

John—An Interpretation

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Observation for Believers

"In the West, most are far more worried about the misuse of biblical authority than the proper understanding of it. Modern interpretative methods are clearer about what a biblical text cannot mean than about what it does mean for us. 'Being carried away,' according to modern moral sensibilities, has an unethical tenor. Nevertheless, the call of the Christian life is, in a sense, the opposite: to be carried away."

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Preface

The present author's understanding of the Epistle to the Hebrews—*Hebrews: An Interpretation*—has been published (*Hebrews—An Interpretation*, Subsidia Biblica 47; Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Institute Press, 2016. 280 pp. Euro 24). It is substantially the same as the on-line presentation (James Swetnam's Close Readings [www.jamesswetnamsclosereadings.com/], Entries ##29, 30, 31).

The present on-line presentation on the Fourth Gospel or, preferably, the Gospel of John or simply John (to parallel the designations Matthew, Mark and Luke) is not the product of decades of study and reflection as was *Hebrews—An Interpretation*. But at age 88 the present author does not think it advisable to count on the possibility of decades of reflection and prayer on John the way he was favored with decades of reflection and prayer on Hebrews.

Hopefully what follows will be sufficient to stimulate some future student(s) of John to arrive at a more profound understanding of what is perhaps the most intriguing Gospel of the four.

The presence of a Greek text of the New Testament and the ability to understand New Testament Greek is presumed in what follows

29 June 2016

Introduction

The methodology that will be employed in interpreting texts in John and other biblical texts has its goal not proof but plausibility, as in the case of the author's book on Hebrews. The presentation will proceed step by step as the material already presented would seem to warrant. The hope is that as the author's surmises and the argumentation in support of them begin to add up that the resulting view of the Gospel of John will assume a physiognomy as a whole with the various parts assuming an intelligibility of their own.

The citation of secondary sources will be minimal. The writings on John's Gospel are endless, and no attempt to give them adequate acknowledgement is possible. As far as the present writer knows the positions presented here are, taken together, unique to the present writer. He would gladly acknowledge evidence to the contrary. What is being attempted here is a plausible explanation of the Gospel as a whole, an explanation that is intelligible in term of its several parts.

References to previously published material on John's Gospel will be kept to a minimum. The material on John is, of course, vast to the point of being unknowable. It seems pointless to give references just for the sake of giving references.

The present author is a believing Catholic and in *John—An Interpretation* will make use of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church as a guide for his surmises. Use of this Magisterium will not be allowed to take away with the legitimate autonomy of the text. Perhaps the analogy of a flashlight can serve as a guide to how this Magisterium will be employed: as an illumination of what is objectively in the text so that what results is genuine exegesis, not eisegesis. A good example is the teaching of the Magisterium that Jesus Christ is both divine and human. This teaching helps this author see in the text of John what is objectively there.

As always, what is written below represents the view(s) of the present writer and him only, to the extent that it is unique.

CHAPTER 1: **Jesus as Divine in the Gospel of John the Beloved Disciple**

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus dies on the cross. It would seem to follow from this that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke look on Jesus primarily as human and not as divine, if there is question of one or the other, as early dogmatic decisions about Jesus in the early Church would seem to suggest. For in Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus was crucified, died, was buried and three days later rose from the dead. But He did not do this *as* divine but *as* human, for God *as* God cannot die. But Jesus who *is* God can die, for He does so *as* human. It is not that Matthew, Mark and Luke did not believe that Jesus was divine. Rather, it is a question of emphasis. For their purposes the authors of the first three Gospels consider Jesus in their Gospels as human, not as divine. It would seem that John, though, is considering Jesus primarily as divine and only secondarily as human. One reason for asserting this is to be found in viewing Mary, the mother of Jesus, as being the Daughter of Zion, as will be explained in what follows.

1.1. **Mary, Daughter of Zion**

In the ancient Near East a woman, often evoked as a virgin, was frequently used to symbolize a city or a country. At Isaiah 47,1 the city of Babylon is called a “virgin daughter”. Perhaps this custom arose from the dancing at festivals of unmarried women who symbolized the fertility and hence the future of a city and, at times, its country. The authors of the Bible applied this custom to their own culture. It is found especially with regard to Jerusalem, as at Zephaniah 3,14-16 and Lamentations 2,13. John was well aware of this custom for at John 12,15 he explicitly evokes it (“Fear not, daughter of Zion” [Zechariah 9,9]). Once it is clear that John was aware of this custom it remains to be seen if he used it and, if so, how. In this context Mary, the mother of Jesus, stands out at once. For she makes two and only two appearances in John’s Gospel and is addressed by her Son as “woman”. This term could be used as an indication of respect and this would be a natural term to be used by her Son if it was intended to be taken as the indication that she was to be taken as a symbol. The first of the two appearances of Mary as presumed symbol is at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2,1-11). There she makes a request of her Son but is refused on the grounds that His “hour”, that is, the moment of His being “raised up” at the crucifixion, has not yet come. Jesus and His disciples were invited guests at the wedding feast, whereas the mother of Jesus is simply indicated as being present, as though she was there by a certain right. (The woman’s request is granted, but not, it would seem, as would be appropriate if the hour of her Son had come.) Further, John indicates that the wedding feast at Cana had a symbolic meaning, for it is the first of the “signs” worked by Jesus. All of this points to the only other time in John’s Gospel where the “woman” appears: under the cross.

There Jesus gives the woman a new identity. He does this not by simply telling her that John, the beloved disciple, is henceforth to be her “son”, but by handing on the Spirit to her. For in John 19,30 the text says that Jesus “handed on the Spirit” (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα). These three words are almost never used in non-biblical or biblical Greek to indicate death before their use here in John’s Gospel. The obvious inference is that their primary meaning is not to indicate that Jesus died but that Jesus handed on His Spirit to the “woman” to whom He has just indicated a change of identity. The result is that the “woman” now has the identity of one who has this Spirit. And she is able to share this Spirit with her new son. Placed together with the identify of the “woman” at the wedding feast of Cana in the context of John’s explicit interest in the imagery of the “Daughter of Zion”, the conclusion would seem to be that the primary meaning of the scene of the crucifixion of Jesus is that instead of dying He hands on the Holy Spirit to the “woman”. As a result, “woman”, the mother of Jesus, now has had her identity changed from Daughter of Zion, that is, Jerusalem, to Mother of the Church. John, in turn, becomes the symbol for all the faithful who have the mother of Jesus as their mother. Thus the physical mother of Jesus becomes the spiritual mother of all those who accept her as mother. At the time of this handing on the Spirit to the woman, Jesus dies on the cross secondarily, not primarily as in Matthew, Mark and Luke who view Jesus primarily as human. Thus the crucifixion scene in John looks on Jesus primarily as divine.¹

1.2. The Implications of John 19,30

With the analysis of John 19,30 as revealing the identify of Jesus as fully divine, it remains to attempt to understand some of the implications.

1.2.1. The Identity of Jesus

Once it was revealed in John 19,30 that Jesus was divine there remains the need to attempt an assessment of who He was in relation to “God”,

¹ See Swetnam (2015a) for a more ample treatment. (References are to the Bibliography that follows this book-long essay.) See also Swetnam (1993). In the entire discussion that follows the extensive comments of R. E. Brown (1966 and 1970) are always worth considering. Though now somewhat dated, of course, they are still an invaluable source of knowledge of how the Gospel of John was viewed in centuries past and in the recent present.

whom He regularly is portrayed in John as addressing or referring to as His “Father” (see John 2,16; 5,17.37.43; 6,32.40.57; 8,16; 10,25, etc.) It took the Church hundreds of years to declare solemnly that Jesus was fully equal to this Father (at the Council of Nicaea I in 325), and decades after that to declare that the Spirit was equally divine (Council of Constantinople I in 381). And it took decades more for the Church to declare that Jesus was nonetheless fully human (Council of Chalcedon in 451). The solemn definitions of these ecumenical councils are not to be understood as implying that the relevant solemn declarations were about truths of faith which no one had previously believed, but only that after the declarations that one could not hold or proclaim beliefs contrary to what was declared as being false without being a heretic. Further, the declarations of these councils, together with the declaration of the Council of Ephesus in 331, provided the basis for understanding in an imperfect way the relation of Father, Son and Spirit to each other and thus to have an imperfect but real beginning of an understanding of the Trinity. Hence one is fully justified in believing that the Mother of the Church, the beloved disciple, and all the disciples of Jesus, if they believed in the divinity of Jesus, are fully objectively justified by the teaching of the Catholic Church.

1.2.2. The Identity of Mary

As Daughter of Zion Mary, the physical mother of Jesus, was a symbol of the city of Jerusalem and, in a very real sense, a symbol of the entire Old Dispensation.² With the giving of the Spirit to her by her Son she became the symbol of the Church, for with the death of her Son as man the Old Dispensation passed away and the New Dispensation arrived. But the New Dispensation was not simply the Old Dispensation revived, so to speak, but a radically different reality, for just as Jesus died as human and was raised from the dead to a radically different life that consisted of his entering into eternity with a risen body, so did the reality symbolized by His mother differ from what she had symbolized before. (At the risk of going one bridge too far, in order to maintain a more precise parallel with Mary as symbolizing Jerusalem, perhaps one could venture the opinion that Mary, in being given the Spirit by her Son, became the symbol of Rome, the center of the New Dispensation, the Church, just as Jerusalem was the symbol of the center of the Old Dispensation.) The word *παρέδωκεν* in the Greek of John 19,30, since it means “handed on”, can imply that the Spirit is to be “handed on” in the new entity that Jesus as divine created in the context of God the Father, who is to be understood as the ultimate source of this “handing on” and hence of its legitimacy. This scene thus indicates the founding of the Church by Jesus as divine,

² See de la Potterie (1988), pp. 533-549, especially pp. 548-549.

just as the giving of the keys to Peter in Matthew, Mark and Luke indicates the founding of the Church by Jesus as human.

1.2.3. The Identity of the Beloved Disciple

The identity of “the disciple” (whose symbolic identity becomes transformed by the words of Jesus) would seem to be John, known in the Gospel of John as “the beloved disciple”.³ In the context of the symbolic identity of Mary as the mother of the Church, John would seem to assume the symbolic identity of all those who have the Church as their mother, that is, all those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The object of this belief is to be found in John 20,31: “These things have been written so that all of you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that in believing you may have life in His name”.⁴ It is the contention of the interpretation of the present study that the “beloved disciple” of the Fourth Gospel is the Apostle John of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The basis for this surmise is a difference of function of, presumably, one and the same person. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke John is an “Apostle” whose function is to witness to the reality of the resurrection, that is, to witness of the sameness of the Jesus as human who existed before the resurrection and after (see Acts 1,21-22). But in the Fourth Gospel these Apostles are never mentioned as such, for an Apostle is one who witnesses to Jesus of Nazareth, who called the Apostles, who died, and who rose from the dead—all of which was possible because He was human. But in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is primarily viewed as divine, for after His resurrection He is viewed as “risen” as human and as “exalted” or “glorified” as divine. Thus in the Fourth Gospel to view John as an Apostle would not be consonant with the primary purpose of his Gospel. But to view him as a disciple would be in keeping with the purpose of the Gospel, for such a designation would indicate one who believes that Jesus is divine (see John 20,31, as was noted above). The designation “the beloved disciple” as symbolic son of the Church would single out this disciple as the leader of all the principal disciples. Thus “the beloved disciple” would be to the principal disciples (that is, Apostles) what Peter is to the Apostles. This would explain why it was this disciple who races with Peter to the tomb in John 20: the two are considered in some sense parallel. But John identifies himself as “the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved” to indicate that what is about to take place is the first exercise of the leadership role given him by Jesus when Jesus made him a symbol: John is to the eleven as disciples what Peter is to the eleven as Apostles. (Peter is called a “disciple” as well in John 20, but the designation “the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved” would seem to use “whom Jesus loved” as a title and not as assertion that Jesus did not love Peter.) John 20,1-10 shows how the symbol and leader of all those

³ On the identity of the beloved disciple and the identity of the author of the Fourth Gospel see Brown (1970), p. 906, and Brown (1966), pp. xcii-xcviii.

⁴ Translations from Scripture unless otherwise noted are by the present author.

who believe in the divinity of Jesus came to believe, and the Fourth Gospel may be considered as an explicit exercise by John in this role.

1.3. The Implications of John 2,6-11

As was noted above, the two appearances of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the Fourth Gospel, in each of which she is called by the symbolic term “woman”, in the context of the use by John in 12,15, suggests that Mary is being viewed as Daughter of Zion, i.e., Jerusalem/Old Dispensation in John 2,1-11. This is preface to John 19,26-27, where she is viewed as becoming Mother of the Church/New Dispensation by reason of the authority of her Son who is being viewed as divine and who gives the basis for this designation by handing on to her His Spirit. In the first of these two cameo appearances of the “woman” Jesus changes water into wine (cf. John 2,6-10) at the request of the “woman” even if it is not yet His “hour”. That is, the “hour” of His being exalted on the cross and changing her identity when she will be “Mother” of the Church and making such requests by right. John takes the changing of water into wine by Jesus as a “sign”. “Signs” are an indication of the divine power of Jesus, for a “sign” is something directly caused by God as an indication of some truth. The changing of water into wine is often taken by commentators as a reference to the power of Jesus to change wine into His Eucharistic Blood. And so it seems plausible to take it in this sense here. But even those who consider this interpretation as being possible say that a Eucharistic interpretation is at best only possible shows that they view the Eucharist is marginal to the purpose of John’s Gospel. The interpretation of John’s Gospel being advanced here will beg to differ from the view that the Eucharist is marginal to John’s purpose.⁵

⁵ See Brown (1966), p. 110.

CHAPTER 2: The Prologue of the Gospel of John

Every reading or hearing of a text begins with a set of presuppositions on the part of the reader/listener. It was the purpose of Chapter 1 of this presentation to indicate a few of the presuppositions which were plausibly in the minds of the first readers/listeners of the Fourth Gospel. These presuppositions are summed up in John 20,31: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and those who believe in Him have eternal life. The first eighteen verses of John, conventionally known as the “Prologue” of the Gospel, have, in my opinion, an importance not always recognized in the discussion of the Eucharist as John understands it. Hence the following chapter at the beginning of this study.

2.1.1. The Importance of John 1,14 in the Prologue

There are a number of perplexing problems associated with the final verses of the Prologue. This chapter will argue that a new interpretation of John 1,14—“and the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us”—is the key to solving these problems and thus a means to showing the way to the dimension of legitimacy and cultic divine presence usually ignored in exegesis of the Prologue. The Prologue seems to be delimited by v. 1 and v. 18. V. 18 speaks of “the Only Begotten, the One being in the bosom of the Father”, thus echoing the description of the “Word” in v. 1 as being “with God”. (Both verses use the accusative case as objects of the prepositions, thus possibly indicating a dynamic relationship.) This presumption that the Prologue as it was written was a coherent, organic whole is important for all that follows, that is, no later insertions in the original text will be postulated.

2.1.2. John 1,16-17

The investigation will begin with an attempt to elucidate John 1,16-17. The reason for beginning the exegesis at the end of the prologue is the possibility of a coherent interpretation which these two verses seem to present, and the relevance which such an interpretation would seem to have for the coherence of the entire passage.⁶ V.16 contains a classic crux—the question of the precise force of the preposition ἀντὶ. The present reading will interpret the preposition as meaning “in place of”: “grace in place of grace”. The reason for this is the content of the following verse, a verse that is introduced by ὅτι, which seems to have the meaning “because”: “because the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ”.⁷ That is to say, two

⁶ That is to say, the *via inventionis* of a text’s meaning is not always identical with its *via scriptiois*.

⁷ Translations are by the present writer. They will be as literal as is possible consistent with English usage.

realities are in play: the Mosaic Law as a grace, and the grace and truth which came through Jesus Christ. The grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ replaces the Mosaic Law. The standard objection to seeing ἀντί as meaning “in place of” is that the Mosaic Law would thus, by implication, be a “grace”, which seems contrary to much of New Testament thought.⁸ But this objection ignores a basic aspect of the Mosaic Law which can only be described as a “grace”, that is, a gratuitous favor of God: the Book of the Law was God’s symbolic presence for the people of Israel during the first Exodus.⁹ That is to say, v. 16 seems to be stating that the symbolic Divine Presence of the first Exodus has been replaced by “the grace and the truth” (ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια) which comes through Jesus Christ. Just what this “grace and truth” is remains to be determined by the context.

2.1.3. John 1,15

John 1,15 sets the stage for John 1,16, as the introductory illative particle ὅτι at the beginning of 1,16 indicates. John 1,15 presents a text interpreting an act of witness of John the Baptist: “the one coming after me passed before me because he was before me” (see John 1,30). In the context of John 1,1-2 this solemn citation of John in 1,15 implies that what is in question here is the divinity of Christ. Hence the following v. 16, introduced by ὅτι, would seem to involve the divinity of Christ in some way. The key word in this connection in v. 16 would seem to be πλήρωμα. Πλήρωμα is a *hapax* in the Fourth Gospel but the cognate verb πληρῶ is frequently used with the sense “to bring to fulfillment” (see John 3,29; 7,8; 12,38; 13,18; etc.). Thus the translation: “because from his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace”.¹⁰ The implication is that the symbolic Divine Presence of God in the tent of meeting of the first Exodus has been replaced by what John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, considers a “fulfilling” consisting of the Divine Presence of Jesus Christ in what is presumably a new Exodus involving Christians.

2.1.4. John 1,14

John 1,14 is linked with what follows by the use of the adjective πλήρης (“full”)—cf. the πλήρωμα of v. 16—and the pairing χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια (“grace and truth”) found in both v. 14 and v. 17. It is a suggestive verse: “And the Word became flesh and tented among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from a Father, full of grace and truth”. The

⁸ See the discussion in Brown (1966), pp. 15-16.

⁹ See Ex 40,34-35. This symbolic Divine Presence was the crucial element in the “testing” of the generation of the first Exodus (see Ex 17,7).

¹⁰ See the translation of John 1,14 in *The New Jerusalem Bible*: “one gift replacing another” (p. 1745).

words “flesh” (σάρξ) and “tented” (σκηνώω) are the most important words in the exegesis of the prologue being advanced here, because from arguments based on the Fourth Gospel they offer the possibility of explaining plausibly in what way the Divine Presence occurs in the new Exodus of Christians. The word “tented” (σκηνώω) is often presented as having to do with the liturgical Divine Presence in connection with the dwelling of God among His people in the tent or Tabernacle of the Exodus (see Ex 25,8-9).¹¹ But the accompanying exegesis is usually that this “tenting” in the Fourth Gospel is a picturesque way of describing the activity of the Word among men, with the use of the word “flesh” indicating the Incarnation.¹² However, this interpretation of “flesh” (σάρξ) ignores the fact that in the Fourth Gospel the word is used most prominently to mean the Eucharistic “flesh” (John 6,51.52.53.54.55.56).¹³ The Eucharist “flesh” would thus seem to be a more plausible place to look for the way in which the Word “tented” among us rather than having recourse to direct reference to the Incarnation in terms of “flesh” which is used elsewhere in the John in opposition to the Spirit (see John 3,6 for example). An *a priori* consideration in favor of seeing the “flesh” of v. 14 as not involving a direct portrayal of the Incarnation is that such an interpretation violates the basic supposition that the perspective of Christ’s divinity as dominant with regard to the perspective of His humanity. But a Eucharistic interpretation of “flesh” labors under no such disadvantage, for in John the Eucharistic flesh is presented repeatedly as coming “from heaven” (see John 6,33.38.48.50.58). The humanity of Christ, of course, is not denied by this. But the allusion to it is attenuated enough to allow John, the author, to remain faithful to his perspective and thus to communicate indirectly but powerfully belief in both divinity and

¹¹ See the lengthy discussion in Brown (1966), pp. 32-34.

¹² See the remarks of *The New Jerusalem Bible* on John 1,14: “The Incarnation of the Word makes God personally and visibly present; it is no longer a presence unseen and awe-inspiring as in the Tent and Temple of the old régime, Ex 25:8d; cf. Nb 35:34, nor merely the presence of divine Wisdom enshrined in Israel’s Mosaic Law, Si 24:7-22; Ba 3:36-34:4” (p. 1745). See also Brown (1966), pp 32-34.

¹³ It is worthwhile to speculate about just why the default position with regard to “flesh” in this context involves the Incarnation and not the Eucharist. In the context of the present paper a reason suggests itself: not enough attention is paid to the perspective of the Fourth Gospel’s presentation of the Passion and Crucifixion as involving primarily the divinity of Christ and not His humanity, with the attendant corollary that an explicit statement about the Incarnation would violate the Gospel’s perspective. In addition there is the element of circular reasoning: everyone knows that the phrase “and the Word was made flesh” refers immediately to the Incarnation because the phrase “and the Word was made flesh” does as a matter of fact refer to the Incarnation. Then, finally, there is the subtle anti-liturgical prejudice of modern New Testament studies that have been largely framed in a Protestant context.

humanity.¹⁴ This Eucharistic “flesh” is the reality which is “full of grace” (πλήρης χάριτος) referred to in the last part of the verse. It is the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of the first “grace” (χάρις) mentioned in v. 16. In the context, the symbolic Divine Presence of the first Exodus has been brought to fullness in the real Divine Presence of the Christian Exodus.¹⁵ V. 17 makes the parallelism more explicit: the first “grace” (χάρις) is the Mosaic Law viewed under the formality of the symbolic Divine Presence which is at the center of the significance of the desert tent, and parallel to it and replacing it as its “fullness” is the “grace” (χάρις) of the real Divine Presence of the Eucharistic “flesh” (σάρξ). The “truth” (ἀλήθεια) mentioned in v. 14 refers to Wisdom revealed (cf. John 5,33; 17,17; 18,37). In the context here, toward the end of the Prologue, it refers to the Divine Wisdom alluded to in the introductory verses, a Wisdom that will be presented below in the text. In the immediate context of v. 14, just as the Mosaic Law was the preliminary presentation of this Wisdom, so the New Law is the definitive presentation.¹⁶ And this New Law, being the very “flesh” of Christ, is Christ himself, the definitive Divine Presence for man. This interpretation of the “flesh” as being the Eucharistic “flesh” of Christ makes better sense in the context of v. 14 for another reason: it is more plausible to see the Christians as “viewing” (θεάομαι) the “glory” (δόξα) of Christ under the formality of the Divine Presence in the Eucharistic “flesh”, than in seeing Christ living a day-to-day life among men. The reason for this is that “glory” in the Old Testament is the manifestation of God’s presence in a liturgical setting (see Ex 40,34-35; 1 Kings 8,10-11).¹⁷ The word “Only Begotten” (μονογενής) in v. 14 in connection with the Christian name for God (πατήρ) as an explanation of “glory”, would seem to be consequent upon God’s wishing to reveal Himself in a new and more profound way—as a Father of an Only Begotten. But this new revelation would still be in the tradition of the

¹⁴ The same technique would seem to be operative in the way the author of the Fourth Gospel uses the expression “Son of Man”. He uses it ironically, to mean the divinity of Christ. This is exactly the opposite of the literal meaning of the Synoptics which, of course, is valid and meaningful in its own context.

¹⁵ The continuity of the imagery—first Exodus, new Exodus—implies the continuity in some sense of the context of the people of God taking part in the new Exodus, but it also implies a difference which is communicated by the different mode of Divine Presence.

¹⁶ “The comparison of Moses and the Law with Christ is implicit throughout the Gospel The whole Mosaic revelation, expression of God’s wisdom (Sir; 24:23ff; Bar 4:1), divine gift to Israel (cf. Jos. *Ant.*, 7, 338), is contrasted with the New Covenant which comes to us through Jesus” (Russell [1969-], §801h [p. 1039]).

¹⁷ “The thought of the Divine Presence of Jesus who now serves as the Tabernacle ... overflows into v. 14c: ‘We have seen His glory.’ In the OT the *glory* (Heb. *kâbôd*; Gr. *doxa* ...) implies a visible and powerful manifestation of God to men. what we are primarily interested in is the constant connection of the glory of God with His presence in the Tabernacle and the Temple” (Brown [1966], p. 34).

revelation of Himself in the Old Dispensation—as a Father with Israel as His son (see Ex 4,22; Num 11,12; Is 1,2; 45,11). This exegesis seems supported by the use in v. 18 of the “Only Begotten” as the source of revelation of the Father. But there is even more to the double occurrence of μονογενής in vv. 14 and 18, as will be explained below.

2.1.5. John 1,12-13

John 1,12-13 gives a descriptive definition of those who “became” (γίνομαι) “children of God” (τέκνα θεοῦ). It is a curious description, with three negations followed by an affirmation.¹⁸ The description is applied to those who “receive” (λαμβάνω) the Light who is the Word. To such the Light “gives” (δίδωμι) the “capability” (ἐξουσία) to become the children. An appositional phrase explains what this means: “to those who believe in his name” (πιστεύειν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ). This appositional phrase is important for two reasons: 1) together with what precedes it shows that faith is a divine gift, but 2) a divine gift which requires human cooperation if it is to reach its goal.¹⁹ (This passage is cited here because it’s the Prologue’s way of anticipating the purpose of John’s Gospel as presented in John 20,31: the effect that belief in Jesus as Son of God has on a believer’s life.) V. 13 begins with the first negative description: “who are not born (γεννάω—from the final word in the sentence) of bloods” (οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων). The primary reference for this seems to be John 19,34, where the piercing of Jesus’ side on the cross results in the outpouring of “blood” (αἷμα). That is to say, only the effect of the blood of Jesus and of no other blood enters into the Christians’ belief from the Light. The phrase “nor from the will of flesh” (οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός) would seem to refer to the negation of “flesh” in the sense of the earthly domain and all that it implies as regards ends and means, with the implied affirmation of the domain of the Spirit and all that this implies as regards ends and means. This contrast is at the heart of John 3,6 and context. The third negated phrase, “nor from the will of a man” (οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός) is explained by a positive phrase, “but from God” (ἀλλ’ ἐκ θεοῦ)—Christians are born from a decision not of a human genitor but of source who is divine. In other words, Jesus, Spirit and Father are at the source of the sonship of Christians. This interpretation seems to be plausible. But it also seems to be incomplete: it does not take sufficiently into account the negative cast of the three

¹⁸ See Swetnam (1987), pp. 697-701. The article still seems basically sound, but labors under the considerable defect of not considering sufficiently the divinely-oriented perspective of the Fourth Gospel. The article was written following some suggestions by Hoskyns (1947). The article cites an abundance of secondary sources.

¹⁹ In connection with the verse the inference suggests itself that there is an intrinsic connection between the Word as Light and the gift of faith to all receive Him. That is to say, the Word as Light makes faith available to all, but the gift is known only with regard to those to accept it. (See again John 20,31 in context.)

phrases: it would seem that the above ideas could have been conveyed in a sentence cast positively if that is all the author wanted to say. A possible explanation of the negative phrasing looks on the above explanation as primary in respect to another which is secondary: the reason for the negative phrasing is to make the verse patent of both of these two explanations, each of which is intended. This secondary explanation views the three verses as an explanation of the birth of the Word. The reason for the elaborate indirection is that the Gospel is about Jesus as God, and Jesus as God had no birth. Only secondarily (from the standpoint of the Fourth Gospel) is His birth as man relevant to the author's perspective. In this secondary explanation of the verses John suggests that in believing in the "name" (ὄνομα) of the Word/Light, Christians become children of God in the world by reason of the relationship intrinsic to the Word's becoming the "Only Begotten of the Father" in the world. In this explanation, the phrase "who are not born (γεννάω—taken from the final word in the sentence) of bloods" (οὐ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων) implies that the Word/Light was not born of two bloods, that is, two human parents.²⁰ The phrase "nor from the will of flesh" (οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός) would seem to refer to the Spirit's role in the birth of Jesus. The phrase, "nor from the will of a man" (οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός) is explained by a positive phrase, "but from God" (ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ)—Christ was born not from the decision of a husband (ἀνὴρ) but from a decision of God. This view that a secondary meaning is being alluded to would help explain the influential text variant of the singular of "was born" (ἐγεννήθη) found in a number of Fathers of the Church. Further, this implied secondary meaning would also help explain the otherwise abrupt appearance of "as of an Only Begotten from a Father" (ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός) in v. 14. It would be an intriguing case of a text implying that the earthly birth of the Logos is analogous to generation within the Christian Godhead.

2.1.6. John 1,9-11

This cluster of verses introduces the word "world" (κόσμος) into John's Gospel for the first time. "World" occurs dozens of times in the chapters which follow and is a major factor in setting the tone of the Gospel's point that the Word—Jesus Christ—is God in the full sense of the word. For the word "world" in John suggests the transcendence of the Word by the very fact of its use in connection with Him: He enters into the world from "outside". Thus the translation of v. 9 should probably be, "It was the true Light (that enlightens every man) who was coming into the world", with the "who" referring to "Light". That is, two points are being made: 1) the Word was Wisdom and as such enlightens every man; and what is more, 2) this Wisdom was entering into the world (sc., in a unique way apart from His role as Wisdom). In v. 10 the point is amplified: the

²⁰ See Swetnam (1987), p. 700, n. 16.

Light was in the world which had been created through Him, but the world did not accept Him (λαμβάνω—would not “receive” Him). In v. 11 even “His own” (οἱ ἴδιοι) would not “receive” (παραλαμβάνω) Him. (The implication of οἱ ἴδιοι joined with παραλαμβάνω is that the Jews who did not accept the Word were not accepting what was proper to their own tradition that was being handed on to them.) There follow vv. 12-13 with the statement that those Jews who did accept the Light received the “right” (ἐξουσία), as explained above. The Jews were and are children of God in a real sense independently of the coming of the Word; their refusal to accept the Light which came into the world in a way unknown in the Old Dispensation indicates that the Christians are God’s children in a new and unique way, just as the Light is the Only Begotten of the Father in a way which is new and unique in the tradition in which He came.

2.1.7. **John 1,6-8**

These verses introduce “John” (Ἰωάννης) to the addressees of the Gospel. John the Baptist is meant. He is given a specific role: “sent by God he came for witness, to witness to the Light so that all might believe through him [sc., John]”. It would seem that this is a specific vocation given John by God. The word “witness” has considerable weight in the Fourth Gospel.²¹ The protestation in v. 9 that John is not the Light is to be understood in the context of John 5,35, where the Baptist is said to give light as does a “lamp” (λύχνος). John witnesses to the introductory phase of the Word’s entrance into the world as Light. This phase is brought to a conclusion in the prologue in vv. 12-13, which effectively sums up this phase by indirectly presenting the birth of Jesus through the presentation of the spiritual birth of Christians, thereby remaining true to the perspective of the Fourth Gospel where reference to the humanity of Christ is by indirection. Given the way John is introduced (“sent by God”), it is clear that his witness marks a radical turning point in God’s relations to His people. Light represents Wisdom, and this Wisdom is now being officially ushered in as a replacement of the liturgical Divine Presence found in the Mosaic Law, as will be seen in the second part of the prologue.

2.1.8. **John 1,1-5**

The opening verses prepare the way for the radical move on the part of

²¹ “‘Witness’, key word in Jn, who uses the verb 33 times (Mt 1, Lk 1, Mk 0); it has affinity with truth, faith and light, and means not only to attain the historic truth of Jesus but to have ‘contemplated his glory’ (Jn 1:14) revealed only to the believer, 11:40); he who believes in the Son of God has the testimony of God in himself’, 1 Jn 5:10” (Russell [1969], §801d [p. 1038]). This “light” which illumines “every man” would seem to be the source of subjective salvation for men in the perspective of God, corresponding to the fidelity of the human Jesus which is the source of the subjective salvation made available to every man for his personal belief.

God of replacing the Wisdom as present in the Mosaic Law with Wisdom personified in His Only Begotten.²² This Wisdom comes as Light and Life and shines in the Darkness, and the Darkness (a symbol of Evil) cannot “prevail” (καταλαμβάνω)²³ against it. Here, in v. 5, the arrival of the Word in the world of men is portrayed on a cosmic scale as befits a perspective in which the Word is viewed as divine and not human. Just as in the Old Testament God’s personified Word is sent on earth to reveal God’s plan and then returns to Him with this task accomplished (see Is 55,10-11), so the Word who is the Only-Begotten (John 1,14,18) is now being sent among men in a confrontation with the powers of Evil and will return to God when this victory has been accomplished (vv. 4-5). In the Prologue the relation of the Word to God is presented in terms of differentiation but also of intimacy (vv 1-2). These first two verses present a view “confined” to the Godhead, so to speak, with use of the imperfect “was” (ἦν) to convey the timeless. There follows a pair of aorists: “came about” (ἐγένετο, ἐγένετο—a repetition in line with the sonority of the passage) to punctuate the timeless with acts. In v. 4 the creative Word is characterized as having Life and Light with the implication that these attributes are to be shared. The word “Light” gives an opening for the author to contrast this implied goodness of the Word now active (“shines”—φαίνει) with the explicit mention of Darkness which stands for the Evil which did not “overpower” (κατέλαβεν) it. In vv. 1-5 the Word is presented as having arrived among men without mention of His birth: the perspective of the divinity of Jesus is thus honored in these words of introduction. Thus interpreted, with a Eucharistic understanding of v. 13, the Prologue assumes a radically different and, ultimately, more profound meaning than the conventional one involving σάρξ with reference to the Incarnation, profound as that reading is. But there would seem to be more.

2.1.9. John 1,18

First, the word μονογενής in vv. 14 and 18. The context in the Prologue—each use in explicit connection with the Father—plus the limited use of μονογενής in the Old Testament, suggests that the allusion is to Isaac as the only begotten (legitimate) son of Abraham.²⁴ This

²² “... Jn 1:1-4 in the manner of sapiential Judaism gives a new interpretation of Gn’s account while introducing the new creation. Jesus is God’s creative Word and also the Word in substitution for the Jewish idea of the Law existing at the creation, cf. Ps 33(32):4-9; Jn 1:17 (Russell, §801b [p. 1037]).

²³ “The verb has the idea of seizing or grasping after a pursuit (cf. Rm 9:30; Phil 3:12f, but, in the present context, with the implication of overcoming or quenching, cf. Wis 7:30; 1 Jn 2:8; *Odes Sol.* 13:6. It should not be taken as ‘understand’ (not Semitic), nor ‘welcome’ (contrast *parelabon*, v 11). ‘Darkness’ in Jn never means men as such, but Satan’s world in which they are plunged” (Russell, §801b [p. 1038]).

²⁴ See the discussion in Brown (1966), pp. 13-14.

becomes even more plausible when John 8,56 is taken into consideration. There Abraham is said to “rejoice” at seeing Jesus’ “day”. In the light of John 1,14.18 the reference would seem to be the joy of Abraham at being informed that he would have a legitimate heir through which the descendants promised him by God would come (Gen 17,17).²⁵ With the word *μονογενής*, then, the crucial idea of legitimacy with regard to God would seem to enter the context.²⁶ There remains the climactic word of the entire prologue, *διηγῆσομαι*, the word in 1,18 which closes the entire discourse. A plausible case can be made for an allusion here to Ps 21[LXX],23.²⁷ The plausibility increases when the allusion to Ps 21[LXX],23 is taken into account.²⁸ The allusion to Ps 21[LXX],23 is especially significant in the light of the Eucharistic interpretation given John 1,14, for Ps 21[LXX],23 is part of a *toda* prayer, that is, the most plausible Old Testament antecedent of the Christian Eucharist. This in turn implies that the climax of the entire Prologue is about the legitimacy of the Word in terms of the Father in a liturgical setting. Which is a confirmation of the liturgical reading given in this paper to John 1,14. The focal point of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel is the legitimacy of the Word in relation to the Father in the context of the liturgy of the Church. But, it should be noted, this focal point is not in the context of the liturgy as it is normally taken, i.e., with Christ being viewed as a sacrificing priest and victim in the context of His humanity, but in John being viewed as the legitimate heir of the Father, with all that implies in what is to follow in the Gospel, especially His handing over of the Spirit to His Mother on the cross in the context of worship.

2.2. Structure

The Prologue would seem to have a structure based on the two ways in which Christ came to be present in the world as God. The first presence is sketched in vv. 1-13, and tells of the coming of the Word as Wisdom into the world to give Light and Life, the official witness to Him by John the Baptist, His rejection by many of His religious tradition but His acceptance by others, and His role in a Godhead which implies that His divinity is shared with a Father and a Spirit. His birth as man is suggested

²⁵ See Brown (1966), pp. 359-360. Brown notes that the “laughter” of skepticism of the original meaning is changed to the “laughter” of joy in Jewish tradition, a change which is made to order for Johannine irony. In his discussion of John 1,14 Brown misses the important connotation of legitimacy (Brown (1966), p. 14.

²⁶ It is worth noting that in John 8,56 there is the same mix of the divinity of Christ and His being foreshadowed by the legitimacy of Isaac as in the suggestion about the use of *μονογενής* in the suggestion in question.

²⁷ Cf. the discussion in A. Cavicchia (2010), p. 230. Cavicchia notes that *ἐξηγέομαι* can substitute for *διηγέομαι* as a translation of the root *סבר* (the Hebrew of the Massoretic text) in the Septuagint.

²⁸ Cf. Cavicchia (2010), pp. 235-239.

at the end of this initial section in a way honors the primary focus on His divinity. The second presence is sketched in vv. 14-18 and tells of his becoming “flesh” in a way which substituted His Divine Presence (John’s witness of His divinity is again invoked to indicate God’s responsibility in what is happening) for the symbolic Divine Presence of the Mosaic Law in the first Exodus. This Divine Presence of Christ in His “flesh” is the fullness of the symbolic Divine Presence, and the implication is that it functions as did the first, symbolic Divine Presence, in an Exodus. This second section begins and ends with an evocation of the legitimacy of the Word in relation to His Father in the context of Christian Eucharistic worship, but from the standpoint of the intimacy for the Christian worshipper expressed in the intimacy of the Word’s relation to the Father.

2.3. Summary

The central point being made in the above presentation of the prologue of the Fourth Gospel is that the Word who is Wisdom personified is liturgically present in the Eucharist, replacing the liturgical Divine Presence of the Mosaic Law. A convergence of factors argues for this interpretation of the famous words, “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us ...”:

1) Factor: in the Fourth Gospel the word “flesh” (σάρξ) with a Eucharistic meaning is more prominent than any other meaning..

2) Factor: the use of the word “to tent” (σκηνώω) to convey the idea of “dwelling”, a use that has connotations of the “tenting” of God among His people in the first Exodus.

3) Factor: a Eucharistic interpretation of v. 14 describes a new type of presence of the Word among men, something related to but different from the first presence described in vv. 1-13 and thus important for structuring the verses.

4) Factor: the Eucharistic existence of the Word in terms of history was subsequent to the initial existence of the Word among His people.

5) Factor: that the second witness of John thus results in his two witnesses matching the two types of the Word’s existence among men.

6) Factor: the phrase “to gaze at His glory” (θεάομαι τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ) seems more in accord with the Old Testament meaning of “glory” if an allusion to the liturgical Divine Presence is envisioned.

7) Factor: the language with regard to the Mosaic Law makes more sense if v. 14 is interpreted as referring to the Eucharist as the Divine Presence of the New Dispensation, bringing to fulfillment the Divine Presence of the Old.

8) Factor: the suggestion about the presence of the *toda* in connection with the ending of the prologue.

This interpretation of “flesh” in John 1,14 fits in well with the way Christ presents His “flesh” in Chapter 6 of the Fourth Gospel. There the Eucharist is presented not from “below” so to speak, that is, in terms of Christ’s humanity (death, atonement for sin, resurrection from the dead, the Eucharist as sacrifice), but from “above”, in terms of Christ’s divinity (the bread of life come down from heaven). Further, in John 6 this divine

bread is presented in terms of a prefiguring in the imagery of the first Exodus (see v. 32, with explicit mention of Moses).

2.4. Reflections

The above conclusions about John 1,1-18 were based on internal evidence of the text with the presupposition that, since the Fourth Gospel tells of the Passion and Crucifixion from the perspective of Christ's divinity, the Prologue would do the same. The above points, and the exegesis on which they are based, seems to bear this out. One of the main arguments in favor of the plausibility of the exegesis being advanced here is that it is internally coherent, i.e., an intelligible structure may be discerned that is based on the content. This is an important point for the interpretation of all that intervenes in the Fourth Gospel between the Prologue and the Passion narrative. This is, after all, what one would expect in a writing the Prologue of which stresses the view that the very Wisdom of God has come to be present among man as the inspiration of all that is done in His name. The emphasis on legitimacy placed in the reading of the Prologue advanced above would seem to be an element too often missing in analysis of the Gospels. As present writer sees it, Matthew and Luke offer a Christ legitimized by God's sign of the Resurrection: Matthew presents the case for the legitimate Christ on behalf of Christians from a Jewish background with regard to the Jewish establishment symbolized by and centered in Antioch; Luke presents the case for the legitimate Christ on behalf of Christians from a non-Jewish background with regard to the non-Jewish establishment symbolized by and centered in Alexandria. Mark presents a Christ legitimized by His own word addressed officially to the Chief Priest and the Sanhedrin, thus substituting His own words for a sign from God²⁹; Mark thus presents the case for the legitimate Christ as "Son of God" on behalf of the Christians from both a Jewish and non-Jewish Christians with regard to the emperors symbolized and centered in Rome who claimed the title for themselves. John, as the meaning of the Prologue advanced here implies, presents the case for the legitimate Christ as God's cultic presence on behalf of the Christians from a Jewish background with regard to the Jewish establishment symbolized and centered in Jerusalem who claimed that God's cultic presence in the Temple was still the center of God's relations with His people.

To repeat: In order to attempt to put the Prologue into its full perspective,

²⁹ And, negatively, by Mark's handling of the "empty tomb" where he makes sure that neither the risen Christ (who never appears in the Gospel that Mark wrote) nor any legally verifiable account of the risen Christ is possible: one (not two as required by the Law) young (not old, which would have been preferable according to the Mosaic Law) man at an empty tomb (no presence of the risen Christ in the Gospel) speaks to women (who cannot give valid witness according to the Law) who in the event said nothing, for they were in awe (ἐφοβούντο γάρ — a masterly way to end a Gospel in which human witness is portrayed as being totally ineffectual as regards piercing the mystery of Christ.

i.e., in a perspective intended by the author of the Fourth Gospel, one may advantageously consult the purpose of the Gospel in the author's own words:

Many other signs of course Jesus performed in the sight of His disciples, signs that are not written down in this book. These that have been written are for your belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in your belief you may have life in His name.³⁰

Here the legitimacy of Jesus is emphasized: He is the legitimate Messiah, the Christ; He is the Son of God in an ontological sense because He is able to produce life for all those who believe in His "name", that is, Son, with all that this implies as regards God as Father, with all that that name implies as regards the ultimate grounding of legitimacy.

³⁰ John 20,30-31.

CHAPTER 3: **The Theological Anecdotes of John 20**

A reading of John 20, if done carefully, will result in the realization that there are a number of remarks that at first glance would seem to be observations of a careful observer, with no other significance than the satisfaction of historical curiosity. It is the contention of some such observers that these anecdotes have theological significance, and are included by the author of John's Gospel, because they recorded events that enabled him to penetrate more deeply into what happened than mere historical occurrence.³¹ And because of this he uses them to signal this meaning to fulfill the purpose of his Gospel (see John 20,31). At least so thinks the present writer of this attempt to come to grips with the Fourth Gospel. The present chapter will view John 20 as originally intended to be viewed in three distinct parts with a summary of the entire Gospel: 1) Peter and John at the Empty Tomb; 2) Jesus and Mary Magdalene; 3) Jesus and His Disciples Behind Closed Doors; Summary.³²

3.1. **Peter and John at the Empty Tomb**

The first ten verses of John 20 tell of a number of persons (presumably all women), going to the tomb where Jesus was buried and finding it empty. One of these persons, Mary Magdalene (see v. 2), ran to Peter and "the other disciples whom Jesus loved", that is, John, and told them of the fact of the empty tomb.³³ Peter was chosen, presumably, because his role as leader of the Apostles was well known to Mary Magdalene. John was with him and chosen, presumably, because his role as designated by Jesus on the cross as son of Mary, to whom the Spirit had been given, also was known by Mary Magdalene. Or, by Peter. The pairing of John with Peter would seem to indicate that John's role matched Peter's: just as Peter was to be a leader of those who were to witness to the resurrection, that is, the Apostles, so John was to be a leader in achieving the purpose of the Gospel that he was to write (John 20,31). (This, of course, was in addition to his role as Apostle.) The beloved disciple shows by his actions that he recognizes the pre-eminent role of Peter in the hierarchical Church by ceding him the right to enter the tomb first, but not before he sees some of

³¹ See O'Day (1986), pp. 6-10, for an analogous approach.

³² The present arrangement into chapters was done in the Middle Ages, of course.

³³ The failure to make any use of the other persons stresses the theological role of Mary Magdalene as being "one" and as being a "woman". This would seem to imply that she has a symbolic role in what follows.

the burial cloths in a way which does not result in his believing.³⁴ Peter then enters, sees the burial cloths carefully arranged, but is not said to believe. Then the beloved disciple enters the tomb again, sees presumably what Peter saw, and is said to believe. This carefully constructed account is theologically significant. It presents an interplay between the disciple assigned the primacy in the role of an Apostle (who here acts as a disciple not assigned the role of primacy of believing), and the disciple assigned the role of believing (and who acts, consequently, as the disciple assigned the role of primacy of believing).³⁵ Peter is not able to act as witness to the resurrection on the basis of seeing the burial cloths in an empty tomb, even when they are arranged; that is to say, the empty tomb is not sufficient to ground the witness of the disciple enjoying the primacy in witness to the resurrection. But the disciple who enjoys the primacy of belief in something different from Peter is not able to believe on the basis of burial cloths simply existing in an empty tomb, but he is able to believe on the basis of burial cloths in an empty tomb when they have been carefully arranged. This is the first presentation of the disciple who has been given a primacy in believing in a way different from the primacy given to Peter. It is a crucial moment for the entire Gospel.³⁶ Indeed, it is a crucial moment for Christianity. For what did the disciple believe? John 20,31 gives the answer: the disciple believes that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. The fact that the burial cloths are carefully arranged suggests that the coming to life of Jesus was essentially different from the coming to life of Lazarus, who was encumbered by the burial cloth (John 11,44). The burial cloths of Lazarus suggest that his coming to life was the work of another; the burial cloths of Jesus suggest that His coming to life was the work of Jesus Himself. Only a divine power can raise from the dead. Jesus, as inferred by the one who enjoyed primacy of belief, must have this power at His beck and call, that is, Jesus must be Son of God in a unique sense as He Himself stated in His life with the disciples. When the disciple infers from the arrangement of the burial cloths that Jesus raised Himself through divine power, the inference is that as God He never

³⁴ In all of John, and in John 20 in particular, a close reading is demanded. This close reading should be colored theological, not just anecdotal. That is to say, the details are ultimately intended not to cater to curiosity as to what happened (narrative mode) but to understanding what happened (theological claim).

³⁵ The disciple assigned the role of symbol of believers in the Fourth Gospel is the same disciple assigned the role of Apostle in the Synoptics, as was indicated above. The refusal to attribute the authorship of the Fourth Gospel to John the Apostle is based on a failure to honor the underlying perspectives proper to the Gospels. The function of an Apostle, as explained in the Acts of the Apostles (1,21-22), is to witness to the fact that the Jesus who existed before the resurrection was the same Jesus who existed after the resurrection. But in the perspective of John's Gospel, the resurrection as such is not under consideration because it involves the humanity of Jesus and not His divinity.

³⁶ "The writer's purpose is not to detract from Peter but to exalt the status of the Beloved Disciple" (Brown [1970], p. 1005).

really died but instead has been glorified.³⁷ Thus the external circumstances of the disciple's coming to believe that Jesus was "Son of God" are presented. Further, the fact that Peter does not exercise his function as witness to the resurrection on the basis of the arrangement of the clothes in the empty tomb suggests that even for the one having the primacy of witness to the resurrection the empty tomb is not sufficient evidence to ground witness to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Verse 9 has been the occasion of no little perplexity ("... for they did not yet know the Scripture that it was necessary that he rise from the dead").³⁸ A plausible solution would seem to lie in giving a close reading to the meaning and form of the Greek verb indicating that Jesus rose (*ἀναστῆναι*). This verb can be understood as being intransitive. That is, the disciples were not yet aware that the Messiah among them was destined to rise from the dead, that is, raise Himself from the dead, as opposed to being raised from the dead. A background for such an insight based on an Old Testament text could be Ezechiel 34, where the Lord Himself assumes personal guidance of His sheep.³⁹ That is to say, the Scripture text which John and Peter were ignorant of foretold a Messiah who was divine, not a human Messiah who would be raised from the dead. But the context of John 20,1-10, a passage that makes a point of the divinity of the Messiah, would imply that to grasp the Messiah's divinity by faith one would have to first grasp that this is indicated by the fact that He would rise from the dead on His own power. Given time after the event, John and Peter could have arrived by inference at the relevance of Ezechiel 34, an inference they would not have been able to make immediately on the spot. The upshot of the visit of Peter and the beloved disciple to the empty tomb is that the news of Christ's glorification was communicated to the disciples gathered together not under the formality of Apostles (which presupposes the responsibility to witness to Christ's resurrection as human) but under the formality of believers in Christ's divinity (which presupposes the responsibility to witness to Christ's glorification as divine).

3.2. Jesus and Mary Magdalene

The final verse of the previous section, John 20,10, has Peter and the beloved disciple returning to the rest of the disciples, who seem to have returned to different dwelling places (John 20,10). These disciples, whether they were aware of the visit to the tomb or not, must have been aware that the two were missing from their group at a time of crucial

³⁷ Jesus *as* God, of course, cannot die. Only Jesus who *was* God can die, but He does so *as* man. At the same time that Jesus as man is raised from the dead, Jesus as God acquires a glorified body. Materially it is the same body, but formally it is different.

³⁸ Cf. Brown (1970), pp. 987-988.

³⁹ This text seems to be behind the commissioning of Peter in John 21: God as Shepherd of His sheep is sharing His divine authority with Peter.

confusion. Presumably Peter and the beloved disciple, when they returned from the tomb, informed their brethren of their visit and their reactions. The detail in 20,4 that the two “ran” so fast that the younger beloved disciple outdistanced his respected leader, implies that Mary Magdalene was not with them. Further, it also would seem to imply that the two did not inform her of their reactions, as they did the other disciples. But this does not imply that Mary Magdalene was not a witness: Jesus Himself, as the passage develops, makes her a witness of Himself as ascending to the Father, thus implying that the requirements of the Mosaic Law about witnesses is no longer valid. With the two disciples long gone, the two angels whom Mary Magdalene sees were standing in what apparently are symbolic positions on either side of where the body of Jesus lay. The suggestion that they thus recall the two cherubs on either side of the Ark of the Covenant would make good sense on the supposition that the Ark contained the Tables of the Law—the symbolic presence of God—and that the position of the angels was meant to suggest this.⁸ The two angels are portrayed as speaking in unison, but this seems to be a literary technique for indicating that they were unified in their witness. They thus assume a quasi-official role, for the Mosaic Law, valid at the time the Ark was valid, required the presence of two witnesses. When their message begins with the formal address “Woman”, it suggests not impoliteness but a symbolic use, and further serves to situate Mary Magdalene as a witness. The question of the angels, “Why are you weeping”, would seem to be rhetorical. That is to say, “Why weep you when there is really no cause for weeping”? But their statement gains by the indirection. Mary Magdalene’s reply, that she thinks the body of Jesus has been taken away and that she does not know where it was placed, implies that she will be a focal point of the passage, not necessarily that she is physically alone. It also implies that she is not thinking of any kind of return to life of Jesus. Her “turning around” suggests that the angels viewed Jesus standing behind Mary when they gave her their indirect response, which suggests in turn that since they knew that Jesus was on hand they knew He would handle Mary’s perplexity. On turning around Mary “sees” Jesus. (The Greek word [θεωρέω] seems to be used in John to indicate an intense gaze.) She does not recognize Him. This is important, for as the subsequent narrative indicates, it was the initiative of Jesus that revealed His identity to her. Jesus’ words to Mary—“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?”, in view of her subsequent recognition of Jesus, would seem to indicate a view that He was talking with someone not as central to what is taking place as the disciples: He does not treat her with the formality with which He treats them in 20,19-23. The words also serve as an authoritative indication in the text that Mary’s subsequent recognition of Jesus, first as her friend and then as her God, was caused by Jesus Himself. Finally, and most importantly, it suggests that their conversation

⁸ See Brown (1970), p. 989.

is a renewal of a relationship which existed before Jesus' resurrection/exaltation; that is to say, this is the same Jesus who existed before His resurrection/exaltation. Thus the conversation between Jesus and Mary has the same function in John as the witness of the Apostles has in the Synoptics/Acts but with a crucial difference: in John that the Jesus who reveals Himself to Mary is not a Jesus in a risen body, but a Jesus in a glorified body. And this in turn has the immensely moving implication: a divine being has a body. And it would seem that only Jesus as a divine being can reveal the fact that He as divine has a body. This prerogative of the divine Jesus is reinforced by Mary's use of "teacher".⁴¹ In v. 15 the statement is made that Mary thought Jesus was the "gardener". This alludes to John 19,41 where the word "garden" is used twice to situate the tomb in which Jesus was laid. Mary's confusion about Jesus' identity helps emphasize that her knowledge of who He is comes from Him and not from her. V. 17 which follows is one of the more challenging verses in the entire Gospel of John.⁴² In the light of the presuppositions guiding the present reading of Chapter 20, the following understanding of the verse suggests itself: Having been given the designation "teacher", Jesus begins to teach. His words "Stop clinging to me" would seem to demand being interpreted both as a "thatness" and as a "whatness". That is, Jesus as divine has a body and this body can be and is being physically touched. In the context of this revelation Jesus then commands Mary to go to "my brothers". The term "brothers" in the context would seem to imply equality as regards the Eucharist: here Jesus is returning to His Father, from where He will preside at all future celebrations of the Eucharist, separated from His "brothers". This allusion to the Eucharist will become intelligible in the following passage that deals with Jesus as victim, in which capacity He remains with His "brothers". The final verse of the section, v. 18, gives what the author of the Fourth Gospel, John, thinks is the content of Mary Magdalene's witness to the disciples. The witness is divided into two parts. The first part is phrased as being her exact words: "I have seen the Lord." But the second part is phrased as indirect discourse: "And He said these things to her." The reason for this, at first sight, curious variation would seem to be to indicate that the direct quotation indicates what she understood, and the indirect discourse indicates what she did not understand. If this interpretation is adopted two possibilities are established as regards Jesus' communication with His disciples: What Mary Magdalene understands (the fact that she has seen

⁴¹ The statement in the indicative in v. 14 that Mary Magdalene "turned" physically to see Jesus need not be interpreted as being an act different from the participle "having turned" in v. 16. V. 16 emphasizes that she had turned when Jesus explicitly recognized her and she, in turn, explicitly recognized Him. The repetition of the verb helps make the ensuing words of explicit recognition more meaningful because it emphasizes that they were in face-to-face contact as befits an act corresponding to the meaningful witness of the Apostles in the Synoptics. Perhaps this scene reflects the anti-Docetist concerns of John: it is Jesus Himself who here implicitly condemns Docetism.

⁴² See the wide variety of interpretations given by Brown (Brown [1970], pp. 992-993).

Jesus, that is, He is no longer dead) He reveals to His disciples through her. What Mary Magdalene does not understand (His going to His Father) He reveals to His disciples Himself. The result of all this is that when Jesus reveals Himself to His disciples He does so not only as having ascended to His Father, but as having revealed to His disciples that He has ascended to His Father. In the section that follows, vv. 19-29, Jesus immediately explains what must have been a source of mystery to his disciples: how He could be ascended to the Father and yet be present to them.

3.3. Jesus and the Disciples

The opening words of this section, with their explicit time references, indicates that for the author the sequence in the scenes in the chapter are important: the mention of the “first day of the week” reinforces the implications of a liturgical relevance indicated in v. 1 (see Acts 20,7). This liturgical relevance is important for what is to follow. The mention of the “locked doors because of fear of the Judeans” serves to suggest the preternatural entrance of Jesus through physical barriers, an important part of the context in what is to follow.⁴³ The presence of the disciples is made explicit within the locked doors—what is to happen happens with reference to them, and in relation to Christ as divine victim. With this elaborate preparation of liturgical time, inaccessible physical space, and allusion to the previous scenes by the use of “on that day”, Jesus “entered”, “stood in their midst”, and speaks. There follows a series of words and gestures, which suggest a ceremony:

- 1) Words: “Peace”;
- 2) Gesture: Showing of wounds;
- 3) Words: “Peace”, “I send”;
- 4) Gesture: Breathing;
- 5) Words: Receive Spirit.

1) His words “I give you my peace” or “Peace be with you” are to be taken, in the context of John, as an example of preformative speech.⁴⁴ Given the repetition of the words in v. 21 their use in v. 19 seems to be an introduction to what follows rather than a greeting. Presumably, in the light of all that Jesus had told them through Mary Magdalene, the disciples were in expectation of some manifestation of the Lord involving the complementary counterpart to His ascent to the Father as the divine counterpart of high priest, that is, something about His role as the divine counterpart of victim.

2) “He showed them His hands and His side.” The disciples correctly take this as a sign of the Lord’s identity and rejoice. But Mary Magdalene did not need to see the wounds to recognize the Lord’s identity—there seems to be more involved here in the scene with the disciples. And that something would seem to be His identity as victim,

⁴³ See Brown (1970), pp. 1020 and 1033.

⁴⁴ See John 14,27 and 16,33.

which the wounds certainly convey.

3) The use of the phrase “Peace be with you” is followed by the statement “As the Father has sent me, so I send you”. The mention of “sending” here, with its parallel between the Father-given authority of the Son and the Son-given authority to the disciples, evokes the parallel “sending” of John 17,18, where it seems to be used to indicate an analogous authorization by the Father in a solemn way.

4) The breathing of Christ on the disciples has been interpreted in a great variety of ways.⁴⁵ In the interpretation adopted in the present book the presuppositions being honored will be the guides: John is thinking of the divine Jesus but in the explicit context of the human Jesus as liturgical victim. The wounds are an allusion to the expiation wrought by the human Jesus. “A Spirit” is John’s understanding as the divine counterpart to this human role—Jesus bestows “a Spirit” on the disciples for the forgiveness of sins. “A Spirit” is given not to “Apostles” but to “disciples”, to those who are able to believe because brothers of the beloved disciple, and the beloved disciple, John, can believe because of “the Spirit” given to the Church at the moment of her creation in John as personified by Mary as Mother under the cross. V. 23 then gives the effect of the giving of “a Spirit”: the ability to forgive or not forgive sins.⁴⁶ The “sending” by Jesus seems to be related to the selection of the disciple under the cross. Then, once the disciple is selected, a further step seems to be indicated by the giving of “a Spirit” in order to empower for the forgiveness of sin. In the context of John 19,30 and the giving of “the Spirit” to the Church as such, the repeated use of “a Spirit” in John 20,22 seems to be a deliberate attempt to make some sort of distinction between the “giving” in 19,30 and the “bestowal” in 20,22. The latter is restricted to a group of persons who have been “sent”. If the “giving” refers to the role of “the Spirit” in the Church as regards guidance in matters of faith, the “bestowal” would seem to refer to faith in a restricted sense as regards guidance in matters of faith concerning forgiveness of sin, which is a divine prerogative communicated because of the sending and the Spirit. The “forgiving” would seem to depend on power conferred by possession of this Spirit; the “retaining” would seem to refer to the authority involved in the exercise of not using this power. In this study the important thing to note is that this discussion in 20,22-23 revolves around Father, Son and Spirit, that is, the Christian God. In the context of these verses and of John in general what is involved here is the giving of the authority to forgive sins. This forgiveness has been achieved by the human Jesus through His bloody death on the cross. The use of the designation “the twelve” indicates that John is thinking in terms of the

⁴⁵ See Brown (1970), pp. 1022-1023 and the more ample discussion on pp. 1036-1039.

⁴⁶ Ample discussion in Brown (1970), pp. 1023-1024 and the more ample discussion on pp. 1035-1045.

human Jesus as well as in terms of the divine Jesus, of “Apostles” as well as “disciples”. But the former is a matter of supposition, while the latter is a matter of focus. The supposition in the use of the word “twelve” implies that Jesus is dealing with the disciples in terms of a group, and not as individuals.⁴⁷ When “the other disciples” then say to Thomas, “we have seen the Lord”, it implies a group function, that is, the “twelve” function as witnesses. The word “Apostles” implies focus on a group function of witnessing to the human Jesus, dead and risen, whereas the word “witnesses” (in the context of “the twelve”) implies a group function of witnessing to the divine Jesus, now glorified. The human Jesus whom “the witnesses” knew before His death is now the same Jesus but under the formality of being glorified, not risen. The theme of Jesus as divine is working its way out as an interpretive key to give coherence to all that is being said. In laying down the conditions for his belief in Jesus as involving touch as well as sight (v. 25), Thomas would seem to be subtly correcting his brothers. Perhaps the implication is that Thomas, on having heard that Jesus appeared through closed doors, thought Jesus might have been without a body which could be felt, and that the other disciples had given credence to a vision, a sort of divinely-caused hologram. Jesus accepts this condition by inviting Thomas to touch as well as see, thus implicitly denying Thomas’ mistaken supposition. But Jesus does more than meet Thomas’ condition involving touch: He gives a command to Thomas to stop disbelieving but to believe—“and stop being a non-believer but [become] a believer,” thus implicitly denying the supposition underlying the condition.⁴⁸ That is to say, Thomas is asked to believe on the basis of sight, as the other disciples have.⁴⁹ The combination of “Lord” and “God” in Thomas’s reply, given the use of “Lord” in the rest of the chapter, would seem to imply that Thomas is giving assent to the continuity between the Jesus before the cross and the Jesus after the cross, while “God” would seem to imply a recognition of the divine nature underlying this continuity. In other words, Thomas is acting as a “witness” and not as an “Apostle”. But all of this interchange between Jesus and Thomas would seem to be but preliminary to the final statement of Jesus closing out the four scenes and thus, in a sense, serving as a climax to all of them: “Because you have seen me have you believed? Blessed are those who, though not seeing me, did believe”. This lapidary pronouncement by Jesus, at the end of the main part of the entire Gospel of John, would seem to need an interpretation that transcends not simply the fact of the new belief of Thomas but even the object of that belief.

⁴⁷ Since Judas is no longer a member of the group, the term “the twelve” must be intended in a *de iure*, not in a *de facto*, sense.

⁴⁸ See Brown (1970), p. 1026.

⁴⁹ “Thomas is being asked to change his attitude” (Brown [1970], p. 1026).

The phrase “though not seeing me” would seem to imply not seeing the wounds, that is, not having visible (and tangible) proof that Jesus was a victim. Those who earn the macarism of Jesus constitute a definite group: the “not-having-seen-the-wounds-but-the-having-believed” ones. This group was initiated by the beloved disciple who was designated by Jesus on the cross as the Spirit-guided son of the Spirit-guided Church, and he believed in the divine Jesus who was in the tomb without seeing His wounds or seeing Jesus at all. But in the context a Gospel which places so much emphasis on the Eucharist as the divine flesh that gives life in the context of belief (John 6), this final, thunderous pronouncement of Jesus, would seem to refer to the vast body of believers who do not see the wounds of the victim in the Eucharist but still believe in Him in His presence there as He “enters” on a Sunday “through closed doors”.

3.4. The Purpose of the Gospel

The two final verses in the chapter indicate that a choice has been made in what has actually been written in the Gospel out of all the “signs” that Jesus performed, that is, out of all the other indications of His divinity from among his words and deeds (v. 30). This suggests theological purpose, communicated on the basis of historical occurrence. The purpose given is twofold: 1) belief in the divine Sonship of Jesus the Messiah, and 2) life for believers in His name. That is, in all that Jesus taught by His words and deeds as regards His relation to His Father. The liturgical indications in the previous three scenes support a liturgical cast for the summation involved Jesus in the context of the liturgy of which He, as Word, is the one who gives intelligibility, that is, meaning. And in John 20 this means Jesus as Eucharistic victim.

3.5. Selected Reflections

As a prelude to the “close” reading given John 20 above, it was suggested that the details be colored “theological” and not merely “anecdotal”.⁵⁰ In retrospect this seem to be a valid statement, but restrictive. For it focuses on the text only from the standpoint of the believers portrayed and not on the believer who wrote it as well. The reason for the caution in favor of a theological coloring as contrasted with an anecdotal coloring ignores the reason for making the caution—that the text is full of details which are clearly anecdotal. And so it must have seemed to the one who was principally involved as an actor and as an interpreter of the action. If John the official representative of believers is considered as an actor or as an interpreter of the action in the three scenes he has chosen as the climax of his signs, it becomes clear that anecdote as well as theology must be brought into play if the chapter (and the Gospel as a whole!) is to have its full force. That is to say, the witness of the evangelist who first believes before indicating what others are to believe, must have moved personally from anecdote to theology. The impression of anecdotes is simply too

⁵⁰ Cf. note 4 above.

strong to ignore. But if this impression is acted on under the guidance of the one who believed, the anecdotes become theology. And this movement from historical fact to theological sign could only have been understood by one under the guidance of the Spirit given to the Mother of the beloved disciple, the Mother through whom the Spirit acts. Such is the effect of the Mother's Spirit on those whom He guides in the faith journey from narrative mode to theological claim.

CHAPTER 4: The Non-Priestly Prayer of John 17

Doing an exegesis of John 17 here is difficult. There are no previous commentaries to help one. The reason it is difficult is that it is a view of the Last Supper under the formality of Jesus as divine. At the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus institutes the Eucharist, but this institution has to be by Jesus as human, for the institution of the Eucharist is, with Jesus' death on the cross, is a view of Jesus as human. But in John the presence of Jesus at the Last Supper is viewed as the presence of Jesus as divine. That is why the Last Supper in John is so obviously different from the Last Supper in the Synoptics. And that is why what follows is more than usually tentative in my attempt to understand John.

4.1. The *toda* prayer in Ps 22, used for the presentation of the Eucharist in Matthew and in Hebrews, was based on Jesus as man.⁵¹ (Jesus as Son [of God] is discussed in Hebrews at 2,1-4 in connection with the Eucharist, but there is no evocation of an Old Covenant *toda* prayer. Rather, the contrast drawn is between the Eucharist and the Mosaic Law under the formality of the Divine Presence.) In the Old Testament all those who called for a *toda* were human, by the very nature of the implied subordination to God of the one calling for a *toda*. But in the New Covenant the situation changes radically, and, from the standpoint of the Old Covenant, unimaginably. For in the New Covenant the one calling for the *toda* is not only human but also divine. In John's Gospel Jesus is presented primarily as divine, just as He is presented in the Synoptics primarily as human. And in John's Gospel the Eucharist is presented (see Chapter 6 of John's Gospel), but not in a way which resembles the Synoptics. The reason for this difference would seem to be the emphasis given in John to Jesus as divine.

4.2. The final meal that Jesus shared with His disciples immediately preceding the crucifixion in John's Gospel would seem to be the same meal as the "Last Supper" and the institution of the Eucharist in the Synoptics, even though the terminology is radically different. The terminology is different because the perspective is different: in John Jesus is being presented as divine, and God as God cannot die. This radical difference was anticipated in John 6 where there is no mention of the death of Jesus in connection with the Eucharist. Rather, Jesus is the "bread" which has come down from heaven (6,41), a bread which, like the "flesh" which is also described, is a special kind of heavenly bread.

⁵¹ On the *toda* see Swetnam (2016), pp. 33-57.

4.3. The basic time frame seems indicated by the words of Jesus that “the hour has arrived”. This “hour” is His being “lifted up” and all that immediately precedes and follows it. The fact that this is the first thing mentioned by Jesus in His prayer, once His Father has been addressed, underlines its importance. This indication of time fits in well with the interpretation that the “Last Supper” is in question. It shows that Jesus is speaking prospectively.

4.4. Both the accounts of the Last Supper in the Synoptics and the account of the Last Supper in John would seem to be based on what actually happened. But the respective evangelists edited the text in accord with the perspective proper to each—the humanity of Jesus in the Synoptics and the divinity of Jesus in John. But, however one accounts for the origin of the text, the text as it stands is what counts. This view focused on the divinity of Jesus is the supposition on which the following analysis of John 17 is based.

4.5. John 17 seems to be structured in three parts:

- 1) vv. 1-5: Jesus’ Prayer for Himself;
- 2) vv. 6-19: Jesus’ Prayer for His Disciples;
- 3) vv. 20-26: Jesus’ Prayer for Those Who Will Also Believe.

4.6.1. Vv. 1-5: Jesus’ Prayer for Himself

The three elements of a *toda* are found in the opening verses of John 17, but modified in accordance to the supposition operative. Jesus is portrayed as adopting a posture of prayer by the observation that He “raised His eyes” and addressed His Father (Aspect #1: the prayer proper to the *toda* ceremony). Jesus is not presented as requesting salvation, but as giving a command to the Father to glorify Him. (The force of the imperative is tempered by the purpose of the glorification—the glorification of the Father.) The central act of the Christian *toda* is presented as Jesus’ “hour” (Aspect #2: the death of Jesus). The glorification corresponds to the salvation from death, that is, resurrection. But resurrection implies death whereas glorification does not. In view of the use of “flesh” to designate the Eucharist in John 6 the mention of the authority which Jesus has been given over “all flesh” for the purpose of conveying eternal life suggests the Eucharistic flesh of the glorified Christ’ (Aspect #3: the eating of bread). All of this in the first two verses.

4.6.2. In v. 3 a summary of the preceding two verses is given. This is the announcing of the name of Father (see Psalm 22:22[LXX] and Hebrews 2:12). Here the name is communicated indirectly by mentioning the “one true God” and “Jesus Christ”. The relationship “Father-Son” is there for the inferring. The rarity of these names in John indicates the solemnity when used here, as is fitting when a solemn liturgical ceremony is being alluded to. Here is Johannine indirection at its most evocative. The word “Christ” in addition to the word “Jesus” suggests the glorified state of Jesus. The glorified state spoken of here in anticipation as is consistent with the summary of the *toda* spoken of in terms of the glorification of

Jesus, that is, ahead of the event. The use of the word “send” with the same root in Greek as “apostle” is a reminder that Jesus was not acting on His own authority in announcing God’s name. The “work” spoken of in v. 4 seems to be the expiatory death of Jesus leading to the sanctifying liturgical *toda*, but both are alluded to here as a glorification of God in accordance with the underlying supposition of John’s gospel. V. 5 clarifies the “glorification” to which Jesus aspires—it is the restoration of the glory He had before creation. The verse forms an inclusion with v. 1, which served as an introduction to the section on Jesus’ prayer for Himself.

4.7.1. Vv. 6-19: Jesus’ Prayer for His Disciples

In this section Jesus’ disciples are not called “apostles”, just as they are not called “apostles” elsewhere in John’s Gospel. The reason for this would seem to be that the term “apostle” as understood by the apostles themselves involves witness to the resurrection, that is, it is intrinsically involved with the humanity of Jesus. (In 13,16 the term “apostle” is used indirectly with reference to the disciples. The context here is not concerned with the *raison d’être* of an apostle but with an accidental attribute of an apostle, the honor he enjoys with relation to his master.) The concept of “sending” is present through the use of the verb which has the same root as the noun “apostle”. But the “sending” is done by the Father with regard to Jesus (see v. 8 and v. 4), and the “sending” of the disciples is in function of this. Thus the “sending” is from above and is not related to the resurrection, and the underlying supposition of John’s Gospel is honored.

4.7.2. V. 6 begins the section with an mention of the “name” which is so prominent in the *toda* prayer in Psalm 22 and in the Christian use of this prayer in Hebrews 2,12. The verse asserts that the name was entrusted by God to Jesus and in turn was entrusted by him to the disciples. The verse asserts that the disciples have “kept” this “word” of God, which apparently refers to the “name” as standing for the *toda* ceremony as a whole. This *toda* “word” of God which the disciples have kept is, of course, intimately connected with the “Word” who is Jesus, for it was this Word which constitutes the “grace” of the new dispensation, as the prologue of John’s Gospel makes clear. The *toda* is thus presented here as originating with the Father. (This squares well with the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Father’s “speaking” is clearly shown to be the source of Jesus’ “speaking”.) This “word” must in some way stand over in contrast to the Mosaic Law, and represents the Father’s definitive grounding of the new dispensation. The theme of “world” is also introduced in the verse: the disciples were given to Jesus by the Father (the original context of prayer directed to the Father in v. 1 is to be maintained, as v. 11 makes clear). Thus the function of the disciples with relation to what is divine and not human is emphasized from the very first.

4.7.3. V. 7 introduces the theme of how the fruits of the *toda* are to be

understood by the disciples in a divine setting: in terms of the relation of Jesus with His Father. V. 8 repeats the assertion about the faith of the disciples (no mention of the faith of Jesus is made, of course, for to speak of faith on the part of Jesus as divine is non-sense). Just as Jesus asked His Father for Himself in the first section, so He now asks on behalf of the disciples (v. 9). The unity between Father and Jesus is emphasized in vv. 9 and 10. The “glorification” of Jesus by the disciples which Jesus speaks of at the end of v. 10 could refer to the Eucharistic Jesus as victim. In v. 11 the talk about Jesus no longer being in the world would seem to refer to His no longer having to face the challenge of death, a situation not yet realized for the disciples. The reference about Jesus “going” to the father would seem to be an indication of how Jesus’ not being in the world is to be understood—as a situation taken for granted even if He has not yet been raised up, that is, he has not yet died as man. The final part of v. 11, with its use of the phrase “holy Father”, gives a precious glimpse of the implications involving the revelation of God as “Father”: He is “Father” and thus is responsible for “keeping” the disciples just as they have “kept” His word. The adjective “holy” emphasizes that this act of caring is to be understood in the context of the unity which exists between the Father and Jesus. This implies the concrete unity of the disciples among themselves and with Jesus, that is, loyalty in faith to what He has taught as the Father’s legitimate emissary (see v. 8).

4.7.4. V. 12 supports this view of the concrete unity existing between the disciples and Jesus preserved by Jesus in return for the disciples’ faith. The unity of the disciples with Jesus and among themselves is marred by the defection of Judas, and this is explained as happening in order to fulfill what was prophesied by Scripture, not as a result of any lack of concern by Jesus. In v. 13 the “going” of Jesus to the Father is repeated; it is clear that Jesus is still in the world because of the present tense for “speak” “in the world”. A new subject is introduced: joy. Jesus here looks on the faith-trust of Himself and the disciples as giving way after its vindication to joy in His glorification. This attitude can never come from the world, for from the world comes hatred (v. 14). V. 15 stresses that this protection given the disciples by the Father does not imply removal from the world but protection from the corruption of the world with its consequent defection. Jesus reminds the disciples in v. 16 that He was never “of” the world. The attitude of the disciples does not arise from looking at the example of the human Jesus in the face of death, but from the influence of the divine Jesus which comes from His participation in a life which is not of the world. V. 17 speaks of the *toda* again as the Father’s “word”—the “truth” implies the reality of revelation, and the “sanctification” implies the process which takes place in and through the *toda*. But here in John it is God who is presented as working the sanctification, whereas in Hebrews 2,11 it was Christ the Heavenly High Priest who is pictured as working the sanctification. V. 18 speaks of the authority and legitimacy of the disciples in terms of “being sent” without using the word “apostle”: they partake of the legitimacy of Jesus just as He partakes of the legitimacy of the Father. The final verse of the section

(v. 19) would seem to refer to the “consecration” of Jesus by Himself as victim so that His disciples can share in this “consecration”.

4.8.1. Vv. 20-26: Jesus’ Prayer for Those Who Will Also Believe This third section is about the disciples who will believe through the “word” of the disciples, that is, the *toda* as source of the Church based on the apostles. But again that which is requested is not forgiveness from sin but something appropriate to the divinity of Jesus and His life with the Father: unity. V. 20 introduces the *toda* as the “word” of the disciples functioning as an instrument of belief for others in Jesus. The use of the “I ask” links this section with the previous one: Jesus makes His request of the Father for both the immediate disciples and those disciples who will believe through them. (The careful distinction between the two types of disciples suggests strongly the special nature of the former as authorized agents of the work of Jesus, that is, the priesthood but in terms not of the priesthood of Jesus—precluded by the supposition operative—but in terms of the unity between the Father and Jesus.) V. 20 specifies the unity which should result from the belief in Jesus through the *toda*. This unity should function in turn as an argument for the authority of Jesus.

4.8.2. In V. 22 “glory” is specified as coming from the Father to Jesus and transmitted to the believers. This “glory” must be the anticipated glory which will come with the glorification of Jesus and will be the source of the unity of these disciples through participation in the divine unity. V. 23 introduces the virtue of charity into the presentation and it is introduced in connection with the perfection intrinsic to the unity of the Father with Jesus and this in turn is connected with the authority of one sent by the Father. Here is indeed a vision of the Church from the standpoint not of children of Adam redeemed by the cross (that is understood), but from the standpoint of the children of Adam incorporated into eternal life at a level which transcends the human. The next verse begins with an invocation of the Father to remind the reader of the One constantly being addressed. If Hebrews 2,12 indicates in the context of Hebrews that Jesus the heavenly high priest reveals God as Father in the Christian *toda*, John 17,20-26 shows how this works itself out from the standpoint of Jesus as the Son sent by the Father to elucidate by His words and deeds what this implies. “Seeing the glory” of Jesus would seem, again, to refer to the Host in which Jesus is heavenly victim. This observation, made before, is the same glory which Jesus had as Son before the creation of the world, for in the Host is present the Jesus who was with the Father in glory before the world was created. V. 25 contrasts the knowledge that Jesus has of the Father with the ignorance of the world and the knowledge of the disciples who accept the Father-given authority of Jesus. The concluding verse, v. 26, makes explicit the manifestation of the name of the Father and the love which He has for Jesus and which should be shared by the members of the Church.

4.9. Summary

This then is Chapter 17 of John’s Gospel. It is not a “High-Priestly

Prayer”. It is a presentation of Jesus designed to prescind from His humanity, which is the basis for His sacrificial death on the cross. It is intended to go with the exaltation of Jesus on the cross which has as its climax the handing on of the Spirit to the Mother of Jesus in her role as Mother of the Church. The Spirit is the unspoken Reality who complements the story of the Father and of Jesus Christ as God that dominates Chapter 17. Just as the bloody death of Jesus on the cross was the essential complement understood at the institution of the Christian *toda* at the Last Supper as presented in the Synoptic Gospels, so the handing on of the Spirit was the essential complement understood at the prayer of Jesus in Chapter 17 of John which speaks explicitly only of the Father and Jesus as God. Chapter 17 of John in the context of the exaltation of Jesus at the crucifixion indicates what the crucifixion of Jesus as man and the attendant establishment of the Church (Christology from below, so to speak) involve on the basis of the Christian *toda*: participation in this world and the next in the life proper to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Christology from above, so to speak). Chapter 17 of John in the context of the exaltation of Jesus at the crucifixion indicates what the crucifixion of Jesus as man and the attendant establishment of the Church on the basis of the Christian *toda* really involve: participation in this world and the next in the life proper to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The revelation of the Christian name of God—Father—in the *toda* prayer of Psalm 22 cited at Hebrews 2,12 in the perspective of Jesus as Man becomes in the *toda* prayer in the perspective of Jesus as God an invitation to partake in the internal life of God.

CHAPTER 5: **The Washing of the Feet in John**

The washing of the feet of the disciples by Jesus in John 13,1-11 has been the source of a great variety of interpretations. The present discussion will center on the question why the washing is done by Jesus precisely at this point of the Gospel.

5.1 **General Background**

As a general background Exodus 40,12.30-32 can serve, indicating that a washing of the feet is part of a priest's preparation in the Old Dispensation and now, as fulfillment, in the New. This implication in John is indirect, as befits the indirect allusion to the institution of the Eucharist in John (see John, Chapter 6) as the direct portrayal of the institution of the Eucharist in the Synoptics.

5.2 **The Role of Peter**

The betrayal of Jesus by Judas is mentioned as part of the background of the washing but this would seem to be intended as a contrast with Peter in the mind of Jesus: Jesus knows that Judas will persevere to the end in his betrayal of Jesus whereas Peter will not persevere in his difference of opinion about what Jesus is about to do. Jesus is aware that what He is about to do has implications especially for Peter, and that Peter will discover what these implications are only later (v. 7). Here is the point of the foot washing. What is being done to him and the other disciples has a direct bearing on Peter, and Peter will discover what this bearing is "later". It would seem that Peter is singled out here in the foot washing because he is the leader of the Apostles. As mentioned above in discussing the difference between the Gospels of the Synoptics and the Gospel of John, the "Apostles" is a concept proper to the Synoptics because it is a concept proper to Jesus as human (Apostles witness to the Resurrection of Jesus, which implies the death of Jesus, which implies the humanity of Jesus). But in the closing episodes of the life of Jesus viewed as divine another disciple of Jesus is going to be singled out for the leadership of the Apostles: John, the Beloved Disciple. Peter will be reduced to a non-leadership role under the leadership of John, who has become the one leading the disciples to belief in the divinity of Jesus. To accept this new, subordinate role, Peter will have need of humility, and this is what the foot washing is designed to teach: if Jesus, the "Teacher and Lord" (v. 13) has the humility to do a humble act, Peter should have the humility to accept the role of subordinate to the leadership of John.

5.3 **The Role of John**

The one who is to be the head of the apostles under a new formality as disciples who are to be guided by him to learn of the divinity of Jesus, John, the beloved disciple, appears in v. 23 with the designation "whom Jesus loved". This, of course, does not mean that Jesus did not love the other disciples. But it implies that John was a source of information as

regards Jesus that was denied even to Peter. Jesus as human, Jesus as divine. Peter, John. John receives his role as Jesus is being glorified on the cross. As Jesus is about to die as human He hands on His Spirit to His mother who thereby becomes the Mother of the Church. And John, the beloved disciple, becomes her son to symbolize all believers. And John's role is explained in John 20,30-31. All of this is to repeat in a different context what was explained before in Chapters 1-3 of this interpretation.

5.4 The Role of Jesus

The entire account is written by John who portrays himself and Peter as not yet being aware of the role that John is to play in the portrayal of Jesus for the world. But Jesus is portrayed as intent on conveying His divinity to His disciples. In v. 19 this concern is presented as the motive for Jesus' prophesying to His disciples the betrayal of Judas, so that they may believe that "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι), the standard expression in the Septuagint for the self-identification of God.

5.5 The Role of Other Persons and Objects

The above presentation is designed to give the framework for what John intends to convey in all its richness. For example, Jesus use of the word "washing" in apparent reference to the installation of priests in the Old Testament. This is of great importance. It is an indirect allusion, as is much in John, to the institution of the priesthood in the New Dispensation. But in John at this point this institution, important as it is, takes second place to the example of humility of Jesus, who is teaching through His humility that in THE key aspect of John's Gospel Peter, the appointed leader of the Apostles, must take second place: the teaching of His divinity by His beloved disciple. This beloved disciple has the role of representing all of those who accept the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the one to whom Jesus handed on His Spirit. And it is this Spirit who is to teach all believers in the Church, that Jesus is divine. The washing of the feet of the disciples in John is ordered indirectly but through the persons involved, to the belief of those whom John represents "that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and that you, believing, may have life in His name" (John 20,30-31).

CHAPTER 6: **The Meaning of Ἰουδαῖος in John**

The word Ἰουδαῖος appears dozens of times in the Gospel of John. More than in the other three Gospels combined. In non-biblical usage the word can mean “Jew”, referring to the people at the time of Jesus who were the heirs of the blessing given to Abraham by God some eighteen centuries before, were living under the dictates of the Mosaic Law, and were also designated by a variety of geographical terms (e.g., “Galileans” for Jews living in Galilee). Or it can mean “Judean”, referring to the persons living in the area in and around Jerusalem who were heirs to the promise given to Abraham (and therefore “Jews”) but also inhabitants of Judea. How does John, the author of the Fourth Gospel and the one charged by Jesus with making His divine identity known, handle these two public meanings? What follows is an attempt to give a plausible meaning of Ἰουδαῖος as John wished it to be understood in his Gospel. But first the following supposition to what follows:

To Be Noted about the Catholic Reading of Scripture in the Liturgy:

“The message of the liturgy in proclaiming the passion narratives in full is to enable the assembly to see vividly the love of Christ for each person, despite their sins, a love that even death could not vanquish. The crimes during the Passion of Christ cannot be attributed indiscriminately to all Jews at that time, nor to Jews today. The Jewish people should not be referred to as though rejected or cursed, as if this view followed from Scripture. The Church ever keeps in mind that Jesus, his mother Mary and the Apostles all were Jewish. As the Church has always held, Christ freely suffered his passion and death because of the sins of all that all might be saved.”

—Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

The above note is by the Bishops’ Committee of the United States of America, but it could easily have been written by any other group of bishops of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not cited here to deny that anti-Semitism in the Roman Catholic Church and elsewhere based on the New Testament Scripture of John has existed or will exist; it is written to state that such anti-Semitism is wrong and has no basis in the Gospel.

6.1 John’s Understanding of Ἰουδαῖος

John 11,7-8 reads: “Then, after this, he [Jesus] says to His disciples. ‘Let us go again to Judea.’ His disciples say to Him, ‘Rabbi, just now the Judeans were trying to stone you. And you are going back there?’ The word here translated as “Judeans” is Ἰουδαῖοι. Many versions of the Greek translate the word “Jews”. To this translator this shows a basic misunderstanding of what John understands by the words “Judeans” and “Jews”, a misunderstanding that is based on a false understanding of “Jews” in the Fourth Gospel. For John a Jew is one who has accepted Jesus as the Christ, or who is at least open to accepting Him as such. Such

a Jew can live anywhere, in Judea or outside of Judea. In contrast, a Judean for John is a Jew who lives in Judea and who opposes Jesus. The Jews who control the Sanhedrin and the Jews who control the Temple are such. This was the situation at the time of Jesus. The Jews who were Judeans succeeded in using their influence with the controlling power in Judea, the Romans, to have Jesus put to death. But this was the situation also when John wrote his Gospel after the death of Jesus. He wrote at a time before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. The Judean Jews still controlled the Temple and the Sanhedrin. John still uses the terminology of the time of Jesus. **FOR JOHN, IN HIS GOSPEL, A NON-JUDEAN JEW AS SUCH WAS ONE WHO WAS OPEN TO HIS MESSAGE OF THE DIVINITY OF JESUS, WHEREAS A JUDEAN JEW WAS NOT.** After the glorification of the Jesus as divine on the cross (= the death of Jesus as human), John took the mother of Jesus to Ephesus, out of reach of the Judeans. He left his Gospel to speak to all Jews and to all Judeans who would be willing to throw off the prejudices of Judeans and become the unprejudiced Jews from whom Jesus had selected His disciples/Apostles. The apostolate of Peter and the Apostles as such as a result of the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke is more obvious than the result of the absent John and his Gospel. And this explains why there is such confusion over the meaning of Ἰουδαῖος in John's Gospel. John's mission can be achieved only in the context of the Church to which He as divine handed over the Spirit, of which His Mother is its Mother. It is only in the context of the Church founded by Jesus on the Rock of Peter and through the agency of Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit with Mary as its Mother that the mission of John the Beloved Disciple can be realized. All Jews as such are invited to join this New Dispensation, the Dispensation that brings the Old Dispensation to fulfillment.

6.2 How then should John's understanding of Ἰουδαῖος be translated in John's Gospel? It should be translated as "Jew" or "Judean" according to the particular context. And if the above suggestions are taken seriously, the result will be a more profound understanding of John's Gospel and of the viewpoints of its participants.

CHAPTER 7: **The Ending of the Gospel in John**

There are a number of challenges in the ending of John's Gospel (Chapter 21). But there would seem to be no reason for not assigning it in its entirety to John, the Beloved Disciple. Like all the Gospels, and everything else in Inspired Scripture, one should be prepared to walk in and take part, and be prepared for the reality—if one is a believer—that the Gospel as understood will become a part of one's life (see Item #32 of this website).

7.1 **The Scene**

Jesus reveals Himself to some of His Disciples (not Apostles, which would be an appropriate name for them in any of the first three Gospels). Thus what follows is about Jesus as divine. As divine he “reveals Himself” (v. 1), that is, as divine it is His part to take the initiative. He does this by the Sea of Tiberias, far away from Judea. But Simon Peter is listed as the first among these Disciples (v. 2). John, however, a son of Zebedee, is also present (v. 2). The sea symbolizes the turbulence of life which the Disciples experience. The dry land on which Jesus stands symbolizes the solidity of the life He now lives as divine. The fish that are caught symbolize the faithful who respond to the preaching of the Disciples. No matter how many there are, the net that holds them together will not break if the Disciples follow the directions of Jesus. The number 153 as the number of the fish caught (v. 11) has been interpreted in various ways. An interpretation that suggests itself to me is one based on the fact that no further knowledge is needed except the number itself: no matter how many the faithful in the net, they should be treated as individuals with individual attention. The scene closes with Jesus eating, that is, as human (vv. 13-14).

7.2 **Jesus and Peter**

All eat breakfast; a unity under Peter and thus under Jesus is presumed (v. 15). Jesus then asks Peter three times if he loves Him, thus informing Peter indirectly that the questioning is designed to enable Peter to atone for his denials in the courtyard (John 18,15-18). There is a variety of synonyms used to alert the reader to the fact that two words for “love” are being used, ἀγαπάω (“willed love”) and φιλέω (“emotional love”). Jesus uses “willed love” for the first two questions to Peter, and “emotional love” for the third and final question. Peter uses “emotional love” for all three of his answers. Thus Peter voluntarily agrees that his love for Jesus is really emotional, and this is the reason why it did not measure up to what was demanded of Peter in the courtyard. Even so, Peter's pastoral role is reaffirmed by Jesus, And his loyalty to Jesus in his death is prophesied (vv. 18-19).

7.3 Peter and John

With his death prophesied by Jesus, Peter is curious about the fate of John. Jesus says that John is to remain in life “until I come”. The reference seems to be to Jesus as divine and His coming at the destruction of Jerusalem. His will is that John remain in life to take care of the mother of Jesus, a task given him by Jesus on the cross as symbol of all believers. Thus the subordinate role of Peter to John, important as it is in itself, is re-affirmed.

7.4 John and His Disciples

The Gospel concludes with a reference by John to himself as author of the Gospel and to himself as a symbol of the special group of followers of Jesus as Disciples witnessing as a group to what John as an individual has written and his goal in writing it (John 20,30-31). Thus John’s role is witnessed to by John himself. The final verse is a comment by John on the difficulty of choosing for his Gospel that which was relevant to the task assigned him by Jesus, He states that not all that Jesus said and did has been witnessed to by his Gospel, but he thereby implies that what was necessary for what Jesus assigned to him has.

CHAPTER 8: **St. John the Baptist and The Beloved Disciple**

The final verse of the Gospel written by The Beloved Disciple—John 21,25—states that there were many other things that Jesus did which the author of the preceding Gospel did not include in his presentation of the life and work of Jesus. The implication is that what is written is significant for what the author, The Beloved Disciple, intended as the message of his Gospel.

8.1 **St. John the Baptist in the Gospel of The Beloved Disciple.**

What is particularly striking about St. John the Baptist in the Gospel of The Beloved Disciple is the fact that he is mentioned so seldom. Aside from a passing mention of him in Chapter 5, Verse 33, mention of him is limited to Chapter 1. And what mention of John there is has to do with the identity of the person to whom John is witnessing (Chapter 1,6-8.15-19-34). And this constant witness to the identity of the One witnessed to by John ends in a strong affirmation of the divinity of Christ: “And I have seen and I have testified that He is the Son of God” (Chapter 1,34). This emphatic statement is made by him to Judeans, that is, to priests and Levites sent from Jerusalem to interrogate him.

8.2 The effect of the above mentions of John the Baptist in the Gospel of The Beloved Disciple is that the mission given to the Beloved Disciple by Jesus on the cross dovetails precisely with the mission given the Baptist. The Beloved Disciple has made use of the name “John” to emphasize the continuity of the message authorized by God in calling John the Baptist to witness (Chapter 1, Verse 33) and by calling The Beloved Disciple to witness (Chapter 20, Verses 30-31). Thus the confrontation with the “Judeans” begins (Chapter 1, Verse 19) and thus it continues through the entire Gospel of The Beloved Disciple.

8.3 The fact that the above statement in 8.2 can be made is independent affirmation that the Gospel of The Beloved Disciple is truly by John the Evangelist and truly about the divinity of Jesus Christ. The author of the Fourth Gospel was referred to above as “John” based on other evidence that the Apostle John was the author and is The Beloved Disciple (see above, pp. 14-15, “The Identity of the Beloved Disciple” (#1.2.3). The argument based on the apparent continuity between the two Johns given in this chapter is, as far as this writer can determine, yet another argument that The Beloved Disciple is John. **AND THE ONE MAKING THE ARGUMENT THAT THE SECOND JOHN IN THE PAIRING IS THE BELOVED DISCIPLE IS THE BELOVED DISCIPLE HIMSELF!**

CHAPTER 9: **John 6 and Belief in Divine Presence**

In Chapter 2 above (**The Prologue of the Gospel of John**, p. 17) I have laid out what seems to me one of the major aspects of the Prologue, the emphasis on the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ in fulfillment of the symbolic presence of God for the Jews of the Old Testament, in particular, for the people of the Exodus. In the present chapter I would like to present the way John the Beloved Disciple (who is John the Apostle in the context of the Synoptics, where Jesus is viewed primarily as human) views the Eucharist in his Gospel in which Jesus is viewed primarily as divine. This presentation is particularly relevant to Catholics today, for many of them (well over half in the United States) do not believe that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist. This was true also, though we are not informed of any percentage, of many followers of Jesus contemporary with Him. The present writer is not capable of giving the grace of faith in the Real Presence, but he is capable of pointing out the need to appeal for this grace to One who is.

9.1. **The Multiplication of the Loaves**

The chapter begins with a multiplication of loaves of bread. Those who read/hear the passage are well aware of the Eucharist and thus realize how the multiplication points in this direction. This realization is enhanced by the fact that in Chapter 2 of the Gospel Jesus works a miracle involving wine. The pairing of bread and wine is an unmistakable evocation of the Eucharist. The mention of the Passover in 6,4 brings to mind in the reader the feast that commemorates the liberation from Egypt and the lamb that is the prefiguration of Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb (see John 1,29 and the prophetic words of John the Baptist). The “lad” of 6,9 is probably an allusion to Israel as a preliminary to the full development that is Christianity. The “lad” has five loaves and two fish that match his symbolism of Israel as an incomplete body (to be fulfilled in the Mystical Body of Christ) with their symbolism of the Old Testament as the five books of Law and their completion in the Prophets and the Wisdom Literature, to be brought to fulfillment in the New Testament that is centered on the Eucharist. The twelve baskets that remain are the symbol of the twelve apostles who replace the twelve tribes of Israel (see 6,70-71).

9.2. **Jesus Walks on the Sea**

What follows next is a brief account of Jesus walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee in a storm. The brief passage is centered on the words “I

am” of 6,20, a sign of the divinity of Jesus (see John 8,24.58; 13,19; 18,6) alluding to Exodus 3,14. It is a designation quite fitting for a Gospel that centers on Jesus as divine and is appropriate for the immediate context that describes the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New, each of which is centered in a way proper to each on Jesus Christ. Further, in this particular context the boat is a symbol of the Church which is beset by anxiety-breeding fear without the felt presence of her Founder. But the disciples do not grasp the significance of the self-identification of Jesus because the decisive events of the Cross have not as yet occurred.

9.3. **The Bread from Heaven**

There follows a presentation of the Eucharist as “bread from heaven”, a fulfillment of the foreshadowing of the manna given by God to the people of the Exodus (6,22-51). The entire passage is rich in evocations of the past and future in the ministry of Jesus, the “Son of man” “on whom God has set His seal” (6,27). But nothing is definitive for the faithful involved, for the great teachings of the Cross have not as yet taken place.

9.4. **The Body and Blood of Christ**

Jesus then goes on to enunciate the core mystery of the Bread from Heaven: it is the Body and Blood of Christ that leads those who believe this and act on it to eternal life (6,52-65).

9.5 **The Believers and Non-Believers**

The chapter ends (6,66-71) with the remark that “many” of the disciples of Jesus no longer followed him and contrasts their lack of faith with the faith of Peter and the Apostles who remain with Jesus. Jesus contrasts their fidelity with the betrayal of Simon Iscariot, the traitor.

9.6 **Summary**

Chapter 6 of John gives a clear picture of the confusion that attended the ministry of Jesus as regards His preaching of the Eucharist before the enormous changes that marked the events of the Crucifixion in John. For in John, as explained above in Chapter 1, the primary emphasis in presenting the Crucifixion of Jesus is not on the death of Jesus but on His handing on of the Spirit to His mother (John 19,30). The Apostle John thereby becomes the symbol of all those who believe for he has been declared the mother’s “son” (John 19,27). Only by being an active member of the Church of which the mother of Jesus is its mother will the believer have the insight needed to believe in the Eucharist as he or she should. The Crucifixion of Jesus in the Synoptics treats Jesus as human and with His death as human the redemption of the negative effects of sin

are removed. In the Crucifixion of Jesus as divine the gift needed for the positive living of belief in the divinity of Jesus is given in the “handing on” of the Spirit by Jesus to His mother, and His designation of “the Beloved Disciple”—John—as the beneficiary of this gift through faith in the Church of which the mother of Jesus has become the “mother”, that is, the conveyor of the Spirit. It is because of this gift of the Spirit that John could recognize that the earthly Jesus was also divine, as explained above in Chapter 3 in the treatment of the “theological anecdotes” set forth in the visit of Peter and Paul to the empty tomb. And it is because of this gift of the Spirit that John can assert the divinity of Jesus in the Eucharist, as explained in Chapter 1 on the fulfillment of the symbolic presence of God by the Real Presence of the Son in the Eucharist as set forth in the Prologue. The Fourth Gospel is a masterpiece of the conveyance of the truth of the divinity of Jesus both in His life on earth and in His life in the Eucharist, and it is the “handing on of the Spirit” to the mother of Jesus at the Crucifixion that makes this conveyance of truth possible. Those who wish to renew or deepen their faith in the divine Jesus in the Eucharist should deepen their faith in the Church of which the mother of Jesus is the mother, because the Church IS Jesus in His Mystical Body.

9.7 A Review of Chapter 20 and Its Relevance for Chapter 6

John the Beloved Disciple wrote Chapter 6 with the full awareness that at the time he was describing the “handing on the Spirit” to the mother of Jesus had not taken place, along with the attendant naming of himself as the mother’s adopted “son” with the implications of his sharing in the Spirit. In Chapter 6 Peter is accordingly given the role of speaking for the followers of Jesus who accept the words of Jesus as regards His real presence in the Manna from heaven. There is no implication of the role of the mother of Jesus and her role as the one who had been “handed on the Spirit” because the handing on of the Spirit had not yet taken place.

In Chapter 20 the handing on of the Spirit had taken place, and John the beneficiary of this handing on is writing. He portrays himself as coming to the awareness of the divinity of Jesus through the arrangement of the burial cloths in the empty tomb. This in contrast to Peter, who remained in the dark about this basic truth because his charisma as apostle had to do with the humanity of Jesus. John then writes that Mary Magdalene at first thought Jesus was the gardener, a subtle allusion to the Garden of Eden and to the fact that with the recognition of the divinity of Jesus a new epoch for mankind had begun.

Jesus then identifies Himself to Mary Magdalene and cautions her against “touching” Him, implying that His humanity has not disappeared despite His being divine. He says that He is about to “ascend” to His

Father who is also her Father but in a different way. He then tells her to tell His disciples of this ascent to the Father with the implication that the ascent in question is to take place immediately, putting it in a category different from the ascension that took place forty days later. Mary Magdalene acts as a divinely appointed witness of the resurrection, thus ending the necessity of having two male witnesses. Thus the Mosaic Law by divine act is terminated and a new divinely-willed dispensation takes place for the meeting of Jesus with His disciples.

That meeting takes place later the same day, a Sunday, which, by implication becomes the new principal day of worship in the week, replacing the Jewish Sabbath. The doors are locked out of fear of the Judaeans (not Jews), and the entrance of Jesus despite the locked doors implies that His body is not an earthly one. Jesus shows His wounds to the disciples implying that He is a victim. Thus the pairing Priest-Victim is presented to the disciples and to the reader, for the visit of Mary Magdalene is presupposed. The divine Jesus as presider at the Eucharist is at the side of His Father. As victim He remains on earth. As victim He gives His disciples the power to forgive sins, but the giving is anchored in His relation to His Father, not in the shedding of His blood as human, which is the basis for the remission of sins in Jewish Law. (The latter view is, of course, the reason why Jesus' death was the source of forgiveness when Jesus was viewed as human, that is, as subject to death.)

What emerges from this powerful scene in John 20 is a miniature presentation of the Church from the standpoint of Christ's divinity, with Father-Son-Spirit functioning as responsible for the Eucharist and for Penance, with the faithful alluded to by Jesus in His comments to Thomas. Thomas was missing on the first Sunday, but he was given the power of forgiving sins even though he was not present. We know this by implication, for it was no more mentioned; he received it as a member of the group to which as such it was given. Thomas comes to believe in the divinity of Jesus because he has seen Jesus. But belief is possible, says Jesus, also for those who have not seen Jesus. Where do these persons get the power to believe rooted in something else? Here the persons of the mother of Jesus and her adopted son are thrust into the reader's view by the power of the Spirit that has been given to them, as He has been given to the disciples for their role as disciples of Jesus in His Church.

Does all of the above seem to be an exercise in reading things into the text? Only if one refuses to recognize the power of the Spirit "handed on" to the mother of Jesus and to those who wish to have her as their adopted mother, thus acting on the fact that she, as mother, was given a symbolic son. **(September 17, 2020)**

CHAPTER 10: **John 8 and Legitimacy**

Perhaps at this point it would not be inappropriate to review some presuppositions about the present work on the Fourth Gospel. The present chapters are not a commentary on the Fourth Gospel. They are an “interpretation”. That is, they are essays on different aspects of the Gospel that give my views on what the text seems to be saying so that a plausible understanding of the text results. This is done in the hope that someone more knowledgeable about the Fourth Gospel than I can put the plausible interpretations together so that a genuine commentary results and a more plausible understanding of the Fourth Gospel in commentary form emerges. I would not take it amiss if the one consulting when I have written on this website about John should say that all I that I have written, plausible as it is, is wide of the mark, PROVIDED that what he or she substitutes is more plausible than what I have written. Arriving at truth, even Biblical truth, is a fraught enterprise, and no one realizes this more than the present writer.

The present chapter will take Chapter 8 of the Fourth Gospel and look at it from the standpoint of legitimacy. As a prelude it is important to recall that the divisions of the biblical text, the Fourth Gospel included, into chapters was not part of its original composition, but was introduced centuries after it was written along with the designation of individual verses in order to facilitate referencing. The division was done competently, so that the present division often can be adduced to reflect the mind of the original author. But there are exceptions. In the case of John 1 the prologue seems to stop at verse 18, and what follows is better separated from it thematically. Much of course depends on how the Gospel of John is considered in its structure. A future chapter of this Item will pay attention to this important aspect that has such an important bearing on the meaning of the work.

10.1 **The Woman Taken in Adultery**

The theme of Chapter 8 seems to center on legitimacy. And it involves the opposition between the Judeans and the Galileans. The beginning of this opposition in the context of John 8, and hence of the theme of legitimacy, seems to begin at John 7,45 and is an example of an errant division of the text as discussed above. The coherent section seems to be 7,45 — 8,11, which serves as an introduction to the theme of legitimacy. 7,52 has the introduction that seems to be based on the Judean-Galilean contrast and introduces all that follows up to 8,59. Once put into this context the incident involving the woman takes on a certain clarity. The writing of Jesus on the ground seems to allude to Jeremiah 17,13, where there is a warning that those who forsake the Lord “shall be written on the earth” because they have rejected “the fountain of living water”. In John 7,38 Jesus has been identified as the source of “living water”. Thus the gesture of Jesus in writing is an implicit condemnation of those who reject Him, for He is the source of legitimacy. The account of the woman

taken in adultery ends in a very nuanced way. The woman herself is clearly taken as a sinner, but she is obviously not primarily responsible for her sins. The scribes and Pharisees who brought her to Jesus emerge as the ones primarily responsible. The woman would seem to be a symbol of the Temple in Jerusalem, the heart of Judean opposition to the Galilean Jesus. (Jesus was teaching in the Temple when the woman was brought to Him. [John 8,2]). The Temple is not the source of legitimate support for Jesus as it should be, but the scribes and Pharisees, not the institution of the Temple, are the ones primarily responsible for this reprehensible attitude.

10.2 Jesus the Light of the World

Jesus, still pictured as teaching in the Temple (John 8,21-30), identifies Himself as the light of the world who enables men to “walk in the light of life” (John 8,12). That is, He gives meaning to life. Intellect before will. Knowledge before choice. The Pharisees accuse Him of bearing false witness (John 8,13). In reply Jesus appeals to His self-knowledge and, implicitly, His divinity and unique relation to His Father (John 8,18-19). Jesus is speaking specifically in the treasury of the Temple, near where the lighting of lamps takes place. Jesus considers Himself to be the replacement of the Temple (John 2,19-22). In speaking of judgment Jesus appeals to the Father with whom He is united (John 2,15-16). In so doing Jesus implicitly uses His divine status to say that it is intrinsically related to the source of legitimacy, His Father, just as in earthly genealogy it is the father who gives legitimacy to the son.

10.3 Jesus Alludes to His Being “Lifted Up”

Jesus then speaks of His being “lifted up” (John 8,28), an obvious allusion to His being “lifted up” on the cross. This is taken as a reference to His death, which it is, but only secondarily. The primary reference is to His being revealed as divine, through His “handing on” of the Spirit to His mother, as explained earlier in Chapter 1 above. In the present passage (John 8,21-30), Jesus centers His discourse on two phrases: “I am” in John 8,24,28) and “Son of man” (John 8,28). “Son of man”, much discussed of course, seems to me to refer to a human being acting with some kind of delegation from above, and here refers to Jesus in His humanity which is obvious as He is “lifted up” on the cross at His crucifixion. “I am” is a standard reference to the divinity in the Old Testament and in the New, and refers to the identity of Jesus that becomes known to persons of faith at His being “lifted up”: His divinity. The result of this teaching of Jesus: Many believed in Him” (John 8,30).

10.4 Jesus and Abraham

The rest of the chapter (John 8,31-59) is devoted to a discussion of Abraham, the “father” of all Jews and hence the one bestowing legitimacy.

The section begins with two minor cruces. John 8,31 reads: “Jesus was speaking to Ἰουδαίου πεπιστευκότας in him”. The context is decisive in deciding the meaning of these two words. Jesus is still

teaching in the Temple. It is not a feast day, that would bring Jews from all parts of the area to Him. Further, in John 8,37 the persons He is addressing are said to seek to kill him. Therefore the first crux should be translated advantageously “Judeans”, Jews who share the regional animosity towards Him. The second word is a perfect participle that, in a different context, would advantageously be translated “who have believed in Him”. But again this goes against the context of verse 37. Hence it is better translated as a pluperfect: “who had believed in Him” (sc., but believe in Him no longer). This use of the perfect participle in a pluperfect sense is not unknown in New Testament Greek, as for example in Mark 5,15.⁵² It is important to clarify these cruces, for the verse they are in is thematic for all that follows.

In the confrontation that follows a number of truths emerge:

1) A true descendant of Abraham is one who has trust in God as Abraham did in Genesis 22,1-18. The Judean Jews who oppose Jesus are sons of the demon. Jesus is Son of the Father and parallel to Isaac whom Abraham, his father, loved, If the Judean Jews were really sons of God as they claim they would parallel Abraham’s love of Isaac with love of Jesus, the Father’s Son. The Judean Jews do not believe Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God because their father is not God but the demon who hates truth just as the Judean Jews hate what Jesus says (John 8,31-47).

2) Abraham’s offering his son Isaac as a holocaust was rewarded with the reception of Isaac back alive (Genesis 22,1-8). This was a prefiguration (a “parable” according to the Epistle to the Hebrews 11,19) of God offering His Son as a holocaust and receiving Him back at the resurrection. The reception of Isaac back alive in Genesis 22 was the reward for Abraham’s faith in God, but it left hanging the promise to Abraham that in his offspring, Isaac, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (see Genesis 22,18; Galatians 3,16). Jesus tells the Judeans that anyone who keeps the word of Jesus will never die and they challenge Jesus with the assertion that their father, Abraham, as well as the prophets, died. And they demand to know who Jesus really is (John 8,51-53). Jesus asserts that Abraham rejoiced “to see My day”, that is, Jesus was symbolized by Isaac and what He was to achieve in His glorification by the Father (John 8,54) was what Isaac failed to achieve: the blessing of all the nations of the earth. And Jesus uses the expression “I am” which is the classic identification of God (John 8,58; see John 6,20 where the text says “I am”). This expression, of course, goes back to Exodus 3,13-15, where Moses asks God whom should he name as the one who sent him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God replies “I am” sent me to you. And God adds: “This my name forever”. When I was studying Thomistic natural theology the professor used this text to illustrate the Thomistic view that God’s essence is to exist: there is no real distinction between

⁵² See Swetnam (1980).

God's essence and His existence. But this interpretation, true as it is in itself, does not seem appropriate for the context of the Bible, where God is the God of covenants⁵³ who always is the same as regards the covenants He has made: He is always who He was when He made the covenant. If this is true of the Father it is true of the Son, as Jesus implicitly asserts when He applies the words to Himself. And this faithfulness of Jesus as divine is thus parallel to the faithfulness of Jesus as human, His having πίστις even as divine explains His having πίστις even as human after the event of His self-giving in death and His raising of Himself as divine after His death as human.

10.5 Summary

The present chapter deals with legitimacy, legitimacy related to the Temple. The Temple was the symbolic presence of God to His people under the Old Law. But it was about to be replaced by the Real Presence of God to His people in the Person of Jesus, whose being “lifted up” at the crucifixion and being revealed as divine accompanied His “handing on” of the Spirit to His mother and thus establishing the New Law. John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, writes of legitimacy from his role as one of those who have participated in the Spirit because of his leadership in showing to the disciples of Jesus that Jesus is divine. In arguing with those who are responsible for the errancy of the Temple—Pharisees and scribes—He maintains His own legitimacy as the new Isaac, designated by God to be the agent of blessing of all nations by completing the sacrifice left incomplete by the return of the first Isaac to his father Abraham, but above all by appealing to His divinity as Son of the divine Father. **(October 9, 2020)**

⁵³ See Hahn (2009).

CHAPTER 11: **An Outline of the Gospel of John**

11.1. Introduction. When writing the preceding 10 chapters of this interpretation of the Gospel of John I was thinking of the text in terms of chapter and verse. This was hardly a surprising supposition, given the conventional habits of thinking and writing about the Bible in today's world and in centuries past. When I began thinking of writing Chapter 11 devoted to an outline of this Gospel I suddenly began thinking that this was not the way John would have approached an outline of his work. That is, John did not structure his Gospel (nor did the other evangelists) in terms of chapter and verse. As I mulled over this idea it seemed more and more an obvious truth. Hence what follows is an outline of the Gospel of John the way I think of the way John must have thought of it: not in terms of chapter and verse but in terms which emerge from the text itself. And, as I see the text, this meant the ideas that are fundamental to his Gospel, ideas that I have presented in the previous chapters. Naturally in my thinking I regard what I have written and will continue to write in terms of plausibility, not proof. But plausibility does not necessarily rule out proof. It simply means that the basis for the assertion of proof is not present, but does not rule out the possibility that some day it may well appear. And, of course, plausibility does not rule out the possibility of error. In what follows the numbers of chapters will be inserted in order to let the reader know where he/she is in terms of the current division of the text. What I have written in Chapters 1-10 above will be presumed to be valid in the terms in which they were written, that is, as plausibly referring to the mind of the author of the Gospel, St. John, and will be referred to as such. The Greek text used is that of *The Greek New Testament*. Fourth Revised Edition. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / United Bible Societies. Stuttgart 2010).

The "outline" will be done in two parts. Part I will be an outline in detail. Part II will be an interpretation of the same outline, plus some suggestions for a new interpretation of the Gospel of John.

Part I: A Summary of the Contents of the First Eleven Chapters

11.2.1. Chapter 1. The first part of John's Gospel is a statement without an indication of place. The author (John) is presumed to be speaking. He imitates the beginning of the Book of Genesis, centering the creation of a new world through the "Word" (understood as Jesus Christ). The believing readers are aware that the author, John, is the Apostle John, but viewed under a different formality. In the Gospel of John, John is "the beloved Disciple" chosen by Jesus to portray Jesus as divine, not as human. In the former capacity John is a leader of the Disciples chosen by

Jesus. These same Disciples, when viewed under the leadership of the Apostle Peter, are Apostles and witness to the Resurrection of Jesus. That is to say, they are portrayed as viewing Jesus as human. In presenting Jesus as the (divine) Word John is thus indicating that he is acting as the Beloved Disciple, not as an Apostle. The new world he envisions as being created is centered in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, not the symbolic Presence in the Temple. Thus the New Dispensation replaces the Old. Jesus Christ is portrayed as Light, and is presented in John's Gospel as being opposed by Darkness, a Darkness that is unable to win out in the conflict. The terminology Light-Darkness is repeated in order to make the point that Jesus Christ illumines not only the Old and New Dispensations of this world but the Trinity of which the Word is a part. John the Baptist is portrayed as a witness to this Light sent by God in order to distinguish him from the John who is sent by God's only Son, the Word.

This initial statement is designed to sum up much of what is to come in the Gospel of John. Inasmuch as the Gospel is about Jesus as divine there is no account of His earthly birth, as in Matthew and Luke. The key verse, 1,14, is usually interpreted as referring to the Word's becoming incarnate. But in view of the immediate and general context it would seem preferable to see it as referring to the Word's becoming Eucharistic flesh. The preceding context prepares the way for this by stating that becoming a Christian is analogous to Christ's becoming Eucharistic flesh: it was a result of a special act of God and not through the normal process of human birth. John the Baptist is again cited to indicate that all of this is based on the divinity of Jesus, a truth that John prepares the way for by asserting it. And the statement ends by indicating that this real presence of Christ as divine in the Eucharist is the fulfillment of the symbolic presence of God in the Mosaic Law. The statement ends with an assertion that the only begotten Son has made the Father, as Father, known. (See Chapter 2 above for a fuller treatment of this "statement" by John, the Beloved Disciple.)

After this "statement" that sets the tone for the entire Gospel, the Beloved Disciple John takes the reader to "Bethany, beyond the Jordan", where John the Baptist was baptizing. But the essential point of this lengthy introduction to John the Baptist (as opposed to the first two mentions of him in the introductory "statement", which were inserted to distinguish him from the John who was writing the Gospel) is the explicitation of the "darkness" mentioned in the "statement": the "Judeans" sent "priests and Levites" from Jerusalem to interrogate John. (See above, Chapter 6.) John assures them that he whom he witnesses to is greater than himself. And the next day John the Baptist brings in the Holy Spirit, Whom John saw descending on Jesus at the moment of Jesus' baptism by John "and remain". This remark about the "remaining of the Spirit" on Jesus is important because of the statement that when Jesus is about to die as human He "handed on" the Spirit. (See above, Chapter 1, #1.2.2). John the Baptist uses the phrase "Lamb of God" to refer to Jesus. This is part of the mission of John the Baptist, to reveal the identity of Jesus to those willing to accept his testimony. No more is said of the

“priests and Levites” sent from Jerusalem but the supposition (that is confirmed by the subsequent hostility of officials from Jerusalem) is that they did not accept the testimony given them by John. John the Beloved Disciple concludes this passage by quoting John the Baptist as saying that Jesus was “the son of God”. This phrase (“the son of God”) was in common usage to indicate a religiously remarkable person. But as used for the believing Christian who had been made aware of the special meaning of the phrase as regards Jesus Christ, this use at the beginning of John the Baptist’s testimony can be seen as prophetic.

On the following day John the Baptist uses the phrase “Lamb of God” (an indirect reference to the humanity of Jesus) to bring two disciples to Jesus, Andrew and Simon Peter, who receives the name “Cephas” from Jesus, but without the explanation that Cephas is going to be the “Rock” on which Jesus’ Church is to be founded. For that “Rock” is in the context of Peter as head of the Apostles, which implies the humanity of Jesus.

Again, “on the next day”, Jesus goes to Galilee and acquires two more disciples, Philip and Nathanael. Philip tells Nathanael about Jesus using the designation “son of Joseph” and links Jesus to Nazareth. Nathanael calls Jesus “son of God” to indicate that Jesus is an extraordinarily blessed person. Jesus replies by using the title “Son of man”, to indicate His humanity which will have a special link to heaven. He prophesizes that Nathanael will see even greater indications of Jesus’ link to heaven.

11.2.2. Chapter 2. On the third day after meeting Nathanael Jesus and His disciples go to Cana where they meet the mother of Jesus. The fact that she is there as if by right suggests a symbolic role for her when juxtaposed with the only other mention of her in the Gospel, at the foot of the cross as the receptor of the Spirit Who is to be “handed on” to John the Beloved Disciple who is a symbol of all believers. (See Item #1.2.2 for the symbolic identities of the mother of Jesus.) At this wedding feast Jesus changes water into a wine, a symbol of the Eucharist to come This is the first of the “signs” He did.

From the wedding feast Jesus went to Capernaum with His mother and His “brethren”, that is, relatives.

From Capernaum Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. There He cleanses the Temple and speaks of His body as a temple and prophesizes His rising from the dead in confrontation with the local Judeans.

11.2.3. Chapter 3. Then comes the visit from Nicodemus who was probably a member of the Sanhedrin. Jesus explains at length the role of the Spirit in His being sent by God, that is, His Father.

From Jerusalem to Judea (assuming that Jerusalem is neither of Judea or Galilee) with His disciples. And He baptizes, probably through His disciples. This activity prompts John the Baptist to acknowledge the superiority of Jesus over himself because of Jesus’ relation as Son to God His Father.

At the end of Chapter 3, in verses 32 to 36. is another “statement” similar in tone to the prologue, The “statement” contrasts the ministry of John the Baptist, which is of earthly origin, and the ministry of Jesus, which is of heavenly origin. The faith that comes from belief in the ministry of Jesus must also include action based on this faith.

11.2.4. Chapter 4. When word was out that Jesus was making more disciples than John, Jesus went to Galilee, on the way stopping at Samaria. There, while alone at Jacob’s well, He meets a woman of Samaria and through her makes converts because they believe He is the savior of the world. Jesus after two days returns to Galilee. At Capernaum He heals an official’s son.

11.2.5. Chapter 5. There is another feast requiring the presence of Jewish men in Jerusalem and Jesus again goes up to that city. Jesus heals a crippled man at the pool by the Sheep Gate. He does this on a Sabbath day and thus earns the persecution of the local Judeans. But Jesus was also calling God His Father, thus making Himself equal to God, and for this additional reason the Judeans sought to kill Him. Jesus defends His relation to the Father and says that all who believe in Jesus and His being sent by the Father have eternal life. Jesus further claims that the dead will come forth from the tombs and have life because of Him and His power of judgment given Him by the Father.

11.2.6. Chapter 6. This section of John’s Gospel picks up a theme that was prominent in the prologue: the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. (See above, Chapter 9, “John 6 and Belief in Divine Presence”, p. 53 of this Item.) A number of events in the ministry of Jesus are presented as background for the presentation by Jesus of this central teaching. First occurs the multiplication of loaves for 5,000 men. There follows the walking of Jesus on the water of the sea and His use of the standard phrase “I am” to identify the divinity. Jesus identifies Himself as the Bread of Life descended from heaven. This He teaches in the synagogue of Capernaum and says that whoever eats of this Bread will live forever. Many are depicted as not accepting this teaching and no longer following Jesus. Simon Peter speaks for the Apostles and says that they will follow Jesus for He has the words of eternal life. Jesus replies by making an exception of Judas who was to betray Him.

11.2.7. Chapter 7. In 7,1-45 is a section that highlights the opposition between Jesus the Galilean and His opponents in Judea. To the suggestion that He go to Judea and preach Jesus answers that His “time” has not yet come. He seems to be referring to the “hour” when His identity as One glorified by God will be revealed. But eventually on the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus does go to Jerusalem where He first teaches privately and then publicly. Authorities sought to arrest Him but they were unable to do so because His “hour” had not yet come. The section constantly emphasizes the hatred of the “Judeans” (often translated “Jews”) for Jews and Jesus’ emphasis on His being sent to preach as He does.

11.2.8. **Chapter 8.** This chapter begins by presenting the woman taken in adultery. It occurs in the Temple. The “scribes and Pharisees” bring her to Jesus in the hope that His decision with the woman’s regard might be used against Him. But Jesus does not condemn her even though He implicitly condemns the sin she has committed. Thus Jesus implicitly acts differently from what the Mosaic Law commands and implicitly, acting in accord with the judgment of His Father, implicitly lays the basis for a new set of commands from God. At the same time He induces those who tested Him to condemn themselves. There follows a passage in which Jesus reiterates His special relation to the Father. And this in turn leads to His presentation of His death as pleasing to His Father. He then refers to the Judeans who had believed in Him and said they were not free because they were in bondage to sin. (In the context, a lack of trust in God.) He compares Himself to Abraham who was prevented from offering his son in sacrifice because God took his faith in Him as reason to increase the blessings promised to him. These blessings were to be achieved through the One who sensed that Abraham’s sacrifice was incomplete and, as God, offered Himself in sacrifice, Jesus, the new Isaac, who was divine.

11.2.9. **Chapter 9.** The chapter is about the man born blind and how he is healed by Jesus who identifies Himself as “the Son of Man” and demands belief in Himself for the gift of healing spiritual blindness of which the physical blindness that He healed was a symbol. Jesus condemns those who do not believe in His ability to heal spiritual blindness after seeing His ability to heal physical blindness. The Pharisees are singled out for their refusal to believe while asserting that they are capable of seeing.

11.2.10. **Chapter 10.** Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd and states that He is the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for His sheep whom He knows by name. He causes division among the Judeans because of His statement about His close relation to God Whom He calls His Father. Those who do not believe in Him try to kill Him but He escapes and goes across the Jordan to where He is at the site of the first baptisms of John the Baptist. There many believe in Him, recognizing the truths that John spoke of Him.

11.2.11. **Chapter 11.** The scene now shifts to Bethany, a small village to the east of Jerusalem, and the focus is on the relations of Jesus to a family composed of a brother, Lazarus, and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Lazarus has just died and Jesus raises him to life. He uses this miracle to illustrate His power over death. In the process He shows His human affection for Lazarus and wins the belief in His power from Martha. The act of Jesus in raising Lazarus from the dead is treated as a “sign” by the adversaries of Jesus, by name the Pharisees and priests of the Temple, and they plot to kill Jesus for fear that the Romans may use the raising from the dead as an excuse for subjecting the Jews even more. The high priest, Caiaphas, utters an unintentional prophecy when he says to justify the plot to kill Jesus that it is legitimate that one man should die to save a

whole nation from perishing. Jesus leaves the Judeans and goes to Ephraim where He stays with His disciples. When the time came for the Feast of the Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem where the chief priests and the Pharisees were ignorant of where He had been.

11.2.12. **Chapter 12.** Six days before the Passover Jesus goes to Bethany to visit Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Mary anoints the feet of Jesus with a pound of precious ointment, thus preparing his body for death. When word of Jesus' presence spread and many Judeans came to see Him and Lazarus and believed, so that the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well as Jesus. Jesus "the next day" entered Jerusalem on a donkey to the applause of many. This, comments John, was another "sign" given by Jesus, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9,9. Some Greeks come to Jerusalem to see Jesus, and Jesus prophesizes that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, thus referring to His humanity not as dying but as being "glorified" (a term implying that His crucifixion was primarily a revelation of His divinity). Jesus then refers to His glorification and God the Father from heaven confirms His role in the glorification. Many in the crowds attending on Jesus believe in Him, but many do not, in accordance with prophecies of Isaiah interpreted by Jesus. Jesus is then portrayed as acting in obedience to His Father as savior, while His Father is judge.

Part II: Some Thoughts on Part One

11.3.1. **Background.** At the end of this lengthy first section Jesus publicly enters Jerusalem on a donkey to triumphant acclaim. The evangelist, John, comments that thus is fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah (9,9) that the king of the "daughter of Zion" is coming. This confirms the judgment that Mary, the mother of Jesus, who personified the "daughter of Zion" at the wedding feast at Cana, is about to become the Mother of the Church at the transformation of Zion into the Church when Jesus on the cross "hands on" to her His Spirit. (Thus Mary, who is the mother of the Jesus as human becomes the mother of the Mystical Body which is the Church.) John, the author of this comment on the relevance of the prophecy of Zephaniah, is a part of this fulfillment for he is the one who shares in the Spirit as the symbol of the believers who constitute the members of the Mystical Body, the Church. It is this John who is writing the Gospel, John who shares the Spirit given to Mary. This sharing is not that of an equal with Mary, but as one who participates in the Mystical Body as member. John as an Apostle of Jesus witnessed or heard from witnesses the things he presents in his Gospel. But he does so as one who now shares in the Spirit as a member of the Mystical Body. With this as the basic supposition I wish to present the following interpretation of what has been outlined above.

11.3.2. **The Number Seven.** It is evident from the lengthy way the account of the background of the Eucharist is treated by John in what is now parts of Chapters 5 and 7 that the present division of the Gospel of

John into chapters and verses is the work of a later hand. But there are indications in the original divisions of the text that there is a deeper message than is given by a superficial reading. The key to this deeper meaning is given through use of the number “seven”. In what follows I will suggest that the fact that the phrase “I am” is used seven times in the Gospel, and the fact that the word “sign” is used seven times in the Gospel leads to the inference, if supported by legitimate argumentation, that the seven Sacraments of the Mystical Body are referred to the Gospel.

11.3.3. The Use of “I Am” in the Gospel of John. The phrase “I am” is a standard way of referring to the divinity of God in the Old Testament, going back to its self-designation by God Himself in Exodus 3,14. In the light of John 20,31 the report of its use by Jesus Himself is highly significant. It is used seven times in the Gospel of John:

- 1) 6,35 (“I am the Bread of Life”);
- 2) 8,12 (“I am the Light of the world”);
- 3) 10,7 (“I am the Door of the sheep”);
- 4) 10,11 (“I am the Good Shepherd”);
- 5) 11,25 (“I am the Resurrection and the Life”);
- 6) 14,6 (“I am the Way and the Truth and the Life”);
- 7) 15,1 (“I am the True Vine”).

11.3.4. The Use of “Sign” in the Gospel of John. A “sign” is an event worked by God to convey a message. In the Old Testament “sign” is used of the revelation of God at Numbers 14,22 working through Moses (Exodus 3,12; 4,28-31; Deuteronomy 34,11). It is used by John seventeen times in his Gospel, but the principal “signs” can be said to be seven in number”:

- 1) the marriage feast at Cana (2,1-11);
- 2) the healing of an official’s son (4,46-54);
- 3) the healing of a paralytic (5,1-9);
- 4) the multiplication of the loaves (6,1-14);
- 5) the restoration of sight to a blind man (9,1-4);
- 6) the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11,17-44);
- 7) the handing on of the Spirit to the mother of Jesus (19,30).

The first and last of these “signs” can be said to form an inclusion, with Jesus as the subject and his Mother as the object in both instances.

11.3.5. The Seven Sacraments. The seven uses of “I am” and the seven uses of “sign” in the Gospel of John suggest that John also alludes to the seven Sacraments. And the reason for suspecting this is the certainty that he alludes to two of the Sacraments on the basis of what the Church infallibly teaches. *Baptism*: In Chapter 3, verse 5, the text reads: “Jesus answered: “Amen, amen I say to you [Nicodemus], unless one is born of water and Spirit one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven”. The Council of Trent in 1547 in Session 7, Canon 2, declared that the text refers to the sacrament of Baptism. Thus there is no mere plausibility here but a proof that speaks with the certitude of faith. *Reconciliation*: In John 20,21b-23

Jesus presents Himself to His disciples as victim (see above, Chapter 9, 3.3 (“The Theological Anecdotes of Chapter 20”) with the words: “Peace to you. Just as the Father has sent me, so I send you”. And after saying this He breathed on them and says, “Receive a Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive they are forgiven them, whatever sins you retain, they remain retained”. Once again the Council of Trent (Session 14, Chapter 1) can be cited with regard to a sacrament of the Church, this time with regard to the sacrament of Reconciliation. What now follows are argumentations for the existence of allusions to the other five sacraments of the Church. The argumentation is only plausible, but the plausibility is not insignificant, based as it is on the use of the number “seven” by John in his Gospel and by the presence of allusions to the Sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation as confirmed by the infallible of the teaching authority of an ecumenical council of the Church. *Confirmation*: In John 14,16-17 Jesus is quoted as saying: “I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, so that He will be with you forever. The Spirit of Truth which the world is unable to receive because it does not perceive or know Him. You know Him because He is with you and will be in you”. In 1 John 2,1 John calls Jesus a “Helper”, which explains his use of “other” in the text quoted above. In the sacrament of Confirmation the Holy Spirit is given to those already baptized. At the time of the Reformation the Protestants refused to recognize Confirmation as a Sacrament because they were committed to the idea of “Sola Scriptura”. But here the Evangelist John is speaking as one who symbolizes believers of the Catholic Church and thus are committed to the idea of “Scripture and Tradition; and John is speaking of his experience of Tradition, a Tradition made explicit by the Council of Trent. *Holy Eucharist*: The series of incidents set forth in Chapter 6 are fully intelligible in the light of the Church’s Tradition. There was a time in the Church when there was no New Testament Scripture, but there was never a time in the Church when there was no Tradition. As regards the Eucharist this Tradition began at the Last Supper when the New Covenant was instituted that replaced the Old. The Eucharist is the New Covenant. *Extreme Unction*. In John 12,3 Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anoints the feet of Jesus. Jesus links this anointing with His death (John 12,7): the same costly ointment that Mary used to anoint the feet of Jesus as a guest in her house Mary was to keep and use for the day of Jesus burial. It would be somewhat far-fetched to link these events (which must have been witnessed by John to what would later be called “Extreme Unction” were it not for the fact that John’s Gospel is characterized by “signs”, and two of the sacraments of the Church, Baptism and Reconciliation, have been solemnly indicated by the teaching authority of the Church as occurring in his Gospel. *Holy Orders*. In John 13,1-11 Jesus is portrayed as washing the feet of His disciples. This could be taken as an example of the humility of Jesus, but in a Gospel where the author notes that Jesus actions are to be interpreted as “signs” (John 2,11) it seems justified to interpret the action of Jesus as a sign of priestly ordination, as in the Old Testament (Exodus 40,12.30-32). *Matrimony*: The final Sacrament is, of, course, alluded to in John 22,1-11, where the changing of water into wine is often taken as an allusion to the

Eucharist, but in the present context would seem to refer to the radical change in matrimony when the “hour” of Jesus comes, that is, when Jesus “hands on” His Spirit to His mother on the cross and the Old Covenant becomes the New. What Jesus did at Cana is called a “sign”, so some kind of allusion must be present. (As a possible relevant observation I would note that there is no presentation of the Our Father in John’s Gospel as there is in Matthew and Luke. In Entry #21 I have argued [“surmised”] that the Our Father in Matthew, the more complete of the two versions, is a presentation of the seven Sacraments.)

CHAPTER 12: A Point of Closure

At this point it would seem appropriate to bring to a closure, possibly only a temporary one, speculations on the meaning of the Gospel of John. For the Feast of St. John (December 27) the liturgy of the Church calls him an “Apostle and Evangelist”, and this Item has attempted to draw out possible implications of this brief description. It is quite possible that more implications can be drawn out. Perhaps they already have and I am ignorant of them. One thing is certain: If John is an Apostle and an Evangelist, more has to be said.

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