Expressions of the Johannine Kerygma in John 2:23–5:18

Edited by
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and JÖRG FREY

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Expressions of the Johannine Kerygma in John 2:23–5:18

Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings
from the Colloquium Ioanneum 2017
in Jerusalem

Edited by

R. Alan Culpepper and Jörg Frey

Mohr Siebeck

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Foreword

The Colloquium Ioanneum held its third biennial conference in Jerusalem, from 31 August–2 September 2017, focusing on chapters 3 and 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 of the Fourth Gospel. As these passages are particularly related to aspects of the Jewish and Samaritan history and to the topography of Jerusalem, the location of the conference was fortuitous, providing the opportunity for archaeological excursions led by Dr. Mordechai Aviam and Dr. Yuval Gadot before and after the conference.

The essays in this volume, based on the papers presented in Jerusalem, employ a variety of methods (historical criticism, narrative criticism, archaeology, and theology) and engage a wide spectrum of topics and issues. Repeatedly, they demonstrate the astuteness of an observation made by Adele Reinhartz: the closer we look at a text the more it pixilates and the more open to interpretation it becomes. Continuing the work of the Colloquium,[1] the papers treat aspects of John 2:23–5:18. The portion of the Gospel covered in this volume does not represent a judgment on the structure of the text; John 5:1–18 was included because the colloquium met in Jerusalem (see especially Craig Koester's essay on the Pool of Bethesda). John 2–4 has often been treated as a unit because it begins and ends in Cana of Galilee and seems to develop the Johannine theme of life. The transition between the cleansing of the temple and the scene with Nicodemus has variously been marked at either John 2:23 or 3:1. The Colloquium chose the former (without reflecting on the views of its participants) because it sets the context for the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus and because it introduces the issues of belief and unbelief, which are developed in the next several chapters and the rest of the Gospel. The last verses of John 2 also set the conversation with Nicodemus in relation to the narrator's statement that Jesus "knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone" (John 2:24–25 NRSV).

These early chapters present interpreters with a challenging series of issues, many of which are examined in the essays that follow: the strategy of revelation in John 3–4 (Jean Zumstein), the characterization and role of Nicodemus (Christos Karakolis), the only references to the kingdom of God in John (3:3, 5 – Jan van der Watt), Jesus' role as Son of Man and the exaltation-glorification-ascension nexus in John (esp. in 3:13–15 – William Loader), the *erga* concept in the Fourth Gospel (esp. in 3:18–21 and especially in relation to the ethics of John – Ruben Zimmermann), and the references

[1] See *The Prologue of the Gospel of John*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt, R. Alan Culpepper, and Udo Schnelle, WUNT 359 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016); and *The Opening of John's Narrative (John 1:19–2:22)*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Jörg Frey, WUNT 385 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

to John's baptism and Jesus' baptism in John 3:21–36 and 4:1–3 – Jörg Frey). Fresh perspectives on the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, one of the classic episodes in the Fourth Gospel, emerge in the essays on John's engagement with Samaritan traditions in John 4 (Catrin Williams), local tradition and the universal program in John 4:4–42 (Udo Schnelle), 2 Kgs 17:24–41 as an intertext for Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman (Michael Theobald), the references to Samaritans and Jews and the divine covenant in John 4:19–23 (Adele Reinhartz), and the harvest proverbs in John 4:35–38 (Alan Culpepper). The last two essays explore the characterization of the royal official in John 4:46–54 (François Tolmie) and the evidence for associating the Pool of Bethesda with healing in light of archaeology, Jewish practice, and Greco-Roman perspectives on healing (Craig Koester).

Jean Zumstein asks whether we can identify a common strategy for revelation in the relationship that the Johannine Jesus has with the two very different figures in John 3 and 4 – Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Both encounters begin with dialogue, but they are no ordinary conversations, nor are they Socratic dialogues. Only one interlocutor knows the truth. Jesus employs a "language of change" that encourages the other to adopt new perspectives and discover unexpected possibilities: "the truth of God cannot be revealed through an exchange of discursive arguments." The discourse moves from an anthropological topic (birth, water) to the gift of the Spirit, from earthly things to heavenly things (birth from above, living water) which required recognition of Jesus' identity. The process leads from indirect revelation in metaphorical language to direct revelation that has a transformative effect. It also leads to a reconfiguration of the other's (and the reader's) understanding of God. In this way "the Johannine kerygma" is expressed by means of the same rhetorical strategy in each of these encounters. Zumstein's treatment of this theme suggested the title for this volume.

Christos Karakolis offers a reading of the characterization of Nicodemus that leads him to a more positive, open-ended view of Nicodemus and his role in John than one finds in much of the current literature. Karakolis recognizes that the Gospel addresses a variety of readers and that its characterization of the Pharisees is not consistently negative. Nicodemus, moreover, is not introduced as a Pharisee. Indeed, the Fourth Gospel only uses the term in plural references. By naming Nicodemus, the evangelist "provides a concrete face to the Pharisaic collectivity." Emerging out of the darkness, Nicodemus approaches the light and addresses Jesus as "rabbi," a term that only disciples and believers use elsewhere in the Gospel. His address to Jesus as "teacher" is the first step on the way to a christological confession, something he cannot yet achieve because he does not have the Spirit (3:5). Jesus' response to Nicodemus challenges his assumption that he understands the law. Although his faith is inadequate, Nicodemus has taken his first step toward the light. Two later scenes build on this beginning. In 7:45–52, Nicodemus clearly differentiates himself from the other Pharisees, speaking as "a voice of conscience," seeking to protect Jesus, and exposing his later conviction as an injustice. In 19:38–42, Nicodemus joins Joseph of Arimathea in

burying Jesus in a new tomb with a lavish amount of myrrh, that hints at "a burial of royal-messianic character." Although Nicodemus remains narratologically ambiguous, he offers a bridge to faith that other Pharisees could follow later, in the Johannine context.

Jan G. van der Watt raises the question of whether the references to the kingdom of God in John 3:3, 5 – the only occurrences of this term in the Fourth Gospel – are in any way rhetorically and semantically developed in the unfolding of the plot of John's narrative. He argues that these references are indeed programmatic within the narrative of John, which emphasizes the presence of the kingdom in the person and work of Jesus. The argument first establishes the conceptual field of kingship in the Hellenistic era, thereby identifying analytical categories related to the concept of king/kingship in John. Analysis of these categories establishes the presence and nature of this conceptual field in the Gospel. The next step is to analyze specific terms related to kingship, like Messiah/Christ or Son of God. What does the Messiah-King do, and how is he perceived or treated? In this way, van der Watt advances our understanding of the function of this concept. He finds that the full range of analytical criteria are present in John, confirming that king/kingship complements John's familial imagery as "one of the indispensable images John uses in developing his christological mosaic."

William R. G. Loader reviews and evaluates common interpretations of John 3:13–15, which applies the dramatic image of Moses lifting up the snake in the wilderness to Jesus, the Son of Man. In this context, does the word ὑψόω refer to Jesus' crucifixion or his exaltation, or does the author play with two different meanings of the word? Loader's analysis of the occurrences of this term elsewhere in the Gospel suggests that the reference in John 3 means more than crucifixion: "it means also exaltation to God's presence and so is associated with glorification, ascension, return, and the blessings which flow as a result." The ὑψόω motif cannot be separated from this nexus of associations. Moreover, Loader contends, the Fourth Gospel does not limit exaltation or glorification to the event of Jesus' death. This nexus is part of the deep story that underlies the narrative, with the result that the lifting up of the Son of Man in John 3 cannot be limited to the crucifixion but must also include his exaltation and return, his ascension to glory.

Extending the work on the ethics of John that he and Jan van der Watt began a decade ago, *Ruben Zimmermann* examines the ἔργα-concept in the Fourth Gospel. His exploration unfolds in two stages: first, arguments suggesting that the terms ἔργα and ἐργάζεσθαι can be seen as ethical terms; and secondly, an analysis of John 3:19–21, applying his method of understanding "implicit ethics" to the passage. A syntactical analysis of these terms in the Gospel of John demonstrates that the agents associated with them are not limited to God or Jesus: "There are many occurrences in which humans are the grammatical subjects in sentences associating them with τὰ ἔργα and, ethically speaking, the moral agents of those deeds." It is also significant that in a broader context ἔργον plays a major role in ancient ethical theory, suggest-

ing that ἔργα conveys an ethical meaning. To test this conclusion, Zimmermann turns to the first occurrence of the term in John, in John 3:19–21, which also functions as the introductory discourse on the topic. As an "organon" to analyze the implicit ethics of a text, Zimmermann employs eight perspectives. This nuanced interpretation leads to the conclusion that "'doing the truth' cannot be limited to believing in Christ, but also, and perhaps even more, to following Christ's actions."

The references in John 3 and 4 to John's baptism, Jesus' baptism, and their concurrent ministry have been perennial cruxes in Johannine scholarship, raising both historical and theological questions. *Jörg Frey* asks whether there are any clear references to Christian baptism in John. Even the word "baptism," of course, may already be an anachronism, since the Greek words βάπτειν, βαπτίζειν, or βάπτισμα can point to a variety of immersion rites. How are the baptisms of John and Jesus to be understood, did Jesus baptize, and which is more likely, John's report of a concurrent ministry or Mark's sequential chronology? Frey surveys the occurrences of the term βαπτίζειν in John 1:19–34 and 10:40, and the important reference to "water and spirit" in 3:5, before focusing on the issues presented by John 3:22–26 and 4:1–3. These references to Jesus' baptizing activity, Frey argues, were part of the Johannine community tradition which the evangelist defended as factual information against differing traditions: "A rivalry between the Jesus movement and the movement inaugurated by the Baptizer is . . . easily conceivable in an early post-Easter setting." In such context, baptism by Jesus or his followers would not have been Christian baptism, however, but a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins similar to that practiced by John the Baptist, and the Fourth Gospel does not develop a particular theology of Christian baptism based on this tradition.

Catrin H. Williams examines the Samaritan elements within John 4:4–42 and then considers whether specifically Samaritan traditions can be identified among those elements. Specifically, how does the Gospel engage Samaritan and Jewish traditions in its depiction of Jesus' identity and the Samaritan woman's journey of faith? Williams argues that evocations of certain scriptural promises of salvation in John shed light on how and why it "appropriates what are predominantly Jewish categories to set out its vision of a mission situated within a non-Jewish setting." Williams finds that although many direct and indirect references to Samaritan issues, beliefs, and practices can be identified in John 4:4–42, the information about Samaria and the Samaritans afforded in this narrative could easily have been drawn from scriptural texts shared by both Jews and Samaritans. In particular Deutero-Isaiah's vision of extending the offer of divine salvation beyond traditional boundaries plays a significant role in John's Gospel. Interpreting the narrative with reference to the Isaianic offer of salvation "to the end of the earth" (45:18–25) elucidates the deepening christological claims in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.

In his contribution on John 4:4–42 as local tradition and universal program, *Udo Schnelle* reflects on the evangelist's skills and creativity in his narrative and dramaturgical recontextualization of the Jesus story, focusing on the intertwining of locally

rooted traditions and universal theological claims. In an analysis of the structure and thought development of the dialogues Schnelle demonstrates how readers are led to insights about the true identity and soteriological relevance of Jesus. By adopting numerous details about places, local traditions, and the Judeo-Samaritan conflict, the evangelist develops insights about the universality of the true veneration of God, about the Spirit as the essence of God's acting, and about Jesus as the savior of the whole world. The intention of the text is obviously to communicate new insights about the divine presence and new values, but the preaching is presented in dialogical form, and the narrative figure of the Samaritan woman is developed into a role model for the universal mission of Johannine Christianity. The Gospel of John appears, thus, as an expression of a new system of knowledge and values that were created within early Christianity in a remarkably short period.

Michael Theobald discusses the relationship between the dialogue in John 4:4–26 and the biblical pre-history of the Samaritans as presented in 2 Kgs 17:24–41. He shows that the allegorical interpretation of John 4:16–19, with the Samaritan woman representing the history of her people, which is usually traced back to the work on the life of Jesus by David Friedrich Strauss, is already present in the Middle Ages in a marginal gloss in a 13th century manuscript of Josephus which provides a connection between the five Gods of the Samaritans and the five husbands of the woman. Theobald then provides a close investigation of the Hebrew text of 2 Kgs 17:24–41 and its reception in the LXX, in Josephus and, finally, in John 4. He argues for an allegorical understanding of the five husbands also in John, which is suggested in particular by the fact that the present husband of the woman is called illegitimate. This might be an image for the present, illegitimate religion of the Samaritans rather than a description of the present allegedly immoral life-situation of the woman.

Adele Reinhartz interprets John 4:19–23, and especially Jesus' statement in 4:22, "we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews," in the context of the rhetoric of the Fourth Gospel. Verse 22 initially appears out of place because John's Jesus has few positive things to say about the Jews. Although some have sought to excise the verse as a later gloss, there is no textual evidence for the exclusion of 4:22. Nevertheless, if it is an integral part of the Gospel, it is best understood in the context of the Gospel's rhetorical program, which "offers access to salvific covenantal relationship with God through faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (20:30–31)." Reinhartz explains, "the passage acknowledges that Jews view worship at the temple on Mount Zion as the expression of their covenantal partnership with the divine, and that Samaritans believe the same about Mount Gerizim. Now, says the Fourth Gospel, the covenant partnership is actualized through Christ." The effect of this pronouncement is that the Samaritans have access to the salvation that the Jews alone previously enjoyed as God's elect people. Because the one who provides salvation is a Jew, the salvation that he promises comes from God's covenant people. Furthermore, not only Samaritans but now also the Jews can be in relationship with God only by worshiping the Father in spirit and truth, that is, through faith in Jesus. John 4:22,

therefore, cannot be used to exculpate John's otherwise anti-Jewish stance; in fact, it stems from the same set of ideas and impulses expressed elsewhere in the Gospel.

The harvest parables in John 4:35 and 37, and their role in the Gospel, are often left in the shadow of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, but the "interlude" in the conversation serves an important function in the Gospel and has been read in different ways by interpreters. Is Jesus characterized as sower or reaper, and who are the "others" in 4:38 into whose work the disciples enter? *Alan Culpepper* examines the interpretation of harvest proverbs in current scholarship and in John's mission theology and concludes that a stronger case can be made for interpreting Jesus as the Sower whose work will lead to the future harvest. The reference to "the others" who have sown the seed reminds the community that they have been brought into the long history of God's work in the world. If v. 36 is a vision of hope, pointing to a bountiful harvest and the reward of celebration with the Sower, v. 38 is an admonition to humility (it is not their work, others have done the heavy labor, yet they have been given the privilege of reaping the harvest). In both its immediate context in John 4 and in the larger mission theology of the Gospel, therefore, Jesus is best understood as the Sower who creates the conditions for the harvest, announces the harvest, and sends the disciples out to the harvest that, in the context of John 4, is still yet to come.

D. François Tolmie offers a study of the characterization of the royal official in John 4:46–54 that unfolds in three movements: a brief overview of ways in which scholars have approached the characterization of the official; secondly, discussion of the most important decisions a reader has to make when interpreting the royal official from a narrative-critical perspective, and finally Tolmie's own interpretation of the progressive development of this character. As crucial decisions an interpreter has to make, Tolmie discusses the following: (1) the methodological approach to be followed, (2) the meaning and relevance of vv. 43–45, (3) the dominant traits associated with the concept βασιλικός, (4) the meaning of Jesus' response in v. 48, and (5) the sense of the twofold reference to the faith of the royal official. Tolmie follows Seymour Chatman's approach, analyzing the character as a paradigm of traits and restricting his analysis to the narrative world in the text. Verses 43–45 are relevant for one's understanding of the characterization of the official because these verses guide the reader towards viewing the response of the Galileans to Jesus unfavorably. While a reader may associate various traits with the royal official, the narrator "seems to be highlighting the fact that the father and his son are vulnerable to (physical) death; in the face of the nearing death of his son, both of them are totally helpless." The question of the adequacy of the official's faith must then be answered by a sequential reading that tracks the character's responses to Jesus in the events of the story.

Current scholarship has construed the archaeological and literary evidence regarding the Pool of Bethesda variously as a Jewish ritual bath used by pilgrims coming to Jerusalem and as "the location of a healing cult, similar to the cult of Asclepius, which the Romans then adapted to their own healing cult of Serapis in the second century." *Craig R. Koester* examines the question of the functions of the pool afresh

in light of the archaeological evidence, Jewish practice, and Greco-Roman perspectives on healing and asks how this exercise shapes the way we see the Bethesda story within John's narrative. Koester summarizes the evidence as follows:

> The archaeological evidence strongly suggests that prior to 70 CE the large double pool was a public ritual bath that was used by Jewish pilgrims coming to Jerusalem. In the second century the area was rebuilt under Hadrian, and there is evidence of devotion to Serapis as a deity who provided for the welfare of the Roman city and the personal wellbeing of the god's devotees. Yet there is no clear archaeological evidence of a healing cult on the site either before or after 70 CE. On the other hand, the Fourth Gospel does depict the pool of Bethesda as a site noted for healing. Yet John 5 makes no mention of the pool's use for ritual cleansing, despite comments about purification in other chapters of the Gospel.

Giving weight to both the archaeological and literary evidence, Koester concludes that people went to the pool of Bethesda for different reasons, some for ritual purification and others for healing. He then explores the implications of his findings for how the pool functions in the Gospel narrative.

Regrettably, George Parsenios, Udo Schnelle, and Marianne Meye Thompson were unable to attend the 2017 conference. François Tolmie was elected to membership in the Colloquium, and Marcie Lenk participated as a guest. The Colloquium expresses its gratitude to her and to the Shalom Hartman Institute and its President, Donniel Hartman, for the invitation to meet at the Institute, for assistance in making arrangements for the conference, and for their gracious hospitality. The Colloquium Ioanneum also expresses its thanks to the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa, for its partnership with the Colloquium. Finally, we must recognize Michal Maurer for her capable assistance in editing and in verifying documentation, Ruben Bühner for compiling the index of ancient sources, Mohr Siebeck for their support of the Colloquium, and in particular Susanne Mang for her expert assistance in the production of this volume.

R. Alan Culpepper
Jörg Frey

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AcBib	Academia Biblica
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
AJBI	*Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute*
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
Aug	*Augustinianum*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BEHER	Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études: Sciences religieuses
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BMSEC	Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BRLA	Brill Reference Library of Judaism
BSR	Biblioteca di scienze religiosa
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BSR	Biblioteca di scienze religiose
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BThSt	Biblisch-theologische Studien
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Neuen Testament
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique

CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea Neotestamentica or Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
CR.BS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
DMOA	Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui
DRev	*Downside Review*
EBib	Etudes bibliques
EC	*Early Christianity*
ECL	Early Christian Literature
EHPhR	Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses
EKK	Evangelish-katholischer Kommentar
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
EWNT	*Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament.* Ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992.
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FGH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker.* Ed. Felix Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
GNT	Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament
HBS	Herder biblische Studien
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Study*
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTCNT	Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HThKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HthKNTSup	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Supplementband
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRASup	Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
KD	*Kerygma und Dogma*

KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LIMC	*Lexikon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Ed. H. Christoph Ackerman and Jean-Robert Gisler. 8 vols. Zurich: Artemis, 1981–1997
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
MJS	Münsteraner judaistische Studien
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NGTT	*Nederduitse gereformeerde teologiese tydskrif*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OrAnt	*Oriens Antiquus*
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
OTL	Old Testament Library
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completes: Series Graeca*. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paries: Migne, 1857–1886
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
RB	*Revue biblique*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
RevScRel	*Revue des sciences religieuses*
RGG	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Ed. Hans Dieter Betz. 4th ed. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2007
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RST	Regensburger Studien zur Theologie
RTP	*Revue de théologie et philosophie*
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLECL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Christian Literature Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SE	*Studia Evangelica*
SJ	Studia Judaica
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series

SP	Sacra Pagina
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STJ	*Stulos Theological Journal*
StPB	Studia Post-Biblica
StSam	Studia Samaritana
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigraphica
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 Vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
UNT	Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VF	*Verkündigung und Forschung*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
Wdf	Wege der Forschung
WuD	(Lindemann)
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZB	Zürcher Bibel
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZNT	*Zeitschrift für Neues Testament*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

The Revelation Strategy in the Gospel of John 3 and 4

Jean Zumstein

Chapters three and four of the Fourth Gospel programmatically lay out John's interpretation of Jesus' revelation.[1] It is worth asking, therefore, how Jesus develops his message in these two sequences, especially given that his interlocutors – Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman – are so utterly different from one another. Nicodemus represents the religious elite. A man in a patriarchal society, he lives in Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish faith and home of the Temple. Not only does he belong to the Establishment, but also to the Pharisees.[2] The Samaritan woman, on the other hand, is a marginal figure with a tumultuous marital life.[3] She lives in Samaria, a region in conflict with official Judaism.[4] These two characters have nothing in common, except for their face-to-face meeting with Jesus, away from the crowd.

How is communication established between Jesus and these two characters? Can we identify a common strategy[5] in the relationship that the Johannine Jesus has with

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[1] On my interpretation of these two chapters see Jean Zumstein, *Das Johannesevangelium*, KEK 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 131–95.

[2] The narrator introduces the character of Nicodemus at 3:1 (Ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων, Νικόδημος ὄνομα αὐτῷ, ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων), then at 3:10 (σὺ εἶ ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ). See R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 134–36; Uta Poplutz, "Die Pharisäer als literarische Figurengruppe im Johannesevangelium," in *Narrativität und Theologie im vierten Evangelium*, ed. Jörg Frey and Uta Poplutz, BThSt 130 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Theologie, 2012), 19–39.

[3] The characterization of the Samaritan woman occurs notably at 4:7 (Ἔρχεται γυνὴ ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας ἀντλῆσαι ὕδωρ), then 4:12.17–18. See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 136–37.

[4] On the conflict between Samaria and Judea the main sources are: 2 Kgs 17:24–41; Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus erläutert aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 4th ed. (München: Beck'sche, 1965), 538–60; Josephus, *Ant*. 18.29–30; 20.118; *Neuer Wettstein: Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus,* vol. 1/2, ed. Udo Schnelle, Michael Labahn, and Manfred Lang (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 187–94; 183–84 (Plutarch). The Gospels themselves reveal tensions between the Jews and the Samaritans: see Luke 9:52–53, 17:11–19, Matt 10:5, John 8:48. Modern discussions include: Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, ÖTK 4/1, 3rd ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher/Würzburg: Mohn, 1991), 201–02; Frank Moore Cross, Jr., "Aspects of Samaritan and Jewish History in Late Persian and Hellenistic Time," *HTR* 59 (1966): 201–11; Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, ZBK 4/1 (Zürich: TVZ, 2001), 97–101; Nadav Na'aman, "Samaria," *RGG*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 7:814–16; Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, THKNT 4, 5th ed. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 122; Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12,* RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 298–99; Hartwig Thyen, *Studien zum Corpus Johanneum*, WUNT 2.14 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 483–500; J. Zangenberg, *ΣΑΜΑΡΕΙΑ: Antike Quellen zur Geschichte und Kultur der Samaritaner in deutscher Übersetzung*, TANZ 15 (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1994).

[5] Modern scholars have generally emphasised the opposition between the character of Nicode-

these two very different figures? What way does the Johannine Jesus choose to announce his message and persuade his addressees? Does analysis of the argumentation[6] used in chapters three and four reveal any similarities between the two narratives?

1. Jesus and Nicodemus

The summary at 2:23–25 is the departure point for the episode dedicated to the meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus. This summary is significant because it signposts the theme that will be further developed in chapter three, namely the relationship between human beings and divinity as manifested in Jesus. The crowd of pilgrims is overcome by the miraculous events – and thus by divinity – that are associated with Jesus' actions (2:23, θεωροῦντες αὐτοῦ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει). But they do not perceive the real meaning of these events. Conversely, Jesus is characterised by his true knowledge, which is centred not on the divine world but rather sheds light on human existence, right down to its interiority (2: 25, ἐγίνωσκεν τί ἦν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ).

The questions posed by this introductory passage consist in knowing how the Johannine Jesus will guide his lost "admirers" toward a true discovery of God and, by the same token, allow them to perceive the meaning of their existence.[7] Nicodemus is representative of the typical "lost admirer."

Firstly, Jesus opts for *dialogue* with Nicodemus, who has come to converse (3:1–12). But the reader quickly notes that this is no ordinary dialogue. Indeed, unlike a Socratic dialogue, we are not dealing with a debate where questions and responses follow one another in harmony, where the speakers share the same premises, and agree on the way of arguing. The aim of Jesus' dialogue is not to increase his interlocutor's knowledge. In fact, Jesus employs a language of change.[8] As he speaks, he again and again highlights a gap in relation to Nicodemus's expectations and beliefs. In this

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mus and that of the Samaritan woman. While certainly valid, it is nevertheless important to examine the strategy developed by the Johannine Jesus in the two narratives and to underscore its coherence.

[6] It is important to emphasise that the revelation occurs via a dialogue. In the present analysis, I set out to determine whether the dialogue between Jesus and his interlocutors belongs to a recognisable pattern, such as that of the Socratic dialogue, or whether, on the contrary, it is characterised by other processes.

[7] Taking the example of Nicodemus, Kierkegaard drew the distinction between an admirer and an imitator: "Nicodème était un admirateur ; la réalité offrait pour lui trop de danger ; personnellement, il désirait rester à l'écart. Mais, d'autre part, la vérité le préoccupait tellement qu'il chercha un contact avec elle. […] Car il est logique et sensé de reconnaître qu'une doctrine contient peut-être du vrai sans qu'on change pour cela de conduite," in Søren Kierkegaard, *L'école du christianisme,* Œuvres complètes, tome XVII (Paris: Éd. de l'Orante, 1982), 218–22.

[8] On the language of change, see Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland, and Richard Fisch, *Change, Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution* (New York: Norton, 1974).

way, he encourages his interlocutor to shift his viewpoint so that he might discover unexpected possibilities.

What the holder of traditional knowledge, in this case Nicodemus, is encouraged to perceive through this dialogue is that human beings are helpless in the face of the fundamental question of salvation. Nicodemus is unable, of his own accord, to establish a relationship with God nor, as a result, to discover the true basis of his existence. The "new birth from above" (γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν)[9] that he requires can only come in the form of an unconditional gift – the gift of the Spirit[10] or, in other terms, the arrival of God in him. Only the initiative of God can wrest him from his alienation, by which I mean an existence whose sole reference point is the immanent world. According to the Johannine Jesus, human beings – however religious and knowledgeable they might be – do not have access to divine truth merely through adequate knowledge. The truth of God cannot be revealed through an exchange of discursive arguments.

Following this dialogical, anthropological approach to the question of how humans can reach salvation, we come to a *monologue* (3:13–21) that explores the inverse of the above, namely how God comes to humans.[11] If, in effect, salvation can only be a divine gift, then the question arises as to how this grace can reach the human level. Dialogue is no longer the most suitable form for this message; only a monologue or, if we prefer, a revelation speech, can account for the divine freedom that precedes any human initiative. The succession from *dialogue* to *monologue* is thus theologically significant for the revelation strategy chosen by the Johannine Jesus.

The revelation (3:13–15), framed by the Johannine Jesus in the third-person singular, comprises three main elements. First, the divine gift materialises itself in a historical person, identified as the Son of Man (3:13–15, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). Adopting

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[9] The translation of γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν is a matter of contention. ἄνωθεν can mean either "again" or "from above"; see Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 6th ed., ed. Kurt and Barbara Aland (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 153. In my opinion, the ambiguity is intentional and should be maintained in translation. On the issue, see C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 6th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 303 n. 2; C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 205–06; Theobald, *Johannes*, 250; Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 189.

[10] On the Johannine notion of the Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα), see Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Band I: Die Vielfalt des Neuen Testaments. Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 658–61; Udo Schnelle, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, UTB (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 664–72.

[11] The precise point of separation between the monologue and the dialogue, as well as between the two parts, is contestable (see Theobald, *Johannes*, 243; Zumstein, *Johannesvangelium*, 134). Three arguments support a division between v. 12 (the end of the dialogue) and v. 13 (the beginning of the monologue). First, the final dialogic elements appear in v. 12 ("I" replies explicitly to "you"), while at the beginning of v. 13, Jesus speaks about himself in the third-person singular. Secondly, τὰ ἐπίγεια refers to the prior context (vv. 2–11), whereas τὰ ἐπουράνια designates what is to come (vv. 13–21). Lastly, the monologue has a theological motivation: the christological event that is about to be discussed cannot occur in a conversation, but only in the form of a revelation (see below).

this title allows him to assume the christological trajectory: his origin with God, his arrival, and his return to the Father via his crucifixion. This trajectory, which describes the life and death of the Johannine Jesus, only makes sense because it brings life in fullness to whoever welcomes it. The question of the possibility of salvation that was asked in verse 3, finds here its answer.

This trajectory of the Son of Man then becomes part of an explanation (3:16–18).[12] It is presented as the unique, historical expression of the love of God, giving that which he holds most dear – his only Son – to save all human beings from perdition, that is to say, from darkness and from death. This gift is characterised by its asymmetry: God's willingness to offer salvation, manifested in the person of Jesus, clearly exceeds his desire to pass judgement. This connection, between the idea of judgment and the coming of Jesus, leads to a re-evaluation of eschatology[13]: in meeting with the Son, each human decides his own destiny. Either he escapes judgment and condemnation by welcoming the revelation into his faith, or, by refusing the revelation, he becomes the maker of his own perdition, since he remains trapped in a world where God has no place.

Finally, the theme of judgment is taken up again retrospectively (3:19–21).[14] The coming of the "light" shows that all humans live in a world without God, as attested by the declaration of their "bad deeds" (πονηρὰ τὰ ἔργα), which are simply a reflection of their refusal to believe. Only the coming of the "light" interrupts this perdition. If most humans actively refuse faith in Jesus, it is through fear of having their belief and acts exposed, and thus to be revealed as imposters. Those, on the other hand, who accept the coming of the Son into their faith, discover that, thanks to a new basis for their existence, God intervenes in their life to elicit deeds that attest his presence.

Let us conclude. Scholars agree that Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus represents the first extended expression of the "Johannine kerygma."[15] It is particularly interesting to observe how this process of revelation is constructed from an argumentative point of view.

[12] Verses 16–18 introduce a new christological title; abandoning "Son of Man" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), this becomes "the only son" (τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ).

[13] The verb κρίνω at v. 17 and v. 18, and the word κρίσις at v. 19, signal the beginning of the eschatological theme. On the vocabulary of judgement in John, see Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, KEK 2, 21st ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 113 n. 6; Josef Blank, *Krisis: Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg in B.: Lambertus, 1964), 75–110.

[14] Verses 19–21 are controversial, since it is difficult to incorporate them into the argumentative development of the monologue. Several solutions have been put forward. For some scholars, we are dealing with a pre-Johannine tradition that the Evangelist inserted into a new context (e.g., Becker, *Johannes*, 154–55, and Schnelle, *Johannes*, 111–12). For others, we are dealing with an addition to the final version that is meant to introduce an ethical reading of vv. 16–18 (so Ernst Haenchen, *Johannesevangelium*, ed. Ulrich Busse [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,1980], 228–29; Georg Richter, *Studien zum Johannesevangelium*, ed. Josef Hainz [Regensburg: Pustet, 1977], 337).

[15] The "Johannine kerygma" refers to John's specific, theological system, developed in his narrative and whose role is to invite others to the faith.

The dialogue section (3:2–10) leads us to note the following: firstly, the dialogue is triggered by Nicodemus's statement about the identity of Jesus. According to the notable Jerusalemite, Jesus is a master whose thaumaturgical power has divine sanction. However, Jesus does not respond by explaining his role (we would then be in the field of Christology), but by introducing an anthropological topic, that of the "new birth from above" and its condition of possibility: the gift of the Spirit. He concentrates on his interlocutor's situation and his quest for salvation, so that the revelation remains an *indirect revelation*. In his argumentative model, the anthropological explanation of the human situation comes before the specifically christological framing of the revelation. It is a necessary preliminary.

Second observation: Nicodemus's cognitive path takes him from the acquired knowledge professed at the outset of the dialogue (v. 2: οἴδαμεν ὅτι) to the realisation of his ignorance at the end of the discussion (v. 10: σὺ εἶ ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ταῦτα οὐ γινώσκεις).[16] From the point of view of communicative pragmatics, it is the deconstruction of Nicodemus's certitudes (cf. the misunderstandings in the dialogue[17]) that opens up the path to the reformulation of the christological revelation. Access to the revelation requires a crisis of knowledge.[18]

Thirdly, the text's argumentative turning point is provided in v. 12, which signals the transition from earthly things (τὰ ἐπίγεια) to heavenly things (τὰ ἐπουράνια). And yet, this transition from "earthly things" to "heavenly things" is marked also by a change of form. Monologue takes over from dialogue. While the anthropological problem is tackled through *dialogue*, the christological comes strictly through *monologue*. This shift is significant because it opens the way to the Johannine framing of the revelation which, this time, is a direct formulation. It is worth highlighting two aspects of this wholly Johannine expression of the christological revelation: the focus of the *katabasis* on the death of Christ, and the reformulation of traditional eschatology.[19] Moreover, the monologue form allows John to emphasise the asymmetry of the revelation and the unconditional gift of "eternal life."

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[16] It is not Nicodemus himself who admits ignorance, but rather the Johannine Jesus who reveals it to him. The text is ambiguous as to whether Nicodemus accepts this judgement. However, both the reported scene at 7:45–52 and Nicodemus's participation in the laying of Jesus' tomb (19:38–42) suggest he has accepted Jesus.

[17] Cf. 3:3–5. On the notion of misunderstanding, see Herbert Leroy, *Rätsel und Missverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Johannesevangeliums*, BBB 30 (Bonn: Handstein, 1968); Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 152–65; Andreas Dettwiler, "Fragile compréhension. L'herméneutique de l'usage johannique du malentendu," *RTP* 131 (1999): 371–84.

[18] On the crisis of konwledge in the fourth Evangelist see Jean Zumstein, "Wissenskrise und Interpretationskonflikt nach Joh 9: Ein Beispiel für die Arbeit der johanneischen Schule," in *Kreative Erinnerung: Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium*, 2nd ed., ATANT 84 (Zürich: TVZ, 2004), 147–60; "Krise des Wissens und Entstehung des Glaubens: Zu einem Aspekt der johanneischen Anthropologie," in *Seinkönnen: Der Mensch zwischen Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Ingolf Ulrich Dalferth and Andreas Hunziker, Religion in Philosophy and Theology 54 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 217–31.

[19] The trajectory of the Son of Man (vv. 13–15) and its explanation, centred on the gift of the only Son, have the same focal point, namely the cross.

Finally, we should note the unfinished nature of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus, whose final words are ones of perplexity (v. 9: πῶς δύναται ταῦτα γενέσθαι;). The arguments of the Johannine Jesus about the "new birth" do not convince Nicodemus. His position remains unresolved. The revelation speech itself remains, at first, unanswered. We might think that the speech is addressed directly at the implicit reader, but that would be to ignore the long sequence centred around the Baptist himself that concludes chapter three, where he confirms his role – *cum grano salis* – as a witness and the "first Christian." Verses 31–36, which have elicited much scholarly discussion,[20] seem, to my mind, to have a precise literary function: the Baptist himself, in his *ultima verba*,[21] adopts the Johannine kerygma to validate it. In this way, the revelation project sketched out in chapter three finds both a recipient and a messenger.

2. Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

As in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus' sojourn in Samaria is characterised by a narration of the christological revelation and its effects. Like the Samaritan woman, then the disciples, and finally the inhabitants of the city, the reader is trained in a cognitive process that aims at transporting him from an elementary level of knowledge, based on immediate and verifiable certitudes in the immanent world, to a complete level of knowledge, provided by the revelation. Irony and use of metaphorical language force him repeatedly to make decisions and to progress, step by step, toward the decisive discovery at the centre of the story: grasping the true identity of the Johannine Jesus.

The structure of the text is relatively simple: verses 4–6 introduce the story's main character, who finds himself in a land that is not only foreign, but also engaged in religious conflict with the territory from which he has come. Jesus is in a position of vulnerability and weakness.

Verses 7–26 tell the story of the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. This consists of a dialogue culminating in the revelation and recognition of Jesus' identity.[22] There are three parts: (a) Verses 7–15 are dedicated to the famous discussion about living water. As in the dialogue with Nicodemus, the conversation here takes the form of an *indirect revelation*. Taking inspiration from a concrete situation – the meeting next to a well – Jesus chooses to present himself via the metaphor of

[20] See Theobald, *Johannes*, 290–91; Zumstein, *Johannesevangelium*, 120–30. The main difficulty lies in identifying the narrative voice. If it is Jesus, then the passage has been moved, and initially would have been the expected follow-up to v. 21 or v. 12. Or is it the Baptist himself who has appropriated elements of the teaching of the Johannine Jesus? Or, finally, is it a theological commentary written by the Evangelist to conclude the chapter?

[21] Theobald, *Johannes*, 279.

[22] On the theme of recognition, see Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung* (Berlin: Suhrkampf, 1992).

water.[23] (b) Verses 16–19 introduce a significant break in the conversation as Jesus abandons the theme of water and broaches that of the woman's husbands. (c) Verses 20–26 represent a further break as the woman passes from the topic of her husbands to that of true adoration. From an indirect revelation in metaphorical language, the reader passes to a *direct revelation* in classical theological language. The argumentative schema adopted in chapter three, repeats itself here.

The interpretive challenge consists in understanding the coherence between these three parts or, more precisely, in identifying the communicative strategy deployed in the text. In this respect, I propose the following hypothesis: the indirect revelation of verses 7–15 and the direct revelation of verses 20–26 have the same content, and the transition from one to the other is mediated by verses 16–19.

Let us look once more at the first part (vv. 7–15). The dialogue's starting point lies in Jesus' demand, whose aim of manifesting himself in a "heterodox" space becomes clear as the text progresses. The demand (v. 7b, "Give me something to drink") is disqualified by the Samaritan who identifies a double socio-cultural barrier: that of man/woman, and that of the religious conflict between Samaria and Judea.

The Johannine Jesus' communication strategy for overcoming this difficulty is to set up a process of *indirect revelation*. To do this, Jesus relies on two arguments. Firstly, he transforms the water motif into a metaphor (vv. 10,11: "living water," τὸ ὕδωρ [τὸ] ζῶν). Then, he links the gift of water to his person. As the many misunderstandings in the dialogue show, this strategy is a failure. Jesus' attempt fails because, as we see in verse 15, the woman does not integrate the hoped-for metaphorical transfer, but rather she sees in Jesus' water solely a magical water that relieves her of her daily work (cf. v. 15). In other words, she remains stuck in a system based on immediate facts (having a bucket to draw water [v. 11]; having an ancestor who has already given her everything [v. 12]) and, as such, Jesus' message is neutralised.

Nevertheless, the reader notes a first change. At verse 7, Jesus says "give me something to drink"; at verse 15, the woman retorts, "Lord, give me this water." The change has taken place within the system, but it still induces a change in the recognition of Jesus. If, at verse 9, she was the wrong person in the wrong place, here she reveals her social skills: Jesus is recognised as the one who is giving a water that quenches thirst for all time. But the indirect revelation that should have led to the discovery of Jesus' true identity fails. For the Johannine Jesus, therefore, the problem of this unsuccessful recognition needs to be overcome.

The second part (vv. 16–19) describes the process that allows Jesus to overcome the failure of the water dialogue.[24] How can he help the Samaritan woman move beyond

[23] On the water metaphor, see Marion Moser, *Schriftdiskurse im Johannesevangelium: Eine narrativ-intertextuelle Analyse am Paradigma von Joh 4 und Joh 7*, WUNT 2.380 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 111–17.

[24] For the contested interpretation of the mention of the five husbands and their role in this passage, see Stefan Schapdick, *Auf dem Weg in den Konflikt: Exegetische Studien zum theologischen Profil der Erzählung vom Aufenthalt Jesu in Samarien (Joh 4, 1–42),* BBB 26 (Berlin: Philo, 2000), 171–83; Zumstein, *Johannesevangelium*, 179–80.

this impasse? It would, of course, be mistaken for Jesus to try to overcome the difficulty with further explanation, since this would merely prolong the argumentative approach that had not worked the first time. We need then, as Watzlawick would say, a change of system. By asking the woman to go look for her husband, Jesus brings her back to her own existence.[25] She is thus confronted with a thirst for life that has never been satisfied, namely her unfulfilled existence.[26] The words "you are a prophet" (v. 19) reveal the success of this new approach. Seeing herself for who she is, the woman asks the questions about true adoration, that is to say, about the relationship with God. This step, that had not been taken in the first dialogue (connecting the living water to the divine revelation rather than to God), can now be made.

In the third part (vv. 20–26), the Samaritan woman begins her dialogue with Jesus on a new basis. Confronted with someone she now understands to be a prophet (v. 19, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ), she asks about the true relationship between man and God, in other words, the question of true adoration.[27] She begins with a piece of common knowledge that links God to a particular sacred place and asks for clarification about where God's presence manifests itself in this world.

This classical approach reveals itself to be inappropriate, so Jesus immediately sets about reframing the question, which leads to a paradigm shift. The presence of God is not linked to a place but to a decisive moment in history (v. 21, "a time is coming" [ἔρχεται ὥρα]), one which depends on God's initiative (= the Spirit as a manifestation of God) and the manifestation of the truth (= the Revealer; cf. 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life"). The woman does not grasp the significance of Jesus' declaration, but interprets it in *bonam partem* by relating the arrival of the decisive hour to the coming of the Messiah. In other words, the woman progresses along the cognitive path proposed by the Johannine Jesus, but she is not able herself to make the transition from the traditional expectation of the Messiah coming at the end of time to the Johannine suggestion that the Messiah is already present, here and now, in the person of Jesus (historicising of eschatology). This unexpected possibility is made clear by the christological revelation in verse 26 (ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι). As throughout the process of recognition, it is the Johannine Jesus who brings about the ultimate shift that allows the woman to reach the goal. The thetic declaration "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι) has the same function as the monologue from chapter three.

From the aborted recognition in verse 18, the reader moves on to a successful recognition. Verse 28 attests the woman's acceptance of Jesus' claim. By abandoning her

[25] Cf. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 138: "Dass Jesus der Frau ihre eigene Situation enthüllt, ist für sie den Anlass, in ihm den Offenbarer zu ahnen. Der Offenbarer wird nur erkannt, indem der Mensch sich selbst durchsichtig wird; Gottes- und Selbsterkenntnis vollziehen sich in Einem."

[26] The mention of the Samaritan woman's husbands is not meant to demonstrate her immorality but rather the incompletion of her life project, namely her unquenched thirst for life (see Bultmann, *Johannes*, 138; Theobald, *Johannes*, 318). The symbolic interpretation of the husbands and their number introduces more problems than it solves (see e.g., Schnelle, *Johannes*, 124).

[27] See the use of the verb προσκυνεῖν at vv. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

pitcher, which symbolises the world she occupied previously, and by making herself a messenger of Jesus' offer, she shows that she wants to share the discovery that is the recognition of Jesus, a discovery that has transformed her life. From this point on – one needs only to compare her behaviour here with that from the beginning of the text – she recognises Jesus in his true identity.[28]

The recognition process narrated in this text is marked by its asymmetric character. Jesus introduces a series of system changes (the husbands, the place and moment of God's presence) so that his interlocutor can arrive at the desired goal. From a Christian point of view, the path to recognition cannot be Socratic, but rather only asymmetric.[29]

The transformative effect of this revelation unfolds in two ways: firstly, in the behaviour of the woman who becomes a witness and then invites her co-religionists to discover Jesus;[30] then, in the faith of the latter who, based on the woman's testimony, gain access to a direct and full relationship with Jesus. Their confession of faith (v. 42, "this one is truly the Saviour of the world" [οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου]) confers upon Jesus' time in Samaria its final dimension: his revelation is no longer linked to specific places, but is rather universal.

The dialogue between Jesus and his disciples (vv. 31–38) reveals the future of the revelation.[31] Jesus' work in Samaria, namely that of the revelation, is indeed an eschatological occurrence – the time of the harvest has arrived (v. 35). This is not a conclusion, however, but rather a beginning. It is the beginning of a universal mission in which the disciples are invited to participate. "The living water" – that which is necessary for life – "the adoration of the Father in spirit and truth" has become part of a universal project.

3. Conclusion

Without denying or rejecting the distinct characteristics of each narrative, we should recognise that John 3 and John 4 exploit the same rhetorical model. To support this idea, we can note the following four points.

First, in both narratives, two distinct moments follow one another. In the initial phase, whether it be via the motif of a "new birth" or that of "living water," the Johan-

[28] On this contested point (what is the exact nature of the Samaritan woman's faith?), see my conclusion below.

[29] In a Socratic dialogue, the disciple is invited, thanks to his conversation with the teacher, to find by himself and within himself the response to the question(s) asked. In a dialogue with Jesus, the disciple is invited to know himself thanks to a word that comes from the outside (*extra nos*), a process that he could not have undertaken alone.

[30] Cf. Marion Moser, "Die zweifelnde Samaritanerin: Diskussion über die Interpretation von Joh 4,29," *Hermeneutische Blätter* I/2 (2011): 33–38; Schapdick, *Auf dem Weg in den Konflikt*, 255–60.

[31] On this passage, see the study by R. Alan Culpepper, "John 4:35–38: Harvest Proverbs in the Context of John's Mission Theology," in the present volume.

nine Jesus relies on a process of *indirect revelation*. He unveils his offer of life without revealing himself directly. The first part of the narrative, embedded in the literary form of a dialogue, primarily treats anthropological or soteriological questions. The key question is that of a human being's access to a plentiful life.

In the second phase, the Johannine Jesus undergoes a shift and sets up a process of *direct revelation*. Now it is the unveiling of his identity that becomes the focus. Yet this unveiling is subject to several precise conditions. Both in John 3 and John 4, Jesus' interlocutor is unable of their own accord to discover who Jesus is and what he is bringing. Only the Johannine Jesus himself is capable of revealing his true identity, either in a revelatory speech (3:13–21) or a declaration (4:26). This is thus an asymmetric revelation; just one of the speakers possesses the crucial knowledge, which can only be received as a gift.

The shift from an indirect to a direct revelation invites two observations. First, both narratives suggest a cognitive trajectory that involves passing from elementary knowledge (or lack of knowledge) to authentic knowledge. Nicodemus, the "master of Israel" (ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ) must admit that his knowledge does not allow him fully to appreciate Jesus' offer (see the repeated πῶς δύναται at v. 4 and v. 9). He is faced with a type of knowledge that goes beyond his comprehension. Similarly, the Samaritan woman has a basic knowledge of the patriarch Jacob (v. 12), places of worship (v. 20), and the Messiah (v. 25), but she is incapable of transitioning to complete knowledge without the aid of Jesus.

Secondly, it is interesting to note that illumination of the human condition, that is, the question of salvation, comes in both instances before the christological revelation. In other words, clarification of the human condition and clarification of the identity of Jesus are linked. This dialectic relationship between the two types of knowledge is typical of the cognitive path put forward in the exchanges.

The second important element common to our two narratives is the language of change. The phenomenon of discontinuity in the two dialogues is indeed remarkable. This is not a discursive model or an argument that is responding to another argument at the same level. Jesus and his interlocutors do not share the same belief system. In support of that observation, we can note the use of two literary processes. On the one hand – and this is true for both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman – Jesus never responds directly to his conversational partner but seems consistently to be out of step with regard to their words. There is a succession of exchanges where the interlocutor is made to shift their stance in order to remove the gap introduced by the responses of the Johannine Jesus. On the other hand, two literary techniques well represented in the Johannine literature appear also in our sequences, namely misunderstanding and irony. The overlap between these two rhetorical figures is that, beyond an immediately recognisable meaning, one must look also for a second meaning. Dialogue in our passages does not flow in the expected fashion, but rather is characterised by breaks and ruptures. These show that the Johannine Jesus is not teaching

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