Which side of the line?: a study of the characterisation of non-Jewish characters in the gospel of john

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ABSTRACT

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A study of the characterisation of non-Jewish characters in the Gospel of John
Elizabeth Danna

The theme of κρίσις which runs through the gospel has been taken account of in studying the characterisation of "the Jews," but never yet of non-Jewish characters. The method set out covers all the important aspects of characterisation, including both anthropological and rhetorical interests. This method is then applied to the gospel's non-Jewish characters. The Samaritan woman's faith is tentative and hesitating at best; she sees Jesus only as a prophet. Her faith is ambiguous, but not ineffective. The ambiguity in her faith is resolved by the townspeople's. The title Saviour of the World indicates that Jesus has transcended expectations as he inaugurates a new worship which transcends all the old racial and geographical barriers.

The pericope of the Greeks is brief, but important, for their arrival signals the coming of Jesus' "hour". At the moment when Jewish rejection of Jesus is becoming complete, a group of Gentiles ask to become part of the redefined people of God. The pericope is, significantly, brief and open-ended.

The Johannine Pilate wants to avoid taking a stand for Jesus, and so is forced to take a stand against him. He has the authority simply to drop the charges against Jesus. But he is too afraid of the Jewish leaders to drop the charges, and not sufficiently perceptive or clever to get around the Jewish leaders by more oblique means. More than that, his indecisiveness and fear lead him to become a *theomachos*. "The Jews" force Pilate to give in by appealing to his patron-client relationship with Caesar. He is outmanoeuvred and shamed by "the Jews", and his actions after the trial are an attempt to salvage some gain from the afffair, and revenge his humiliation. While political considerations are not absent from these passages, what is in the forefront is not Roman-Jewish relations but Pilate's reaction to Jesus; where he will take his stand in the κρίσις. Here again the theme of κρίσις appears - I argue that ths theme is relevant to the characterisation of non-Jewish as well as Jewish characters.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Diagrams

List of Tables

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List of Abbreviations and Works Frequently Cited

Barrett, *St. John*	C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*
Beasley-Murray, *John*	G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*
BibInter	*Biblical Interpretation*
Brown, *Death*	R.E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*
Brown, *John*	--, *The Gospel According to John*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
Bull. John Rylands Lib	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
Carson, *John*	D.A. Carson, *The Gospel of John*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
Culpepper, *Anatomy*	R.A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*
ExpTimes	The Expository Times
FoiVie	*Foi et Vie*
Hoskyns,*Fourth Gospel*	E.C. Hoskyns ed. F.N. Davey, *The Fourth Gospel*
HeyJourn	*The Heythrop Journal*
IBS	*Irish Biblical Studies*
JBL	*Journal of Bibical Literature*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
Lagrange, S. *Jean*	J.-M. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Jean*
Lightfoot, *St. John*	R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary*
Lindars, *John*	Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*
LSJ	H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, ed. H.S. Jones, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*
Macgregor, *John*	G.H.C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John*
Marsh, *St. John*	John Marsh, *The Gospel of St. John*
Morris, *John*	Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*
NouvRevThéol	*Nouveau Revue Théologique*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RSR	*Recherch des Sciences Réligieuses*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*	J.N. Sanders ed. B.A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*
Schnackenburg, *St. John*	Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*
SciEsprit	*Science et Esprit*
SEAsiaJournTheol	*Southeast Asia Journal of Theology*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
Stibbe, *John*	M.W.G. Stibbe, *John: A Readings Commentary*
Stibbe ed., *Literature*	-- , ed., *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives*
Stibbe, *Storyteller*	-- , *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel*
TDNT	G. Kittel ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
ThLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TheolToday	*Theology Today*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In every field of research there are trends. Ideas and methods of study wax and wane in influence. This also applies to the field of gospel studies. For much of this century historical-critical research was the order of the day, and little attention was given to the literary aspects of the gospels. But in the last two and a half decades, literary research has come to the forefront in gospel studies.

Two explanations have been offered for this trend. The first may be said to have come from the theological academy, and the second from the church. The first explanation for the rise of literary criticism is that it filled a scholarly gap. By the middle of this century, biblical scholars had begun to realise that there were certain questions which historical-critical methods could not answer. Historical-critical methods are valid for answering questions of the formation and transmission of the text, and of its background in the life of Jesus and the church. But they cannot answer questions relating to "the literary meaning and impact of the texts themselves."[1]

> The major limitation of [historical] approaches...is that they fail to take seriously the narrative character of the Gospels...The historical-critical method attempted to interpret not the stories but the historical circumstances behind them...The desire for a more literary approach to the Gospels, then, was first expressed by historical critics themselves, in recognition of the limitations of an exclusively historical approach. The prevailing sense was not that historical criticism had failed or that its methods had become invalid, but that something else should be done.[2]

The second reason for the rise of literary criticism came from the church. The results obtained by historical criticism had led many churchpeople, lay and clergy alike,

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[1]Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism* (Minneapolis, 1990) p. 2. Cf. the similar remarks made by William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1969) p. 1, and Brodie, *John*, pp. 5f.

[2]Powell, *op. cit.*, pp. 2f.

to feel that they could no longer believe that the gospel accounts were historically accurate records of the life of Jesus. It seemed as if a separation was developing between the church and its Scriptures. Now most biblical scholars are also churchpeople. The study of the Scriptures is thus for them more than an intellectual exercise; there is a faith dimension to it as well. There was therefore good reason for these believing scholars to search for a new way to make the gospels relevant for twentieth-century readers. The path to relevance was found in the study of the gospel texts as texts, focusing on their literary properties.[3] Again, this does not mean that literary criticism is somehow intrinsically more valuable than historical criticism, only that it provides ways of appreciating the text which historical criticism does not.

Literary criticism and the Gospel of John

Literary criticism is concerned with several aspects of the text: vocabulary, context, structure, form, plot, literary devices and characterisation. It is this last aspect which will be the focus of this present study. In the next chapter we shall discuss literary criticism as a method, and theory of characterisation. But before proceeding further, it will be useful to review what has been said about characterisation in the Gospel of John, with a view to asking, "Why a new look at this subject?"

"The Jews"

The first group to which we shall turn our attention is "the Jews." Though they will not be the focus of this study, it may be useful to look briefly at what has been said about their characterisation. "The primary concern of recent scholarship on ["the Jews"] has been to distinguish various groups designated by the term Ἰουδαῖος in

[3]Cf. Beardslee, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-81; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 235-37.

John."[4] One way of dealing with this question is to consider how to translate the phrase οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. As this becomes a question of whom, historically "the Jews" represent, rather than their portrayal in the narrative, I shall not concern myself very much with that question here.

Bultmann[5] and Grässer[6] argue that "the Jews" is a cipher for "the disbelieving world." Gutbrod[7] suggests that "the Jews" are those who "oppose Jesus on the grounds of Jewish religion,"[8] i.e. because of his apparently iconoclastic attitude toward Jewish laws and customs. "Οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι is a name for those who reject the claim of Jesus to lordship, and who remain Jews because they do so."[9]

Others, such as C.J. Cuming[10] and Malcolm Lowe,[11] assert that "οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι" is always a geographical reference, to be translated, "the Judeans." And indeed this could be its meaning at 7:1, where Jesus goes to Galilee to avoid the Ἰουδαῖοι, and at 11:8, where Jesus (in Perea) says, "Let us go into Judea again," and the disciples remind him that the Ἰουδαῖοι had tried to stone him. But there are difficulties. The Bread-of-Life discussion of 6:25-59 takes place in Capernaum (vv. 24,59), but the people with whom Jesus is talking are twice referred to as οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (vv. 41,52). Here Lowe resorts to the convenient solution of a redactor who uses the word differently from the original author.[12] But the Gospel of John is such a literary and theological unity that even those scholars who subscribe to theories of redaction do not agree on which verses are redactional additions. This weakens an argument based on a theory of redaction.

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[4]Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 125.
[5]*John*, p. 86.
[6]"Die Antijudaische Polemik im Johannesevangelium," *NTS* 11(1964-65) pp. 74-89
[7]"*Ioudaios, Israel, Hebraios* in the New Testament," *TDNT*, 3:375-91.
[8]*Ibid.*, p. 379.
[9]*Ibid.*
[10]"The Jews in the Fourth Gospel," *ExpT* 60 (1948-49) pp. 290-92.
[11]"Who Were the ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ?" *NovT* 18 (1976) pp. 101-30.
[12]*Ibid.*, pp. 117, 120.

Lowe counts thirty-six uses of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι referring to opponents of Jesus[13] in a Judean context, and only two in a Galilean context (these are 6:41,52, which I have already discussed). This is true, but it must be remembered that most of this gospel has its setting in or near Jerusalem. Therefore it is not surprising that most of Jesus' debates with his opponents take place in Jerusalem, and that most of the gospel's references to those opponents are to be found in a Jerusalem context.

The greatest difficulty in translating οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as "the Judeans" lies with the recurring phrases τὸ πάσχα/ ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.[14] According to Lowe, if these phrases, which John did not invent,

> were already current in the long period when Judaism was merely the religion of Judea in the strict sense (and before that the religion of the kingdom of Judah) then they would have meant "feast/Passover of the Judeans."[15]

> In fact the chief feasts of Judaism continued to be celebrated near a Judean temple run by Judeans, so that they were still in a sense peculiarly Judean feasts.[16]

It is true that these feasts took place in Jerusalem. But all Jews, no matter where they lived, were expected to come to Jerusalem for them.[17]

Lowe says that the expression ἡ ἑορτὴ/ τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων is used only when a character travels to Jerusalem for the feast in question. If they are already there, the full expression is not used. The only exception to this is at 6:4, where the full formula is used, but no journey from the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem takes place. Here again Lowe resorts to the convenient solution of a redactor using the word Ἰουδαῖος differently from the original author.[18] In general the theory that "οἱ

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[13]At least, this is what he seems to mean; he is not clear on this point.
[14]2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55.
[15]*Ibid.*, p. 117.
[16]*Ibid.*, n. 52.
[17]Ex. 12:47; 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16; cf. Ex. 34:24. For an indication that this was still so in the first century AD, see Philo, *De Spec. Leg.* 1.68-70.
[18]*Art. cit.*, pp. 116f.

Ἰουδαῖοι" has a strictly geographical reference, and should always be translated "the Judeans," seems to me to be unsubstantiated.[19]

Urban C. von Wahlde[20] concludes a survey of recent scholarship on the identity of "the Jews" by saying,

> Although a current trend in scholarship is to see the Johannine 'Jews' as comprising both the common people and the authorities, upon close examination we found that there is little or no reason for seeing the Johannine Jews as common people except for the case of 6.41,52.[21]

It can be seen that all of these scholars look at the question of who "the Jews" are from a historical angle. Let us now turn to what has been said about this question from a literary angle, considering how "the Jews" are portrayed in the Johannine narrative. In his chapter on "Characters," Culpepper[22] discusses "the Jews," the Pharisees and the crowd together, in the same section. We have seen that much scholarship on "the Jews" has revolved around distinguishing John's different uses of the term. But as Culpepper points out, "the amount of discussion generated by John's varied use of the designation shows that the gospel does not attempt to distinguish and separate these groups; all are called Ἰουδαῖοι."[23]

For Culpepper, this fact indicates that they have a representative role: "the Jews are closely associated with the response of unbelief."[24] This response is explored in the discussions and debates of the first half of the gospel. The reasons for it "are

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[19]An interesting variation on this theory is that of Robert Fortna ["Theological Use of Locale in the Fourth Gospel," *ATR* SuppSer 3 (March, 1974), cited in Urban C. von Wahlde, "The Johannine 'Jews': A Critical Survey," *NTS* 28 (1982) pp. 33-60. The reference here is to p. 36.] Fortna argues that Ἰουδαῖος has a geographical reference, and that the locality referred to symbolises a particular attitude. To Fortna, the dominant attitude of the Jewish groups (he includes passages referring to the Φαρισαῖοι, ἀρχιερεῖς, ἄρχοντες and ὄχλος in his study, as well as pericopae dealing with individuals) is unbelief and hostility toward Jesus. But Fortna also sees that there is division among "the Jews," and some of them believe. This division is significant, as we shall see below.

[20]*Art. cit.*

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 54. In fact as I shall say below, I found a general agreement that "the Jews" used in a negative sense refers to the authorities.

[22]*Anatomy*, pp. 101-48.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 126.

[24]*Ibid.*

explained not in terms of their 'Jewishness' but in universally applicable characteristics."[25] "The Jews" have neither heard nor seen the Father, and do not have his love in themselves; they seek not his glory but their own. It is for this reason that they are not willing to come to Jesus and gain life, or to receive him.

> An even more basic reason emerges later: they are from a different world order. They live on the wrong side of John's dualism: 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of the world, I am not of this world'(8:23).[26]

They are the opposite of Jesus in that they have neither heard nor seen the Father, and the opposite of the disciples in their response to Jesus. Their misunderstandings can be said to arise from misdirected love: love of darkness rather than light (3:19-21), of human glory rather than the glory of God (5:41-44; 12:43;cf.7:18; 8:50,54), of one's own life (12:25). But as Culpepper ends by noting, there is division among "the Jews," and some of them do believe.[27] This means that they are perhaps not so monolithic a group as Culpepper suggests,[28] which is significant, as we shall see below. It is also the main flaw in Culpepper's argument. He, like the other scholars I have discussed, fails to see the significance of the fact that some of "the Jews" believe. This means that they cannot be characterised monolithically.

By Culpepper's count, the Pharisees are mentioned nineteen times in John's Gospel.[29] "The Pharisees emerge as the leaders of the Jews."[30] If John depicts God as

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[25]*Ibid.*, p. 129. That these characteristics are not culture- or religion-specific is in my opinion an indication that John is not anti-Semitic.
[26]*Ibid.*
[27]All this *ibid.*, pp. 126-30.
[28]See what I have quoted above, from p. 126.
[29]*Ibid.*, p. 130
[30]*Ibid.*.

the one who sends,[31] then the Pharisees are rival senders (1:19,24; 5:33; 7:32; 18:24). Culpepper notes that

> following 9:17 they blend with the Jews (cf. 9:16,18 and 9:40;10:19)...By means of this pattern of characterization, the evangelist lays the blame for much of the Jews' opposition to Jesus at the Pharisees' feet. If the unbelief of the world is represented by the Jews, then in similar fashion the hostility of the Jews toward Jesus is concentrated in the Pharisees.[32]

By Culpepper's count, the crowd appears twenty times in the Gospel of John, eighteen of these in chapters 6,7, and 12 (the other two references are at 5:13 and 11:42).[33]

> This very concentration places them in the controversy over Jesus' signs. Although we expect references to the crowd in the passion narrative, there are none.[34]

Like "the Jews," the crowd is often divided over Jesus; some believe, others do not (7:12,20,31,40,44). But the Johannine characterisation of the crowd is not as hostile as his characterisation of "the Jews." The Pharisees look down on the crowd as not knowing the law (7:49), but Jesus prays for their sake at Lazarus' tomb (11:42).[35]

> The crowd is best characterized by the final references to it. The scriptures have not been clear to them (12:34); they hear the voice of God and some say it thundered but others say they heard the voice of an angel (12:29)...The crowd represents the struggle of those who are open to believing, but neither the scriptures or the signs lead them to authentic faith. They are the world God loves (3:16).[36]

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[31] An idea occurring forty times in John (*Ibid.*, p. 113, where Culpepper also cites the observation of M.C. Tenney ["Topics From the Gospel of John. Part I: The Person of the Father," *Interpretation* 34 (1980) pp. 34-80. The reference here is to p. 43] "that the word *sent* occurs five times in each of the main confrontations with the Jews (chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8) and twice in 20:21").

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 131. So also J.W. Bowker, "The Origin and Purpose of St. John's Gospel," *NTS* 11(1964-65) pp. 398-408. Bowker makes the interesting suggestion that John 1-8 deals with Jesus' relationship to Judaism (his origins and identity), and John 9-12 deals with the relationship of the disciple of Jesus to Judaism (can a disciple of Jesus remain attached to the synagogue?).

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.* The last point is noteworthy, as it represents a difference between the Johannine and Synoptic passion narratives.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

[36] *Ibid.*

The only literary-critical commentary on the Gospel of John to date is the *Readings* commentary by Mark W.G. Stibbe. According to Stibbe, "the Jews" are repeatedly characterised as "the *theomachos*[*sic*];" in their opposition to Jesus they are fighting against God.[37] At 5:31-47 they are criticised as inadequate readers.[38] For all their study of the Scriptures, they have not understood them.

> They have, according to Jesus, spent centuries delving into the details of the surface meaning [of the Scriptures] without ever reaching the real depths of their writings."[39]

Their main concern is for the Law, a fact stressed by the narrator at 5:16,18.[40]

> They see in this sign not the healing , liberating power of God at work in Jesus but the sin of one who has broken the Law. The Jews are presented here as bound to the Law. Because they cannot see beyond the Law, they oppose Jesus.[41]

In chapter 7 the opponents of Jesus are named as the Pharisees; their disdain for the common people is an attitude opposite to that of Jesus.[42] The Pharisees come across as backstage operators, who send the Temple guards for Jesus rather than appearing themselves.[43] At 7:11,13,33 "the Jews" also seem to be agents of the Pharisees.[44] Through much of chapter 8 the dispute between Jesus and "the Jews" revolves around the subject of paternity.

> [T]he relationship between the devil and the Jews is a sinister imitation of the relationship between the Father and the Son.[45]

It is often said that John uses οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in three senses: negative,[46] neutral,[47] and positive.[48] There is general agreement that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι used in a negative sense

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[37]Cf. Stibbe's comments on 5:1-15 (*John*, p. 75); 10:22-39 (*John*, p. 118); and *Storyteller*, p. 138, where he describes "the Jews" as "the *theomachus* of the Fourth Gospel."
[38]Stibbe, *John*, pp. 80f.
[39]*Ibid.*, p. 81.
[40]*Ibid.*
[41]*Ibid.*, p. 206.
[42]Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 120
[43]So also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 130.
[44]Stibbe, *John*, p. 93.
[45]*Ibid.*, p. 103.

refers not to the entire Jewish people but to the authorities, especially those in Jerusalem.[49] Dunn, however, points out that it is methodologically incorrect to distinguish the negative uses of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι from the rest as if one use were Johannine and the others not. What connects the different senses of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Gospel of John is the theme of κρίσις and σχίσμα.[50] This is a key Johannine theme, and it is one which will also be of significance for this present study. The coming of Jesus has meant a separation of humanity into those who respond positively to Jesus and those who do not.[51] This is most clearly illustrated by Jesus' encounters with "the Jews" throughout the first twelve chapters of the gospel. The first encounters are amicable; but in chapter 5 opposition to Jesus arises, and it intensifies through until the end of chapter 12.[52] At the same time, however, there are Jews who believe in Jesus.[53] So it cannot be said that the Johannine characterisation of "the Jews" is entirely negative.

> John is not anti-Semitic; the evangelist is condemning not race or people but opposition to Jesus.[54]

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[46]Forty times out of seventy-one uses (the figure seventy-one includes four uses of the singular Ἰουδαῖος). I use here the list in Dunn *art. cit.*, pp. 21,23.

[47]2:6, 13; 4:9b; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 19:40,42 (references to Jewish customs and feasts); 3:1,22,25; 18:33,35,39; 19:3,19,21 (national designation).

[48]4:9a, 22. In a later chapter I shall ask whether it is significant that both of these uses occur during Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan, i.e. a non-Jew.

[49]So e.g. Brown, *John*, p. LXXI; Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. CXXXI, who believes that John uses "the Jews" as a substitute for the Synoptic phrase "the chief priests and Pharisees;" Morris, who says that John uses "the Jews" to mean "the Jewish nation as hostile to Jesus. It does not necessarily denote the whole nation" (*John*, p.131).

[50]James D. G. Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," in Dunn ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135* (Tübingen, 1992) pp 177-211; the reference here is to p. 197. This theme was first noticed by C.H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, see esp. pp. 352 ff.

[51]Cf. 1:11-13; 3:18-21;12:31-43.

[52]So also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 126-28.; Dunn, *art. cit.*, pp. 24f.

[53]7:31; 8:31;9:1-39; 10:41f.;11:45f.;12:11.

[54]Brown, *John*, p. LXXII, who points out that this is the main point of the Johannine attack on the Jewish leaders, not hypocrisy or immorality as in the Synoptics.

Representative individual Jewish characters

More scholarly attention has been paid to the characterisation of certain individual Jewish characters than to that of "the Jews" as a group. Let us now look at some of these characters and see what has been said about their characterisation.

i) John the Baptist

The first such character whom we meet is John the Baptist (1:6-8, 15, 19-34; 3:22-4:1; 5:33-35; 10:40f.). In this gospel he is never given the epithet "the Baptist:" why not? The simplest explanation may be the best - in this gospel there is no need to give John an epithet because the only other man of that name among the disciples of Jesus, John bar Zebedee, is not mentioned by name.[55] The first reference to John is the keynote for what is to follow, for John is characterised in all his appearances as the witness *par excellence* to Jesus. "The word μαρτυρία...stands...as a theme or leitmotiv"[56] in the Johannine characterisation of John.[57]

John has his own authority: he is sent from God (1:6). Jesus makes John's authority very clear when he calls John's testimony as a witness on his behalf (5:33f). Jesus does this, not because he requires another's testimony to establish his identity in his own mind, but as evidence which his interlocutors may find convincing, so that they may believe.[58] It is because John is sent that his work is significant.[59] It is also perhaps because he is sent that he is aware of, and accepts, his subordination to Jesus. His disciples are not pleased to see him being eclipsed, but he reminds them that he told them that it would be so (3:26-28). It is perhaps also because John is sent from

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[55]So Carson, *John*, p. 120.
[56]Haenchen, *John 1*, p. 143. Haenchen is speaking of 1:19-28, but witness is the key theme in all this gospel's references to John.
[57]So also Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge, 1984) p. 105.
[58]So Carson, *John*, p. 260.
[59]Barrett, *St. John*, p. 133.

God that his testimony is effective, even after he himself is gone from the narrative. "His witness abides (5:30-36; 10:40-42), but John slips off the stage. His death is not even mentioned, so unimportant is his person."[60] The accuracy of what John says is borne out by events, and this validates both John's ministry and Jesus': "John did no sign, but everything he said about this man is true," the people say (10:42). "No witness could have a better epitaph."[61]

John is characterised in ways that contrast him with Jesus/ the Logos. The Logos is Θεός, but John is ἄνθρωπος. The Logos is *with* God (1:1), but John is sent *from* God (1:6). The Logos/ Jesus is the Light (1:4; 8:13; 9:5) to which John testifies (1:7). John is specifically said not to be the Light (1:8) The Logos existed in the beginning (1:1f) but this is not so of John (hence the ἐγένετο of 1:6 and the ἦλθεν of 1:7).[62]

There is, however, one interesting characteristic which John, in 1:19-28, shares with Jesus - elusiveness. Jesus in this gospel frequently engages in discontinuous dialogue, baffling disciples and opponents alike with *non sequiturs* and obscure responses. At 1:19-28 John does the same thing, answering his interrogators with two non-answers (two "I am not"'s) and an obscure Scripture quotation. This characterisation

> should be seen as an anticipation of the elusiveness of Jesus and as an indication of the unanimity between the Baptist and the Messiah. The question, "who are you?" will not only be asked of the Baptist (as it is here), it will also be the key question addressed to Jesus in the Gospel.[63]

In short, John is characterised as the exemplary witness, who points others to Jesus and diverts attention from himself to the one concerning whom he is sent to testify.

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[60]Wink, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
[61]Carson, *John*, p. 400.
[62]*Ibid.*, pp. 87f.
[63]Stibbe, *John*, p. 33.

ii) Nathanael

Nathanael (1:43-51; 21:2) makes his first appearance shortly after John makes his first appearance. Nathanael's is the last, and the longest, of the Johannine call narratives. Raymond Collins[64] stresses the characterisation of Nathanael as a true Israelite.

> In the tradition of the Fourth Gospel, that which is true is not merely authentic; it is also the fulfilment of that which has been foreshadowed and promised of old.[65]

In other words, Nathanael is a model Jew; he is what the Jews were intended to be. Nathanael can be seen as a true Israelite because his confession is twofold - he confesses Jesus as both King of Israel and Son of God, and leaves neither title out.[66] According to Collins, Nathanael's characterisation stands in contrast to that of "the Jews." Nathanael's location under the fig tree may be associated with the study of Scripture,[67] and he comes to Jesus; "the Jews" study the Scriptures but refuse to believe in Jesus to whom the Scriptures point (5:39f.). There is no guile in Nathanael, but "the Jews" are the offspring of the devil who has no truth in him (8:44). "The Jews" do not understand who Jesus is (8:25), but Nathanael does.[68] With respect to 1:51, Collins says,

> What the true and believing Israelite perceives is the abiding and permanent union of the early[69] Son of Man with the heavenly world.[70]

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[64]"The Representative Figures of the Fourth Gospel - 1," *Downside Review* 94 (1976) pp. 26-46.
[65]*Ibid.*, p. 35. Collins gives the individual characters in the gospel great importance; he says that we can understand the gospel only when we understand its individual characters (*ibid.*, p. 26.). It is true that John's individuals are important; but I question whether it is right to exclude groups when interpreting. A group can also function as a character.
[66]*Ibid.*, p. 35.
[67] Barrett (*St. John*, p. 185), Carson (*John*, p. 161), and Brown (*John*, 1:83) cite *Ecclesiates Rabbah* 5.15 (where a story is told about R. Aqiba) for this view. But as Carson (*ibid.*) points out, the emphasis is on Jesus' supernatural knowledge rather than on what Nathanael is doing.
[68]All this *ibid.*, p. 35.
[69]*Sic*; I suspect that this should be "earthly."
[70]*Ibid.*, p. 36.

I find myself in substantial agreement with Collins, with one proviso. "The Jews" with whom Nathanael is a contrast are those who do not believe in Jesus. As we have seen, not all those designated by this term do not believe.

iii) Nicodemus

Much scholarly attention has been paid to the figure of Nicodemus [3:1-15(21?); 7:50;19:39]. Nicodemus is an "inveterate literalist,"[71] which is a sign that he is from below rather than above, and therefore cannot understand Jesus' teaching. "He is a representative of official Judaism,"[72] probably a member of the Sanhedrin.[73] For Collins, Nicodemus "has become for the Evangelist a type of the unbeliever."[74] The darkness of the night in which Nicodemus comes to Jesus is symbolic as well as temporal: the encounter takes place in the darkness of misunderstanding rather than the light of revelation. According to Collins, Nicodemus' misunderstanding

> is expressive of a lack of faith...Nicodemus has not received the gift of belief. He does not represent those for whom signs are but a step toward belief; rather he represents those for whom the signs are the end as well as the beginning...As such he remains a leading man among "the Jews" - a type of unbelief.[75]

It is true that Nicodemus' meeting with Jesus in chapter 3 is surrounded by darkness and misunderstanding. But do things remain that way? We shall see that the question of whether Nicodemus remains an unbeliever is open to debate.

F.P. Cottrell[76] examines the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus using the principles of discourse theory, "not as a written and artificially contrived text but as

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[71]Stibbe, *John*, p. 54.
[72]*Ibid.*
[73]*Ibid.*, citing Bultmann, *John*, p. 132.
[74]*Ibid.*, p. 37.
[75]*Ibid.* A similar negative opinion is expressed by Marinus de Jonge, "Nicodemus and Jesus: Some Observations on Misunderstanding and Understanding in the Fourth Gospel," *Bull. John Rylands Lib.* 53 (1970-71) pp. 337-59, who argues that Nicodemus remains a signs-believer.
[76]"The Nicodemus Conversation: A Fresh Appraisal," *ExpTimes* 96 (1985) pp 237-42.

a record of a historical encounter and an actual conversation."[77] According to Cottrell, Nicodemus is to be associated with the ἀνθρώποι of 2:25, as indicated by the adversative δὲ of 3:1.[78]

> *Their* belief was inadequate; so was that of *this* man, Nicodemus, but John will demonstrate through his three references to Nicodemus in the fabric of the Gospel that his faith grew into a personal commitment to Jesus.[79]

By starting the conversation off, Nicodemus by implication asserts his social superiority to Jesus,[80] but Jesus will not allow him to get away with this. At v. 3 Jesus takes the initiative and offers a new range of topics for conversation, thus bringing Nicodemus' assumed superiority into question.[81] Nicodemus, his pride offended, decides not to play along; through the rest of the conversation he is deliberately obtuse and unco-operative.[82] There is no reason why Nicodemus should misunderstand Jesus' words about rebirth.[83]

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[77]*Ibid.*, p. 238. Cottrell believes that what John gives us is a summary of the conversation, giving the reader only what is necessary for understanding of the point which John wants to make.

[78]*Ibid.* Stibbe (*John*, p. 54) suggests that Nicodemus is representative of the signs-believers mentioned at 2:23-25. If the δὲ of 3:1 implies a contrast as Cottrell believes, the contrast is more likely to be with these signs-believers than with the ἀνθρώποι of 2:25, which seems to me to refer to all humanity rather than to a group. So also Carson, *John*, p. 185; Brown, *John*, 1:126f; Morris, *John*, pp. 206f.; Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 71.

[79]Cottrell, *ibid.*, emphasis original.

[80]Cottrell, *art. cit.*, p. 239.

[81]*Ibid.*, pp. 239f.

[82]*Ibid.*, p. 240; so also Morris, *John*, p. 214. This, says Cottrell, explains the rapid decrease in Nicodemus' contributions to the conversation.

[83]So also e.g. Brown, *John*, 1:139-41, Carson, *John*, p. 190. According to Stibbe, *John*, p. 54, the definite article at v.10 suggests that Nicodemus is the most prominent teacher in Israel at this time. Cottrell points out that while the Greek ἄνωθεν is ambiguous in meaning, there is no one word in Aramaic (the language in which this conversation took place) which can reproduce the ambiguity (*ibid.*, p. 240), any more than there is in English. "[I]t is clear that Jesus said 'again,' and was understood by Nicodemus to have said 'again.' Reference to John's use of anothen elsewhere (3^{31}, $19^{11,23}$) is irrelevant"(*ibid.*). It may be objected that we cannot be sure that the conversation took place in Aramaic; Wayne Meeks ["'Am I a Jew?'-Johannine Christianity and Judaism" in J. Neusner ed., *Christianity, Judaism and Other Graeco-Roman Cults* (Leiden, 1975) pp. 163-85. The reference here is to p.167], citing Morton Smith ["Aramaic Studies and the Study of the New Testament" *JBR* 26 (1958) pp. 304-13] and J.A. Fitzmeyer ["The Language of Palestine in the First Century AD," *CBQ* 32 (1970) pp. 501-31], points out that in the Palestine of Jesus' time, bilingualism and even trilingualism were common. That is not unbelievable; but it seems likely to me that a conversation between Palestinian Jews, whether they were multilingual or not, would be in Aramaic, just as a conversation between multilingual native English speakers would probably be in English.

> [Nicodemus] emerges as a Pharisee indeed, entirely sure of himself, inclined to patronize and easily disconcerted when his *amour-propre* is pierced...A man who is human enough to sulk. But a man who eventually so far forgot his injured pride as to take his place at Calvary.[84]

I find most of Cottrell's arguments convincing. They are especially appealing in that they explain things like the gradual disappearance of Nicodemus from the scene, and the plurals of vv. 2,11[85] without resorting to redactional theories which make the account nothing more than a thinly-disguised attack on certain Jewish Christians of the author's own time.[86] But I cannot agree with him when he says that νυκτὸς (3:2) is merely "a simple chronological marker."[87] It serves this function, yes, but it does more also. It symbolises the darkness of confusion and misunderstanding in which Nicodemus finds himself;[88] a darkness which he eventually leaves behind after coming to Jesus.[89] The last time we see Nicodemus, he and Joseph of Arimathea, another disciple who has kept his discipleship secret out of fear of "the Jews," are firmly and publicly on the side of Jesus - and that at a moment when the other disciples are hidden in fear behind locked doors. Nicodemus and Joseph bury Jesus, and this has been said to show their lack of faith, on the grounds that one does not hold a funeral for a man whom one believes is about to be resurrected. It is true that Nicodemus and Joseph were not expecting the resurrection - but neither were the other disciples. In summary,

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[84]Cottrell, *ibid.*, p. 241.

[85]Social conditions make it likely that both Jesus and Nicodemus were attended by their respective disciples (*ibid.*, p. 238).

[86]It is true that there are several levels of reference in John's Gospel. One of these, which tends to be devalued by historical critics, is the lifetime of the historical Jesus. In my opinion, it is a mistake to leave this level out of our interpretation.

[87]*Ibid.*, pp. 238f.

[88]So also e.g. Collins *art. cit.* p. 87; Lightfoot, *John*, p. 116; Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 186; Barrett, *John*, p. 205; Margaret Pamment, "Focus in the Fourth Gospel," *Exp. T.* 97 (1985) p. 71. This interpretation is as old as Augustine (*Homilies on the Gospel of John*, XI.5, cited by Morris, *John*, p. 211).

[89]So also J.M. Auwers, "La nuit de Nicodème (Jean 3,2;19,39) ou l'ombre du langage," *RB* 97 (1990) pp. 481-503, who believes that Nicodemus' first encounter with Jesus takes place on Passover night. His second encounter with Jesus also takes place at Passover, but during daylight, a sign that his faith is mature. Also e.g. Carson, *John*, p. 629; Hoskyns, *John*, p. 536; Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 359; Brown, *John*, 2:959f; Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 503.

Nicodemus is a "closet disciple" who eventually declares his discipleship openly, in spite of what it may cost him in terms of social position.[90]

iv) The sick man at Bethesda

In John 5 Jesus heals a sick man by the pool Bethesda.[91] The account begins like a Synoptic-type healing story, but quickly turns into a Sabbath debate, and thence into a Johannine dominical discourse. Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether the sick man is portrayed in a positive or negative way.[92] Some see the man's report to "the Jews" that it was Jesus who healed him as a positive witness. But Culpepper[93] argues convincingly that it is not so, for four reasons: first, the man tends to avoid taking responsibility in the preceding verses. Second, Jesus' warning at v.14 indicates that the man is a sinner. Third, there are formal contrasts between this passage and Jesus' first two signs, which lead individuals to belief. Finally, this pericope establishes, and begins to explain, the opposition to Jesus.

Stibbe points out that the sick man is also a poor man, because a κράββατος is a poor person's mat. This makes this man and the blind man of chapter 9 the only two

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[90] A complete discussion of this issue is outside the scope of this study. For a summary of the evidence on both sides of the question see Brown (*Death*, 2:1265-68), who concludes that Nicodemus becomes a full-fledged disciple. This is the majority view (*Ibid*, 2:1266).

[91] MS. readings of the name vary, but this form seems to be the most likely to be original; so e.g. Brown, *John*, 1:206f.; Morris, *John*, p. 300f.

[92] Positive: Staley, whom I shall discuss below; Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 140, who notes the man's report at v.15; he tells "the Jews" that Jesus was the one who healed him. "*Si le miraculé aurait voulu dénoncer Jésus, ou seulement s'excuser, il aurait dit: Voilá celui qui m'a donné l'ordre de porter mon grabat.*" This makes the man not hostile to Jesus, but not perceptive enough to gauge the hostility of Jesus' opponents. Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:209, where Brown refers to the man's "obtuseness" and "persistent naïveté." Negative: e.g. Carson, *John*, p. 243; Morris, *John*, pp. 306f. But Morris (*John*, p. 306 n. 37) points out that the man himself is in danger of being executed for Sabbath-breaking, and could be seen as acting in self-defence.

[93] "John 5.1-18 - A Sample of Narrative-Critical Commentary" in J.D. Kaestli, J.M. Poffet and J. Zumstein eds., *La communauté johannique et son histoire* (Geneva, 1990). Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 193-207. The reference here is to pp. 204f, where Culpepper also points out that the reader is not informed until after the healing that it has taken place on the Sabbath, a fact which forces a re-evaluation of what may seem like a positive situation.

characters in John's Gospel who are socially marginalised.[94] Though his portrait is not entirely sympathetic, he is distinguished from the hostile "Jews," although he himself is surely Jewish.[95]

Staley[96] draws attention to the ambiguities in the man's character which are brought out "by paying close attention to the sequence of sentences and the gradual accumulation of information and responses."[97] At first the man seems weak and unwilling to help himself. But then, after the healing, the narrator says that the healing took place on the Sabbath (v. 9), a fact which makes the reader re-evaluate the situation. Perhaps the man was right to hesitate; perhaps Jesus was wrong to tell the man to carry his mat on the Sabbath.[98] Staley also notes that at v. 11, the man does not reveal Jesus' name to "the Jews" - he describes him only as "the one who made me well."

> Now, at this point in the story the reader has no idea that the healed man doesn't know who his benefactor is...Thus, his response...could simply be read as juxtaposing the legal authority of "the Jews" and the authority of a charismatic healer,[99]

whose power to heal also gives him the power to abrogate the Sabbath law (cf. 5:17,19-23). But when the narrator informs the reader that the man does not know who Jesus is, the reader begins to suspect that the man is not engaging in a theological discussion, but protecting himself.[100]

The other ambiguity concerning this man revolves around Jesus' command, "μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε" (v.14). "[S]houldn't the man's healing have been the evidence of

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[94]Stibbe, *John*, p. 75. I would also include the Samaritan woman, who, apart from being a woman, from the Jewish point of view would be considered not only a heretic but perpetually ceremonially unclean, among the marginalised. Cf. R.J. Karris, *Jesus and the Marginalized in John's Gospel* (Collegeville, 1990) pp. 67-70

[95]*Ibid.*

[96]"Stumbling in the Dark, Reaching for the Light: Reading character in John 5 and 9," *Semeia* 53 (1991) pp. 55-80.

[97]*Ibid.*, p. 69.

[98]*Ibid.*

[99]*Ibid.*, p. 61.

[100]*Ibid.*

forgiveness of sins?..So what wrong or sin is he presently guilty of ?"[101] Staley fails to see that Jesus' warning does not imply that the man's past sins have not been forgiven, nor does it imply present guilt. It is rather a warning against future sin, which may in fact imply that the man's slate is at present clean, because his past sins are forgiven. Staley suggests that the man's sin lies in not having revealed his healer's name to "the Jews,"[102] because after Jesus' warning he goes to "the Jews." Therefore when he informs on Jesus, "ironically, the healed man's intentions should be understood positively."[103] But the man's faith is based on the sign from which he has benefitted - and both Jesus and the reader know better than to trust those whose faith is based only on signs (cf. 2:24; 3:10; 4:13,48).[104]

v) The man born blind

One pericope that has attracted much scholarly attention is that of the man born blind of chapter 9. Much study of this chapter has concerned its historical background, especially the synagogue ban mentioned in vv. 22, 34f.[105] The theme of this pericope is the judgement brought about by people's reactions to the light which has come in Jesus.

> The contrasting characterisations of the religious authorities and the blind man parallel the opposing judgements made by the characters concerning Jesus.[106]

In most gospel healing stories the character of the patient is not fully developed, but the blind man in this story is an exception.[107] He is a model of the believer who takes

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[101] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[102] *Ibid.* But how could he have revealed something which he did not know?
[103] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] On this see especially J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Nashville, 1979)
[106] J. L. Resseguie, "John 9: A Literary-Critical Analysis," in K. Gros Louis ed., *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, vol. II, (Nashville, 1987), reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 114-22.
[107] *Ibid.*, pp. 115f.

a public stand for Jesus, no matter what the cost to himself. The growth of the man's faith is seen in his confessions:[108] Jesus is first "the man called Jesus" (v.11); then "a prophet" (v.17), "from God" (v.33), and finally "Lord" (v.38). At 9:18-23 the bold man, now healed, is contrasted with his fearful parents, which explains v.23.[109] At vv.24-34 the characterisation of the man reaches full development, and this time it is contrasted with that of the authorities. Where they were divided earlier in the passage (vv.13-17), they are now united and assertive ("we know," v.24). But the healed man is equally assertive, and not afraid to be sarcastic - his "we know" at v.31 is a parody of their earlier "we know."[110] He is also not afraid to lecture them in basic theology;[111] on things they should know, and he ridicules them for not knowing.

According to Resseguie, along with the man's gain of his physical sight comes a gain in insight, into Jesus' identity and his own. It is the authorities who are blind, not the healed man - and they are guilty because they claim to be able to see.[112] There is irony in the fact that at v. 2 the disciples ask Jesus for a judgement on the blind man, and at v.41 a judgement is given - on the Jewish authorities, not on the man.

Staley[113] draws attention to the change in the epithets by which the narrator refers to the man. At first he is "a beggar" (9:8), but when the Pharisees arrive, reference is made to his blindness, or former blindness (vv.13,17,24). When his parents come, he is "the one who regained his sight" (v.18).

> The narrator's epithets betray an ideological perspective, one which will lead the reader surreptitiously toward the pronouncement with which Jesus ends the story: Those with eyes to see do not have the ability to peer beneath the surface and find the person with true insight. Thus,

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[108]So Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 161; Carson, *John*, p. 372; Stibbe, *John*, p. 106, Brown, *John*, 1:377; Morris, *John*, p. 486.
[109]So Resseguie, *art. cit.*, p. 118, *contra* Martyn, etc. This explanation has the advantage of referring the situation to the lifetime of the historical Jesus, rather than only to the situation of the church in John's own day.
[110]*Ibid.*, p. 119.
[111]*Ibid.*
[112]*Ibid.*
[113]*Art. cit.*, p. 66.

> from the perspective of the Pharisees, they never speak to anything more than an ignorant, 'blind' person.[114]

There is also significance in what the man says, and does not say, in his discussions with the Pharisees. He never mentions Jesus' name to them, and his descriptions of what Jesus did are as innocuous as possible. He tells them that Jesus put clay on his eyes (v. 15), rather than using "anoint" as he has earlier (v. 11; cf. vv. 6, 14, 27), or the narrator's expression "make clay;" and he says that he washed, rather than repeating Jesus' command to go and wash. Thus right from the beginning the quick-witted man determinedly protects Jesus from accusations of having broken the Sabbath.[115]

We can see that the theme of κρίσις runs through the characterisation of most of these individuals, in that most of them, when confronted by Jesus, must make a choice for or against Jesus, and must do so over an obstacle which might prevent them from coming to faith. Nathanael carries geographical prejudices ("Can anything good come from Nazareth?"); when he sees Jesus he is able to overcome these prejudices and acknowledge Jesus as both Son of God and King of Israel. Nicodemus is a religious leader who must come to terms with a revolutionary change in his field. The sick man at Bethesda faces the challenge of being healed after a long illness - and ends up by informing on his healer as a Sabbath-breaker. By contrast the man born blind does his best to protect his healer from the charge of Sabbath-breaking. He gains spiritual insight along with his physical sight, and is not afraid to affirm his faith in Jesus, even though it leads to his excommunication from the synagogue. In the case of John the Baptist, the theme of κρίσις appears in his testimony. His identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God, and as the one who comes after John but is greater than he, leaves his hearers (and the implied reader) with the choice whether to accept John's testimony or reject it.

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[114] *Ibid.*
[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 67f.

Κρίσις as a Theme in the Gospel

Before going further, it may be useful to briefly consider κρίσις as a theme in the gospel. The word itself appears at 3:19; 5:22, 24, 27, 29, 30; 7:24; 8:16; 12:31; 16:8, 11; and its cognates appear at 3:17, 18; 5:22, 30; 7:24, 51; 8:15 (twice), 16, 26, 50; 12:47 (twice), 48 (twice); 16:11; 18:31. Such frequency is in itself enough to indicate that the idea is an important one.

LSJ defines κρίσις as: I. a separating, power of distinguishing, choice, selection; II. a decision, judgement; 2. in a legal sense, a trial; the result of a trial, condemnation; 3. a trial of skill; 4. a dispute; III. the outcome of a thing.[116] Thayer's defines the word similarly, and adds,

> In John's usage κρίσις means α that judgement which Christ occasioned, in that wicked men rejected the salvation he offered, and so of their own accord brought upon themselves misery and punishment...β the last judgement, the damnation of the wicked...[117]

These definitions bring out the "twofold sense of judgement and separation"[118] which the word has. Jesus brings the light of salvation, but people separate themselves before the light, moving toward or away from it (3:19-21). This is the same principle as is expressed at Matt. 25:31-33, but in the Johannine expression the separation occurs in the present rather than the eschatological future.[119] This is so because the separation is brought about by the presence of Jesus among those who must make a choice. Because he is present now, the results of that presence begin to manifest themselves immediately, though the manifestation will not be complete until the eschatological end (5:24-30).

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[116]LSJ *s.v.* κρίσις.
[117]*Thayer's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, (New York, 1892) *s.v.* κρίσις.
[118]Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 51.
[119]*Ibid.* Cf. *TDNT*, 3:939: "The distinctive feature of John's thinking on judgement... is to be found in this emphasis on the fact that on both sides [i.e. the side of belief and that of unbelief] judgement is already present."

Another indication of the importance of κρίσις is the fact that "[t]he great controversies end in division."[120] In chapter 3, for example, the discussion of spiritual birth ends in the distinction between those who do evil and those who do the truth (3:19-21). Similarly the Sabbath dispute of chapter 9 ends with the distinction between the blind who come to see and the seeing who become blind.[121] And the crowds are often divided as to whether they should believe in Jesus or not. This sequence of controversy followed by division highlights the aspect of choice and separation inherent in the concept of κρίσις in this gospel.[122]

This aspect of choice and separation will be important to this study. People who meet Jesus must choose for or against him, and are divided according to which choice they make, which side of the line of κρίσις they place themselves on. This has a bearing on characterisation, for we shall see that those who respond positively to Jesus (i.e. come to faith in him) are characterised positively, and those who respond negatively to Jesus (i.e. do not come to faith in him) are characterised negatively.[123] In the concluding chapter of this study I shall ask whether the implied author has done this deliberately, and if so, why.

Concluding remarks

Let us draw together the threads of what has been said so far. We have looked at the characterisation of "the Jews," and of some prominent Jewish characters in the Gospel of John, to see what has been said about how they are characterised. Is there

[120]Barrett, *St. John*, p. 92.
[121]*Ibid.*
[122]Cf. *TDNT*, 3:941: "The sense of division or separation is hinted at here."
[123]By "characterised positively," I mean that the character is given qualities which a reader is likely to find admirable, so that the reader is likely to want to emulate the character; by "characterised negatively" I mean that the character is given qualities which the reader is likely to find reprehensible, so that the reader is unlikely to want to emulate the character.

something that connects these different characterisations? A key point is to be found in the theme of κρίσις which runs through this gospel. Dunn has discussed it in regard to "the Jews;" the coming of Jesus has meant a division of humanity into those who believe and those who do not. This division transcends the old division into Jew and Gentile which is based on ethnic descent. Another way of expressing this is to say that the dividing line has shifted. The dividing line is no longer between Jew and Gentile, but between those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. Now every person must decide which side of the line they will be on. No one has yet asked whether this theme of κρίσις can be seen in the characterisation of the various non-Jewish characters in this gospel. This means that there is room for a new look at this subject, and that is what I propose to do in this present study. In this study I shall argue that the division which occurs among "the Jews" also occurs among the non-Jews, and that this can be brought out by attention to the characterisation of these characters.

CHAPTER 2

JOHANNINE LITERARY CRITICISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Introduction

This chapter will be divided into two parts. In the first part I shall survey Johannine literary criticism, as it has been practised from the beginning of this century to the present, and discuss the various types of literary criticism that have been practised in that time. In the second part I shall focus on characterisation. Here I shall consider the method to be used in this present study, asking and answering the question, "Which type of literary criticism is the most suited to this study, and why?"

I

A Survey of Research

The history of Johannine literary criticism may be summed up thus.[1] There have been three periods in the history of Johannine literary criticism, which reflect the stages in the development of literary criticism in general. The first, which lasted roughly from 1900 to 1930, may be called the classical stage; in this period the main interest was in the gospel as drama. This was followed by a period from roughly 1930 to 1960, when historical-critical methods dominated the field of research. The decade

[1]In this paragraph I follow Stibbe, *Literature*, p. 10.

between 1968 and 1978 may be called the new-critical stage, for it was during this time that the New Criticism had its greatest influence. In 1979 began what may be called the pluralistic stage, beginning with the appearance of Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*. In this stage, which continues into the present, all the varied methods of secular literary criticism are being applied to the gospels, including that of John.

It may be said that there are three components to any narrative: the author(s), the text and the reader(s).[2] Each of these interacts with the other two, like this:

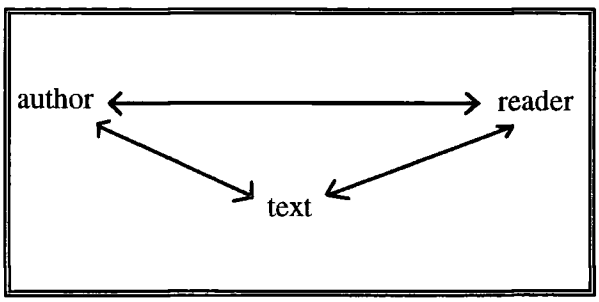

Diagram 1: How the Components of Narrative Interact

We will see that each of the methods we will consider focuses on one of these components over the others. Rhetorical criticism, for example, focuses on the author, while reader-response criticism focuses on the reader, and narrative criticism focuses on the text. It is for this reason that, as we shall see, some scholars are calling for a combination of methods of research, so that a balance between these components is maintained.

Let us look in more detail at the subject of literary criticism. One significant trend in Johannine research is in a literary vein. But if literary criticism has dominated the field in recent years, its use has by no means been confined to recent years. There is a

> widespread assumption that literary appreciation of John is new, which it patently is not. For example, Culpepper's introduction to *Anatomy* in

[2]Cf. Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p. 10; Jeffrey Staley [*The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, 1986) p. 21], who uses the terms "addresser," "message," and "addressee".

> 1983 sounds very similar to the kinds of statement being made by Hitchcock in 1911...[3]

It is true that there was not much literary work done on the Gospel of John in the first four decades of this century. This was due to the rise of methods which developed into form and source criticism. The questions being asked at this time were usually historical rather than literary. But it was in this same period that an appreciation of the gospel as drama arose.

i) The Gospel of John as Drama

Leading the way in Johannine literary research was F.R.M. Hitchcock, whose work was the first in a still-continuing series of studies of the Gospel of John as drama.[4] Hitchcock, an Anglican priest, wrote in response to the partition theory put forward by, among others, H.H. Wendt in *Das Johannesevangelium.*[5] Wendt

> argued that the Fourth Gospel is by no means an organic, literary unity but rather a theological interpretation of notes which the Apostle John made on the discourses of Jesus.[6]

According to Wendt, an anonymous Asian Christian elaborated these notes (Wendt calls them *die Quelle*) and set them in a historical framework in the first quarter of the second century AD. Wendt thus believes that the Gospel of John has two authors; the discourses were written down by the apostle John, and the narratives

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[3]Stibbe, *Literature*, p.4. Culpepper (whose work I shall discuss later, in its turn) does not acknowledge any literary criticism of the Gospel of John prior to his own.

[4]Work in this vein has been done since Hitchcock by, among others, Thompson, Connick, Lee, Pierce, Martyn, Smalley, Flanagan, Domeris, Ehrman, Stibbe and Schenke.

[5]English translation, *St. John* (Edinburgh, 1902). Hitchcock discusses Wendt's partition theory in particular because he sees it "as that which appears to be the most impartial and because he seems to handle his subject with the most delicacy and reverence of all the German critics."[*A Fresh Study of the Fourth Gospel* (London, 1911) p. 7].

[6]Stibbe ed., *Literature*, p. 2.

were composed by the second-century Christian. The discourses were historical, but most of the narratives were fictional.

Hitchcock, on the other hand, starts by assuming the organic and literary unity of the text. "Consistent character drawing is an aesthetic mark of the organic unity of the Fourth Gospel."[7] He approved of Wendt's willingness to acknowledge the historical value of the discourses, but was opposed to the partition theory. He criticised the source-critical tendency of those holding this theory, and their rationalist scepticism on the question of the supernatural.

> A different method of study would be to approach these documents without any presuppositions whatever, and to apply to them the same historical and literary canons of exegesis as would be employed in the area of classical literature. This method would be fairer to the writers and their work, and would not be hampered by having to find facts to support given hypotheses.[8]

Hitchcock himself focuses on

> the organic unity and structure of the Gospel, which [is] based...upon the internal evidences of mind and art shown in the writer's standpoint and treatment of his subject, in the consistency of character drawing, and in the dramatic character of the narrative.[9]

All these characteristics, which give the gospel its literary and theological unity, indicate, for Hitchcock, that the gospel is the work of one writer, which invalidates any theory of partition. Elsewhere he says,

> No evangelist has a keener conception of a situation, or of dialogue or characterisation. The vividness, variety and progress of the scenes, together with the number, individuality and distinctness of the characters; the play of question and retort; the pointed and allusive manner of the Master's sayings; and the growing interest of the narrative, give dramatic force and movement to the work. Clearly the

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[7]Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, p. 86. By "character drawing" Hitchcock means what we now refer to simply as characterisation.
[8]*Ibid.*, p. 74.
[9]*Ibid..*, p. 56.

> writer had the dramatic sense by nature...We shall see how closely he follows the canons of Aristotle...[10]

It is true that the Gospel of John has all the characteristics which Hitchcock says give it its dramatic quality. No one who reads, for example, the narratives of the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-42), the healing of the man born blind (9:1-41), or John's account of the Pilate trial (John 18:28-19:16a) can deny that John has a sense of the dramatic. But in the end the answer to the question, "Is the Gospel of John a drama?" must be No. It may justifiably be called a dramatic narrative; but it is a narrative, not a drama for the stage.[11]

ii) Reader-Response Criticism - 1

Among those who built on the work of Hitchcock was Hans Windisch.[12] Windisch dramatises several scenes from the gospel in order to show its dramatic style, though he does not actually go so far as to suggest that it was written for the stage. "Windisch's essay represents an attempt to apply Gunkel's more aesthetic version of historical criticism to John's Gospel."[13] The essay had less impact than it deserved on subsequent German scholarship, due to the influence of Bultmann and others.[14]

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[10]Hitchcock, "Is the Fourth Gospel a Drama?" *Theology* 7 (1923) pp. 307-17. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 15-24, quote on p. 15. Hitchcock does not say that John is indebted to Aristotle, only that he "follows the then recognised canons of the drama." (*ibid.*) But in *Fresh Study* (p. 141) he asks, "Is it possible to doubt that the writer's evident genius for characterization...may have received its direction from an acquaintance with Greek drama and the laws of its construction?"

[11]Cf. Stibbe (*Literature*, p. 8), who asks about "the *purpose* of this dramatic dimension to the Fourth Gospel" (emphasis original), and asks if "it ha[s] something to do with the liturgical use of the narrative in the Johannine community" (*ibid.*), though he does not go on to discuss the question further.

[12]"Der Johannisch Erzählungstil," in *Eucharisterion: Studien zur Religion and Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments; Festschrift für H. Gunkel* (Göttingen, 1923), pp. 174-213. This important essay was made available in English for the first time as "John's Narrative Style," in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 25-64. In what follows I refer to the English edition.

[13]Stibbe, in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, p. 8.

[14]*Ibid.* Stibbe, *ibid.* p. 6, comments, "Windisch's essay...undermines the position of anyone who chooses to accuse all twentieth-century German scholars of a lack of literary sensitivity."

Windisch, who describes his method as "the style-critical method,"[15] aims to take the text as it stands and analyse its "stylistic forms"[16] to discern its effect on the reader. This, of course, is an early form of reader-response criticism. Stylistic analysis shows that John's Gospel has only a few Synoptic-style pericopae, and consists "mainly [of] fully-elaborated narratives, discussions and dispute scenes."[17] John chose stories which would fit into his overall plan, which was

> the progressive self-revelation of Jesus, the contrasting rising opposition of the Jews, the catastrophe, which ends with the victory of Jesus and the confirmation of faith over against unbelief. To this extent, the Fourth Gospel is thus an organic whole, and is a literary work of art, as it attempts to illustrate these fundamental ideas by means of its narratives and its discourses.[18]

> The elements of the Gospel that are characteristic of John are...not the small pericopes...but (1) the broadly elaborated, dramatically presented narratives, (2) a connection between narrative and dispute discourse, and (3) the sequence of individual scenes that belong together.[19]

In spite of Windisch's expressed intention of discussing the effect of the Gospel of John on the reader,[20] there is in fact almost no discussion of the effect of the stories on the reader. Nor does Windisch discuss how style contributes to reader response, or ask why the author chose the styles he did to communicate his message.

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[15]*Ibid.*, p. 63.
[16]*Ibid.*, p. 64.
[17]*Ibid.*, p. 26.
[18]*Ibid.* Robert Tannehill's term "narrative Christology," which Stibbe uses frequently in *Storyteller*, comes to mind here, though Stibbe himself in his comments on this essay does not use it.
[19]*Ibid.*, p. 27. According to Windisch, a connection between miracle narrative and dispute discourse is seen only in John and Acts, "which stands under similar literary conditions to John"(*ibid.*).
[20]"The investigation of style...aims by means of analysis of the stylistic forms to describe the direct effect that [the text] has on the reader...to bring out the measure of feeling on which, above all, the effect of [the] narratives rests." *Ibid.*, p. 64.

iii) Rhetorical Criticism

If reader-response criticism focuses on how the reader reacts to a narrative, rhetorical criticism focuses on the techniques which an author uses to make a reader react the way the author wants him to. One scholar who practised an early form of rhetorical criticism was James Muilenberg.[21] Muilenberg followed on from Hitchcock and Windisch, and was a predecessor of George Kennedy and William Wuellner, who were also concerned with rhetoric. He was interested in "the literary form of the Fourth Gospel."[22] By a structural analysis of John 1:19-51 Muilenberg argues that John builds his narratives to end on a high note, "and always the conclusion is of the revealing sort."[23] At the beginning of the John the Baptist passages, Jesus is the Unknown One; by the end he has been shown to be the Son of God who baptises with the Holy Spirit, the King of Israel whose coming was foretold by Moses and the prophets. But Muilenberg fails to notice the chiastic parallelism which forms an integral part of the structure of this gospel, and which must be taken into account in its interpretation. The high point of many passages in the gospel is not the end but the middle.[24] In the passages with which Muilenberg is concerned, for example, vv. 19-28 are best structured like this:[25]

A:19-20	John's testimony: "I am not the Christ."
B:21-22	Questions from the Jerusalem delegation
C:23	John's self-identification using Isa. 40:3
B^1:24-25	A question from the Jerusalem delegation
A^1:26-28	John's testimony to the one who comes after him

Table 1: Structure of 1:19-28

[21]"Literary Form in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 5 (1932) pp. 40-53. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 65-76.
[22]*Ibid.*, p. 66.
[23]*Ibid.*, p. 75.
[24]A discussion of chiasms in the Gospel of John is beyond the range of this study. See e.g. Brown, *John*, 1:cxxxv; Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p 20. Peter F. Ellis bases his commentary on the gospel [*The Genius of John* (Collegeville, 1984)] on a chiastic structure for the entire gospel.
[25]This is the structure favoured by Stibbe (*John*. pp. 31f.).

This structure balances John's testimony, and questions from the Jerusalem delegation, on either side of the quotation of Isa. 40:3, which is thus emphasised. Vv. 29-34 may also be structured chiastically, like this:

A:29-30	John identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God and the one who comes after him
B:31	John talks about baptism
C:32	John's account of the coming of the Spirit on Jesus
B^1:33	John talks about baptism
A^1:34	John identifies Jesus as the Son of God

Table 2: Structure of 1:29-34

There are three arguments in favour of this structure. First, John's twofold identification of Jesus, and his discussion of baptism, are balanced on either side of his identification of Jesus as the one on whom the Spirit rests. This emphasises the main point of the passage, which is that it is Jesus, and not John, upon whom the Spirit rests. Second, the phrase κἀγὼ οὐκ ἤδειν αὐτόν appears in vv. 31 and 33. Third, the idea of seeing appears in v. 29 and v. 34. All of these things suggest that this passage should also be structured chiastically. Thus there is in my opinion good reason to question Muilenberg's claim that each passage in the gospel builds toward a high point at the end.

Through the decades from the 1930's to the 1960's there was very little work done in Johannine literary criticism, for source criticism dominated the field of research during this period. In the 1960's, however, the New criticism with its text-immanent perspective entered the field of biblical studies, some four decades after its origin in university literature faculties.

iv) The New-Critical Stage

It will have been noticed that most of the studies I have referred to so far have been articles. Source- and historical-critical methods dominated the field of Johannine research to such an extent that it was only in 1970 that a book-length literary-critical study of John's Gospel appeared. The book in question was David Wead's *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel.*[26] After an introductory chapter in which he discusses the gospel's post-resurrection point of view and the influence on the gospel of such a point of view,[27] Wead devotes a chapter each to "The Johannine Sign," "The Johannine Double Meaning," "Irony," and "The Johannine Metaphor." In discussing signs, Wead shows that the background to the signs is to be found in the Old Testament rather than in Philo or the Qumran literature. "Above all, we can see in the sign the union of the Old Testament aspects of the prophetic word and its authentication."[28] Jesus' signs authenticate him as God's envoy and place people in a position where they must decide for or against Jesus. Wead discusses double meaning in several divisions: double meaning on the basis of the Greek word alone, of Semitic and Greek words, of an Aramaic word behind the Greek text, double meaning in short pericopae or parabolic sayings, double meaning based on the mode of verbs, and words which rely on figurative meaning for complete understanding (here he focuses his attention on the Johannine use of νύξ). He concludes that in dealing with Johannine double meaning, both meanings of a word are significant. This distinguishes the technique of double meaning from those of allegory and the use of hidden meanings.[29]

In discussing irony, Wead rightly concludes that Johannine irony is closer to Sophoclean irony than to Socratic irony. Sophoclean irony

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[26]Basel, 1970.
[27]"This post-resurrection point of view allows for much we shall discuss in the remainder of this work. The distinctive literary devices which John uses gain their shape in large measure from the author" (*ibid.*, p. 11).
[28]*Ibid.*, p. 29.
[29]Cf. *ibid.* p. 46.

> comes in [the characters'] words, the true meaning of which they themselves do not understand. The conflict is between the meaning the character perceives and the total meaning of the plot. This latter is the meaning the author wished to convey.[30]

In Socratic irony, however, a character uses irony as a weapon of attack.[31] Sophoclean irony is possible in this gospel because John speaks from a position of having superior knowledge to the characters in the gospel (with the exception of Jesus), and assumes that the reader shares his position.[32] In his chapter on metaphor Wead discusses the "I am" sayings (more precisely, he discusses the ἐγώ εἰμι + predicate sayings, but does not mention the places where ἐγώ εἰμι is used absolutely) and describes them as metaphors (*contra* Schweitzer and Bultmann). To Wead, these statements are best defined as metaphors because this definition best explains the revelatory emphasis of these statements,[33] and because the definite article is common in New Testament metaphor.[34] There are also other metaphors in the Gospel of John. These are

> a part of a pattern of usage...whereby the metaphor is stated or inferred and then is followed by an 'extension' either in a short parabolic form, a sign or a discourse.[35]

Wead rightly concludes that metaphor allows the author to fuse a concrete figure (like a shepherd or a vine) and the character of Jesus into a new meaning which is "stronger than the simile. Here, Jesus is identified figuratively with the role of the person he metaphorically represents."[36]

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[30]*Ibid.*, p. 49.
[31]*Ibid.*, p. 67. This is perhaps not unconnected with the dramatic nature of the Gospel of John, which I have already discussed above.
[32]*Ibid.*, pp.67f.
[33]*Op. cit.*, pp. 76-78.
[34]*Ibid.*, pp. 78f. "This use of the article is very close to the generic use. This usage is what one would expect when dealing with a metaphor for one is dealing with general classes or conceptions and not with individuals (p. 78)." This means that one cannot infer that in these statements Jesus claims to be the true figure over against "other false figures" (*ibid.*).
[35]*Ibid.* p. 79
[36]*Ibid.*, p. 94

There is one important Johannine literary device with which Wead does not deal - misunderstanding. Wead chooses not to discuss misunderstanding on its own because, he says, misunderstanding contributes to the effect of the devices which he does discuss.[37] This is true; but in my opinion misunderstanding is a sufficiently important literary device in this gospel to warrant a discussion of its own.

Other important work in this period includes that of George MacRae on irony in John.[38] MacRae shows how John uses irony to express his theology. Not only does John use a distinctive type of dramatic irony, but he "expresses his ironic theological vision in some of the dominant themes throughout the gospel."[39] This type of irony MacRae calls thematic irony.

> In a word, the heart of the Johannine theology is in itself the irony of the Logos becoming flesh and dwelling among men, the revealing word graciously announcing to men their own potential for eternal life in the self-giving act of love that is the return to the Father.[40]

v) The Pluralistic Stage

In the 1980's there was another shift in Johannine literary research, set off by the publication of Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*.[41] In this book Kermode, a secular literary critic of English literature, applies poststructuralist literary criticism to the gospels, focusing most of his attention on the Gospel of Mark. Kermode justifies secular scholars' study of the biblical texts on the grounds that the methods now being used by secular scholars were originally developed in the formation of the documents

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[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 69f.
[38] "Theology and Irony in the Fourth Gospel," in R.J. Clifford and G.W. MacRae eds., *The Word in the World: Essays in Honour of F.L. Moriarty* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973) pp. 83-96. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 103-13. MacRae is a predecessor of Paul Duke and Gail O'Day in work on Johannine irony.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[41] Cambridge, Mass., 1979.

of the New Testament (for Kermode, the New Testament documents are little more than midrash on the Jewish Scriptures). Thus secular scholars "are, though secular, the heirs of the exegetical and hermeneutic traditions."[42]

For Kermode, "the central problem [is]...the existence, among initiates, of a preference for spiritual over carnal readings - that is, for interpretations that are beyond the hearing of outsiders."[43] The most important such interpretation was that which joined the Old Testament to the New. When this happened, the more literal meanings of the Old Testament were cast aside in favour of a spiritual, typological interpretation which valued the Old Testament only inasmuch as it prefigured Christianity. Soon afterward the New Testament became subject to the same kind of interpretation. If the Old Testament prefigured the New Testament, the New Testament prefigured the Church, which alone had the authority to determine what was the literal meaning of Scripture and what the spiritual.[44] The same kind of interpretation goes on today; but now that the biblical documents have attained canonical status, the interpretation appears not as midrashic alterations to the text but as exegesis.

Kermode focuses some attention on the Markan parables, because the sharp distinction between insiders and outsiders which the New Testament documents draw is particularly sharp in the parables.[45] "Outsiders see but do not perceive. Insiders read and perceive, but always in a different sense."[46] Insiders are those who think that they have discerned the true meaning of the narrative, not visible to all. But each insider's interpretation differs, and what is seen as the true meaning also differs from age to age. The Antiochene-type, plain-sense meanings favoured by modern interpreters would not have been deep enough to satisfy the Church Fathers, who preferred Alexandrian-type allegory of a type which is today considered fanciful.[47]

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[42]*Ibid.*. p. 15.
[43]*Ibid.*, p. 18
[44]*Ibid.*, pp. 18f.
[45]*Ibid.*, p. 23.
[46]*Ibid.*, p. 144.
[47]*Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

"The apparently perspicuous narrative yields up latent senses to interpretation; we are never inside it, and from the outside may never experience more than some radient intimation of the source of all these senses."[48] And so in the end the insiders find themselves still outside, for they become aware that they have discerned only part of the narrative's meaning .

In all this, Kermode has "basically opted for three views which are characteristic of post-Modernism's antagonism towards referentiality."[49] The first of these views is that history is chaotic and unplotted rather than story-like. This means that any historical narrative, which as narrative is ordered and story-like, is fraudulent. The second is that historians, being aware of this, "plac[e] reality-effects in their narratives"[50] to lend them a reality which they would not otherwise have. Thus the evangelists added realistic-seeming details to their narratives, in order to lend them authority. The third is that historiography cannot offer a window onto events, because texts cannot refer to anything outside themselves. This is a conclusion drawn from the linguistic researches of Ferdinand de Saussure. It means that the narrative worlds of the gospels are autonomous, and do not refer to the world of the historical Jesus.

Let us consider each of these views briefly. With regard to the first, it can now be said that there is no need to divorce event from meaning. "[G]eneral relativity theory has called into question the old rationalist dichotomy between the empirical and the theoretical, between events and inherent rationality, with the result that historical research can begin at last, from a scientific basis, to speak of an inner logic of temporal relation within historical facts."[51] In other words, history really does have a linear, narrative quality; such a quality is not artificially imposed on it by humans.

As to the second view, there is evidence that a historical tradition has been maintained in the gospel Passion narratives. The events of Jesus' life and death have

[48]*Ibid.*, p. 45; cf. pp. 20f.
[49]Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p. 73.
[50]*Ibid.*
[51]*Ibid.*, p. 74.

been narrated by the evangelists in such a way that those events are interpreted and their significance made clear; but that does not make them fictions with a few verisimilar details added.[52] Nor can it be said that the ancients did not distinguish between truth and fiction as we do, for they did.[53] Such a distinction, usually expressed as a distinction between λόγος and μῦθος, is at least as old as Plato.[54]

What of the third view? This view sees texts only as mirrors, but it is now increasingly agreed that texts are both mirrors and windows. There is a level of interpretation by the evangelists, but that does not mean that the level of the lifetime of the historical Jesus has been obscured from view.[55]

Another key person in the shift which brought secular methods of literary research into gospel studies was R. Alan Culpepper. It would be impossible to discuss Johannine literary criticism without mentioning his *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel.* Culpepper's method, like that of the New Critics, is text-immanent. Culpepper applies modern narrative theory, as developed by E.M. Forster, Wolfgang Iser, Gerard Genette, Stanley Fish, Seymour Chatman, and others, to the Gospel of John. Culpepper anticipates three objections to what he attempts to do in *Anatomy*. The first objection is that "it is not legitimate to apply methods developed for the study of modern literature to ancient writings.[56] To this objection Culpepper replies that the Gospels are unlike any other extant first-century literature.[57] But Charles H. Talbert[58]

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[52]On history in the Gospel of John see C.H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*; J.A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*; Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question*; Stibbe, *Storyteller*, pp. 168-79; on all the Passion narratives see Brown, *Death*, 1:13-22. On truth, fiction and the Gospels see Stewart Sutherland, "History, Truth and Narrative," in Martin Warner ed., *The Bible as Rhetoric* (London, 1980) pp. 105-116; Roger Trigg, "'Tales Artfully Spun'," in *The Bible As Rhetoric*, pp. 117-32.

[53]So Trigg, *art. cit.*, pp. 126-32.

[54]So LSJ *s.v.* μῦθος; see *Phaedo* 61b; *Republic* II 376e; *Protagoras* 320c; Thucydides, I 22; Aristotle, *Poetics* IX 1451b, where the difference between history and poetry is that one relates what has happened, the other relates what may happen.

[55]Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p. 75. In these paragraphs I am informed by Stibbe's discussion in *Storyteller*, pp. 73-75.

[56]*Anatomy* (Philadelphia, 1983), p.8

[57]*Ibid.*, citing Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 40-49; Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric*, p. 36; William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, pp. 3-5.

[58]*What Is A Gospel?* (Philadelphia, 1977)

has shown that there are similarities between the gospels and one other ancient form of literature, namely biographies. Culpepper further says that

> In writing realistic narrative the evangelists could not avoid using and dealing with all the components of narrative literature. They may not have been aware of their handling of characters, the narrator, or the implied reader, but they could not write a narrative without dealing with them in one way or another. When...we use concepts and examine narrative components which were unknown to ancient writers, we are still dealing with features of the text that are actually there and which had to be handled by the evangelist, whether unconsciously, instinctively, or deliberately.[59]

But the objection which has been raised is not, in my opinion, one which is so lightly argued away. Ancient authors cannot be expected to have written according to modern rules.[60] As Stibbe puts it,

> Whilst Culpepper is not guilty of calling gospel narratives primitive, it needs to be stated that the sophistications of gospel narrative are quite different from the subtleties of modern novels. Gospel narratives share in the subtleties of ancient Hebrew and Graeco-Roman narratives, not in the more self-conscious subtleties of modern novels.[61]

The second objection which Culpepper anticipates "is that perspectives and methods drawn from the study of fiction are inappropriate for the study of scripture and therefore will inevitably distort the interpretation and prejudice the interpreter toward treating the gospel as fiction."[62] But this need not be a problem. The narrative art used in storytelling is the same whether the story being told is a true story (i.e. one that corresponds accurately to historical facts) or a fictional one. There is no need for a different set of rules.

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[59]*Anatomy*, p. 9.
[60]Culpepper himself comes close to admitting this when, immediately after the passage which I have just quoted, he warns against "expecting to find such modern devices as an unreliable narrator, distance between the narrator and the implied author, or between the narrator and the implied reader"(*ibid.*).
[61]*Storyteller*, p 11.
[62]*Anatomy*, p. 9

The third objection which Culpepper anticipates "is that literary criticism ignores the gains of historical criticism and the historical nature of the gospel itself."[63] But Culpepper does not deny the validity of historical-critical research.

> Appeals to general historical considerations regarding the age of the story, the culture it assumes, and the meaning of the words with which it is told are, of course, necessary if one is to understand the dynamics of the narrative, but using historical data as aids to interpretation is quite different from using the gospel story for historical reconstruction. On the other hand, our effort to set aside interest in the Johannine community or the historical Jesus should not be interpreted as a denial of any historical core or matrix of the gospel.[64]

My own view on this question is that it is a matter of using the appropriate tools for the task in hand. The carpenter does not use a plumb line to put a nail into a piece of wood, nor a hammer to determine a straight vertical line. But a hammer and a plumb line are valid tools for their intended uses. So also historical-critical methods are valid for investigating historical questions, and literary-critical methods are valid for investigating literary questions, provided that they take account of the literary conventions of the time in which the work being studied was written. This is roughly the view of early Christian scholarship,[65] and with the passing of the Enlightenment's dominant interest in historical questions, a balance in scholarship may once again be obtained. Robert M. Polzin rightly describes the literary and historical-critical approaches as "truly complementary: each must eventually take the other's conclusions into account."[66]

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[63] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] So Charles T. Davis, "A multidimensional criticism of the Gospels," in *Orientation by Disorientation*, p. 94, citing Origen's view that Scripture "has an historical body, a symbolic body and a Spritual body" (*ibid.*, p. 93; cf. *On First Principles* 4.2).

[66] "Literary and historical criticism of the Bible: a crisis in scholarship," in *Orientation by Disorientation*, p. 104. Polzin says that "scholarly understanding of biblical material results from a *circular* movement that begins with a literary analysis, then turns to historical problems, whose attempted solution then furnishes further refinements and adaptations of one's literary-critical conclusions" (*ibid.*, emphasis original). On this whole question, with specific relevance to the Gospel of John, see also M.C. de Boer, "Narrative Criticism, Historical Criticism and the Gospel of John," *JSNT* 47 (1992) pp. 35-48. Recently Stibbe, Powell, Davies and Tovey have also called for a combination of historical- and literary-critical methods in Gospel research.

Culpepper devotes an entire chapter to the narrator (I shall discuss what he says in my own discussion of the narrator below), then turns his attention to genre. In discussing the genre of the Gospel of John using Northrop Frye's plot types, Culpepper argues that the gospel is a romance. "The fit is certainly not perfect,"[67] he admits, and he is correct. A better fit is obtained when one sees the plot of the gospel as tragic.[68]

In his chapter on characters, Culpepper says that the characters of the gospel primarily have two purposes: first, to reveal aspects of Jesus' character; and second, to represent different responses to Jesus, of which Culpepper detects seven, ranging from defection (as exemplified by Judas Iscariot) and rejection (the Jewish leadership) to paradigmatic discipleship (the Beloved Disciple).

Culpepper says that contemporary studies of characterisation may be placed in one of two camps, depending on whether the characters in a story are seen as independent beings or as functionaries who exist only to serve a role in the plot. The former view is that of Seymour Chatman;[69] the latter is that of the structuralists and formalists.[70] According to Culpepper,

> most of the characters in [the Gospel of John] appear so briefly that it is difficult to form an impression of them as "autonomous beings"...When any of the minor characters conveys an impression of personhood it is usually the personification of a single trait: Thomas doubts, Pilate wrestles with the claims of truth and political expediency, Peter is impulsive, the Beloved Disciple is perceptive.[71]

and again, "In John, Jesus is the protagonist and most of the other characters are ficelles."[72] But how fair is this statement? It is true that many Johannine characters

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[67]*Op. cit.*, p. 89.
[68]This is the choice of Stibbe (*Storyteller*, pp. 121-47), who draws some remarkable parallels between the Johannine Passion narrative and Euripides' *Bacchae*. I shall say more about this when I discuss *Storyteller*.
[69]*Story and Discourse*, p. 119
[70]*Anatomy*, p. 102.
[71]*Ibid.*
[72]*Ibid.*, p. 104, where Culpepper defines ficelles as "typical characters easily recognizable by the reader. They exist to serve specific functions, often revealing the protagonist, and may carry a great deal of representative or symbolic value." The first part of this definition is, in my opinion, unfairly reductionist when applied to the minor characters in the Gospel of John.

appear for only a short time as they interact with Jesus; but the Johannine narrator is a master of the art of conveying much in a few words. And as Culpepper himself admits, "Some of the minor characters, the Samaritan woman and the blind man in particular, undergo a significant change."[73] I shall discuss what Culpepper says about the gospel's various non-Jewish characters and character groups in the relevant chapters of this study.

> Culpepper is at his best in his chapter on implicit commentary.[74]
>
> The continuous implicit communication within the Fourth Gospel is a major source of both its power and its mystery. What seems clear and simple on the surface is never so simple for the perceptive reader because of the opacity and complexity of the gospel's sub-surface signals.[75]

Culpepper's discussion of Johannine misunderstanding, irony and symbolism shows keen insight. In considering misunderstanding, his "central concern [is] the function of the misunderstandings and their effect on the reader."[76] The themes which the narrator emphasises using the technique of misunderstanding are closely connected to his point of view. The meaning of Jesus' death/exaltation is the most prominent of these; the other themes developed by misunderstanding are connected with the identity and nature of the people of God.[77] For Culpepper, the effect of the misunderstandings on the reader is "to enforce a marked distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders,' between those who understand Jesus and those who do not."[78] This statement brings to mind the theme of κρίσις, which is important to this present study, though Culpepper does not use the word.

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[73]*Ibid.*. p. 103
[74]Stibbe defines implicit commentary as "the means used by the narrator to communicate indirectly with the reader, including irony and symbolism."(*Storyteller,* p. 10.)
[75]*Anatomy,* p. 151.
[76]*Ibid.*, p. 155.
[77]*Ibid.*, pp. 163f.
[78]*Ibid.*, p. 164.

For Culpepper, "the 'silent' communication between author and reader assumes its most intriguing form in the ironies of the gospel."[79] The implied author makes most of the characters whom Jesus encounters the victims of irony, but never the reader. On the contrary, as the reader grasps ironies which the characters do not, he is drawn to the implied author's point of view.[80] Thus the gospel's irony is another method used to win the reader over. The gospel's irony, according to Culpepper, is rooted in its dualistic viewpoint. "The lower level is the plane of appearances; the higher level the perception of right judgement."[81] The main themes of Johannine irony are Jesus' origins, his death and its meaning, the rejection of Jesus by his own people and the nature of discipleship.

In discussing Johannine symbolism, Culpepper says that "Jesus himself is the principal symbol of the Fourth Gospel, for he partakes of the being of God and reveals Him in this world."[82] Among the gospel's impersonal symbols Culpepper detects three core symbols to which all the others are related. These three are light, water and bread.

> The core symbols are those whose centrality is demonstrated by their higher frequency of recurrence and their appearance in more important contexts...Each of these points to Jesus' revelatory role and carries a heavy thematic load.[83]

These core symbols are expanding symbols; that is, they pick up new associations with each appearance and carry them on to the next. The most dominant of these is light,[84] the most widespread of all archetypal symbols.[85] In the Gospel of John light is a symbol of witness, revelation, and judgement.[86] "[W]hile water is a dominant motif

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[79]*Ibid.*, p. 165.
[80]*Ibid.*, p. 174.
[81]*Op. cit.*, p. 167; cf. also 7:24.
[82]*Ibid.*, citing Sandra M. Schneiders, "History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel," in *L'Evangile de Jean: Sources, Rédaction, Théologie* ed. M. de Jonge (Louvain, 1977) p. 373; Edward Malatesta, "Blood and Water from the Pierced Side of Christ (Jn 19,34)," in *Segne e Sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni*, ed. Pius-Ramon Tragan (Rome, 1977) p. 165.
[83]*Ibid.*
[84]*Ibid.*, p. 190.
[85]*Ibid*, citing Philip E. Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1962) p. 116.
[86]*Anatomy*, pp. 191f.

and expanding core symbol, it is less unified and more variable than either light or bread."[87] Water "points to Jesus, the revelation, the new life, and the means by which one enters it, the Spirit."[88] The references to bread are, of course, mostly to be found in the narrative and discourse of chapter 6. The feeding is, in a sense, an alternative Passover.[89] Bread symbolises the sustenance which Jesus gives, which is superior to the bread given by Moses (i.e. the Law), and which in the end is identified with Jesus himself.[90] The discourse which follows the feeding has Eucharistic overtones, "but crass cannibalistic and magical interpretations of the Lord's Supper are rejected. It is the Spirit, not the flesh, which gives life (6.63)."[91]

> In summing up his discussion of implicit commentary, Culpepper says,
>
> > The misunderstandings, ironies and symbols also point to the central conflict in the gospel, the conflict between that which is from above and that which is from below...The symbols are predominantly dualistic: light and darkness, ordinary water and living water, plain bread and true bread...these symbols are woven into the more extensive dualism of the gospel. As Jesus' followers move from one plateau to the other, they adhere to the symbols of the world above."[92]

Kermode and Culpepper were the first to apply secular literary-critical methods to the New Testament. Kermode did so from a purely secular standpoint, while Culpepper did so from the standpoint of a churchman looking for a way to make the New Testment relevant for twentieth-century readers.

vi) Feminist Literary Criticism

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[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 192f.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 194.
[89] *Ibid,*. p. 195.
[90] *Ibid,*. p. 196.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

Since Kermode and Culpepper, all the varied types of literary criticism which had already been applied to secular literature have also been applied to the writings of the New Testament, including the Gospel of John. Feminist literary criticism is the method of choice for, among others, Sandra Schneiders. In "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church"[93] Schneiders considers the roles of Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha of Bethany, and the Samaritan woman.[94] Schneiders begins her study with a section in which she argues that there is nothing in the New Testament which supports the suppression of women in the church today, because the issue of women, as women, is not raised in the New Testament, except in a few culturally and historically specific texts.[95] Then she goes on to consider the roles of the Johannine women. The portrayals are all positive, in that John's women take an active and independent part in ministry. They take the initiative rather than being dependent on men, and indeed on two occasions (4:27; 12:7f.) Jesus blocks male attempts at suppression of women by affirming female discipleship.[96] This, for Schneiders, implies that women must have taken an active and independent role in ministry in the Johannine community, in spite of the objections of some of their male colleagues.

While I find myself in agreement with Schneiders' conclusions, I have difficulty with some of her hermeneutical presuppositions. First, she assumes that the text is

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[93]*BTB* 12.2 (1982) pp. 35-45. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 122-43.

[94]She omits the mother of Jesus from the argument for two reasons. First, the quantity of work already done on Mary in the Gospel of John "precludes any exhaustive original treatment in an essay of this length, and I do not think such a treatment necessary at this point in the history of Johannine research." (p. 128.) Second, "the femaleness of the Mother of Jesus is both an historical fact and an integral part of the symbolism attached to her in the Fourth Gospel, but it is theologically irrelevant for the contemporary question of the role of women in the Church because Mary's role is either unique to her or universally significant for all Christians." (*ibid.*).

[95]*Ibid.*, pp. 23-26.

[96]A few scholars, e.g. Margaret Davies [*Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield, 1992), p. 227, cf. pp.20, 254f.], do not see John's portrayal of women as positive; Davies (*ibid.*, p. 227) argues that "the Fourth Gospel recognizes the usefulness of women, but only in their subsidiary function of waiting upon men" (*ibid*). But in order to support this claim, Davies, ironically, has herself to reduce unfairly the roles of some of the Johannine women. It is surely inaccurate to say that the Samaritan woman is "judged on the basis of her marital status" (*ibid*), or that Mary Magdalene's role in the Easter account "is simply that of messenger to the disciples" (*ibid*). Most scholars are in agreement with Schneiders.

independent of the human author's conscious control, and that therefore there is more in the text than the author intended.

> It will be...assumed that this text, like any other, is semantically independent of the conscious and explicit intentions of its human author. This implies that, when reading from the vantage point of twentieth-century faith, standing within the tradition of the believing community, the gospel text will undoubtedly yield more and richer meaning than the author was aware of expressing when he wrote it...It is thus assumed that the contemporary meaning of the text is the primary question addressed to the text and that it is integral to the interpretive process...,not...a secondary question to be dealt with after the exegesis is completed.[97]

In my view, this is doing things the wrong way around. That the author has no conscious control over the text he writes seems to me a faulty assumption. Exegesis of the text must be done first, to act as a control measure, before asking what the text means to us today. Otherwise there is a greater danger that exegesis may become eisegesis, and the text be made to say whatever one wants it to say.[98]

Second, I must ask of Schneiders, "What justifies the shift from text to community?" Schneiders asserts repeatedly that

> [i]f women Christians in John's community had been restricted to the domestic and religious roles of women in the Jewish world of that period it is very difficult to imagine where the evangelist got his extraordinarily rich insights into the relationships of women with Jesus.[99]

The difficulty here is that we have little historical or archaeological data on the earliest Christian communities, against which to check conclusions drawn from the text. Therefore I suggest that an assertion like the one which Schneiders makes,

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[97]*Ibid.*, p. 127.
[98]Cf. Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testment Theology* (London/Philadelphia, 1990) pp. 74f., 137-40. This is not to say that I regard twentieth-century questions as of secondary importance to us today.
[99]*Art. cit.*, p. 130; cf. the similar remarks on pp. 130, 138, 141.

unsupported by any historical data, is not enough to justify the shift from text to community.

Feminist literary criticism is of value in that it focuses attention on the value of women characters, and thus may help to correct an imbalance. But for a study of characterisation which must focus on both male and female characters, its focus on women makes feminist literary criticism too exclusive.[100]

vii) Structuralism

Structuralism has been used by a number of scholars to look into the deeper meaning of the gospel. There are three types of structuralism. Binary structuralism, which derives from Claude Lévi-Strauss, focuses on how opposites are mediated in the text. Functional structuralism, which derives from Vladimir Propp's study of Russian folktales, looks for "a deep structure or grammar of possible relationships which all [narratives] obey. This structure [is] composed of a limited number of possible actions which the characters of stories perform."[101] Actantial structuralism finds each character's essential function in the plot and places them on a grid developed by A.J. Greimas.[102] J.D. Crossan's "It is Written: A Structuralist Analysis of John 6"[103] is a good example of binary structuralism, in which Crossan stresses the mediation of Feeder and Food. (The oft-noted Johannine dualism makes this an appropriate method for Johannine research.[104]) Crossan shows how the narrative actants in this passage

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[100]It is worth noting here that a feminist view of the narrative of the Samaritan woman necessitates an entirely positive view of the woman's characterisation. But I shall argue in the next chapter that the situation is not so simple, or so positive.

[101]Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p. 34.

[102]*Ibid.*, pp. 34-39.

[103]*Semeia* 26 (1983) pp. 3-21. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 145-64.

[104]It may be objected that the dualism is one of cosmology rather than literary style. I suggest that it is a matter of a dualistic cosmology which is reflected, or expressed, in the literary style. A complete discussion of this is beyond the range of this study.

are absorbed into the discourse actants, and these in turn are absorbed into the collectivity expressed in the repeated phrase "he who." This collectivity in turn both consumes and is consumed.

> Finally, and most importantly, there is the consumption *by* the text's receiver (as 'He Who...') *of* the 'I' of Jesus, whose absolute 'I AM' (6.20) will nevertheless transcend both 'I am the bread' (6.35,48,51a) and 'I am to be consumed.'[105]

In the final section of his article Crossan asks, "Is it of any significance that we read John 6 as *script* rather than see and hear 'it' happen as event?"[106] "[I]s the Word of God oral or scribal or both, and if both, are there differences and hierarchies to be maintained within that answer?"[107] Walter Ong "argues for the primacy of oral over scribal communication basing himself primarily on the historical primordiality of speech over writing in both the species and the child."[108] Jacques Derrida "argues for the philosophic primordiality of *écriture* since script reveals more openly and honestly the absence and deferment at the heart of the sign."[109] Crossan finds John 6 to be "more adequately understood through Derrida than through Ong,"[110] for two reasons. First, if Jesus' words "are a mystery of spirit and life (6.63b,68) wherein what must always be consumed must always be there to be consumed anew,"[111] this is more true of the scribal Word of God than the oral. Second, the discourse of John 6 is in the form of a dialogue of question and answer. This is a very oral form of communication; but in this dialogue most of the questions do not receive real answers.[112] The orality of the discourse is an illusion.[113] "Tentatively, then, John 6 moves toward this: the Word of God is script."[114] Structuralism is not the most apt method for a study of

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[105] *Ibid.*, p. 160.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 161, emphasis original.
[107] *Ibid.*
[108] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[109] *Ibid.*
[110] *Ibid.*
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] *Ibid.*, pp. 162f.
[113] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[114] *Ibid.*

characterisation, because in its focus on the characters' function in the narrative, it loses sight of the character as an individual.

viii) Reader-Response Criticism - 2

While some types of literary criticism lay their emphasis on the text, reader-response criticism emphasises the reader. One good example of this is Lyle Eslinger's study of John 4:4-42,[115] which I shall discuss in the next chapter of this study. Another good example is the work of Jeffrey Staley, which, like that of Eslinger, revolves around the idea of the narrator tripping the reader up.[116] Staley begins his study with a discussion of authors, readers, the narrator and narratee, and of the different levels of discourse to be found in the narrative.[117] His careful distinctions among the real author, real reader, implied author, implied reader, narrator and narratee make for a useful and helpful discussion.[118] According to Staley, the narrator establishes a close relationship with the implied reader and draws the implied reader to his own elevated view of events. Then he deliberately leads the implied reader astray, "just so that he can, as it were with mild admonishment, lead the implied reader back onto the right path."[119]

> The Fourth Gospel...utilizes a symmetrical, concentric structure, and exhibits a sensitivity to Leitwörter and the interplay between narration and direct speech...The implied reader evoked through the interplay of

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[115]"The Wooing of the Woman at the Well: Jesus, the Reader and Reader-Response Criticism," *Literature and Theology* 1/1 (1987) pp 167-83. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature,* pp. 165-82.
[116]*The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, 1986).
[117]*Ibid.*, pp. 21-49.
[118]He faults Culpepper, Booth, Chatman, and Iser for lack of clarity in their discussions of these constructs.
[119]*Ibid.*, p. 41.

> these rhetorical devices is one who is constantly learning to delve below surface appearances.[120]

"The victimization of the implied reader" is Staley's term for this activity on the part of the narrator.

> In the prologue, the implied author establishes the implied reader's sense of control over rudimentary aspects of the story, only to undermine the implied reader's superior position through his victimization in chapters 4, 7, 11, 13 and 21.[121]

Staley argues that just when the implied reader thinks he has "arrived," he learns that faith involves a continuing journey.[122] At first sight Staley's argument is appealing. But consideration of his work raises the question of the reliability of the Johannine narrator. First it must be noted that the unreliable narrator is a modern construct, not found in ancient literary criticism.[123] It would be easier to accept the idea of an unreliable narrator here if the presence of an unreliable narrator in other ancient literature could be shown.[124] Second, the unreliable-narrator device is much more easily used in a first-person narrative than in a third-person narrative such as the gospel, because it is easier for a first-person narrator to hold back or conceal information than for a third-person narrator to do so. Third, Staley does not want to say that a narrator who repeatedly victimises his reader is unreliable. But one must ask how a reader who is repeatedly victimised will react to such treatment. Surely in such a situation the reader is likely to feel alienated, which is scarcely a reaction compatible

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[120]*Ibid.*, p. 70.

[121]*Ibid.*, p. 116. Staley takes the term "victimisation of the implied reader" - a term which is perhaps somewhat "over the top"- from John McKee, *Literary Irony and the Literary Audience: Studies in the Victimization of the Reader in Augustan Fiction* (Amsterdam, 1974).

[122]Staley does not notice the significance of the fact that among Jesus' first words in the Gospel of John are, "*Come* and you will see"(1:39) and his last are, "Follow me,"(21:22), though this supports his argument.

[123]Cf. Culpepper's comment in *Anatomy* (p.9), which I have quoted above in note 60.

[124]I am not aware of any work of ancient literature which has an unreliable narrator. A modern example of a novel whose narrator is unreliable is Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, (London, 1926), in which Hercule Poirot's assistant, who is the narrator of the story, also turns out to be the murderer. Interestingly, it is the murderer's written account of the case which gives him away.

with the narrator's purpose. Will a narrator who wants to win the reader over victimise him?

Staley argues that John's Gospel has a concentric structure, which reflects the concentric structure of the prologue. He divides the gospel into five parts, which may be summarised thus:

Prologue	1:1-18
First ministry tour	1:19-3:36
Second ministry tour	4:1-6:71
Third ministry tour	7:1-10:42
Fourth ministry tour	11: 1-21:25

Table 3: Staley's Structure for the Gospel

But there are some faults with this structure. First, the first ministry tour ends not at 3:36 but at 4:54 - it is a Cana-to-Cana tour.[125] Second, there is a definite closure at 12:20-50, before what is often referred to as the Book of Glory begins.[126] Third, I am not sure that "ministry tour" is a correct phrase to describe the Passion and Resurrection narratives.

ix) Deconstructionism

A deconstructionist approach has been brought to the Gospel of John by, among others, Werner Kelber[127] and Stephen Moore.[128]

> John's Gospel seems well-suited to a deconstructionist approach. If deconstructionism is partly about the dismantling of a *logocentric* world view, then it can hardly afford to neglect the Gospel of the Logos.[129]

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[125]This is the traditional view, and the arguments for it have been set out by, among others, F.J. Moloney ["From Cana to Cana (Jn. 2:1-4:54)," *Studia Biblica* (1978) JSNTSuppSer 2, pp. 185-213]. Staley's position is shared by M. Rissi, "Der Aufbau des Vierten Evangeliums," *NTS* 29 (1983) pp. 48-54.

[126]The full arguments are set out in Stibbe, *John: A Readings Commentary* (Sheffield, 1993) pp. 139f.

[127]"The Birth of a Beginning: John 1.1-18," *Semeia* 53 (1990) pp. 120-44.

In *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, Moore focuses on narrative criticism and reader-response criticism, and finds both wanting. Moore has two problems with gospel literary criticism in general. The first is that literary-critical approaches to the text presuppose the unity of the text, something which Moore cannot accept.[130] In fact for Moore, "the text...is less an opaque quantity than an insubstantial one, which can have no status whatsoever apart from interpretive acts."[131] According to Moore,

> narrative criticism may be founded unsteadily on the suppression of the older paradigm of the fragmentary, source-spliced text and may depend heavily for its success on an effective blocking out of the more disruptive data that the disruptive paradigm would bring into view...Deconstructive criticism, in contrast, enables a detailed tracing of the weave and figure of trope within the fabric of the gospel text - a tracing attentive to any tears in that fabric or to any inconsistencies in its pattern.[132]

It is this unfixed quality of the text which leads to such a bewildering variety of interpretations, according to Moore.[133]

Moore's second problem with literary criticism is of special relevance to reader-centred approaches, though it is relevant to all literary-critical approaches. When literary critics refer to "the reader(s)," they are referring to an (or several) artificial construct(s), rather than to a flesh-and-blood reader or readers. Moore remarks sarcastically that "criticism is an institution to which real readers need not apply."[134] His difficulty with reader-constructs is that he experiences none of the confusion, frustration, setbacks and enlightenment which these reader-constructs are said to experience. This leads him to suspect that critics themselves do not experience

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[128] *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: the Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven, 1989).
[129] Stibbe, in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, p. 12.
[130] *Op. cit.*, pp. 11f. Is this a leftover from his encounter with historical criticism? It seems so; cf. p.176.
[131] *Ibid.*, p. 117, citing Stanley Fish. In the "chorus of citations" (*ibid.*, p.144 - Moore's phrase to describe John Dominic Crossan's *Cliffs of Fall*, but it applies equally, in my view, to Moore's own work) that is *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, it is often hard to tell what Moore's own position is.
[132] *Ibid.*, p. 167. This statement occurs in the context of a discussion of the Gospel of John. Moore overlooks the strong evidence that the Gospel of John as we have it is a literary and theological unity. A full discussion of this topic is outside the range of this study.
[133] *Ibid.*, pp.127-30.
[134] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

these things either, "for the reader seems less an extension of the [jaded] critic...than an idealized alter ego."[135]

As Moore points out, a complete understanding of the deconstructionist approach requires much labour in the fields of contemporary philosophy and literary theory. But in general I cannot say that I find myself drawn to the deconstructionist approach, for two reasons. First, I am unable to accept Moore's arguments that the text which I am looking at is the product solely of interpretation, whether mine or others'. Moore says of Crossan's *Cliffs of Fall*,

> Unless one shares Crossan's assumption from the outset, much of his book will seem counterintuitive...[as Kee says,] "The labyrinth in which play occurs is created by us, has no center, yet we cannot escape it. Where is it? In A.A. Milne's familiar lines, 'It isn't really anywhere, it's somewhere else instead,' this unconvinced reader might respond."[136]

One might respond to Moore in the same way as Moore responds to Crossan: deconstructionism is not helpful unless one shares Moore's philosophical and philological assumptions from the outset.[137] The second difficulty I have with the deconstructionist approach has to do with communication. It is usually the case that anyone who writes a book is *ipso facto* trying to communicate with others, and therefore wants to be understood. There can also be no doubt that anyone who reads a book wants to understand what the writer says. But if words do not have a limited range of possible meanings, agreed upon by members of a linguistic community, how is understanding possible?

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135 *Ibid.*

136 *Ibid.*, p. 143, quoting Howard Clark Kee, "Polyvalence and Parables: Anyone Can Play. A Response to J.D. Crossan's *Cliffs of Fall*" in Achtemeier, *1980 Seminar Papers*, p. 58.

137 See also Staley, *op. cit.*, p. 48 n. 138.

x) Narrative Criticism

Culpepper's article[138] on the pericope of the man at the pool of Bethesda is, as its title suggests, an example of narrative criticism. Culpepper raises the question, "What do we see in Jn. 5.1-18 when we turn from source and redaction-critical analysis to analysis of its form and function as a narrative segment in the larger narrative of the Gospel?"[139] He begins to answer this question by considering the narrative setting of 5:1-18. Here he shows that this passage is connected to what comes before it by the mention of water, which also appears frequently in chapters 2-4. But at the beginning of chapter 5 there is a shift in what is said about water. "Jn. 5. 1-18 then shows that the true power of healing comes not from water but from Jesus. His word alone accomplishes what that man had been denied in thirty-eight years of waiting for the waters to stir."[140] But 5:1 opens a new section of the narrative, as Culpepper also rightly sees; this is indicated by "the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα, a reference to a Jewish festival, and a change of location."[141] This means that while 5:1-18 is connected to what precedes it, it is more closely connected to what follows. It is connected with the whole of chapters 5-10, in that the incident at Bethesda explains, and marks the beginning of, "the Jews'" hostility to Jesus. It is also connected to the rest of chapter 5, for the Sabbath dispute of vv. 9b-18 touches on the issue of Jesus' authority, thus providing the basis for the discourse of vv. 18-47.[142]

Culpepper then turns his attention to the structure of 5:1-18, and rightly sees that there are several important formal differences between this narrative and those of the two preceding signs, the wedding at Cana and the healing of the official's son. The first two follow a sevenfold pattern of request by suppliant → rebuff by Jesus →

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[138]"John 5.1-18 - A Sample of Narrative-Critical Commentary" in J.D. Kaestli, J.M. Poffet and J. Zumstein eds., *La communauté johannique et son histoire* (Geneva, 1990). Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 193-207
[139]*Art. cit.*, p. 195.
[140]*Ibid.*, p. 196.
[141]*Ibid.*
[142]*Ibid.*, pp. 196f.

persistence of suppliant → Jesus' instructions which grant request → obedience of suppliant leading to accomplishment of sign → sign verified by third party → faith response. But 5:1-18 differs from this pattern in several ways. First, it is Jesus who approaches the man rather than the reverse. Second, it is the man who demurs (5:7) rather than Jesus. Third, it is Jesus who persists rather than the man. Fourth, Jesus' command at v. 8 is not given in order to grant the request, because no request has been made. Fifth, the healing precedes, rather than follows, obedience to Jesus' command. Sixth, the sign is verified by a third party - "the Jews" - but they do so unwittingly, and in the form of a reprimand. Seventh, there is no response of faith, rather the response is one of persecution.[143]

The longest section in this article focuses on the characterisation of the three characters in the narrative, Jesus, the man and "the Jews." Jesus in this passage is characterised indirectly. The narrator reports Jesus' words and actions, and the other characters' reaction to him. Only at three points in the narrative is more direct characterisation given; at v. 6 the narrator tells what Jesus knows, and vv. 16 and 18 he makes explanatory comments. Culpepper rightly sees that Jesus' words and actions show his authority and his concern for the man's physical and spiritual needs. Jesus' statement at v. 17 is the key to the entire story. His actions stem from his relationship to the Father.[144] In general, Jesus is characterised in this narrative

> as the one who mediates the power of God to human suffering. He frees the man at the pool from his physical brokenness and points him in the direction of spiritual health...What Jesus does, moreover, he does as the Son of the Father, bound to the Father's will and authority.[145]

Culpepper rightly describes the sick man himself as "one of the least defined characters in the Gospel."[146] He is passive, to such an extent that even when Jesus approaches him with an offer of healing, he cannot summon up the will to be well (vv.

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[143]*Ibid.*, pp. 198-200.
[144]*ibid.*, pp. 202f.
[145]*Ibid.*, p. 204.
[146]*Ibid.*

6f). This passivity is also reflected in his tendency to avoid responsibility. He blames other, quicker invalids for his continued illness (v. 7), and blames Jesus for telling him to carry his mat on the Sabbath (v. 11). Some see the man's report to "the Jews" that it was Jesus who healed him as a positive witness. But Culpepper argues convincingly that it is not so, for four reasons: first, the man tends to avoid taking responsibility in the preceding verses. Second, Jesus' warning at v.14 indicates that the man is a sinner. Third there are formal contrasts between this passage and Jesus' first two signs, which lead individuals to belief. Finally, this pericope establishes, and begins to explain, the opposition to Jesus.[147] "Even when Jesus heals him, he remains a crippled person bound to himself and to sin because he will not open himself and respond with faith in Jesus."[148]

Culpepper rightly sees that "the characterisation of the Jews in the Gospel of John is greatly advanced by Jn. 5.1-18."[149] Up to this point in the gospel narrative, Jesus has encountered little opposition. It is with this narrative that opposition arises because of what "the Jews" see as Jesus' lack of respect for the law. This is something which runs through the remainder of the gospel. "The Jews'" only concern in this narrative is that the law should be kept.[150] "Because they cannot see beyond the law, they oppose Jesus."[151]

Because κρίσις is an important theme of this study, this concluding remark from Culpepper is worth quoting.

> The question is whether we will choose to live under the sovereignty of the Son or give in to the other powers with which we are put in conflict. Like the man at the pool...the reader must choose whether he or she will walk with Jesus or with the human powers that oppose him.[152]

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[147] *Ibid.* pp. 204f.
[148] *Op. cit.*, p. 205.
[149] *Ibid.*
[150] *Ibid.*, pp. 205f.
[151] *Ibid.*, p. 206.
[152] *Ibid.*

This brief look reveals narrative criticism's interest in characterisation, an interest which is significant for this present study. Culpepper has also not omitted consideration of the literary context (his term is "narrative setting") and the structure of the passage with which he is concerned. I shall also consider these things with respect to the passages with which this study is concerned.

xi) Multi-Disciplinary Research

One scholar who has done much work on literary approaches to the Gospel of John is Mark W.G. Stibbe.[153] Stibbe describes the gospel as "a *multi-story* phenomenon calling for a multi-disciplinary narrative methodology."[154] In *Storyteller*, Stibbe begins by arguing that John uses various narrative devices for rhetorical and christological purposes. He then integrates narrative and functional structuralist criticisms with redaction criticism, because the social aspect of the gospel should not be forgotten.

> John's story of Jesus is at the same time a story of a community in crisis, and...John the storyteller uses the narrative and literary devices at his disposal to address the pressing social needs of his day.[155]

In applying this method to John 18-19, Stibbe comes up with some innovative results. In discussing the genre of the gospel, he concludes that the gospel is tragic in genre; its deep structure and its striking parallels to Euripides' *Bacchae* make it fit best there. He also points out that the tragic and Dionysiac elements of the story have been

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[153]*John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1992); *John: A Readings Commentary* (Sheffield, 1993); *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* (Leiden, 1993). This last is a collection of literary studies on the Gospel of John from the beginning of this century to the present. A significant part of its value lies in the fact that it reprints some articles which are no longer easily available elsewhere; one study, that by Windisch which I have discussed above, has not previously been available in English .

[154]*Storyteller*, p. 1. Stibbe believes that the integration of literary- and historical-critical methods will provide the way forward in Gospel research. Cf. Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

[155]*Ibid.*, p. 61. That the Johannine community was a community in crisis is an assumption which may not be warranted, but a discussion of the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the gospel is outside the range of this study.

noted throughout the history of Christian scholarship. Stibbe then turns his attention to sociological questions: this is where he combines historical- with literary-critical matters. His interest here is in how the first readers reacted to the Johannine Passion narrative. Considering the ecclesial imagery to be found in the narrative, he shows that there are narrative echoes between John 10:1-18 and 18:1-27 which indicate that in the latter passage Jesus acts like the Good Shepherd he has described in the former. The Beloved Disciple also acts like a shepherd, while Peter acts like a hired hand. Noting the prominence of familial imagery in the gospel, Stibbe argues that the adoption narrative of 19:25-27 would help "recreate the sense of family and home in a people faced with the crisis of metaphorical and actual homelessness."[156]

Stibbe then turns his attention to tradition history, to "the journey from narrative history through narrative source to narrative gospel."[157] He first argues that there is a historical basis to the basic facts of Jesus' arrest, trial, and death. Then he turns to the issue of sources (he does not construct a pre-Johannine Passion narrative of his own, but uses Fortna's.) According to Stibbe, the gospel is "a complex and creative adaptation of sources: a Bethany tradition deriving from Lazarus [who is the Beloved Disciple], a signs source, a Samaritan mission source, sayings collections and a selection of controversy episodes handed down in the form of dramatic dialogues."[158] This is where I begin to have difficulties. As I shall argue below, whatever sources the author may have used, he has reworked them so thoroughly that it is no longer possible to distinguish or reconstruct them. Stibbe then turns from discerning sources to discussing how the author has reworked those sources. An interesting conclusion here is that the author makes skilful use of process, retrospective, barrier, and polytemporal time shapes in his narrative. Through the use of time shapes "he recreates both a sense of the episodic nature of time and a sense of the teleological nature of history."[159] Rather than record events as a series of

[156]*Ibid.*, p. 167.
[157]*Ibid.*, p. 168.
[158]*Ibid.*, p. 179.
[159]*Ibid.*, p. 196.

episodes, the author reconfigures them into a whole which has a meaning. He does this in order to symbolise Jesus as the new Passover lamb, and to show that there is a divine plan being carried out through human actions.[160]

II

The Method Used In This Study

In the preceding section we surveyed Johannine literary research as it has been practised from the beginning of this century to the present. This allowed us not only to get a sense of the history of Johannine literary research, but also to consider the different types of literary research that are being carried out. This will allow us to consider the question of the method to be used in this present study, and to that question I now turn. Which of these types of literary criticism which we surveyed is most suited to this study, and why? The first thing to be said is that I shall work with the text as it stands, and not concern myself with the issue of sources. Literary criticism starts by accepting "the form of the work."[161] "'The form of the work' is a holistic concept requiring us to start with the whole text, rather than with the philological and form-critical parts."[162] In the case of the Gospel of John, the entire text shows a literary and theological unity.[163] Whatever sources the author may have used, he has reworked them so thoroughly that the resulting work, the text as we have

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[160]*Ibid.*, pp. 190-96.

[161]William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1970) p. 13.

[162]Norman R. Petersen, "Literary Criticism in Biblical Studies," in *Orientation by Disorientation* (Philadelphia, 1980) p. 36

[163]This was noticed as early as Hitchcock (*Fresh Study*, p. 74, cited above). So also e.g. Stibbe, *Storyteller*, pp. 16-22; Carson, *John*, pp. 41-45, and citations p. 41 n. 2. This is, however, a matter of dispute, and some (e.g. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:59-73; Bultmann, *John*, pp. 10f. *et passim*) detect two or more hands in the gospel's composition. For a full discussion of the evidence on both sides of the question see Brown, *John*, 1:xxiv-xxxix. See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. xxxviii; Morris, *John*, pp. 53-58.

it, is his own.[164] This makes it especially appropriate to study the Johannine text as it stands.

Because of its particular interest in characterisation, the method which I have chosen for this study is narrative criticism. This does not imply that other approaches are not also interested in characterisation, only that it is narrative criticism whose prime interest is in characterisation.

> Characters are constructs of the implied author, created to fulfil a particular role in history. They are best regarded, however, as open constructs, whose existence sometimes transcends the purpose for which they were created...Thus, narrative critics are interested in characterization, that is, the process through which the implied author provides the implied reader with what is necessary to reconstruct a character from the narrative.[165]

The process to which Powell refers is one which occurs as the implied reader reads through the text, knowing what has gone before but not knowing what is ahead in the text.[166] Therefore I shall deal with the text in order, both with regard to chapter order and in my discussion within each chapter. With regard to chapter order, I shall discuss the characters in the order in which we meet them. In concluding I shall ask about that order. Is it significant that, of the non-Jewish characters, the implied reader hears about the Samaritans before the Greeks, and about the Romans last of all?[167] Within each chapter I shall consider the text in order, to show how character development occurs for each character.[168]

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[164]Cf. Morris, *John*, p. 58; "It seems much safer to take the Gospel as it stands and assume it comes from the Evangelist. There is no need to deny that he made use of sources. He may well have done this. But he has so thoroughly made them his own that they cannot now be recovered. Any criticism of this gospel which rests on the detection of sources must be regarded as suspect."

[165]Powell, *op. cit*, p. 52.

[166]By definition the implied reader, at any given point in the text, always completely understands the text that has preceded this point, but does not know what follows.

[167]It may be objected that the order of introduction has to do with the chronology of the trial - it is inevitable that the Romans appear in the Passion narrative. This is true; but that need not prevent the implied author from bringing them into the narrative at an earlier point as well. He does not, and I feel that it is worth asking why not.

[168]Powell, *op. cit.* p. 51, says that groups can function as a single character.

Before proceeding further, it may be useful to define some terms which will appear repeatedly throughout this study. The first of these is "the implied author" (a term coined by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*).[169] The implied author is not a flesh-and-blood person, but a theoretical construct who exists only within the text. One must therefore take care to distinguish between the implied author and the real, flesh-and-blood author. Nor is it methodologically correct to discern the characteristics of the implied author from the text and apply them directly to the author, for the two may be very different. As a reader proceeds through the text, he or she discerns clues from the text as to the nature of the author - these gradually coalesce to form an image of the personality behind the text.[170] The image which is thus formed is the implied author.

> The "implied author" is defined by the sum of the choices reflected in the writing of the narrative, choices of the use of settings, irony, characterization, the handling of time, suspense, distance, and all the problematics and potential of narrative writing which must be dealt with in one way or another.[171]

These choices made by the real author determine both the reader's response to the narrative and his image of the author. The implied author comes from the static overview of a text which the reader develops after several readings. He therefore knows the text thoroughly and knows exactly how he wants the reader to react to it.[172] The implied author has no voice of his own, but communicates through the narrator.

Let us now turn our attention to the implied author of the Gospel of John. According to Culpepper, there is "no real difference" between the narrator's point of view and that of the implied author.[173] This implied author invites the implied reader

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[169]Pp. 74f.
[170]As Staley puts it, "the term 'implied author' most generally refers to that sense of author which is communicated through the choice of narrative medium, and that which remains in the audience's memory even when the author is absent" (*op. cit.*, p. 27).
[171]Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 6f.
[172]Staley, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
[173]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

to share his high perspective through irony and misunderstanding - only from this perspective is the higher plane accessible to the implied reader. This is part of the implied author's strategy for winning the implied reader over to his point of view.[174] It also means that those topics which are usually raised in a discussion of Johannine theology are really "aspects of the implied author's point of view."[175] The implied author not only assumes that the implied reader will catch his irony, double meanings and in-jokes (even when the characters in the narrative do not), but also assumes that the implied reader has certain information which is not given in the text (6:42; 7:52; 8:41; 11:48).[176] Finally, the implied author does not give himself a name, but he does give himself a descriptive designation which has almost become a name, for the implied author is "the disciple whom Jesus loved," more commonly referred to as the Beloved Disciple.[177]

Another term which it will be useful to define is "the narrator." It is the narrator through whom the implied author of a narrative speaks. The narrator may be a character in the narrative (as in most of the Sherlock Holmes stories, where the narrator is Dr. Watson, who is also a character in the narrative), but he does not have to be such. A literary reading of a narrative "begins at the moment when we allow ourselves to be addressed by [a narrative's] textually immanent narrator."[178] It is the narrator who guides the implied reader into the world of the text, and guides him in imagining it.[179]

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[174]As Culpepper puts it, the implied reader's understanding of things which the characters in the narrative do not understand "creates a bond of secret communication" (*ibid.*, p. 179, also citing Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, pp. 13, 28f.) between the implied author and the implied reader. Culpepper compares the Johannine implied author's use of irony to a fishing net used to catch the implied reader; the analogy is an appropriate one for the Gospels.

[175]*Ibid.*. p. 33.

[176]*Ibid.*, pp. 170f.

[177]So e.g. Culpepper, *ibid.*, p. 47; Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p. 78. The issue of whether or not the Beloved Disciple was a historical person, and if so, who he was, is outside the range of this study.

[178]Petersen, *art. cit.*, p. 38.

[179]Cf. *ibid.*

> It is through the control exerted by the narrator, himself the puppet of the author, that the reader also becomes a participant in the formation of the work and its imaginitive world.[180]

Let us consider the narrator in the Gospel of John. In his chapter on the narrator, Culpepper argues that the narrator in John's Gospel is "neither unreliable nor deliberately suppressive."[181]

> In John, the narrator is the one who speaks in the prologue, tells the story, introduces the dialogue, provides explanations, translates terms, tells us what various characters knew or did not know. In short, the narrator tells us what to think.[182]

Culpepper says that the narrator is intrusive, that is, he shows himself by making aside comments to the reader. He is also undramatised (i.e. he is not a character in the narrative), omniscient, omnipresent, and omnicommunicative (that is, he gives the reader the information which the reader needs and does not suppress important information). All this helps him to gain the reader's trust. "As the narrator tells the story, and because of the way he tells it, we soon accept him as a reliable guide to the meaning of Jesus' life and death."[183] This is an important factor in the narrator's accomplishment of his purpose, which, as he makes clear at 20:30f., is to win the reader over to his point of view. In most of what he says Culpepper is right, but there is one point on which we disagree, and to that I shall now turn.

In the previous paragraph I noted that Culpepper describes the narrator as undramatised.[184] He says that the narrator "dramatically pulls the curtain"[185] on the implied author and reveals who he is. But this cannot be so, for the narrator is the creation of the implied author. Therefore the situation must be the opposite of what

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[180]*Ibid.*, p. 39.
[181]*Anatomy.*, p. 19.
[182]*Ibid.*, p. 17.
[183]*Ibid.* p. 17. In this paragraph I summarise Culpepper's discussion of the Johannine narrator (*ibid.*, pp. 16-27).
[184]So also Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p. 20.
[185]*Anatomy*, p. 47

Culpepper describes - it is the implied author who pulls the curtain on the narrator and reveals his identity.[186] And there are other indications in the text that this is so. Let us look at this issue. Through the first two chapters of the gospel the narrator's perspective is that of one outside the narrative, a perspective increased by the fact that the narrator's perspective is also retrospective. Omniscient and omnipresent, the narrator moves about among the characters at will. But already at 1:14,16 with their "we" references there is a "hint that this narrator has some personal connection with the events he is about to recount."[187] In chapter 3 there is a shift in the narrator's perspective as his voice merges with those of Jesus and John the Baptist - he is moving closer to the narrative.

In chapter 4 the amount of detail which adds realism to the scene can hardly be missed. It gives the narrative "the sense of immediate, on-the-spot reporting. The narrator has become, as it were, the silent, unseen witness to the event...",[188] all the while retaining his omniscience and omnipresence. This position, still closer to the narrative, is one which he retains for most of the narrative.

At 13:23 the narrator introduces a character to whom he refers only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It is through this disciple's eyes that the narratee sees the events which take place in the upper room,[189] and much of the Passion narrative proper. Another crucial shift happens at 19:35. This verse is often dismissed as a later insertion by an editor,[190] but a narrative-critical reading takes the text as it stands. Let us look at this verse and see what it tells us about the narrator of the gospel.

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[186]So also Staley, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[187]Derek Tovey, "Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel" (unpublished 1994 Durham University Ph.D. thesis) p. 51.
[188]*Ibid.*, p. 52.
[189]Cf. *ibid.*, p. 53.
[190]So e.g. Schnackenburg (*St. John*, 3:290f); Bultmann, (*John*, p. 678); Brown (*John*, 2:948); Beasley-Murray (*John*, p 354); Macgregor (*John*, p. 351).

The first thing that can be said is that the words of this verse are attributed to the narrator rather than any of the gospel's characters.[191] The narrator reports that the events which he has just described have been testified to by an eyewitness, and reports the guarantee of the truth of that testimony. There are two questions to be asked here: who is the eyewitness, and who is the guarantor of the testimony of the eyewitness? Are they the same person, or two different people?

Let us start with the second question, since the answer to that will go some way toward determining the answer to the first. If the guarantor of the eyewitness testimony is not the eyewitness himself, then who is he? One suggestion is that the guarantor is the Father, or Jesus, whom the eyewitness is then calling to witness that he is telling the truth.[192] Another suggestion is that the narrator himself is the guarantor.[193] Bultmann[194] suggests that the guarantor is the same believing community which guarantees the disciple's witness at 21:24. But the most natural - and the most widely-accepted - reading makes ὁ ἑωρακὼς and ἐκεῖνος refer to the same person.[195] In other words, the eyewitness is insisting on the truth of his own testimony.

This leaves the question, "Who is the eyewitness who thus insists on the truth of his testimony?" Paul Minear[196] suggests that the eyewitness is the soldier who has just pierced Jesus' side; but in that case an indication in the text that this soldier believed would be expected.[197] There is virtually universal agreement that the eyewitness is the "disciple whom Jesus loved". And on one level this is so, since the

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[191]So Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 44.
[192]So Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 500; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 533; Macgregor, *John*, pp. 350-52.
[193]So Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 44; Stibbe, *John*, p. 198.
[194]*John*, p. 679; cf. p. 718
[195]So e.g. Brown, *John*, 2:937, *Death*, 2:1184; Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:290; Barrett, *St. John*, p. 557f; Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 354; Carson, *John*, p. 629; Bernard, *St. John*, 2:649-51; Morris, *John*, pp. 820f.; Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 412.
[196]"Unity and Diversity: A Johannine Case-Study," in Ulrich Luz and Hans Weder eds., *Die Mitte des Neuen Testaments: Einheit und Vielfalt neutestlamentlicher Theologie* (1983) pp. 162-75, cited by Brown (*Death*, 2:1182).
[197]So also Brown, *Death*, 2:1182f.

"disciple whom Jesus loved" is the implied author of the gospel. But this overlooks the fact that it was common style in the first century for a narrator to refer to himself in the third person.[198] Therefore I suggest that at 19:35 the narrator is the eyewitness, who then insists that his testimony is true. In other words, at the most important part of his narration, the narrator, who has until now stood outside the narrative, suddenly reveals himself to have been a character in the narrative all along.[199]

The third term which should be defined is "the narratee." Like the implied author and the narrator, the narratee is an intratextual construct. It is the narratee whom the narrator addresses. While the implied reader always hears the story for the first time, this is not necessarily so of the narratee. Like the narrator, the narratee may be a named character in the narrative, but he does not have to be. "Just as with a narrator, the implied author can mark the social status, gender or personality traits of the narratee."[200]

What can be said of the narratee in the Gospel of John? Near the end of the narrative it is made clear that the narratee is in fact a group or corporate body of some kind; at the only two places in the narrative where the narrator openly evokes the narratee, 19:35 and 20:30f., the narratee is addressed with a plural ὑμεῖς.[201] This means that the narratee has no gender.[202] Unlike the implied reader, the narratee knows certain things before they are referred to in the narrative: he knows about the resurrection (2:22), the betrayal (6:64), the gift of the Spirit (7:39), and the anointing at Bethany (11:2).[203] He also knows some of the gospel's characters before they are

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[198]So Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 500; Brown, *John*, 2:936.
[199]So also e.g. Staley, *op. cit.*, p. 13, cf. p. 38; Tovey, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[200]Staley, *ibid.*, p. 43.
[201]Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 212; Staley, *op. cit.*, pp. 43f. However, I shall follow Staley's example; "for simplicity's sake, and since the narratees are not revealed as corporate until nearly the end of the book, I shall use the singular 'narratee' and masculine pronouns when speaking about them" (*ibid.*, p. 43 n. 114.). Staley (*ibid*) notes that in the New Testament narratees are evoked more often than narrators.
[202]Staley, *ibid.*, p. 44.
[203]*Ibid.*

introduced in the narrative: John the Baptist, Jesus, Andrew, Simon Peter, Nathanael, Jesus' brothers, Judas Iscariot, the Twelve, Thomas, Pilate and the sons of Zebedee.[204]

The fourth term which it will be useful to define is "the implied reader." The implied reader, like the implied author, is a theoretical construct who exists only in the text. As with the implied author, care must be taken to distinguish him from the real reader. Nor is it methodologically correct to discern from the text the characteristics of the implied reader and then apply them directly to the real reader (this is a fault of Culpepper's discussion of the implied reader in *Anatomy*).

The implied reader is created by the narrative, which "sets up the mental moves required to experience and understand the text."[205] "[T]he concept of the implied reader designates a network of response inviting [*sic*] structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text."[206] The implied reader is then a sort of idealised reader, who, at any given point in the text, completely understands what has gone before. He catches nuances such as double meaning and irony (even when the characters in the narrative do not). The implied reader is projected by the implied author, as distinct from the narratee, who is shaped by the narrator.[207] If the implied author is static, the implied reader is forward-moving, moved ahead by the text toward the implied author's goals.[208] The implied author knows the entire text, but the implied reader, at any given point in the text, knows only that part of the text which has come before.[209] Thus the implied reader is always a first-time reader. Does the implied reader know only the text in which he exists? The answer to this question is apparently No, for in the Gospel of John the implied reader is quite clearly supposed to understand the gospel's intertextual references.[210]

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[204]*Ibid.*, p. 45.
[205]Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 205; so also Staley, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[206]Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading*, cited by Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 209.
[207]Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 221.
[208]Staley, *op. cit*, p. 33.
[209]*Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.
[210]Cf. *ibid.*, p. 36.

Culpepper devotes a chapter of *Anatomy* to the implied reader.

> In John the ideal narrative audience adopts the narrator's ideological point of view, penetrates the misunderstandings, appreciates the irony, and is moved to fresh appreciations of transcendent mystery through the gospel's symbolism.[211]

In other words, the ideal narrative audience, narratee or implied reader (Culpepper uses the terms synonymously) makes all the mental moves the narrator expects him to make. A picture of the implied reader can therefore be built up from what the narrator tells him or does not tell him.

> If explanation is provided, the narratee would not have understood otherwise; if explanation is absent, the narratee understands (or can figure it out). If a character is introduced, he or she would not otherwise have been known.[212]

While Culpepper distinguishes between the implied reader and actual, historical readers,[213] it soon becomes clear that the latter is his real interest (thus he brings in the very historical-critical issues which he has said that he will avoid). By surveying what the narrator tells and does not tell the implied reader, Culpepper concludes that the implied reader knows of Jesus and John the Baptist, but may have mistaken impressions of them; "all or most of the named disciples are known to the reader,"[214] as are the gospel's various Jewish groups and minor characters; but the implied reader does not know of Lazarus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Caiaphas, Annas or (surprisingly) the Beloved Disciple. "The readers know the general regions but not specific locations"[215] where the story takes place; the implied reader knows Greek but not Hebrew; uses the Roman system of reckoning the hours of the day rather than the Jewish; is familiar with the Old Testament but not with Jewish festivals or practices; and has heard about most of the important events of the story. All this leads

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[211] *Ibid.*, p. 208
[212] *Ibid.*, pp. 208f.
[213] *Ibid.*, p. 205.
[214] *Ibid.*, p. 215.
[215] *Ibid.*, pp. 218.

Culpepper to conclude that the gospel was written for a group of Christians[216] who lived outside Palestine. This group consisted entirely of Jewish Christians when the gospel was begun, but by the time it was completed also included Gentile Christians who were unfamiliar with Judaism.[217]

All this raises two important questions. First, can we be sure that when the implied author tells the implied reader something, it is because the implied reader does not know it? For example, does the narrator say at 9:7 that Siloam means "sent" because the reader does not speak Hebrew, or because he wants to draw attention to the theme of sending, which is an important one in this gospel, or both? And does he repeatedly describe Passover as "the feast of the Jews" because the implied reader he addresses is not of Jewish origin (and thus unfamiliar with the Jewish festivals), or because he wants to remind him that Passover is not his own feast but that of the Jews, from whom he must distance himself? The fact that the explanation is repeated seems to me to suggest the latter. A non-Jewish audience for whom Passover was being explained as something unfamiliar would need the information only once, just as characters who receive an introduction get one only the first time they are mentioned (with the exception of Judas Iscariot).

The second question raised by what Culpepper says is that which I asked of Schneiders: "What justifies the shift from text to community which he makes?" It is only possible to draw accurate conclusions about the readers from the text if 1) the author intended the implied reader to resemble his real readers, and 2) he was able to accurately judge and represent them.[218] But we do not have any information from

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[216]That is, Culpepper believes that the gospel is not a missionary tract aimed at Jews (*contra* Robinson, Wind, and van Unnik).

[217]This last point *ibid.*, p. 225, citing Heinrich Lausberg, *Jesaja 55,10-11 im Evangelium nach Johannes* (Göttingen, 1979) pp. 141-44. In all this "the historical critic in Culpepper triumphs over the formalist critic in this moment of crisis, and he opts for the source hypothesis" (Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 94). In this paragraph I summarise Culpepper's discussion of the Johannine "reader" (Culppeper here abandons his previous distinction between various types of readers) in *Anatomy*, pp. 213-25.

[218] As Culpepper himself admits, "A characterization of the narratee could be used in the debate over the actual, historical audience only on the assumption that the narratee accurately represents the intended audience and that the author's judgements about his actual audience were also accurate" (*Anatomy*, p. 212).

outside the text which would allow us to know if either of these conditions have been met. Therefore I suggest that caution must be used in drawing conclusions about the community from the text, or we shall be drawn into a vortex of circular reasoning in which theories put forth by one generation of scholars are taken as proven fact by the succeeding generation, who then proceed to build their own theories on them.

How then do all of these - the real author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied reader and real reader, relate to each other? The best way to make this clear is with a diagram.[219]

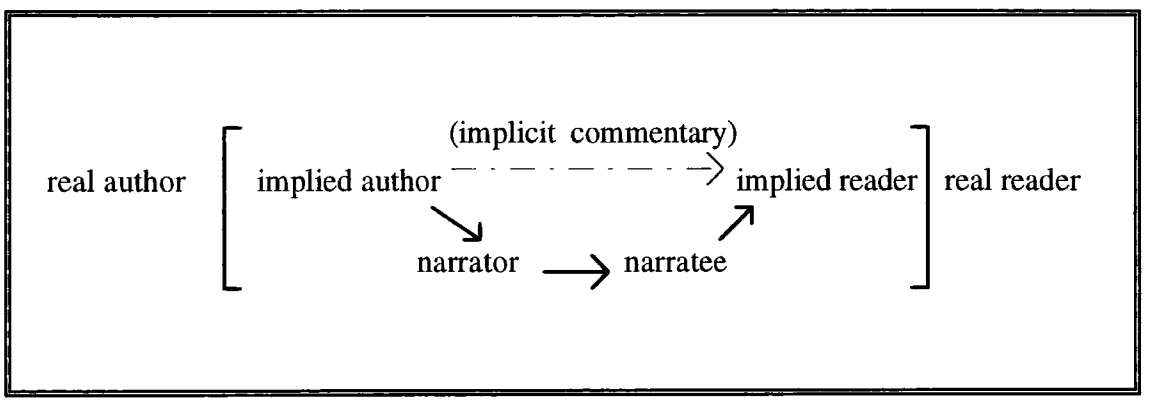

Diagram 2: Levels of Discourse and How They Relate

The real reader and real author are outside the text, which is symbolised by the square brackets. Within the text itself, the implied author and implied reader are on the same level of discourse, the highest, while the narrator and narratee are on a lower level. The implied author speaks through the narrator, who addresses the narratee. The implied reader picks up the message addressed to the narratee. All this might be called explicit commentary, because it is open and obvious. There is also, however, implicit commentary, which is a form of communication from the implied author directly to the

[219]This diagram is modified from that of Staley (*op. cit.*, p. 22), which he developed from the theory of Chatman [*Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, 1977) pp. 146-51, 233, 267].

implied reader, who must "read between the lines" in this form of communication. This is where the irony, symbolism and double meanings in the text are to be found.

Theory of Characterisation

I shall now consider the methods used in some representative studies of characterisation. Powell illustrates various aspects of narrative criticism by using the Synoptics as case studies. In his chapter on characterisation, he discusses characterisation under four categories. The first of Powell's categories of characterisation is telling and showing. "The implied author can reveal characters either by telling the reader about them or by showing the reader what the characters are like within the story itself."[220]

The technique of telling is used when the narrator tells the narratee outright what a character is like. This kind of direct statement "present[s] the implied author's view of the characters in a way that is blatant but accessible."[221] The technique of telling is more common in ancient than in modern literature, because modern literary taste considers this technique intrusive and uninteresting.[222]

Less precise but more interesting than the technique of telling is that of showing. The technique of showing is an indirect one. The implied author does not simply give information to the implied reader directly; rather the implied reader is expected to draw inferences from what the characters say, do and think. The implied

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[220]Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 52, citing Booth.
[221]*Ibid.*
[222]*Ibid.*

reader evaluates the given information and the sources from which it comes "in order to figure out the implied author's view of the characters."[223]

> An implied author can show the reader what characters are like through statements that present either their own point of view or the point of view of others concerning them.[224]

This kind of characterisation takes place on four planes: 1) the spatial-temporal, which refers to actions; 2) the phraseological, which refers to speech; 3) the psychological, which refers to thoughts; 4) the ideological, which refers to beliefs and values.[225]

A character may give different information on one plane than on another; for example the character's actions (spatial-temporal plane) may belie what the character says (phraseological plane). Such inconsistency is noted by the implied reader and becomes part of his evaluation of the character. The implied reader will also be able to discern which information deserves the greater weight.

The second of Powell's categories of characterisation is that of evaluative point of view.

> This refers to the norms, values and general worldview that the implied author establishes as operative for a story. To put it another way, evaluative point of view may be defined as the standard of judgement by which readers are led to evaluate the events, characters and settings that comprise the story...The right way of thinking, furthermore, is aligned with God's point of view...As Kingsbury puts it, the implied authors of [the gospels] have made God's evaluative point of view normative for their works. What God thinks is, by definition, true and right.[226]

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[223]*Ibid.* Evaluating sources of information can be important when, for example, a character is lying, or speaking with an ulterior motive (e.g. when the Pharisees address Jesus courteously, but the narrator has already said that they are trying to trip Jesus up, e.g. Mk. 10:2; Lk. 20:20ff; Matt. 22:34-36). In such cases the implied reader must give more weight to information which comes from one source than that which comes from another in order to come to a view of the character which is in line with the implied author's.

[224]*Ibid.*

[225]*Ibid.*, citing Boris Uspensky.

[226]*Ibid.*, p. 24

If a story can have an evaluative point of view, so can any character within a story. "In this sense, the term refers to the norms, values, and general world view that govern the way a character looks at things and renders judgements upon them."[227] Since the implied author's evaluative point of view is aligned with that of God, a character's evaluative point of view is judged on the basis of whether or not it is also aligned with God's, as represented by Jesus.[228]

The third of Powell's categories of characterisation is that of character traits. According to Powell,

> [c]haracters may also be distinguished by traits that are attributed to them in the narrative...For narrative purposes, traits are considered to be persistent personal qualities that describe the character involved...traits sometimes must be inferred. Such inference does not involve "psychologizing" of characters on the basis of insights extraneous to the text, but rather calls for recognizing assumptions that the text makes of its implied reader.[229]

In his fourth and last category of characterisation, Powell groups together empathy, sympathy and antipathy. "In literary terms, empathy between the implied reader and any given character must be established on the basis of evaluative point of view and character traits."[230]

> The literary concept of sympathy is related to that of empathy, but assumes a less intense identification. Instead of a "feeling-into," empathy consists of a "feeling-alongside-of"...Antipathy [is] feelings of alienation from, or disdain for particular characters...[231]

In other words, we are here moving into the area of reader response.

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[227] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[228] Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 54: "Since the narrators of our Gospels are reliable, their evaluative points of view are always true. In addition, the evaluative point of view of God is by definition true...The reader will judge whether [other characters'] points of view are true by comparing them with the points of view of the narrator [and] God...Jesus is seen to espouse a true evaluative point of view because he always acts, speaks, thinks, and believes in ways that accord with God's point of view." This is especially true of John's Gospel, where Jesus, the Word of God, repeatedly asserts that he does and says only what the Father tells him to, and does only what he sees the Father doing.

[229] *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

[230] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[231] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

David B. Gowler begins his study of characterisation in Luke-Acts[232] with a discussion of characterisation in modern literary theory, followed by a discussion of characterisation in ancient narratives. In the latter chapter Gowler surveys characterisation in six ancient genres: Homer, Greek tragedy, the Hebrew Bible, biography, history and the novel. Gowler concludes that

> Characters in ancient literature are presented in a multiplicity of ways, and a great amount of variety exists between various characters, even characters found in the same genre.[233]

Gowler's taxonomy for the study of characterisation in ancient literature uses the following categories:

1) Direct definition: "The most explicit characterisation comes through direct definition, the overt naming or judgement of someone's qualities."[234] "Direct definition leaves little doubt as far as explicitness. The overt naming of qualities is not subtle; it guides the reader directly and clearly."[235]

2) Indirect presentation: "Indirect presentation...displays or exemplifies the qualities and traits of the characters, leaving the reader to make the appropriate inferences."[236] "Indirect presentation may take the form of speech, action, external appearance, environment, or comparison/contrast."[237]

3) Cultural scripts - "The one constant found in all of these ancient texts was the importance of the cultural context."[238]

"[M]odern readers - in order to interpret these ancient texts more clearly - need to be aware of the implications of these scripts in the narrative world of those texts."[239]

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[232]*Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke-Acts* (New York, 1991).
[233]*Ibid.*, p. 169.
[234]*Ibid.*, p. 55.
[235]*Ibid.*, p. 61.
[236]*Ibid.*
[237]*Ibid.*, p. 171.
[238]*Ibid.*, p. 174.
[239]*Ibid.*, p. 176. In his study of cultural scripts Gowler draws from the work of Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights From Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, 1993).

The most prominent of the cultural scripts on which Gowler focuses is that of honour/shame considerations.[240] In a shame culture such as that of the ancient Mediterranean, honour comes more from the approval of others than from within oneself. Life is a competition with those of equal social status who are not of one's own circle, and honour is gained by winning the competition.

> Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of worth. The purpose of honor is to serve as a sort of social rating which entitles a person to interact in specific ways with his or her equals, superiors, and subordinates, according to the prescribed cultural cues of the society.[241]

The other cultural scripts on which Gowler focuses are: 1) limited good. Limited good involves the perception that the supply of all goods is limited. Goods may be divided or redistributed, but the supply cannot be increased. This means that it is impossible for one to improve one's social status except at the expense of another. For this reason the honourable person seeks to maintain their social status, whatever it is, rather than to improve it.[242]

2) Purity rules. Purity rules involve the establishing and maintaining of boundaries between what is clean and what is unclean. Such rules allow people to "situate the elements of [their] environment, including [them]selves, in some orderly way,"[243] and to recognise that which is out of place. This allows them to make sense of the persons, things, time and space with which they come in contact. Purity rules symbolise the model of God in which one believes; therefore when the coming of Jesus brought a new model of God, his disciples had to establish new purity rules based on this new model.[244]

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[240]"The concern for honor and the relative lack of introspection are the most pervasive of the cultural scripts." (Gowler, *op. cit.*, p. 174.)
[241]Malina, *New Testament World*, p. 54.
[242]*Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.
[243]*Ibid.*, p. 181.
[244]*Ibid.*; see Malina's discussion, pp.149-81.

3) Kinship/οἶκος ties. These ties have to do with the network of relationships that each person has, both by blood and in law. This is usually a matter of families, but can be a matter of race, as we shall see in the next chapter of this study. In first-century Israel, a woman became embedded in her husband and his family at marriage. Extended families usually lived together, and family traditions were highly valued. Those outside the circle of kinship were looked on with suspicion or even hostility.[245]

4) Patron-client relationships. In a society in which goods are limited, one way to obtain needed resources is to form contracts with those who can provide them. A patron-client contract is a vertical one, formed between persons of unequal social status. As with any contract, there are expectations on both sides. The patron

> provides things not normally available in the village or urban neighborhood...What the patron offers is "favours." A favour refers to some object, good, or action that is either unavailable at all or unavailable at a given time.[246]

In return for such things, "[c]lients would repay their patrons by such intangibles as public praise, concern for their reputation among those of the client's status, [and] informing patrons of the plots and machinations of others."[247]

Gowler is surely right when he says that modern readers must be aware that our culture is not the same as the one which produced these ancient texts. This means that we must make an effort to understand certain cultural scripts which the original readers would have taken for granted, and which must be taken account of in interpreting the text. Therefore I shall include a consideration of cultural scripts in my discussion of each of the passages with which this study is concerned.

Gowler's approach shares with Powell's a concern for character presentation - what Powell calls telling Gowler calls direct definition, and what Powell calls showing

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[245]Malina, *op. cit.*, pp. 142f; see Malina's discussion, pp. 117-43
[246]*Ibid*, p. 102.
[247]*Ibid.*, p. 107.

Gowler calls indirect presentation. But by focusing on cultural scripts Gowler takes a more anthropological interest than Powell, whose interest is more rhetorical, as shown by his consideration of the reader's empathy, sympathy and antipathy toward characters.

Therefore, taking what seem to be the best categories of all that have been suggested, I shall use the following in my own study of characterisation: 1) direct definition; 2) indirect presentation; 3) character traits; 4) evaluative point of view; 5) cultural scripts; 6) empathy, sympathy and antipathy. I shall use Gowler's phrases "direct definition" and "indirect presentation" because they are a more accurate description of what occurs in these categories than Powell's "telling and showing." I shall also use Gowler's category of cultural scripts and Powell's category of empathy, sympathy and antipathy, because by using both of these categories I can bring into my own study both Gowler's anthropological concerns and Powell's rhetorical concerns. This combination of categories seems to me to cover all the important aspects of characterisation, because such a combination addresses both historical and literary concerns.

But there are other things besides characterisation itself which must be taken account of in a study of characterisation in any biblical passage. The literary context of the passage may give some clues as to characterisation. The geographical and temporal contexts are often important also - where and when a passage is set may also be significant in considering characterisation in it. Therefore the outline of each chapter will look like this:

Introduction	
Part I	A survey of the state of research on the passage
Part II	The literary context of the passage
Part III	Temporal and geographical contexts of the passage
Part IV	The characterisation of non-Jews in the passage -direct definition -indirect presentation -character traits -evaluative point of view -cultural scripts -empathy, sympathy, and antipathy
Part V	Concluding remarks

Table 4: Structure for Each Chapter of This Study

These are the categories which I shall use in this present study, devoting a chapter to each character and ending each chapter with some concluding remarks. In Chapter 3 I shall discuss the Samaritans, in Chapter 4 the Greeks, and in Chapter 5 the Romans. In the sixth and last chapter I shall offer a summary and some general concluding remarks about the characterisation of non-Jewish characters in the Gospel of John.

CHAPTER 3

CHARACTERISATION OF THE SAMARITANS

Introduction

In this chapter I shall discuss the characterisation of the Samaritans in the Gospel of John. Jesus, returning from Jerusalem to Galilee after Passover, stops for a rest at a well near the Samaritan town of Sychar. While he is there a woman comes from the village to draw water, and Jesus begins to speak with her. She soon comes to see him as a prophet, and brings her fellow-townspeople out to meet him. Meanwhile Jesus takes the opportunity to give his disciples a lesson about mission. The townspeople invite him to stay with them, and eventually come to faith in him as Saviour of the World. The passage under consideration in this chapter is, of course, John 4:4-42.

I

A Survey of Research

In considering this narrative, attention is inevitably focused on the woman whose lengthy wellside conversation with Jesus takes up approximately half of the narrative. Previous literary studies of this narrative have tended to take one of three approaches: the symbolic approach, the discipleship/missiological approach or the betrothal approach. In this section I shall discuss these three major approaches to this narrative, plus an article which uses speech-act theory. The first of these, the symbolic, sees the woman as representative of the Samaritan people. The most recent

exponent of this view, Sandra Schneiders,[1] gives this reading a feminist twist. This interpretation focuses on the woman's six relationships and interprets them allegorically. In the allegory the woman's five husbands become symbolic of the five false gods worshipped by the Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24 ff. is cited here), and the sixth man, who is not the woman's legal husband, represents the God of Israel, whom the Samaritans also worshipped, but in a debased form.[2] In language similar to that of the Old Testament prophets Jesus calls the Samaritan people, represented by the woman, to leave behind their wrong worship of God and worship him in Spirit and truth. Schneiders adopts this reading because it allows her to move away from any reading which sees the woman as sexually immoral;[3] but there are several problems with this reading.[4]

First, the Old Testament (2 Kings 17:24ff.) lists seven false gods of the Samaritans, not five (a difficulty partially mitigated by Josephus, *Ant.* 9.14.3, who seems to reduce the number to five).[5] Second, the false gods were worshipped simultaneously, not sequentially (but then, an allegory does not have to be exact in every detail). Third, to say that the sixth man represents God is to symbolise the worship of God as an adulterous relationship. This is exactly the opposite of what the Old Testament prophets did, and is something which surely no New Testament writer would do either.[6] Fourth, a symbolic reading is contradicted by the highly personal wording of the woman's testimony at v. 29. She speaks of events as though they

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[1] *The Revelatory Text* (San Fransisco, 1991). The symbolic view is also taken by Macgregor (*John*, pp. 101f.) and Hoskyns (*John*, p. 243).

[2] An allegory first made by an anonymous mediaeval scribe, who made a note of it in his copy of Josephus (Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 242f.). Another theory interprets the sixth man as symbolic of a Samaritan teacher such as Dositheus (whom Jerome mentions) or Simon Magus [so J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Johannine Writings* (London, 1927), cited by Morris (*John*, p. 265 n. 45)].

[3] It is interesting to note that Schneiders assumes that a literal reading of the woman's relationships means that she has divorced all her husbands. But the text does not say whether she divorced them, they divorced her or they died.

[4] *Contra* Macgregor (*John*, p. 102), who says that the allegory explains the change in direction in the conversation from husbands to worship.

[5] Josephus says that each of the five tribes of the Samaritans brought its own god with it to Samaria ["ἕκαστοι κατὰ ἔθνος ἴδιον θεὸν εἰς τὴν Σαμάρειαν κομίσαντες (πέντε δ'ἦσαν)"]. The singulars seem to imply that Josephus is thinking of one god for each tribe.

[6] So also Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 144.

referred to her life alone. Fifth, an allegorical interpretation in which the woman is nothing but a symbol denies the woman any individuality and life of her own. But the implied author has given her a lively and realistic characterisation - she is no cardboard cut-out.[7] Sixth, while our implied author is capable of allegory, he does not usually do it this way.[8] Seventh, if the implied author intended such an allegory, one would expect the woman's husbands to be more apparent in the narrative than they are. But they appear only so that Jesus can show his knowledge of the woman's past. "The figure is of no further significance after Jesus has disclosed his miraculous knowledge to the woman."[9] Finally, it should not be forgotten that if the Samaritans had once worshipped false gods (whether five or seven), by the first century A.D. this was no longer so - they had completely adopted Yahwism. It would be unfair to attribute to first-century Samaritans the sins of their ancestors.[10]

The second approach takes account of the discipleship/missiological aspect of the narrative.[11] This approach sees the woman's actions as those of a disciple. When Jesus reveals himself to her with an "I am" statement, she comes to faith in him. She leaves behind her water-jar (the feminine equivalent of leaving behind fishing boats and tax stall) and goes and tells her fellow-townspeople about him, and then brings them to him. Her witness is effective, for they also believe as a result of her testimony. This approach has something to be said for it, for it is true that the woman goes and tells her fellow-townspeople about Jesus, and that they believe as a result. In fact, as I shall argue below, the woman's discipleship is in some ways contrasted to the discipleship of the other disciples, who appear at vv. 27-38. But I shall also argue below that the

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[7] Schneiders notes the realism of the woman's characterisation, but does not see how an allegorical reading reduces this.

[8] So Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 61; Carson, *John*, p. 233.

[9] Hendrikus Boers, *Neither on This Mountain Nor in Jerusalem* (Atlanta, 1988) p. 171. Boers seems to reject the allegorical interpretation.

[10] So Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 110, who describes the allegorical approach as "*l'invention de pédants trop au courant des livres*"(*ibid.*); cf. Lindars, *John*, pp. 185, 187. Brown (*John*, 1:171) also rightly asks whether such an allegorical jibe would have been recognisable, without explanation, to first-century readers (cf. Morris, *John*, p. 266).

[11] This is the approach taken earlier by Schneiders, *art. cit.*, p. 132-34, and by Brown (*John*, 1:178-85), Barrett (*St. John*, p. 243) and Beasley-Murray (*John*, pp. 64, 66).

situation is not as simple as it may at first glance seem to be. First, while Jesus does make a messianic claim, there are indications that the woman fails to understand it. Second, account must be taken of what the woman says, and does not say, in her testimony (I shall return to this later). Third, the woman has not acted entirely in obedience to Jesus' instruction, for he has told her to get her husband, not the other townspeople.[12]

Related to the idea of discipleship is the idea of mission, for as we have just seen, a key way in which a disciple of Jesus shows that he or she is just that is to bring others to Jesus.[13] Mission is a prominent theme in the entire Gospel of John, and Teresa Okure's study of mission in this gospel focuses on the Samaritan narrative as a key missiological text. For Okure, mission is "the fulcrum which holds together the different themes of living water (vv10-15), true worship (vv.20-24) and the revelation of Jesus' messiahship (vv. 25-26)."[14] Okure pays little attention to the characterisation of the woman, because her interest is focused on Jesus as a model missionary. Jesus in his interaction with the woman provides a model which all of his disciples should follow. It is the woman who determines the themes raised in the conversation, because Jesus wants to reach her where she is. "Jesus brings the revelation but she provides the medium by which the revelation is communicated to her personally."[15] For Okure, it is wrong to see mission as a post-Easter activity, because mission is the activity in which Jesus was engaged during his lifetime. In fact, the post-Easter missionary activity of the disciples and the church is founded on, and made possible only by, Jesus'

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[12]Jerome H. Neyrey ["What's Wrong With This Picture? John 4, Cultural Stereotypes of Women, and Public and Private Space," *BTB* 24 (1994) pp. 77-91] makes much of this. While it may be said that the woman cannot get her husband because (at the moment) she has none (or perhaps this is to split hairs in the same way as the woman does), Jesus has not said anything about the townspeople.

[13]This is the view taken by Boers, *op. cit*, who lays great stress on the idea of the woman as a missionary, and even goes so far as to say that she "leads Jesus forward in doing the will of his Father" (Preface) and that she "prepares the villagers for their role of inviting Jesus to stay with them as willing recipients of his self-revelation as saviour of the world" (p. 87; cf. pp. 82f., 92, 165, 182). The same view is also taken by Carson (*John*, pp. 228, 231f.), Morris (*John*, pp. 275, 279), and Lindars, who sees this narrative as "a model of the mission of the church" (*John*, p. 192; cf. pp. 193-95).

[14]*The Johannine Approach to Mission* (Tübingen, 1989) p. 91.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 128.

missionary activity during his lifetime. The other focus of the study is on rhetoric, because she rightly sees that there is a persuasive thrust to the narrative, as the narrator makes clear at 20:30f.

Okure structures the narrative according to a rhetorical scheme. Vv. 1-26 form the *narratio*, in which "the thesis is presented without comment in the narrative plot".[16] Vv. 31-38 form the *expositio*, in which the thesis is developed more fully in Jesus' conversation with the disciples. Vv. 28-30, 39-42 form the *demonstratio*, in which what Jesus has said about mission "is dramatised by both the woman and the Samaritans"[17] as the woman testifies to her people about Jesus and they come to faith in him. The difficulty with this pattern is that Okure must shift part of the text in order to make it fit the pattern. The intended effect of the rhetoric is twofold: first, to persuade the non-believing reader that Jesus is the Messiah and Saviour of the World; second, to remind believing readers that their missionary activity is founded in Jesus, and to demonstrate the right methods and attitudes for missionaries. It is true that the woman goes to her people and brings them to Jesus, and that they believe as a result of her testimony. But we shall see below that there is an inadequacy about her testimony, and their faith at this stage.

The third approach which has been taken to this narrative is the betrothal approach. One of those who has drawn attention to this is Lyle Eslinger.[18] Eslinger argues that some of the vocabulary of this scene has sexual overtones, and that the scene picks up on a recurring Old Testament type-scene in which a man or his representative meets his future wife at a well (Gen. 24:10-61; 29:1-20; Ex. 2:15b-21). According to this reading, through the first half of the encounter "both characters are

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[16]Okure,*op. cit.*, p. 183.
[17]*Ibid.*
[18]"The Wooing of the Woman at the Well: Jesus, the Reader and Reader-Response Criticism" , *Literature and Theology* 1/1 (1987) pp 167-82. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 165-82. Stibbe takes both a discipleship and a betrothal approach to the narrative (*John*, pp. 66-68). The betrothal approach is also taken by Jo-Ann A. Brant, "Husband Hunting: Characterization and Narrative Art in the Gospel of John," *BibInter* 4,2 (1996) pp. 205-23.

engaging in a bit of covert verbal coquetry."[19] Or so it seems. But if the woman intends her language to be interpreted as verbal coquetry, Jesus does not intend his language to be so interpreted, and he soon rebuffs her by telling her to get her husband. According to Eslinger, the reader becomes clued into the carnal interpretation of the encounter by picking up the type-scene references and the overtones of the language. All this, plus the overtly nuptial atmosphere of 2:1-11 and 3:27-30, in turn leads the reader to expect a betrothal between Jesus and the woman; an expectation which is frustrated when Jesus "openly reveals his disinterest in her charms"[20] at v. 17. Through chapters 1-3 the reader of John's Gospel has watched as various characters have fallen into the trap of misunderstanding Jesus' words and actions; but the narrator has given the reader "inside information" which allows him to avoid falling into the trap. For example, at 2:19-21 "the Jews" misunderstand Jesus because they think that he is referring to the Temple building, but the reader knows that he is not, and thus understands. Here in chapter 4, according to Eslinger, the reader falls into the trap along with the Samaritan woman by coming to expect a betrothal, and thus gains personal experience of how difficult understanding Jesus can be. In falling into the trap the reader makes an error "far worse than that of the Samaritan woman, because it was an error in judgement, not one of ignorance."[21]

I must admit that I find this reading amusing - but how convincing is it? In focusing on the overtones of the language and on the betrothal aspects of the Old Testament type-scenes, Eslinger has picked up on an aspect of this narrative which is there - he has not imagined it. The Old Testament type-scene references and the overtones of the language are indeed there to be picked up on. But in stressing the betrothal aspects of the narrative as he does, Eslinger minimises another aspect of the narrative which is more important - its salvation-history aspect. To return to the Old

[19]Eslinger, *art. cit.*, p. 168.
[20]*Ibid.*, p. 180.
[21]*Ibid.*, p. 181. That is, after his experience of Jesus in chapters 1-3 (an experience which the woman has not had) the reader should be sufficiently well-equipped to avoid the trap. But Eslinger has already said that after chapters 2-3 the reader is led to expect a betrothal in chapter 4. It seems to me that Eslinger is thus trying to have it both ways.

Testament narratives which Eslinger calls type-scenes for the Johannine narrative: it is true that in these narratives the meeting at a well leads to marriage. But more important is the fact that the relationships which begin in this manner are steps in the formation of the people of God. So also this New Testament wellside meeting represents a step in the redefinition of the people of God. As to the idea of the narrator deliberately trapping the reader, I have discussed above, in the previous chapter, why I find this unlikely for a first-century narrative, especially one whose implied author wants to win the implied reader over to his point of view. It should also be noted that, as I shall argue below, this approach makes both Jesus and the woman act in ways contrary to the cultural scripts of their culture.[22]

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[22]Calum M. Carmichael ["Marriage and the Samaritan Woman," *NTS* 26 (1979-80) pp. 332-46] had already taken the betrothal idea one step further, connecting the story of the Samaritan woman with that of creation. Carmichael starts by noting the "common interest in water" and in marriage and birth (*ibid.*, p. 332; Carmichael mentions birth here because with every wedding there is an expectation that there will be children) which links the Samaritan passage with the narratives of chapter 3. He then suggests that the change in direction in the conversation from husbands to worship at 4:20 has its background in the book of Jeremiah (*ibid.*, p. 338). According to Carmichael, Jesus relives Jeremiah's role when he refers to the Samaritans' "cleavage from the true religion of the Jews"(*ibid.*, p. 339). It is also noteworthy that through Jeremiah 1-2, Jeremiah uses the metaphor of marital unfaithfulness to describe Israel's unfaithfulness to God, and that at Jer. 2:13, Jeremiah says that Israel has forsaken its fountain of living water and hewn out broken cisterns which cannot hold water [*ibid.* But it is to be noted that in Jer. 1-2, as in the rest of the Old Testament (Hosea and Ezekiel also use the same imagery, though Carmichael does not mention them), it is the worship of false gods which is described as marital unfaithfulness. As I have said, to apply the metaphor to the Samaritan narrative is to say that the worship of the true God is being described as marital unfaithfulness].

Carmichael says that the most likely background to the marital aspect of the narrative is the story of creation.

> It provides the unique model of the single process whereby a woman was both created and married to a man at the same time...The Samaritan woman is led in the direction of being both re-created and remarried through a union with Jesus (*ibid.*. p. 341, citing Gen. 1:27f and *Gen. Rabba* 14.7, which says that Adam and Eve were created as fully-formed adults. Carmichael does not say to whom the woman is to be seen as married, but implies that she is, symbolically at least, married to Jesus).

The story of creation is also in the background to Jesus' language at 4:34-38. As the woman has been re-created and remarried at the same time, so the Samaritans are compared to crops ready to harvest as soon as they have been sown (*ibid.*, pp. 344f., where Carmichael cites Philo, *De Opif.* 40: at creation all the plants had fruit on them as soon as they came into existence). I find this idea of creation as the background to this passage forced; there is nothing in the Johannine narrative which suggests that the idea of creation is in mind there. I would also ask, "How widespread were the rabbinic and Philonic readings on which Carmichael bases his reading?" I wonder if John, or his audience, would have been familiar with them.

The betrothal approach to this narrative derives some of its force from the sudden and unexpected change of direction in the conversation at v. 16, which has been the subject of much scholarly attention. Eugene Botha uses speech-act theory to explain this change.[23] Botha suggests that Jesus changes the subject as he does because he knows that the woman does not understand what he is saying. But he is too polite to tell her so, so he merely changes tack. It must be noted, however, that Jesus is not so polite to the uncomprehending Nicodemus; nor does Botha explain why it is the subject of husbands that Jesus raises.

In summary, the way that scholarship has seen the Samaritan woman and her people can be summarised briefly. Scholarship has tended to take one of three approaches to this narrative - the symbolic approach, the discipleship/missiological approach or the betrothal approach. But I have argued that there are problems with each of these approaches. The woman is seen as coming into a faith-union with Jesus which transcends her previous unions with other men. She is also seen as a model of discipleship,[24] and her people come to faith in Jesus on the basis of her witness and his preaching - not, it is to be noted, on the basis of signs. All this is true - but I hope to show that there is in fact some ambiguity about the woman's characterisation. This ambiguity leads the implied reader to ask about the nature of the woman's faith, and about what sort of faith it is for which the implied author is calling.

[23]"John 4.16: A Difficult Text Speech Act Theoretically Revisited," *Scriptura* 35 (1990) pp 1-9. Reprinted in Stibbe ed., *Literature*, pp. 183-92.
[24]There is no need to say with e.g. Culpepper (*Anatomy*, p. 137), that she is a model of *female* discipleship. There is nothing in her example that could not be followed by men as well as women.

II

The Literary Context

Let us look at the literary context of this passage, and see if it tells us anything about characterisation in the passage with which we are concerned in this chapter. There are several links between it and other parts of the gospel, but I shall here confine myself to those which seem relevant to the task at hand.

The Cana-to-Cana tour: chapters 2-4

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the gospel narrate a Cana-to-Cana tour; they are closely linked in many ways. Not all of the threads which bind these chapters together are relevant to this present study; but one which is relevant is that of the different levels of faith and perception shown by those with whom Jesus interacts in these chapters.[25]

The first verse which comes to our attention is 2:11. In changing the water into wine Jesus ἐφανέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. What sort of faith is being referred to here? There is no indication that their faith is anything but incipient, and at least partially based on the sign which they have just seen. Two things are noteworthy here. First, these men who believe are already disciples; they have already responded to Jesus' call. Second, the sign is not said to have any effect on most of those who are present. Even the servants who draw the water-become-wine, who must know what has happened, are not said to believe. "[I]t is only the disciples who are said to believe, which suggests that even our Evangelist considers miracle to have significance only for those who already have some measure of faith."[26] It can be said, then, that the disciples' faith is incipient but

[25]F.J. Moloney (*art. cit.*) argues that different levels of faith, first among Jews, and then among Gentiles, is the point of the entire section.

[26]Macgregor, *John*, p. 54. Cf. Carson, *John*, p. 175: "The servants saw the sign, but not the glory; the disciples by faith perceived Jesus' glory behind the sign, and they *put their faith in him*" (emphasis original).

genuine, coming in response to a sign which confirms the faith which they began to put in Jesus in responding to his call. And as Barrett observes, "Faith is indeed the purpose of the signs."[27]

The pericope of the wedding at Cana is followed immediately by that of the cleansing of the Temple. "The Jews" do not understand Jesus' action, nor his explanation at v. 19, as their reply at v. 20 shows. They show neither faith nor perception. As for the disciples, at the time of the incident they see it as a zealous action "which has prophetic sanction,"[28] and apparently do not understand the saying any more than do "the Jews." This shows that their faith, which would give them clearer perception later, is still incipient. Ἐμνήσθηαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τοῦτο ἔλεγεν, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (v. 22), but only after Jesus' resurrection.

After the account of the cleansing comes a brief note (vv. 23f.) that many people in Jerusalem believed in Jesus because of his signs, but that he did not trust them. What is the difference between these people's faith and that of the disciples? First, the disciples' faith is not based solely on Jesus' signs; it is also a response to his call. Second, Jesus has called the disciples, and (therefore?) he knows that their faith, though at this stage only incipient, will grow.

Chapter 3 of the gospel is taken up by Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus. It has been suggested that Nicodemus is one of the signs-believers of 2:23f.[29] This would seem to be indicated by what he says at 3:2. Carson, however, suggests that the δὲ of 3:1 is adversative, in which case Nicodemus is being set apart from the signs-believers. Let us look briefly at this dialogue and see what it indicates about Nicodemus' faith.

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[27]*St. John*, p. 194.
[28]Hoskyns (*Fourth Gospel*, p. 195), who contrasts this perception "with their later insight (*v.* 22) and with the irritated questioning of the Jews (*v.* 18)" (*ibid.*).
[29]So e.g. Brown, *John*, 1:137.

Nicodemus opens the dialogue with a courteous remark to Jesus, a remark which is intended to be complimentary, but which shows that his attention has been attracted by Jesus' signs. Jesus responds with a revelation of the kingdom of God which is by implication an invitation and challenge to become part of the kingdom, by birth ἄνωθεν. Nicodemus misunderstands, taking on the literal level what is meant on the spiritual level: "Πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι γέρων ὤν;"(v. 4). Jesus explains the nature of spiritual birth, but Nicodemus still does not understand. He can only ask, "Πῶς δύναται ταῦτα γενέσθαι;" In summary, Jesus' opening challenge to Nicodemus, and Nicodemus' persistent failure throughout the encounter to understand what Jesus says, make it likely that he is a signs-believer, at least at this stage.[30]

The Nicodemus narrative is followed by renewed testimony from John the Baptist (vv. 22-30). There can be no doubt that John's faith is genuine. In chapter 1 he has been quick to identify Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:29,35). Here in chapter 3 he rejoices in Jesus' success (which his disciples see as coming at his own expense, v. 26), identifying Jesus as the bridegroom and himself as the bridegroom's friend (v.29), who has been sent ahead of him (v28).

After the testimony of John comes the Samaritan narrative, with which we are concerned in this chapter. As we shall see below, different levels of faith and perception appear in this narrative. The woman at first takes Jesus' statements about living water, intended on the spiritual level, on the literal level. She thinks that he is referring to magic water of some kind. But when he has shown a prophet's insight about her past (4:18), she is willing to identify him as such (v. 19). When the conversation shifts to the nature of true worship, it appears that she does not understand all that Jesus says. But she believes that Messiah will some day come and explain all things (v. 25). Jesus promptly tells her that he is the Messiah (v. 26) but the statement does not seem to register with her. She goes and tells her fellow-

[30]In my view Nicodemus eventually comes to full-fledged discipleship; see my discussion in chapter 1. What is certain, and what is important here, is that in the narrative with which we are here concerned, Nicodemus' faith is as yet insufficient.

townspeople about Jesus; I shall argue below that although the idea that he might be the Messiah has crossed her mind, she sees him as a prophet rather than as the Messiah. This suggests to me that the woman's faith is hesitating and tentative at best. That of her fellow-townspeople is more sure; they unhesitatingly hail Jesus as Saviour of the World, a faith based on Jesus' word (vv. 41f.)

The Samaritan narrative is followed by that of the healing of the royal official's son (4:43-54). At first Jesus rebuffs the man's request for help, denigrating that kind of faith which requires "signs and wonders" to support it (v. 48).[31] But when the man persists, Jesus accedes to the request. The man puts some trust in Jesus' word, enough to put it to the test and go as Jesus instructs (v 50b). This trust is confirmed when the man learns that his son got well at the very hour when Jesus spoke his word (v. 53a) As a result the man and his entire household come to faith (v. 53b). We can see in this pericope a development from faith which sees only wonders, to trust in Jesus' word, to faith which, like the disciples' at 2:1-12, is based on Jesus' word as confirmed by the sign.[32] Stibbe says rightly that "The author wants us to see in this man who believed and obeyed a paradigm of true faith."[33]

To sum up this discussion, then: in chapters 2-4 of the gospel we see different levels of faith and perception in those with whom Jesus interacts. These include the complete incomprehension of Nicodemus; the hesitant and incipient faith of the disciples and the Samaritan woman; the self-effacing faith of John the Baptist in the Lamb of God; the unhesitating faith of the townspeople of Sychar in the Saviour of the World; and the faith of the royal official, who sees beyond the sign to the one to whom it points. We do not have here a neat linear progression, as Brown rightly sees;[34] note that the incipient, but growing, faith of the disciples is followed by the signs-faith (at

[31]The plurals here indicate that Jesus is rebuking this kind of faith in general, not the man as an individual.
[32]Cf. Brown, *John,* 1:195: "The pedagogy was not to lead the official away from a faith based on signs; rather, it was to lead him to a faith that would not be based on the wondrous aspect of the sign but on what the sign would tell him about Jesus."
[33]*John*, p. 72.
[34]*John*, 1:CXLIIIf.

this stage) of Nicodemus, and that the self-effacing faith of John the Baptist is followed by the hesitant faith of the Samaritan woman. But an overall progression is visible, in that the level of faith shown at the end of chapter 4 is higher than that shown at the beginning of chapter 2.

Another thread which binds chapters 2-4 together is a theme which runs through the entire first half of the gospel: Jesus, and the revelation which he brings, transcend the old revelation which is embodied in Judaism,[35] and surpass all expectations, even the expectations of those who are open to receiving the new revelation. Thus the purification water of the wedding at Cana is replaced by the wine which is symbolic of Jesus' revelation. When Jesus' mother reports the lack of wine to him (2:3), she is by implication asking him to do something about it. Is she asking him to perform a miracle? Carson suggests that she is not asking him for a miracle, but is asking him to do *something*, leaving it up to him to decide what to do. He has not hitherto shown miraculous powers, but she has come to rely on his resourcefulness. Thus her expectations are on a natural level.[36] If Jesus bridles at first, he does deal with the situation, and in a way which exceeds her expectations.

The wedding pericope is followed by the pericope of the cleansing of the Temple. Here the Temple of Herod is superseded by the temple of Jesus' body. And this takes place in an unexpected way, for the reference is to Jesus' death, a fact not realised until after the event. Indeed it may be that the distinctive Johannine placing of the Temple cleansing, which differs from its placement in the Synoptic accounts, is intended to bring out this interpretation of the cleansing as transcendence of the Jerusalem Temple.[37]

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[35]On this see, besides the commentaries, Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Wilmington, 1989).

[36]*John*, pp. 169f.

[37]So Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 31, who then goes so far as to continue, "The chapter [i.e. chapter 2] has a programmatic significance: *whoever understands the miracle of the wine and the cleansing of the temple has the key to the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and their outcome in the salvation of the kingdom and existence of the Church*" (*ibid.*, emphasis original).

A similar pattern is seen in the Nicodemus narrative, in which Jesus talks about spiritual birth which transcends natural birth. Again at 3:22-30, John finds himself being eclipsed by Jesus. This does not please John's disciples (3:26), but John himself knows that this is part of the divine plan, and rejoices in it (3:28-30). Here there are expectations on the part of John's disciples which are exceeded. The fact that they are John's disciples indicates that they have an allegiance to, and expectations of, John. But here John calls on them to transfer their allegiance and expectations to Jesus, who can meet their expectations as John himself cannot.

In the narrative of the Samaritans, as we shall see, the water of Jacob's well is transcended by the living water offered by Jesus, and the Samaritans' expectations of the Taheb[38] are transcended by Jesus, the Saviour of the World. Thus we can see that the narrative of the Samaritans is linked to what precedes it by this theme of transcendence. As Paul expresses it, "The old things have passed away; see, the new have come!" (2 Cor. 5:17). The appearance of this theme in preceding narratives prepares the implied reader to see it in this one. The implied reader is thus not surprised when the woman misunderstands Jesus. He can see that, like some of Jesus' preceding interlocutors, she is taking on a natural level what is intended on a spiritual level.

[38]On the Taheb see e.g., J.W. Bowman, "Samaritan Studies" *JRLB* 40 (1957-58), pp. 298-329; J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (London, 1964) esp. pp. 362-71.

Jesus and "the Jews": 8:48-59

The running debate between Jesus and "the Jews" which is such a prominent feature of this gospel reaches its height in chapters 8-10. There are some significant links between the Samaritan narrative and 8:48-59. At 8:48 "the Jews" accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon (this is the only use of Σαμαρίτης outside the Samaritan narrative of chapter 4). But what does this accusation mean? It has been suggested that the two parts of the accusation are synonymous[39] - this would imply that in answering the latter half of the accusation Jesus answers the former as well. Or the charge of Samaritanism may be tantamount to a charge of heterodoxy.[40] Or it may be that his accusers see Jesus' teaching as similar to Samaritan teaching.[41] Bernard suggests that "the Jews" call Jesus a Samaritan because he, like the Samaritans, has challenged their claims to be the true descendants of Abraham. Jesus does not answer the charge because he does not find it offensive, since he anticipates a time when Jewish-Samaritan rivalries will disappear (cf. 4:21).[42] Therefore he ignores the charge because he does not want to perpetuate such a label, which keeps the Samaritans outsiders. Hoskyns, drawing attention to the context - a discussion of legitimate and illegitimate parentage - suggests that the insult is another hint at Jesus' own irregular parentage.[43] Of these five suggestions I feel that the first is the best, since it best explains why Jesus in his reply to the accusation (v. 49) seems to ignore the charge of Samaritanism.[44] He does not actually ignore it, but refutes it by implication when he

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[39] So Brown, *John*, 1:358, who points out, "The story of Simon Magus in Acts viii 14-24 indicates that possession of a spirit and magical powers were greatly esteemed in Samaria, an attitude that is echoed in later traditions about Simon and Dositheus." So also e.g. Bauer; Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 233; Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 136.

[40] So Bultmann, *John*, p. 299; Morris, *John*, p. 461; Macgregor, *John*, p. 221.

[41] So Bowman, *art. cit.*, pp. 298-308; Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, pp. 50, 90. In a similar vein, it may be that because Jesus stays with the Samaritans for two days, this causes his opponents to identify him with the Samaritans. In this case, his solidarity with them is confirmed by his opponents.

[42] *John*, 2:316f.

[43] *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 345. He cites a tradition that the Samaritans were descendants of mixed marriages between Israelites and deportees brought in by the Assyrians (following Strack-Billerbeck, I, 539 n. 1).

[44] It is unlikely that Jesus fails to deny the charge of Samaritanism because he identifies himself with the Samaritans against the Jews, because at 4:22, he firmly identifies himself with the Jewish people (note also that at 4:9, when the woman identifies Jesus as a Jew, he does not deny it).

refutes the charge of possession. But the saying is a difficult one, and Lindars may well be right when he says that "we must be content to admit that the precise reference is unknown to us."[45] Whatever is meant by the charge of Samaritanism, we may be sure that it is an insult, and another indicator of Jewish antipathy toward Samaritans.

The second link between these passages occurs at 4:12 and 8:53. Using similar phrasing Jesus' interlocutors make comparisons with the patriarchs. The Samaritan woman asks Jesus if he is claiming to be greater than Jacob, who dug the well, and found its water good enough for himself, and his family and his herds; when Jesus says that those who keep his word will never taste death, "the Jews" ask if he is greater than Abraham, who died, as did the prophets. "The Jews ask the question with intentional insult; the Samaritan woman with critical doubt (cf. Chrysostom)."[46] In both cases Jesus' interlocutor has difficulty accepting what Jesus offers because they are holding too tightly to what has been given in the past. What Jesus now offers is superior to what has been given in the past, but it is different, and therefore not easy to accept.

There is a less obvious link between the Samaritan narrative and 8:56. At 8:56 Jesus says that Abraham rejoiced to see his day. But what does this mean? Carson suggests that it refers to a Jewish tradition[47] that Abraham was overjoyed at the birth of Isaac. If Isaac's birth is seen as the fulfilment of the promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3), then Abraham's joy is the result of his realisation that in Isaac's birth the fulfilment of the promise is beginning.[48] In other words, Abraham is seen as rejoicing in the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise that through him all the nations (including the Gentiles) will be blessed. The Johannine addition to this tradition is that it is through the coming of Jesus, Abraham's descendant, that the promise is completely fulfilled. This is why Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day. He rejoiced to see non-Jews coming to God by putting their faith in

[45] *John*, p. 332.
[46] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 346.
[47] This tradition is based on Gen. 17:17; 21:26 and seen in e.g. Targum Onkelos and *Jubilees* 16:16-29.
[48] *John*, p. 357.

Jesus - and this is exactly what the implied reader sees at 4:4-42 (and again, of course, at 12:20-36).

What is the significance of this connection between these two passages? "The Jews'" insult at 8:48 draws attention to the division between Jews and Samaritans (I shall return to this later). And the link between the questions of 4:12 and 8:53 may explain why the Samaritan woman has some difficulty accepting Jesus' revelation - she is holding on too tightly to the religion that she was given in the past.

When reading Chapter 8, one cannot help but notice the fierce intensity of the debate, and of the hostility of "the Jews". This hostility is in striking contrast to the openness of the Samaritans in Chapter 4 - a contrast which is made all the more striking by the links between these passages. The contrast is ironic - those who should be most open to Jesus' preaching reject him, and those who might be expected to reject him on racial grounds welcome him and come to faith in him. The implied reader, however, is not unprepared for this contrast, for the implied author has already indicated in the Prologue that this is what is to come (1:12).

Greeks seeking Jesus: 12:20-36

There are also some significant links between the narrative which we are considering in this chapter and that which we will consider in the next chapter of this study - the pericope of the Greeks who seek Jesus (12:20-36). First, there are several themes which appear in both narratives - the hour (4:23; 12:23, 27); eternal life (4:14, 36; cf. 4:10f; 12:25); seeking Jesus (4:30,40; cf.4:10; 12:21); the fruitful harvest (4:36-3812:21); believing (4:39,41f;12:36); remaining with Jesus (4:40;12:26); Jesus as Saviour of the World (4:42,12:32). Second, there are several verbal parallels between the two passages. Besides the vocabulary associated with the themes I have mentioned, there are προσκυνεῖν [4:20(twice),21,22(twice),23,24(twice);12:20] and Galilee, which is mentioned at 12:21 and at 4:3, immediately before the opening of the Samaritan narrative. Third, it is interesting to note that both the Greeks and the Samaritans are anonymous. Not even the Samaritan woman with whom Jesus has a lengthy conversation is given a proper name (I shall return to the subject of anonymity later). All this makes it likely that the implied author is deliberately making a connection between these narratives, the only two narratives in the first half of this gospel to feature non-Jews. Indeed there are so many connections that it would be tempting to say that there is an inclusio between them, except that the Samaritan narrative is not as close to the beginning of the narrative of Jesus' ministry as the narrative of the Greeks is to the end. Why has the implied author made such a connection? It may be that by connecting these two narratives in which non-Jews respond positively to Jesus, the implied author wants to build in the mind of the implied reader a picture of positive non-Jewish response to Jesus. If this is so, it is noteworthy that these narratives are placed before the narrative of negative non-Jewish response which will be the subject of chapter 5 of this study. The question of why the implied author would do all this moves us from the realm of narrative criticism to that of reader-response criticism, I suggest, since I suspect that it is here a question of the

implied author trying to elicit a particular response from the implied reader. I shall turn my attention to this question in a section of my concluding chapter.

One thing which is of interest in both of these passages is the amount of significant revelation which is given to non-Jews. It is to the Samaritan woman that Jesus makes his first messianic claim with an absolute ἐγὼ εἰμι. Indeed this is his first use of the "I am" formula, since all the ἐγὼ εἰμι + predicate statements come later in the gospel narrative. It is to the Samaritan woman that Jesus says that there will come a time when worship of God transcends geographical boundaries. It is in the presence of the Greeks that Jesus reveals himself as Saviour of the World (12:32). These last two items, of course, would be of special interest to non-Jews. And in chapter 19 Jesus talks to Pilate about the nature of his kingdom, in more detail than elsewhere in this gospel. If, then, Jesus reveals things to non-Jews which he does not reveal to "the Jews," perhaps this is because the non-Jews are more open to receiving the revelation.

The theme of the fruitful harvest also deserves some attention. It has been noted[51] that the theme recurs, but I suggest that there is more to be said than this. The theme, introduced at 4:35-38, is taken up again at 12:24, but the emphasis is different. At 4:35-38 Jesus refutes a saying that there is still time before the harvest. He urges his disciples to see that the time for the eschatological harvest of souls has already come. The emphasis lies on the idea that now, not later, is the time for mission. The woman, however, does not need to be told this. She is already doing the work of harvesting, bringing her fellow-townspeople to Jesus. At 12:24, however, the emphasis is not on the crop which is harvested but on the seed which dies (i.e. sprouts and becomes something other than a seed) to produce the crop. This is primarily a reference to Jesus' self-sacrificing death, though v.26 suggests that it refers also to those disciples of Jesus who share his self-sacrifice by making their own. In both passages the seed bears an unexpected crop as Samaritans and Greeks come to Jesus.

[51] By e.g. Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 246; Stibbe, *John*, p. 135

III

The Temporal and Geographical Contexts

Let us consider briefly the temporal and geographical contexts of the passage with which we are dealing. With respect to the temporal context there is little to be said. At v. 35 Jesus says to the disciples, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months before the harvest comes'?" This has been taken as an indicator of the time of year in which this narrative is set - four months before the harvest.[52] But to say this is to miss the point. The harvest to which Jesus is referring is the Samaritan townspeople whom the woman is bringing out to meet Jesus, and he is rebuking the disciples, who have brought no one to meet him, for their lack of urgency in mission.

In terms of plot time, vv. 31-38 seem, at first glance, to be an interruption which delays the movement of the main plot. Inevitably, this has led the source critics to dismiss these verses as secondary.[53] But these verses are in fact closely connected to the rest of the narrative. The discussion between the Jesus and his disciples about food balances the discussion between Jesus and the woman about water. Moreover, the disciples misunderstand Jesus just as the woman does, and the misunderstanding is of the same sort, for the disciples, like the woman, take on the physical level statements which are intended on the spiritual/symbolic level. Another connection lies in the metaphor of the harvest by which Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of urgency in mission. It is they who should have brought the townspeople to Jesus, as the woman (for all her incomplete and hesitant faith) is doing.

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[52]In fact the incident is set just after Passover (mentioned at 2:23), which is not four months before any of Palestine's harvests.

[53]So e.g. Wellhausen and Odeberg, cited by Bultmann, *John*, p. 194, who himself, surprisingly, says, "One might well suspect that that this section...has been worked over at a later date; on the other hand it is difficult to produce a really convincing analysis and to find a reason for a redaction."

Indeed one might say that the second half of the narrative provides a comment(ary) on the first. Boers[54] says that the issues raised in the first half of the narrative are dealt with in the second. Jesus does not explain what living water is in this narrative, but the parallel suggests that it is the same as his other food - both refer to the spiritual sustenance which he receives from doing the Father's will. And the Jew-Samaritan issue, and that of Jesus' identity, are (as we shall see below) both resolved when the townspeople invite Jesus to stay with them and give him the title Saviour of the World.

There is more to be said about the geographical context of this passage. The setting, of course, is Samaria - how is this significant? There are two things that can be said. First, I suspect that a contrast is intended between Jerusalem, where those who are God's people, who should welcome Jesus, show him only scepticism and rejection, and Samaria, where those who are considered to be outside the people of God welcome God's revelation.[55] Second, this is the first passage in this gospel which is set neither in Judea nor in Galilee. Samaria is territory which is neither Jewish nor Gentile; Jesus has begun to move outside the territory which, since he is a Jew, could be considered his, and the people whom he encounters there are neither Jewish nor Gentile but something in between.[56]

Within a narrower geographical range, it is noteworthy that the narrative is set in a town near Mount Gerizim. Because Sychar is near the mountain where the Samaritans worship, this makes it sacred space[57] (it is also to be noted that the well is known as Jacob's well, a name with connections to sacred history). This means that Jesus here enters Samaritan sacred space, just as he has earlier entered the Temple, which is Jewish sacred space (2:12-23). Just as his actions in cleansing the Temple

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[54]*Op. cit.*, pp. 27, 33.
[55]So also Wayne Meeks, "Galilee and Judea in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 85 (1966) pp. 159-69.
[56]Cf. Carson, *John*, p. 216. Josephus complains that the Samaritans claimed that they were Jews when it was to their advantage to be seen as Jews, and denied being Jews when being seen as Jews would be disadvantageous (*Ant.* 9.14.3; 11.8.6; 12.5.5).
[57]So Boers, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

indicate that the Temple has been transcended by the coming of Jesus, so in this narrative Samaritan sacred space is transcended by Jesus.

There is a more obvious reference to sacred space at v. 19. Here too there is a contrast, for the woman sets "this mountain" (i.e. Mount Gerizim) as the ancestral place of Samaritan worship over against Jerusalem, the place of Jewish worship. But Jesus points the way to a different space, which he describes as "neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem," where true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth. When this space is accepted, Jewish-Samaritan tensions are resolved and Jesus can be affirmed as the Saviour of the World (not only of Jews or Samaritans).[58] Focusing more narrowly still, there is a distinction between the well and the town of Sychar. The well is the place of preparation for the task of evangelism, while Sychar is the place where the task of evangelism is completed.[59] I shall argue below that the woman's faith is hesitating and tentative, in contrast to the more complete faith of the townspeople; this sets up a contrast between the well as the place of incomplete faith and the town as the place of complete faith.

The coming of Jesus inaugurates the redefined people of God, a people who transcend the old racial and geographical barriers. Jesus tells the woman that it is no longer important whether God is worshipped on Mt. Gerizim or in Jerusalem; what matters is that one worship God in Spirit and in truth. So also a person's ethnic background - Jewish, Samaritan or Gentile - is no longer important; what matters is that one respond positively to Jesus.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 74f.

IV

Characterisation of the Samaritans

Let us turn now to the characterisation of the Samaritans. A brief historical note may be in order here, in order to clarify how the Samaritans were perceived by the Jews in the first century A.D., which is important for understanding their characterisation in any first-century document. Little is known for sure about the Samaritans in the first century A.D., because the extant sources are few and late.[60] According to ancient Jewish tradition, the Samaritans were a remnant of the old northern kingdom of Israel. When the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom in 721 B.C., they deported some of the population and settled people from other areas in their place. These people adopted the worship of the God of Israel, but retained their own cults as well.[61]

Samaritans themselves, of whom a small number still worship on Mount Gerizim today, see themselves as "the direct descendants of a faithful nucleus of ancient Israel."[62] To them the transfer of Israel's cultic centre from Gerizim to Shilo in the eleventh century B.C. (and later to Jerusalem) was an act of apostasy.[63] The Samaritans accept only the Pentateuch (of which they have their own version) as authoritative, and reject Israel's prophetic and wisdom tradition. They established a sanctuary on Mount Gerizim in rivalry to that in Jerusalem. It was destroyed in 128 B.C. by the Hasmonean High Priest John Hyrcanus when he captured Shechem. This, understandably, was a major contributing factor in the deterioration of Jewish-Samaritan relations. Three other such factors may be cited: 1) "Political tensions [arose] because of different alliances with the Ptolemies and the Seleucids."[64] 2) The

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[60] A good summary of the present state of Samaritan studies is Alan D. Crown ed., *The Samaritans* (Tübingen, 1989).

[61] 2 Kings 17:24-41. This view is also supported by Josephus (*Ant.* 9.14.3; 10.9.7), who adds that from the end of the Persian period, priests from Jerusalem joined the Samaritans (*Ant.* 9.14.3).

[62] "Samaritans," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 725.

[63] Modern scholars find difficulties with both these views, but they are important for our purposes as indicators of how matters were perceived in the first century (cf. *ibid.*).

[64] *Ibid.*

Samaritans were more open to hellenisation than the Jews, and therefore did not join in the resistance to Antiochus Epiphanes, a situation which the Jews resented.[65] 3) There were tensions between the Jewish and Samaritan communities of the Diaspora.[66] A complete discussion of the historical questions surrounding the Samaritans is outside the scope of this study. But what I have said is enough to show the poor state of Jewish-Samaritan relations in the first century, which is sufficient for the purposes of this study. Given this state of Jew-Samaritan relations, it would not be surprising if a Jewish implied author focused some attention on the Jew-Samaritan issue, nor if he characterised Samaritans negatively. We shall see that these expectations are in fact only partly met; the implied author does indeed focus attention on the Jew-Samaritan issue, but does not characterise the Samaritans negatively.

The story narrated in John 4:4-42 begins when Jesus, on his way from Jerusalem to Galilee, stops in Samaritan territory. His disciples have gone into the nearby village of Sychar to buy food, so Jesus is alone when a woman comes from Sychar to the well to draw water. Jesus opens the conversation by asking the woman to give him a drink; she responds with suspicion which arises from the hostility dividing Jews and Samaritans. He soon reveals her need for a kind of water which only he can give, but she does not understand what he is saying. But when he shows a prophet's insight about her past, she recognises him as such. For this reason she raises the subject of the burning issue between Jews and Samaritans - the appropriate place for worship. Jesus tells her that a time is coming when a worship will be inaugurated which will transcend geographical barriers. Again she does not understand him, but she is sure that Messiah will one day come and explain all things. Jesus tells her that he is that Messiah.

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[65]Menachem Mor ("The Persian, Hellenistic and Hasmonaean Period," in *The Samaritans*, p. 15 and n. 80) says that the Samaritans asked Antiochus Epiphanes to end his persecution of them on the grounds that they were not Jews but Sidonians, and that they may not have joined in the resistance if Antiochus was favourable to their request. But a more likely reason, he says, is that the two peoples could not co-operate, even against a common enemy, because they had different goals. The Samaritans wanted to distinguish themselves from the Jews; the Jews wanted to expand their territory and Judaise all that territory's inhabitants (*ibid.*, pp. 15f.).

[66] *Ibid.*

At this point the disciples return, and the woman leaves in haste and tells the people of Sychar about Jesus. She has come to some kind of faith in him, but as we shall see below, his messianic claim seems to have gone unnoticed. For when she tells the people about him, she refers only to his prophetic insight. Meanwhile Jesus and his disciples talk about food. Jesus has food that his disciples do not know about; he means doing the will of the Father who sent him, and accomplishing the mission which he has been given. But the disciples do not understand him any more than the woman understood about living water. As the townspeople of Sychar (brought by the woman) come out to see him, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of urgency in mission. At the townspeople's request Jesus stays with them for two days, and as a result of his preaching they come to faith in him as Saviour of the World.

Let us now turn to characterisation. The first of the categories of characterisation which I am using is that of *direct definition.* The narrator has in fact directly said little. At v. 9b he mentions the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans.[67] At v. 39 he says that the Samaritans believe in Jesus on the basis of the woman's testimony (this is one of several ways in which he will affirm her discipleship). At v. 41 the narrator says that the Samaritans believe on the basis of Jesus' preaching. This represents a development from v. 39 in two ways. First, the narrator says that many more of the townspeople believed when they heard Jesus than when they heard the woman; there is a numerical increase. Second, there is also a spiritual development, for the basis of the Samaritans' faith is not the woman's word but that of Jesus.[68] That is, after their own encounter with Jesus their faith is based on a greater authority than it was before.

[67]Some scholars believe that v. 9b is the concluding half of the woman's remark to Jesus; but it is more likely to be the narrator's note, explaining the woman's remark for the benefit of readers not familiar with Jewish customs. So also e.g. Carson, *John*, p. 218; Morris, *John*, p. 258f. There are some sixty such narratorial explanatory notes throughout the gospel..

[68]This is not to say, however, that their faith is less genuine before their own encounter with Jesus in the flesh than after; only that it is deepened by the encounter with Jesus.

It is noteworthy that all three of these things which the narrator tells, he also shows elsewhere. The narratorial explanation at v. 9b confirms the woman's remark of v. 9a, while the statements of vv. 39 and 41 are confirmed by the Samaritan townspeople's statement at v. 42. But what is the significance of this? The most likely explanation is that the narrator wants to emphasise these things by repeating them; he does not want the implied reader to miss them. It is worth looking at what is repeated, then, and asking in what way it is significant.

The first thing which the narrator emphasises in this way is the fact of the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans. In the context of this passage, how is this significant? It may be that the intention is to point up the contrast between the two groups. For there is one difference between Jews and Samaritans which is crucial in this gospel; the Samaritans are more open to Jesus' preaching than "the Jews". While there are frequent divisions among "the Jews" over Jesus, and many do not believe, these things do not occur among the Samaritans. This, of course, is an example of Johannine irony, since one would expect things to be the other way around.

The second thing which the narrator emphasises by repetition is that the Samaritans believe. Is this to be contrasted with the scepticism which Jesus has encountered in Jerusalem (2:18ff; cf. 4:1-3)? Or perhaps the important thing is that the Samaritans believe *on the basis of Jesus' word* (the third thing which the narrator emphasises by repetition), in which case the contrast is with those in Jerusalem who believe on the basis of Jesus' signs, and whom Jesus does not trust (2:23f).

If the narrator tells us little in this passage, he shows us much more. This is in keeping with the literary style of all the evangelists.[69] Let us turn to the second of our categories of characterisation, *indirect presentation.* The woman's riposte at v. 9a reveals that she is aware of the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans. It also indicates that she is suspicious. Perhaps she thinks that this Jewish stranger is

[69]Cf. Powell, *op. cit.*, p.52: "Even in the Gospels...the preferred method of characterisation seems to be the technique of showing."

preparing to insult her. The things which the woman says at vv. 11 and 15 indicate that she takes Jesus' statements on a literal level only. She thinks that he is referring to literal water, a misunderstanding which fits with the fact that he uses the same word as she,[70] and that the conversation is taking place near a well. At v. 15 she admits her need and asks Jesus to meet it, which may be seen as a step forward. But she is still thinking on the literal level - that of her physical thirst and her consequent need to make the physical effort of coming to draw water from the deep well.

Jesus' knowledge of the woman's past leads her to acknowledge him as a prophet (v.19). This is followed by a second change of subject, to the dispute between Jews and Samaritans as to the right location for worship. This time it is the woman, rather than Jesus, who changes the subject. Why does she raise the subject of worship, in particular? It is likely that her choice of subject is connected with her identification of Jesus as a prophet. Hoskyns points out that in revealing the woman's sin Jesus has carried out the function of a prophet; "and, since it is the work of a prophet to point also to the place of forgiveness, she asks Him to make known to her the proper place of worship."[71] Or it may be that she wants an opinion on the burning theological issue which divides Jews and Samaritans, and thinks that a man who has shown prophetic insight has the authority to speak on this subject.[72] O'Day[73] notes the word play on "our father Jacob" in v. 12, "our fathers" in v. 20 and "the Father" in v. 22: "By repetition and juxtaposition John has ironically shown that the Samaritan woman has no idea who the Father is."[74]

Jesus responds to the woman's change of subject with a brief discourse on the nature of true worship. "Jesus moves beyond the question of who is right, maintaining

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[70]So Boers, *op. cit.*, p. 5, though one might ask what other word he could have used.
[71]*John*, p. 266.
[72]Boers, *op. cit.*, p. 23. The suggestion that she raises the issue because his prophetic insight makes him an appropriate person to discuss it with has the advantage of not assuming that the woman is entirely to blame for her past.
[73]*Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia, 1986) p. 69
[74]*Ibid.*

that the truth lies beyond both positions."[75] The woman's reply to this (v. 25) indicates that she has not fully understood all that Jesus has said, but that she believes that the Messiah will explain everything when he comes. This belief fits in with the Samaritan concept of the Taheb (the Samaritans' name for the Messiah) as revealer.[76] It is also significant for the woman's characterisation. First, it means that she does not accept his response.[77] Second, it means that she does not see Jesus as the Messiah (note her "when he comes," which means that she does not think that he has come).[78] Third, it means that she has withdrawn the authority she gave him to speak on worship, which means that she does not know who he is.[79] The woman's, and her people's, lack of understanding is also indicated by Jesus' statement at v. 22. This verse also reveals the source of the Samaritans' lack of understanding; they worship what they do not know. Those who want to worship God rightly must do so in truth, that is, with an understanding of what they are doing and whom they worship.[80]

The woman's actions at vv. 28f seem to indicate that she is a disciple of Jesus. She leaves behind her water jug, just as in the Synoptic tradition the other disciples have left behind their fishing nets (Mk. 1:17-20 and par.) and tax-collector's booth (Mk. 2:14 and par.) to follow Jesus. Also, as soon as Jesus has revealed himself to her, she goes to her fellow-townspeople and tells them about Jesus. Boers maintains that the abandonment of her water jug is a sign that she no longer needs the drinking water for which she comes to the well in the first place, because she now has the living water provided by Jesus.[81] But there is an inconsistency here between her actions and her speech. Her actions are those of a disciple, but her words indicate insufficient

[75]*Ibid.*
[76]Cf. Carson, *John*, p. 226; Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 115.
[77]*Ibid.*, pp 23, 52.
[78]*Ibid.*, pp. 53, 178f. So also O'Day, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
[79]*Ibid.*, p. 26. Boers is right in all these things, but fails to notice that they are in tension with the ideas of the woman as disciple and as missionary, both of which he stresses. Nor does he notice the ambiguity in the woman's characterisation which this tension indicates.
[80]Cf. Carson, *John*, p. 225: "[W]orship must be...essentially God-centred...and in personal knowledge of and conformity to God's Word-made-flesh, the one who is God's 'truth,' the faithful exposition of God and his saving purposes."
[81]Boers, *ibid.*, p. 92, cf. pp. 109, 115f., 182f., 191f. Boers describes the woman's reaction here as "ambiguous" (*ibid.*, p.26), but does not develop this ambiguity further.

faith, as we shall see below.[82] In other words, what happens on the spatio-temporal plane is different from what happens on the phraseological plane.

The mention of the ὑδρία provides a verbal link between this passage and the pericope of the wedding at Cana, where ὑδρίαι are also mentioned at 2:6. There, six stone waterpots stand in readiness for the purification rites associated with the wedding. It is sometimes said that the number of pots is significant; since seven is the number of perfection, the six pots are said to represent the insufficiency of Judaism.[83] But there are two problems with this interpretation. First, Jesus does nothing to the pots that are there, nor does he create a seventh pot. It is not the pots themselves but the water they contain which is important. Second, if the implied author were doing gematria here, it is likely that he would make it more obvious by bringing the number seven into the pericope.[84] Things regularly appear in sevens in the Gospel of John,[85] but this does not occur in the wedding pericope.

I have said that it is not the pots themselves but the water they contain that is important in the wedding pericope. There is universal agreement that the wine is symbolic of Jesus' revelation. As the wine replaces and transcends the purification water, so Jesus' revelation transcends the old revelation embodied in Judaism. So also in chapter 4 the living water which Jesus gives is superior to the water which comes from Jacob's well. It can also be said that the water of purification of chapter 2 is transcended by the living water of chapter 4.

The discipleship aspect of the Samaritan narrative which appears at vv. 28f. sets up some parallels between this narrative and the call narratives of 1:35-51. As Philip says, "Ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε," at 1:46, so the woman says, "Δεῦτε ἴδετε...," at 4:29 (the parallel here lies in the idea expressed rather than the vocabulary used). In doing

[82]In a later chapter we will see a similar inconsistency in the characterisation of Pilate, but in reverse.
[83]So Morris, *John*, p. 183; Carson, *John*, p. 174; Barrett, *St. John*, p. 191.
[84]So also Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 142 n. 1
[85]Some examples: seven signs, seven discourses of Jesus, seven ἐγὼ ειμι + predicate sayings (6:35; 8:12; 10:7; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1).

so they also both act like Jesus, who says, "᾽Ερχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε" at 1:39.[86] A second verbal parallel is between 4:39 and 17:20, which refer to people coming to believe through the word of those who already believe:[87] "Πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν τῶν Σαμαριτῶν διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναικὸς," says the narrator at 4:39, while at 17:20 Jesus prays for "τῶν πιστευόντῶν διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ..." These parallels indicate that the woman and her fellow-townspeople are disciples of Jesus.

When the woman tells her fellow-townspeople about Jesus, she refers to his knowledge of her past (v. 29). This shows that she still sees him as a prophet, and nothing more.[88] "[S]he does not understand that Jesus' miraculous ability points beyond itself."[89] Moreover, the phrasing of her question at v. 29 is noteworthy. A question which uses μήτι can be taken in either of two ways. It may indicate that a negative answer is expected[90]- in which case the correct English rendering is "He couldn't be the Christ, could he?"[91] Or it may be taken as a hesitant question.[92] In

[86]So Stibbe, *John.*, p. 67.

[87]*Ibid.*

[88]Cf. Boers, (*op. cit.*, p. 23), who says that the woman's statement here "reveals that she had in reality not yet moved beyond the position she had reached after what he had told her about her husbands;" O'Day, *op. cit.*, p. 87. *Contra* Hoskyns (*Fourth Gospel*, p. 268), who says that the woman understands that Jesus' discussion of worship in spirit is a messianic claim. It is such a claim (cf. "the hour is coming *and now is*", v. 23), but v. 29 seems to me to indicate that the woman does not understand it as such.

[89]Boers, (*op. cit.*, p. 54), who also notes the word play between ἅπαντα of v. 25 and πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα of v. 29. Ironically, the woman hints at a right view of messianism even as she outwardly refers to a wrong one.

[90]So LSJ *s.v.*; so also Samuel Green *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (London, 1904) p. 308, who says that μήτι "suggests an emphatic negative." Of the commentators, the following also read the question this way: Macgregor, *John*, who compares Matt. 12:23 and says that the Samaritan woman "is still more than half doubtful" (p. 108); Morris, *John*, p. 275 ("It is as though a negative answer might be expected, but a positive one is hoped for."); Sanders and Mastin, *John*, p. 150, citing J.H. Moulton's *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. III, Syntax, by N. Turner, p. 283. I cannot, however, agree with Sanders and Mastin when they go on to say that the expectation of a negative answer "does not necessarily indicate any lack of faith on the woman's part, but rather deference to the opinion of those whom she asks to see for themselves" (*ibid.*). Lindars rightly sees that μήτι "implies the answer no," (*John*, p. 193), but nonetheless insists that "the implications of verse 42 hardly allow this. John *means* it to be an expression of cautious faith" (*ibid.*) I suggest that the woman is not one of those who speak at v. 42, so its implications do not apply to her. NRSV "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" comes closest to my rendering; all other English versions that I know of have "Can this be the Messiah?" This rendering weakens the negative force of μήτι.

[91]This is the translation chosen by O'Day (*op. cit.*, p. 76), who says that the question "is not a denial, but neither is it a full affirmative." She suggests, rightly, that the woman's tentativeness leaves the implied reader to decide for himself about Jesus.

which way should this question be taken? There are three things to be noted here. First, a hint may be taken from the other two uses of μήτι in this Gospel: "the Jews'" question at 8:22 (μήτι ἀποκτενεῖ ἑαυτον, ὅτι λέγει, Ὅπου ὑπάγω ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἐλθεῖν;), and Pilate's at 18:35 (μήτι ἐγὼ Ἰουδαίος εἰμι;). In both of these examples there can be little doubt that the questioner expects the answer No. There is nothing in the text to indicate that "the Jews" really expect Jesus to commit suicide (probably quite the opposite, since in Jewish eyes suicide was a grievous sin against God); and Pilate is not a Jew. Second, one must draw attention to what the woman does not say. She goes to the city, "[b]ut she does not yet wholeheartedly believe in him. She does not, like Andrew, cry out, 'We have found the Messias![*sic*]' (cf. 1:41 with 4:29)."[93] Third, it is noteworthy that the woman never uses the word "believe", nor does the narrator use it of her. For all these reasons I am inclined toward the former way of reading the woman's question at 4:29. But either reading indicates the woman's doubts of Jesus' messiahship (even though at v. 36 he has made an open claim to be the Messiah) and introduces an element of ambiguity into the woman's characterisation. What effect does this ambiguity have? It raises the question of the nature of the woman's faith; of what sort is it? There can be no doubt that she sees Jesus as a prophet. Does she see him as more than a prophet? Her mention of the Messiah at v. 25 might be taken as meaning that she wonders if Jesus is the Messiah.[94] But she never actually says that she sees him as the Messiah.

At v. 39 we meet the townspeople of Sychar, who believe in Jesus on the basis of the woman's testimony. It is to be noted that they believe in the same faulty way as the woman does,[95] because until they have heard Jesus for themselves they can believe

[92]Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich *Lexicon s.v.* μήτι has both possibilities, but lists this verse as a hesitant question. So also Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (London, 1915) p. 1167, who says that "μή is just the negative to use when one does not wish to be too positive;" so also, apparently, Blass-Debrunner-Funk, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Cambridge, 1961) p. 221. Boers (*op. cit.*, pp. 183f.) takes a positive view of the woman's question.
[93]J. Bligh "Jesus in Samaria," *HeyJourn* 3 (1962) p. 345.
[94]So e.g. Bernard, *John*, 1:150f: "[She] had already confessed Jesus as a prophet; but now she begins to wonder if he may not be more...her words are almost a query; they invite a further declaration on the part of Jesus, which he gives forthwith."
[95]So also Boers, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

in no other way. At v. 40 they come to Jesus and ask him to remain with them, which he does. Ἐλθεῖν and μένειν are significant words in the Gospel of John. They are expressive of discipleship, for coming to Jesus, and remaining with, or in, him, are prime characteristics of disciples of Jesus (1:39;6:37,44f;15:4-7). Their invitation also means that they authorise him to deal with the questions of Jewish-Samaritan relations and of his own identity, issues which have run through this narrative.[96]

At v. 42 the townspeople tell the woman that they believe in Jesus, not only on the basis of her testimony but on the basis of Jesus' word. This means that they have rejected her testimony and moved beyond it after hearing Jesus for themselves.[97] It is significant that they use the word "believe," a word which the woman never uses. It is at this verse that the townspeople of Sychar give to Jesus the unusual title of Saviour of the World. Why has this title been used at this particular point in the gospel? There are two points to be made in answering this question. The first is that the title is given to Jesus by the Samaritans, the first group of non-Jews he encounters in this gospel. The second point is that Jesus has not yet encountered any serious opposition. There have been hints of opposition to come, and scepticism in Jerusalem, but it is not until just after this passage (i.e. in Chapter 5) that real opposition appears. Before Jesus is opposed by "the world," then, he is acclaimed as its saviour by the first group of non-Jews whom he encounters as his mission begins to spread beyond the boundaries of Judaism.

Useful light will be shed on the characterisation of the Samaritan woman and her fellow-townspeople by comparing and contrasting them with other characters in this gospel. Within the passage itself there is a contrast between the woman and the disciples. As soon as Jesus reveals himself to her she hastens to the town, to tell the people of Sychar about Jesus, and to bring them to him. In contrast, the disciples go

[96]So also Boers, *ibid.*, p. 27, cf. pp. 35, 72.
[97]So also Boers, *ibid.*, p. 87. Cf. O'Day, *op. cit.*, p. 87, who says that the townspeople confirm the woman's testimony and then transcend it. It may be asked, "Is the woman one of these Sycharites who come to faith in this verse?" The answer must be No, for it is these Sycharites who are speaking to her.

to the town but bring back only food, and food of a sort which Jesus does not need at that. Furthermore, Jesus' allegory of v. 35 seems to indicate a lack of urgency in evangelism on the disciples' part,[98] which is in contrast to the woman's haste. In summary, then, the woman is, in one respect, a better disciple than Jesus' other disciples.[99] There is, however, one quality which she shares with a prominent disciple: her exuberance at v. 29 ("Come and see a man who told me everything I've ever done!") is reminiscent of Peter (cf. e.g. 13:6-9,37).[100] There is also a contrast between the woman and the townspeople of Sychar. I have argued that the woman's faith is tentative and uncertain, and that the ambiguity of her characterisation causes the implied reader to ask questions about the nature of the woman's faith. This is not so of the townspeople, whose faith is unhesitating.[101] This is probably the point of the contrast. To have the same kind of faith as the woman does not go far enough, in the view of the implied author. A further step is needed, and the townspeople provide an example of the kind of faith for which the implied author is calling. It may be said that the ambiguity in the woman's characterisation is resolved in that of the townspeople, whose testimony to Jesus as Saviour of the World transcends the woman's testimony to Jesus as a prophet.

Outside the passage we are considering here there are clear points of similarity and contrast between the woman and Nicodemus. These may be set out in table form as follows:[102]

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[98]Cf. Morris (*John*, p. 279), who cites G. Campbell Morgan.

[99]This narrative is the first of several to feature women. Others are 11:1-44; 12:1-8; 19:25-27; 20:1-3; 20:11-18. "These narratives portray women as paradigmatic disciples, often in stark contrast to the male disciples in the relevant episodes." (Stibbe, *John*, pp. 69f). On this subject see Sandra M. Schneiders, *art. cit.*

[100]It may be objected that what the woman says may not be exaggeration due to excitement and exuberance. If the entire conversation is not recorded, Jesus may indeed have told her everything she ever did. But it is best not to draw conclusions from dialogue which may have occurred, but is not in the text.

[101]Cf. Moloney, *art. cit.*, pp. 196-99, who sees the woman as an example of "partial faith" and the townspeople as an example of "complete faith."

[102]This table is informed by Stibbe, *John*, p. 62.

Nicodemus	Samaritan Woman
-is a man	-is a woman
-is part of the establishment	-is marginalised
-misunderstands Jesus because he is a literalist	-misunderstands Jesus because she is a literalist
-sees Jesus as a teacher from God	-sees Jesus as a prophet
-eventually takes a public stand for Jesus	-acts, in one respect, like a disciple
-is a respected teacher	-has an unconventional past

Table 5: The Samaritan Woman and Nicodemus

It can be seen that these two characters have much in common. The most important thing which they share is a misunderstanding of Jesus which is rooted in a spiritual ignorance which takes things at face value. It is this which prevents them from coming to full faith: Nicodemus cannot at this stage see Jesus as more than a teacher from God (i.e. a prophet), and the woman cannot see Jesus as anything more than a prophet.

Also outside the passage, the faith of the Samaritans, based on Jesus' word, is in contrast with that of the Jerusalem signs-believers of 2:23[103] and with the scepticism which Jesus has encountered in Jerusalem. In connection with this, Jesus' reaction to the Samaritans (he remains with them) is in contrast to his reaction to the Jerusalem signs-believers (he does not trust them).

The third of our categories of characterisation is that of *character traits.* At the beginning of the narrative, the root character trait of the Samaritan woman, and her people, is "spiritual ignorance."[104] They worship what they do not know (v.22; cf. v.10). Spiritual ignorance, however, is a condition which need not last; those who are spiritually ignorant can be enlightened. And this is exactly what Jesus does. Through questions and discourse he enlightens her and leads her toward faith in himself. Her reactions indicate another character trait - she is "open to Jesus' word." This allows her to go from seeing Jesus as a thirsty Jewish traveller to seeing him as a prophet, and

[103]So Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 122.

[104]Sanders and Mastin (*John*, p. 146) say that the spiritual ignorance of the Samaritans is due to the fact that they accepted only the Pentateuch as Scripture, thus shutting themselves off from the revelations of the prophets.

possibly more than a prophet. When Jesus reveals himself to her, she rushes immediately to tell her fellow-townspeople about him, which marks her as "impulsive." Something of the same kind is shown by her exuberant hyperbole at v. 29: "Come see a man who told me everything I've ever done!" This is a characteristic which she shares with Peter (cf. e.g. 13:6-9; 21:7).

Another character trait which the woman shows at first is "levelheadedness."[105] She is practical, to a fault: at vv. 10f., when Jesus offers her living water, all she can see is that he has nothing with which to draw water from the deep well next to which they are standing. It does not occur to her that he might be referring to something else. Throughout her conversation with Jesus, she understands on the physical level things which should be understood on the spiritual, or symbolic, level. This levelheadedness, which is focused only on what she can see, is what keeps her from understanding Jesus' revelation, and receiving all of it.[106]

The other character trait of the Samaritans which is noteworthy is their anonymity. Adele Reinhartz[107] says that anonymous characters and character groups may be divided into two categories, according to the nature of their relationship to major characters in the story. "The first group consists of characters who are described as dependents of specific named characters. The second group consists of autonomous characters whose definitions are independent of those of any named character."[108] Since the Samaritans are not described as family members or servants of any of the named characters, we may place them in the second category. This category in turn may be subdivided into three: incidental characters, messengers and functionaries.[109] The Samaritans fit into the first subcategory, that of incidental characters. "These are characters who appear or act only briefly, in one or two verses

[105]This is Boers' word (*op. cit.*, p. 163).
[106]Cf. *ibid.*
[107]"Anonymity and Character in the Books of Samuel," *Semeia* 63 (1993) pp. 117-41.
[108]*Ibid.*, p. 121.
[109]*Ibid.*, pp. 128-31.

within a given pericope, and may have little or no interaction with a major or secondary named character."[110]

Reinhartz concludes,

> What is unique about the anonymous characters...is their very anonymity. In the first place, it deflects attention away from them to the named characters with whom they interact. Second, insofar as readers do notice them, it is their typified roles rather than their names and other aspects of their personal identities that come to the fore. As pure agents, they focus the reader's attention on the main characters and the plot.[111]

How does this apply to the Samaritans? With respect to the first point, their anonymity keeps the reader's attention focused on Jesus. Also, they bring out certain aspects of Jesus' character, and keep the plot moving (Jesus' contact with them signals a turning point in the plot of the gospel as he moves his mission outside the boundaries of Judaism for the first time). What aspects of Jesus' character do they bring out? They bring out his prophetic insight, in the form of his knowledge of the woman's past, and his willingness to cross boundaries in carrying out his mission. With respect to the second point, they serve as examples of non-Jews who come to faith in Jesus. The woman's faith is tentative and uncertain, but it is not absent, or ineffective.[112] The townspeople are positive models as they come to unhesitating faith in Jesus.

The fourth of our categories of characterisation is that of *evaluative point of view*. Since the implied author's evaluative point of view is aligned with that of God (as represented by Jesus), a character's evaluative point of view is judged on the basis of whether or not it is also aligned with God's.

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[110] *Ibid.*, p. 128. It must be said, though, that while the Samaritans, like most of the characters with whom Jesus interacts in this gospel, appear only briefly, that does not mean that they are unimportant to the story as a whole.

[111] *Ibid.*, p.132.

[112] *Contra* John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah* (Nashville, 1993), whose entirely positive view (*op. cit.*, pp. 199-208, esp. pp. 203f.), does not take sufficient account of the woman's misunderstanding and of what she says, and does not say, at v. 29.

At the beginning of the narrative, the Samaritan woman's evaluative point of view is different from God's. This is shown by the fact that she takes on the literal level things which should be taken on the spiritual, or symbolic, level. The cause of this is misunderstanding; the woman fails to hear Jesus' double entendres correctly. This is a sign of the more basic spiritual ignorance to which Jesus refers at v. 22.

But the woman's evaluative point of view changes as the conversation proceeds. At the beginning of the narrative she sees Jesus merely as a thirsty Jewish traveller. By v. 15 she recognises Jesus as someone who can make her life easier, though she is still thinking on the physical level rather than the spiritual/symbolic. At v. 19 she acknowledges him as a prophet. By the end of the conversation the thought that he might be the Messiah has crossed her mind, though she still has doubts (v. 29). In this progress we can see that the woman's evaluative point of view gradually becomes more closely aligned with God's as her encounter with Jesus proceeds.

When the townspeople of Sychar enter the story, their evaluative point of view is the same as the woman's at the beginning of the narrative. This is indicated by the plurals of v. 22a, "ὑμεῖς προσκυνεῖτε ὃ οὐκ οἴδατε." Jesus' statement applies not only to the woman but to her people. But like the woman, their evaluative point of view changes as the story continues, as a result of the woman's testimony and of Jesus' word. Indeed it seems that the change in the townspeople's evaluative point of view may be greater than that in the woman's, for while she cautiously recognises Jesus as prophet-and-possibly-Messiah, they unhesitatingly hail him as Saviour of the World.

> For the villagers, as for the woman, but possibly even more importantly for them, there is a progression from a lesser understanding of the significance of Jesus to a full understanding, as their final statement makes clear.[113]

It is also noteworthy that they use the word "believe" (and the narrator also uses it of them), whereas the woman does not use it, nor does the narrator use it of her. The

[113]Boers, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

narrative progression here is quite clear. The woman goes from seeing Jesus as a despised Jew to seeing him as a prophet. The townspeople, when they enter the narrative, also see Jesus as a prophet. But they go beyond this to see him as Saviour of the World.[114]

Our fifth category of characterisation is that of *cultural scripts*. The most prominent cultural script which is operative in the narrative with which we are concerned in this chapter is that of purity rules. V. 9 makes it clear that Jews do not share drinking vessels with Samaritans[115] - a Mishnaic ruling makes it clear that Samaritan women especially were considered perpetually ceremonially unclean (Mishnah *Niddah* 4.1). But in the new division brought about by the coming of Jesus, such rules are no longer of any importance. It is noteworthy that purity rules have to do with boundaries between what is clean and what is not. Is there a connection between Jesus' transcendence of the boundaries between clean and unclean, and his transcendence of the geographical boundaries between Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim? The woman and her fellow-townspeople also transcend these boundaries, for the Jesus in whom they come to faith is a Jew, an unexpected person for Samaritans to put faith in.

This is perhaps also the appropriate point at which to raise the question of the Christological aspect of this narrative. At v. 26 Jesus makes an open claim to be the Messiah, the first time he does so in this gospel. It is noteworthy that this first claim is made not to a Jew but to a Samaritan, an outsider. Does this explain the δεῖ of v.4? Is

[114] A similar progression can be seen in chapter 9, where the blind man first sees Jesus as "the man called Jesus" (v.11); then "a prophet" (v.17), "from God" (v.33), and finally "Lord" (v.38).

[115] It is likely that συγχρῶνται refers to the sharing of vessels for food and drink. This is the reading of David Daube ["Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: the Meaning of συγχράομαι," *JBL* 69 (1950) pp. 137-47] followed by e.g. Barrett (*St. John*, pp. 194f.) and Morris (*John*, p. 259 and n. 25), who also points out that the context (the disciples have gone to the town for food) makes the meaning all the clearer [*contra* Beasley-Murray (*John*, p. 580), Schnackenburg (*John*, 1:425 n. 18), Lindars (*John*, p. 181) and Haenchen (*John 1*, p. 240), who argue that an expressed object is required if Daube is correct.]

it part of God's plan that Jesus makes his first open messianic claim to a people who until this point have been outsiders, but need be so no longer?[116]

At v. 27 the returning disciples are scandalised to find Jesus talking with a woman (it is noteworthy that they are not scandalised by the fact that he is talking with a Samaritan). This too is a violation of purity rules; good Jewish rabbis did not allow themselves to be distracted from the study of Torah by talking with women. [117] But the new division brought about by Jesus transcends the division between men and women. This is another way in which the distinction between outsiders and insiders is redefined.

Another cultural script that we can see in operation in this passage is that of honour/shame considerations. These are most apparent in the first part of the dialogue between Jesus and the woman, where she tries to get the better of Jesus because she thinks that he is trying to get the better of her. This is a violation of the cultural stereotypes of the time, for in the ancient world it was considered inappropriate for women to engage in such competition. This raises the question of gender roles; the proper conduct of men and women also comes under the heading of honour/shame considerations.[118] The proper roles are violated right from the beginning of the narrative, for women did not converse with men not related to them, especially in public, nor men converse with unrelated women. But as the woman's encounter with

[116]It has been said that Jewish travellers between Judea and Galilee usually took the longer route through the Transjordan in order to avoid going through Samaria, which suggests that if Jesus went through Samaria, it must have been by divine compulsion. But as Carson points out,

> Josephus...provides ample assurance not only that the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans was strong, but also that Jews passing from Judea to Galilee or back nevertheless preferred the shorter route through Samaria (*Ant.* xx.118; *Bel.* ii.232; *Vita* 269). This does not mean that the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman was outside the sweep of divine power..., but only that Jesus' travel arrangements cannot be marshalled as evidence of divine compulsion. (*John*, p. 216.)

Boers sees this δεῖ as "intentionally ambiguous" (*ibid.*, p. 86); at first it is geographical, but by the end of the narrative the divine aspect becomes clear. "It should be noted, however, that it is only after the divine will to break down the antagonism between Jews and Samaritans had been accomplished that it becomes possible to understand the statement in this new light" (*ibid.*, pp. 86f.).

[117] So also Morris, *John*, p. 270, who cites *Ab.* 1:5; *Erub.* 53b; *Sot.* 3:4.

[118]On all this see Neyrey, *art. cit.*

Jesus proceeds, he draws her into his private circle, into the fictive-kinship circle[119] of his disciples.

> Gender stereotypes, then, initially work in the narrative to label the Samaritan woman as the ultimate outsider: non-Jew, unclean, sinner, shameless. The author, then, has created a stereotype of the ultimate *outsider* and the quintessential *deviant*, only to have the stereotype broken, but basically in the direction of the inclusivity of *outsiders* and *deviants*.[120]

The third cultural script which is evident in this narrative is that of kinship/οἶκος ties. In telling her fellow-townsmen about Jesus, the woman seems to be violating the gender stereotypes of her culture. But she is drawing them into the fictive-kinship circle of Jesus' disciples, so they become in effect relatives to her.[121] Kinship/οἶκος ties can be a matter of race as well as more immediate family connections. I have already referred to the separation and enmity that divided Jews and Samaritans. This is indicated by several verses in the gospel, most of them in this narrative. V. 9 indicates that Jews regarded Samaritans as perpetually ceremonially unclean, and that Samaritans in their turn regarded Jews with suspicion. At v. 22 Jesus makes a remark about the spiritual ignorance of the Samaritans, a spiritual ignorance not shared by the Jews.[122] This is immediately followed by the statement that "salvation comes from the Jews." And at 8:48, "the Jews" insult Jesus by calling him a Samaritan. But in the κρίσις which is brought by the coming of Jesus, the Samaritans transcend these ties of race and replace them with a new tie, that which binds those who believe in Jesus. They become part of the fictive-kinship circle of discipleship.[123]

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[119]The phrase is Neyrey's (*art. cit.*).
[120]*Ibid.*, p. 89.
[121]*Ibid.*, p. 88.
[122]This is surprising, in view of the conversation Jesus has just had with the uncomprehending Nicodemus, and his lack of trust in the Jerusalem signs-believers, and the reaction of the authorities to the cleansing of the Temple. Perhaps Jesus is here speaking from the point of view of God's plan of salvation history, that is, he is speaking of "things as they were intended to be," rather than "things as they are."
[123]Cf. Boers, *op. cit.*, p. 110: "Jews and Samaritans are reconciled, not as Jews and Samaritans, but as a new community of true worshippers who recognise Jesus as saviour of the world." In other words, the ethnic distinction is obviated.

The importance of the Jew-Samaritan issue in this narrative is indicated by its prominence. Boers[124] notes that this issue links v. 9 with vv. 20-26. And it also appears at v. 12, in the woman's reference to Jacob, the common ancestor of Jews and Samaritans. A common ancestor, of course, is something which should unite the two peoples. But because the Samaritans used Jacob to legitimate their claim that Mount Gerizim was the right place to worship, and the Jews used Jacob to support their similar claim for Jerusalem,[125] the two peoples were divided by competing claims about Jacob rather than united by their common descent from him. The woman's rejection of Jesus' statement on worship (by which he offers a resolution of the issue) connects this issue with that of Jesus' identity, for if he can resolve the Jew-Samaritan issue convincingly, he can also resolve the question of his identity.[126]

In our sixth and final category of characterisation, I have grouped together *empathy, sympathy and antipathy*. Does the implied reader empathise with the Samaritan woman and her fellow-townspeople? According to Powell, "[r]eaders are most likely to empathise with characters who are similar to them..."[127] This being the case, the implied reader is likely to find it easy to identify with the woman in her incomplete understanding, and in her willingness to understand. Indeed the theory of Eslinger which I have mentioned above (and that of Staley, which I discussed in chapter 2) tacitly assumes that the implied reader identifies with the Samaritan woman and is making the same mental moves as she. Otherwise the "tripping-up effect" which they discuss is not obtained.

If the implied reader empathises with the Samaritan woman, does he also sympathise with her? Powell comments that "[o]ne of the simplest means of arousing the reader's sympathy for a character is to attribute such sympathy to another character

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[124]*Op. cit.*, pp. 5, 27.
[125]So Judith Gundry-Volf, "Spirit, Mercy, and the Other," *TheolToday* 51 (1994-95) p. 512 n. 4; Jerome Neyrey, "Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4: 10-26," *CBQ* 41 (1979) p. 419-37.
[126]Boers, *ibid.*, p. 25.
[127]*Op. cit.*, p. 56.

with whom the reader has come to empathise."[128] Now it is quite obvious that Jesus cares for the Samaritan woman and her fellow-townspeople. His patience and persistence when the woman does not understand what he is saying, and his willingness to stay with them at their request, are sufficient to indicate that this is so. And since Jesus, the protagonist in the gospel, cares about the Samaritans, so does the implied reader.[129]

The final subcategory in this category is antipathy. The implied reader is not led to feel any antipathy toward the Samaritans. Although the characterisation the implied author gives them is somewhat ambiguous (of just what sort is the woman's faith?), there is nothing which would lead the reader to feel alienated from them.

[128]*Ibid.*, p. 57.
[129]Cf. Powell's comments (*ibid.*) about the reader's sympathy for the disciples in the Gospel of Mark.

V

Concluding Remarks

What conclusions can we draw about the Samaritans in the Gospel of John? The woman is spiritually ignorant when Jesus arrives. At first she takes Jesus' statements about living water, intended on the spiritual/symbolic level, on the literal level. And she does not fully understand what he says. But she comes to recognise him as a prophet, and possibly as more than a prophet. A close look at her characterisation, however, reveals some less positive things. I have argued that the woman's question at v. 29 is phrased in such a way as to indicate that she expects a negative answer, for three reasons. First, at the other two places where μήτι is used in this gospel, it is clear that a negative answer is expected. Second, she does not say that she sees Jesus as the Messiah. What she tells her fellow-townspeople shows that she sees him as a prophet, and nothing more. Third, she never uses the word "believe," nor does the narrator use it of her (in contrast to the townspeople, who say that they believe, and so does the narrator). Even if the woman's question is taken more positively, as a hesitant question, it still indicates that she has doubts about Jesus' messiahship. These two things lend an ambiguity to the characterisation of the woman. Of what sort is the faith to which the woman comes? The implied author leaves the implied reader in some doubt. This is not to say, however, that the woman is characterised negatively. But to see Jesus as a prophet, and nothing more, is, in the view of the implied author, not to go far enough.[130]

If the woman's faith is not unambiguous, however, neither is it ineffective. The woman acts like a disciple, and shares some of the characteristics of Jesus' other disciples; indeed in some ways she is a better disciple than those disciples. While they cannot see that the mission fields are white and ready for harvest, she is quick to go to

[130]This is the reason for Jesus' rebuke of Nicodemus (3:10), who at their first meeting sees Jesus as a teacher who has come from God (i.e. a prophet), and no more. Carson (*John*, p. 218) compares this rebuke with 4:10, where Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that if she recognised him for who he was, she would be asking him to meet her need, instead of the reverse.

her fellow-townspeople and tell them about Jesus, and they believe in him as a result of her testimony. The townspeople of Sychar are, like the woman, spiritually ignorant when Jesus arrives, but they are open to his preaching. They quickly come to faith in him and hail him as Saviour of the World.

The implied reader, too, is not ill-disposed toward the Samaritans. He is likely to feel empathy toward the woman, to identify with her in her incomplete understanding, and in her willingness to understand. The implied reader also feels sympathy for the Samaritans; because Jesus cares about them, so does the implied reader.

I argued in the Introduction that the theme of κρίσις runs through the treatment of "the Jews" in the Gospel of John, and suggested that the same theme runs through its treatment of non-Jews. Do we see this theme in this narrative? I suggest that we do.

We do not see any division among the Samaritans; they all come to believe in Jesus (or at least the narrator does not tell us about any who do not).[131] But we will see in later chapters that other non-Jews do not believe. The Samaritans are merely all on the same side of the σχίσμα. The κρίσις, the time of choice for or against, comes to the Samaritans with the coming of Jesus. This is indicated by Jesus' discourse on worship in spirit. *The hour is coming*, and with the coming of Jesus it *now is*, when a new worship will arise which transcends geographical boundaries. This is as true for the people who worship on Mount Gerizim as it is for those who worship on Mount Zion (cf. 2:13-22).

But it is not only the characters in the narrative who must make a choice for or against Jesus - the implied reader must do so as well. In her study of irony in the Gospel of John, O'Day says,

[131]It is true that the vocabulary of division is not used in this narrative. I suggest, however, that the implied author has expressed the theme in more subtle ways.

> John's principle means of engaging the reader in the narrative is through his use of irony...John leads the reader into a relationship with the text and with the Jesus contained in it.[132]

And again,

> Irony does not *force* the reader to decide but *allows* the reader to become engaged...Irony allows the reader room for personal choice but at the same time anticipates and expects that the choice and decision will be made.[133]

Johannine irony, then, encourages the implied reader to make a choice regarding Jesus. Thus I suggest that the theme of κρίσις appears in the irony in this narrative, by which the implied author encourages the implied reader to make a choice for or against Jesus. In my concluding chapter I shall turn to the quesiton of why the implied author would do all this.

It is also indicated by the distinctive title Saviour of the World which the Samaritans give to Jesus. As Strachan points out, the Samaritans' use of this title shows that they realise that with the coming of Jesus, their old controversy with the Jews is superseded, because "what He has brought to them is meant for all."[134] Again we see that the old boundaries have been transcended. As the geographical distinction between Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim has been transcended, so also the ethnic division between Jew and Gentile, based on ancestry, has been transcended in Christ. The new division is between those who believe and those who do not. Real opposition to Jesus in the Gospel of John begins in chapter 5. But before that happens, the implied author gives the implied reader pictures of those who believe. It is noteworthy that in these pictures the implied author has shown believers who are both Jews and non-Jews: first Jewish believers, John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples (1:19-51); then, in this narrative, a group of believers who are neither Jews nor Gentiles. At the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry another group of non-Jews, these ones Greeks,

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[132] *Op. cit.*, p. 90.
[133] *Ibid.*. p. 91, emphasis original.
[134] *Fourth Gospel*, p. 161.

come to faith in him. It is these Greeks who will be the subject of the next chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 4

CHARACTERISATION OF THE GREEKS

Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw that non-Jews appear at a significant point in the gospel: just before real opposition to Jesus begins, Jesus passes through a town in Samaria where many believe as a result of his preaching. In this chapter we shall see that another group of non-Jews appears at another significant point in this gospel: at the end of the first part of the gospel, some Greeks approach Philip with a request to see Jesus. The passage under consideration in this chapter is 12:20-36.

I

A Survey of Research

The passage under consideration begins with the arrival of the Greeks and their request (vv. 20-22). This pericope has attracted surprisingly little attention. Few besides those writing commentaries on the entire gospel have dealt with it; and many of those seem to discuss it only for the same reason that Hillary climbed Mount Everest - because it is there. Even Brown has little to say besides,

> The theological import [of this scene] has so dominated the writer's interest that he has abbreviated his picture of what happened to the point of making it enigmatic...The very awkwardness of all this suggests that a poorly known incident from early tradition has been used as the basis for theological adaptation.[1]

[1]*John*, 1:470. Similarly Bultmann says of vv. 20-22, "to outward appearance it is a fragment lacking a continuation" (*John*, p. 420). Wellhausen, not surprisingly, "sees in 12.20-36 sheer disordered fragments" [*Das Evangelium Iohannis* (1908), cited without reference by Bultmann, *ibid*].

I suggest that a literary reading of this passage yields a somewhat clearer, and different, picture.

Most commentators make little or no more of this passage than does Brown. Few, however, would minimise the importance of these verses to the extent that Lagrange does:

> *[R]ien absoluement ne suggère une solution de continuité entre le v. 19 et le v. 20. L'épisode des Grecs n'est qu'un des traits du triomphe...Jésus loin d'attribuer à cette démarche la valeur d'un point décisif dans sa mission n'y répond même pas, et ne s'addresse pas spécialement aux Grecs dans sa discours.*[2]

It is true that Jesus does not address the Greeks especially, if by that one means that what he says in his response is not meant for the Greeks alone. But in most of the other points he makes Lagrange is wrong, as I shall argue more fully below.

Speculating on what sort of people these Greeks are, Lagrange says,

> *Nés dans le paganisme, ils ont acquis la foi en Dieu ensuite du travaille personelle de leur esprit et de l'impulsion de leur coeur; ils devaient plus que d'autres se sentir pressés de demander à Jésus plus de lumière. Et enfin, ce sont des Grecs, c'est-à-dire qu'ils sont imbus de l'esprit Grec, animés d'une curiosité universelle toujours en éveil.*[3]

But this is to read more between the lines than is justifiable from the text itself, which tells us nothing about the background or history of these Greeks.

In arguing against the view that the coming of the Greeks symbolises the conversion of the Gentiles,[4] Lagrange says that "*on ne voit pas que ces Grecs qui ne montrent en somme que de la curiosité (Lk IX,9) soient plus pres de la conversion que*

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[2]*S. Jean*, p. 328. Similarly Macgregor: "The Greeks are brought onstage only as a cue for Jesus' great discourse upon the necessity of his death and universal salvation which will result from it." (*John*, p. 264). Culpepper, in his chapter on characters in *Anatomy*, does not mention the Greeks at all. Bultmann (*John*, pp. 420-33) directs most of his attention to discussing the Gnostic/Mandaean texts which he claims are the parallels to 12:20-36.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 329.

[4]For this view Lagrange cites Loisy, *Jean*, p. 370: "*La venue des Grecs...figure la conversion des paiens...*"

les Juifs qui acclament celui qui vient au nom du Seigneur."[5] But this is to undervalue both the Johannine meaning of the idea of seeking and the meaning of ἰδεῖν in this gospel. I shall have more to say about these things below.

Bernard draws attention to the fact that in v. 21 Philip is described as being from "Bethsaida in Galilee." He points out[6] that Bethsaida was located on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee, which actually placed it in Gaulanitis, but that the area was considered part of Galilee by A.D. 80.[7] This misses the fact that Galilee was known in Jewish and early Christian tradition as "Galilee *of the Gentiles*" (cf. Isa. 9:1; Matt 4:15),[8] a fact which, as I shall argue below, is significant in the context of the passage which we are here considering.

Brown[9] stresses the "theological import" of this pericope. He rightly sees its keynote as universalism.[10] Similarly Morris says, "Jesus was the Saviour of the World and this group of Gentiles symbolically represents the world seeking its salvation from Jesus."[11] Morris also sees a contrast between the Greeks and the Jewish leaders who complain about Jesus' popularity at v. 19.[12]

W.E. Moore offers an intriguing suggestion which is summed up in the title of his article: "Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Was this an occasion of temptation?"[13] Moore argues that the approach of the Greeks presented Jesus with the temptation to leave Israel, where he would be rejected and suffer a painful and humiliating death, and go to the Diaspora and teach the Greeks,[14] among whom he might find more openness to his

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[5]*Ibid.*, p. 329. One might ask whether Herod's desire to see Jesus at Luke 9:9 is motivated merely by curiosity.
[6]Followed by Marsh, *St. John*, p. 462.
[7]*John*, pp. 430f., and citations there.
[8]Hoskyns, *John*, p. 423, and Brown, *John*, 1:466, draw attention to this fact, but do not ask about its significance.
[9]*John*, 1:470.
[10]"We saw in chs. xi-xii a series of universalistic references pointing out God's intent to save the Gentiles; now the Gentiles come to Jesus (xii 20-21) to see him" *(Ibid.*, 1:469).
[11]*John*, p. 592; cf. p. 509. A similar view of the Greeks as representative is taken by e.g. Marsh, *St. John*, p. 463; Haenchen, *John 2*, p. 96.
[12]*Ibid.*, p. 5911 n. 59, where he suggests that the δέ of v. 20 may be adversative.
[13]*SJT* 20 (1967) pp. 75-93.
[14]Interestingly, this is exactly what "the Jews" think, wrongly, that Jesus intends to do at 7:35.

preaching than in Israel. The temptation would arise from Jesus' concern for Gentiles who wanted to be part of the people of God, but could not do so because of Jewish exclusivism. Moore discounts the idea that "[t]he promise 'to the Jew first,' as the necessary prelude to the promise 'to the Greeks,' must be fulfilled. The ultimate summons to the Gentiles must be left to God."[15]

However, the idea that Jesus in his lifetime confined his ministry to Jews ought not to be minimised. It may also be added that in none of the gospels does Jesus actively seek non-Jews out.[16] When non-Jews ask Jesus for his help, he does not refuse them; but any meetings between Jesus and non-Jews are coincidental, at least on Jesus' part.[17] In short, I do not find sufficient evidence to indicate that Jesus' concern for non-Jews was so great that it constituted a temptation "to anticipate what He knew must come only after the completion, and as a consequence, of His mission to Israel."[18]

Moore argues that the possibility that the Greeks' request was a temptation to Jesus is increased if the cleansing of the Temple was performed on behalf of all the nations, and if John knew of a tradition which placed the cleansing immediately after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, where he has placed the pericope of the Greeks.[19] This reading sees Jesus' action as a protest against the exclusion of non-Jews from the worship of God. Jesus' universalistic outlook prompted his action.[20] This protest can be seen as messianic and eschatological, a proclamation of the time when God will

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[15]*Ibid.*, p. 81, citing J. Jeremias, *Jesu Verheissung für die Völker* (1956).

[16]It is true that in the Gospel of John the tendency is for people to seek Jesus out rather than the reverse. But those whom he does seek out (Philip, the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda and the formerly blind man) are all Jews. In the Synoptics, where Jesus is more active in seeking people than in John, the people he seeks are all Jews.

[17]Since this study concerns the Gospel of John, it is especially relevant to ask whether the δεῖ of 4:4 indicates divine compulsion on Jesus to go through Samaria, and hence to meet the woman at the well; see my discussion of this in chapter 3.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 81.

[19]The Synoptic tradition, of course, does exactly this. This raises two questions - that of the relation of the Gospel of John to the Synoptics, and that of the Johannine placement of the cleansing narrative - which are outside the scope of this study.

[20]*Ibid.*, pp. 80-83. Moore cites Dodd, Marsh and Bowman, F.C. Grant, C.J. Cadoux, and Lightfoot as sharing this view.

bring all nations to worship together in his house.[21] In summary, again I find that Moore has not made out his case, because the evidence he uses to support it is, in my view, weak, because it relies on things that are found only in the Synoptics, and not in the Gospel of John.

For Stibbe,[22] "the *Hellenes* in 12.20 are the epitome of the true seeker in John's story." Others have sought Jesus throughout the gospel, but since chapter 5 this seeking has been hostile. In this pericope, however, the seeking is positive.

> Their religious quest is for true 'sight/insight' about Jesus. This cameo of sincere enquiry is an emotive incident in the Gospel. Jesus comes to his own people but they reject him. Those who are not ethnically and religiously 'his own' come to him and accept him.[23]

Stibbe is right about the nature of the Greeks' seeking. But he fails to take proper account of the theme of κρίσις (the word actually appears at v. 31a), in that not all of Jesus' own people reject him, and not all of those who are "not ethnically and religiously 'his own'" accept him. He also briefly draws attention to the fact that the idea of the fruitful harvest reappears here (v. 24) from 4:36[24]. But he does not develop this any further, as I shall do below.

John Painter[25] sees John 1:19-4:54 as a series of quest stories as people seek Jesus, and John 5-19 as a series of rejection stories as Jesus encounters opposition. "Rejection stories dominate John 5-19 so that even the quest stories of this section have been overlaid with the theme of rejection."[26] But this is not so of the pericope of

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[21]*Ibid.*, pp. 82-84. Moore cites Lohmeyer, Kümmel, Taylor, and Schrenk as sharing this view. All this relies heavily on the phrase "for all the nations" of Isa. 56:7 which is quoted at Mk. 11:17 - and therein lies the difficulty. For although all the Synoptic accounts have the Isaiah reference (the Johannine account omits it), Mark alone among the Evangelists includes the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (a fact which Moore notes only belatedly, *ibid.*, p. 84). This suggests to me that the key to interpreting the cleansing narratives lies in the contrast οἶκος προσευχῆς (Jn:οἶκον τοῦ πατρός μοῦ)/ σπήλαιον λῃστῶν (Jn:οἶκον ἐμπορίου) rather than in a phrase which occurs in only one of the four accounts. Jesus' action, then, has little or nothing to do with universalism, but is a protest against conducting business (for profit?) in a place which is intended for the worship of God.
[22]*John*, p. 136.
[23]*Ibid.*
[24]*Ibid.* p. 135.
[25]*The Quest for the Messiah* (Nashville, 1993) p. 164.
[26]*Ibid.*, p. 213 n. 2.

the Greeks, who come seeking Jesus positively and are not said to reject him. If the Greeks are seen as on a quest, then Jesus' statement at vv. 24f describes the obstacles which they must overcome before their quest can succeed.[27]

For Painter, in this pericope "the authentic goal of all quests is specifically identified in what is the last story of Jesus' public ministry."[28] Painter does not say what this authentic goal is; most likely it is to see Jesus. This quest is fulfilled in the lifting up of the Son of Man, the time for which is signalled by the coming of the Greeks.[29] When this happens "quest and conflict have come together because the conflict must run its full course before the quest can be fulfilled."[30]

To sum up this section: it may be said that the pericope of the Greeks has not attracted a good deal of scholarly attention. Through the rest of this chapter I hope to show that it is an important point in the text, deserving of more attention than it has received, for three reasons. First, it is a turning point in the plot of the gospel as Jesus' hour arrives. Second, it brings out certain aspects of Jesus' character. Third, it provides the opportunity for some key teaching from Jesus on the nature of discipleship.

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[27]Such obstacles, or difficulties, are usually part of quest stories (*ibid.*, p, 177).
[28]*Ibid.*, p. 33.
[29]Cf. p. 165: "The quest story of 12.20-(26)36 could well be a Johannine formulation of unfulfilled quest while at the same time foreshadowing universal fulfilment."
[30]*Ibid.*, p. 377.

II

The Text and its Literary Context

i)The text

Let us now turn to the passage itself. In this section it will be necessary to expand our horizons slightly, for vv. 20-22 are a part of a somewhat larger narrative. Bernard points out that "it has generally been held since the days of Tatian that v.20 begins a new section of the Gospel, and that vv. 20-22 are to be read in connexion with what follows."[31] And indeed a reading of vv. 20-36 shows that these verses are closely linked together, both structurally and verbally. Structurally, the flow of the verses is clear when set out like this:

20-22	-the event - the approach of the Greeks
23	-Jesus' interpretation of the event - "the hour has come"
24-26	-the meaning of the hour - 24-25 - for Jesus himself[32] -26 - for his disciples
27-28	-Jesus' emotional reaction to the hour, and a response from heaven to that reaction
29	-the crowd's interpretation of the response from heaven
30-31	-the meaning of the hour - for the world - "now is its judgement" - for its ruler - "he will be cast out"
32	-the effect of Jesus' being lifted up
33	-a narratorial aside relating Jesus' remark to his death
34	-the crowd's reaction to Jesus' remark - their traditional interpretation has no place for his death
35-36	-an appeal to choose rightly while there is still time

Table 6: Structure of 12:20-36

When the structure is set out like this, it can be seen that there are several themes which run through the passage: the hour and its meaning, the κρίσις, Jesus' death. These help to lend unity to the passage. Looking more closely, we can see that several keywords are repeated throughout the passage: δοξασθῆναι/δοξάζειν [vv. 23, 28a, 28b (twice)]; ὑψωθῆναι (vv. 32, 34);[33] (προσ)έρχεσθαι [vv.21,22 (twice), 23,

[31]*John*, p. 429. Most of the commentators deal with vv. 20-36 as a unit.

[32]*Contra* Bultmann, *John*, p. 425, who argues that both v. 25 and v. 26 apply to the disciples.

[33]Johannes Beutler, "Greeks come to see Jesus: John 12,20f," [*Biblica* 71(1990) pp. 333-47], who argues that there is something else which unites this passage: behind it all is Isa.52:13-53:12, "one of the most important texts in the history of early Christianity" (*ibid.*, p. 345).

27]; ἰδεῖν (vv. 21, 35); ἀποθνήσκειν [vv. 24 (twice), 33]; κόσμος [vv. 25, 31 (twice)]; ὥρα [vv. 23, 27 (twice)]. These also lend unity to the passage. For these reasons, then, I feel that we are justified in considering vv.20-36 as a unit.[34]

ii)The literary context

The Lazarus narrative: 11:1-53

The pericope of the Greeks is closely connected with some of the material that comes just before it. At 12:30 Jesus tells the crowd that the divine voice of v.28 was for their benefit, not his. This remark is reminiscent of 11:42, where Jesus says that he is praying aloud for the sake of the bystanders.[35] This is not the only connection between the narrative of the raising of Lazarus and that of the Greeks. First, in the narrative of the Greeks Jesus makes two predictions of his death (vv. 23,32): a death which in this gospel is provoked by the raising of Lazarus (cf. 11:46-53;12:10f). Connected with this is a second link: the universal effects of Jesus' death are alluded to by the narrator at 11:52 in his comment on Caiaphas' unwitting prophecy at 11:50, and by Jesus himself at 12:32.[36] Third, 11:33,38 and 12:27a are two of only three places in this gospel where reference is made to strong emotions of Jesus (τάρασσειν, one of the words used at 11:33, is also used at 12:27a).[37] In facing the death of his friend Jesus proleptically faces his own death, and is (if only briefly) as shaken as any ordinary human would be. Fourth, the themes of seeking/coming to Jesus (11:20,29;12:21), (eternal) life and death (11:21-26,32c;12:24f), and glory (11:40;12:24,28) appear in both narratives. Fifth, if at 11:52 the narrator makes reference to the gathering of the scattered children of God, that gathering begins, or is

[34]Even Bultmann (*John*, p. 420) admits that "12.23-33 are understandable as a unity," and that "12.20-23 can be interpreted as a unity" (*John*, p. 423). I have argued that the entire passage 12:20-36 is united by themes and keywords, something which Bultmann overlooks.

[35]UBSGNT *ad* 12:30.

[36]Noted also by Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, p.424.

[37]The third reference to strong emotions of Jesus is at 13:21a, where τάρασσειν is used again. Here also the context is that of Jesus' death, for at v. 21b he says that one of his disciples will betray him. Haenchen fails to take account of the intensity of the vocabulary used when he describes Jesus' emotion at 12:27 as "only like a small cloud which appears to darken the sun" (*John 2*, p. 97).

prefigured, when the Greeks come to Philip with their request.[38] Finally, both narratives close with Jesus going into hiding (11:54;12:36b).[39]

The anointing at Bethany: 12:1-11

The Lazarus narrative is followed by the pericope of the anointing at Bethany. There is a verbal link between this passage and the narrative of the Greeks, in that the verb διακονεῖν appears in both (the verb appears in this gospel only at 12:3 and 12:26). Service is a theme that runs through this pericope: Martha is said to serve dinner, and Mary's action of anointing Jesus' feet is a form of service. Both women serve Jesus, and at 12:25f Jesus reveals how costly, and how rewarding, serving him can be. The costliness of service is also alluded to in the anointing pericope, for the ointment which Mary uses is worth 300 denarii, a year's wages for a working man at the time. Having picked up the serving motif in the anointing pericope, the implied reader is prepared to detect it again in the pericope of the Greeks. More than that: v. 26 may be seen as a hint that in serving, those who serve are imitating Jesus who serves. Jesus makes this idea quite clear at 13:14-16.

The idea of seeing Jesus appears in both narratives, at v. 9 and at v. 21. At v. 9 the narrator says that the crowd want to see Jesus and Lazarus. What type of seeing is involved here? Are there indications that more is involved here than just the desire to see a local celebrity and his even more celebrated friend? The narrator does not make a comment about the nature of their faith, as he does at 2:24f. But the use of ὑπῆγον

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[38]Cf. Painter, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

[39]While some [e.g. Bernard (*St. John*, 2:449); Macgregor (*John*, p. 270); Morris (*John*, pp. 601f.); Lindars (*John*, p. 436)] join 12:36b with vv. 37-50, v. 36b seems to me more appropriate as the conclusion to a narrative than the beginning of one, especially as this narrative closes the public ministry (similarly Carson, *John*, pp. 446f., who describes Jesus' action as an "acted parable of judgement" and a fitting climax to the preaching of the previous verses). Beasley-Murray (*John*, p. 215), Barrett (*St. John*, p. 429), Hoskyns *Fourth Gospel*, p. 427), Lagrange (*S. Jean*, p. 339) and Brown (*John*, 1:466,469,480) all join v. 36b to 36a. This link with the conclusion of the Lazarus narrative may reinforce this placement.

at v. 11 may mean that their faith is genuine, rather than signs-based.[40] Another theme which connects the pericope of the anointing with the two narratives which follow it is that of honouring Jesus. Mary and Martha honour Jesus by serving him. The crowds also honour Jesus as he enters Jerusalem; their honour is enthusiastic, but uninformed, as at 6:14f. The Greeks also honour Jesus by their approach to him.

The triumphal entry: 12:12-19

The juxtaposition of v.19 with v.20 is no accident. At the moment when the Jewish leadership reject Jesus, a group of Gentiles come and ask, in effect, to be included in the redefined people of God. V. 19 is the conclusion to the narrative of the triumphal entry (12:12-19), and the narrative of the Greeks may be set in the wider context of that narrative.[41] The crowds acclaim Jesus as "the one who is coming in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel" (v.13), that is, as the Davidic, political Messiah. They do not understand that the sole glory which matters is the kind of glory which comes only through sacrifice, which is Jesus' point at vv. 24f. The Greeks, however, may be somewhat more perceptive. This is indicated by the use of ἰδεῖν at v.21, a subject to which I shall return later.

The twofold conclusion: 12:37-43,44-50

I have argued above that vv.20-22 are closely linked with the verses that immediately follow, namely vv. 23-36. Looking slightly further ahead, we can see that there are also connections between the passage we are considering and 12:37-43;44-50, the twofold conclusion to the first part of the gospel. In particular, the narrative of the Greeks and the twofold conclusion are also connected by themes which appear in

[40]So also Carson, *John*, p. 431; Barrett, *St. John*, p. 415.

[41]Lagrange (*S. Jean* p. 328, cited earlier) is not incorrect in making a connection between the triumphal entry and the pericope of the Greeks (12:20-22); he is, however, mistaken in minimising the importance of the latter, as I shall show in this chapter.

both: glory (vv. 23,28,41,43); eternal life (vv. 25,50); judgement (vv. 31,47,48); light and darkness (vv. 35f., 46); seeing (vv. 21, 40,41,45). Quoting from the Septuagint version of Isaiah, the narrator asks,

> Κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; καὶ ὁ βραχίων Κυρίου τίνι ἀπεκαλύφθη;[42]

The unexpected answer to this question has appeared at v.21: it is the Greeks who have believed, and who have recognised God's revelation. In this connection, it is probably significant that at v.29 the - presumably Jewish[43] - crowd does not understand the voice from heaven. Jesus points out (v.30) that it is intended for them.[44] All this illustrates a theme which we have seen running through this gospel's portrayal of non-Jews: the coming of Jesus redefines the people of God.

The Samaritan woman: 4:4-42

There are also some significant links between the narrative which we are considering in this chapter and that which we considered in the previous chapter. Since I have discussed these in detail in chapter 3, I shall merely review them briefly here. First, there are several themes common to both narratives - the hour (4:23; 12:23, 27); eternal life (4:14, 36; cf. 4:10f; 12:25); seeking Jesus (4:30,40, cf.4:10; 12:21); the fruitful harvest (4:36-38; 12:21); believing (4:39,41f; 12:36); remaining with Jesus (4:40; 12:26); Jesus as Saviour of the World (4:42; 12:32). Second, there are several verbal parallels between the two passages. Besides the vocabulary associated with the themes I have mentioned, there are προσκυνεῖν [4:20 (twice), 21,22 (twice), 23,24 (twice); 12:20] and Galilee, which is mentioned at 12:21 and at

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[42]12:38, citing Isa. 53:1.

[43]I make the assumption that the crowd was made up of (mostly) Jews because of the setting, Jerusalem at Passover.

[44]These two verses, contradictory at first glance, are reconciled by the realisation that the crowd should have been able to understand the voice, but "they lacked the spiritual perception to recognise the voice of God."(Morris, *John*, p. 59). This is a more satisfactory answer to this question than Haenchen's accusation of "naive docetism" (*John 2*, p. 97) on the part of the implied author.

4:3, immediately before the opening of the Samaritan narrative. Third, it is interesting to note that both the Greeks and the Samaritans are anonymous. All this makes it likely that the implied author is deliberately making a connection between these narratives, the only two narratives in the first half of this gospel to feature non-Jews. I suggest that by connecting these two narratives in which non-Jews respond positively to Jesus, the implied author wants to build in the mind of the implied reader a picture of positive non-Jewish response to Jesus. He thus offers the implied reader two pictures of positive non-Jewish response to Jesus before offering the picture of negative non-Jewish response which will be the subject of the next chapter of this study. The question of why the implied author would do all this moves us from the realm of narrative criticism to that of reader-response criticism, for it has to do with how the implied author wants the implied reader to respond to the narrative. I shall turn my attention to this question in a section of my concluding chapter.

The theme of the fruitful harvest also deserves attention. It has been noted[45] that the theme recurs, but I suggest that there is more to be said than this. The theme, introduced at 4:35-38, is taken up again at 12:24, but the emphasis is different. As I said in the previous chapter, at 4:35-38 the emphasis lies on the idea that now, not later, is the time for mission. At 12:24, however, the emphasis is not on the crop which is harvested but on the seed which dies (i.e. sprouts and becomes something other than a seed) to produce the crop. This is primarily a reference to Jesus' self-sacrificing death, though v.26 suggests that it refers also to those disciples of Jesus who share his self-sacrifice by making their own. The aspect of suffering is new, and here it is said to bear an unexpected crop as Greeks come to Jesus, at the time when official Jewish opposition to him reaches its height.

[45]By e.g. Stibbe (*John*, p. 135) and Hoskyns (*Fourth Gospel*, p. 246).

Other mentions of Greeks: 7:35; 19:20

Brief mention must be made of two passages in which the Greeks are alluded to, though they do not appear. The first is 7:35. Here "the Jews," misunderstanding Jesus' statement that he is going away, wonder if Jesus means that he is planning to go to the Diaspora and teach the Greeks.[46] To "the Jews," this seems like a foolish, even improper, activity for the Messiah.[47] Of course, the implied reader knows that this is not what Jesus means. And, ironically, he does not go to the Greeks; in our passage, the Greeks come to him. The implied reader is also aware of a further irony: there is a sense in which Jesus has gone to teach the Greeks, through the preaching of his disciples after Jesus' resurrection.

The final allusion to the Greeks in this gospel is at 19:20. Much to the annoyance of the Jewish leaders, Pilate puts up a sign describing Jesus as "king of the Jews." The irony is that the Jewish leaders have rejected Jesus as their king, opting for Caesar instead (19:15). The sign is trilingual, and one of the languages is Greek. This adds to the universalism of the portrayal of the Greeks in this gospel.[48] Westcott notes the order in which the languages are mentioned; this order

> answers to the position which they would naturally occupy: the national dialect, the official dialect, the common dialect. These three languages gathered up the results of the religious, the social, the intellectual, preparation for Christ, and in each witness was given to His office.[49]

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[46]It is likely that Gentiles, rather than Greek-speaking Jews, are being referred to here. Brown (*John*, 1:314) asks why Jerusalem Jews would think that Jesus might get "a better hearing among Jews who spoke another language." Morris (*John*, p. 418) suggests that the idea is of using the synagogues as a springboard for a mission to the Gentiles, as in Acts; so also Macgregor (*John* 204); Sanders and Mastin (*John*, p. 211); and Beasley-Murray (*John*, pp. 112 f.). Carson (*John*, p. 320) says that a reference to Gentiles "is marginally more likely [than a reference to Greek-speaking Jews], but probably Gentile *proselytes* are in view" (emphasis original). Above all it should be noted that the usual New Testament word for Greek-speaking Jews is Ἑλληνισταί (so LSJ and Thayer's *s.v.*); cf. Acts 6:1; 9:29; 11:20.

[47]So also Westcott, *St. John*, p. 122; Morris, *John*, p. 418.

[48]*Contra* Barrett, *St. John*, p. 549: "If John saw any theological significance in the trilingual inscription - the universal condemnation of those who thus condemned Jesus, and the universal offer of salvation to the universally condemned - he does nothing to indicate it."

[49]*St. John*, p. 274.

III

The Temporal and Geographical Contexts

Thus far in this chapter we have discussed the literary context of the passage which we are considering; let us now turn our attention to the geographical and temporal contexts of this passage. We shall see that the incident of the Greeks is significant, and the location in which it happens is also significant. It takes place in Jerusalem, right under the noses of the official opposition and, more importantly, in the very heart of the homeland of the people of God. It is here that the people of God are being redefined. The dividing line is no longer the old one between Jew and Gentile, based on ethnicity and physical descent. The boundaries have shifted, and the new dividing line is between those who recognise Jesus as God's Son and envoy, and those who do not. This is where the theme of κρίσις comes in, as humanity is divided along new lines, according to a choice for or against Jesus. "Since this 'now' [of the hour] the 'prince of this world' is judged (16.11); the destiny of man has become definitive, according as each grasps the meaning of this 'now,' according as he believes or not (1.36;5.25)."[50] Bultmann rightly sees the κρίσις as a separation, for if Jesus promises to draw all people to himself (v. 32), that promise can only be fulfilled in those who follow him. It is they who will be where he is (v. 26).

This is the appropriate place to address the issue of crossing boundaries. The Greeks have crossed a geographical boundary in coming to Israel to worship. And they cross another boundary, metaphorical rather than geographical, in coming, as Gentiles, to faith in the Jewish Jesus. We have seen this before, for the Samaritans have done likewise. In this connection it is interesting to note that we are here dealing with two relatively marginalised groups.[51] For proselytes (as these Greeks may be)

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[50]Bultmann, *John*, p. 431.

[51]I use the word "relatively" here because while these groups were considered marginal by the Jews, they would not, of course, have considered themselves marginal. It is worthwhile noting that two different kinds of marginality are in view here. The Samaritans were considered religiously marginal by the Jews, and the Gentiles were considered both ethnically and religiously marginal.

were considered second-class citizens by born Jews,[52] as were Samaritans. Is it because these people are already near the boundaries of society that they find boundaries so easy to cross? It may be so; at any rate we shall see in the next chapter that Pilate, who is a man of high social and political position and not marginalised, does not find boundaries so easy to cross. But there is more to be said than this. For Jesus has crossed a boundary in coming from heaven to earth; he too is a "marginal" figure. It may be that this mutuality of crossing boundaries (and it is to be noticed that Jesus has crossed his boundary before the Samaritans and Greeks cross theirs) makes it easier for the Samaritans and Greeks to come to faith.

There is another dynamic which may be operative here as well. One of the themes running through this gospel is that Jesus replaces, or reinterprets, sacred space.[53] At 2:12-22 we see Jesus replace the Temple of Herod with the temple of his own body as a place of worship. At 4:21 Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that the hour is coming when worship will be focused "neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." Here in the passage with which we are concerned in this chapter, the Greeks begin by coming to Jerusalem for Passover (12:20), but end up by coming to Jesus. The narrator may thus be saying that Jesus replaces Jerusalem as a place of worship.

If the location in which this incident takes place is significant, so also is the time at which it takes place. For it is Passover, the festival at which the Jewish people commemorate a key moment in the definition of themselves as the people of God. And this particular Passover will be unlike any other, for at this Passover the key event which redefines the people of God will take place.

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[52]So Moore, *art. cit.*, p. 79.

[53]On this see Gary M. Burge, "Territorial Religion, Johannine Christology, and the Vineyard of John 15," in J.B. Green and M. Turner eds., *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ* (Grand Rapids, 1994) pp. 384-96.

The Passover setting also provides a temporal link between this passage and the feeding narrative and discourse of chapter 6, in that both incidents occur shortly before Passover (6:4;12:1). The fact that the feeding takes place shortly before Passover[54] is one of the things that have led scholars to see Eucharistic elements in this narrative. Eucharistic elements have also been seen in the Bread-of-Life discourse (6:22-59, especially, though not only, in vv.51-58) which is closely connected to the feeding narrative and is a key to its interpretation. The discourse makes it clear that Jesus' action of giving bread is symbolic of his self-sacrifice for the people to whom he has been sent (see esp. vv. 48-51; note also the connection between the bread metaphor of the discourse and the grain-of-wheat metaphor of 12:24).[55] But the crowd understand neither the action of feeding nor the discourse. As at 12:34, the crowd's interpretation has no place for Jesus' self-sacrificing death (6:31,42,52).[56] But they must accept it if they are to become part of the redefined people of God. Jesus makes this clear in terms which become increasingly graphic as the discourse proceeds. The idea of munching on the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus is, if taken literally, as repugnant to modern readers as it is to the crowd in the gospel. Σκληρός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος οὗτος (6:60), indeed. "Yet this revolting character is altogether appropriate in view of the fact that God's provision includes death. For death is revolting. Even Jesus as he came close to it found it difficult to take"[57](cf. 11:33,35,38;12:27a).

Jesus' statement at 12:25f adds to all this a related idea, not found in chapter 6. The self-sacrifice to which he is referring does not apply to himself alone: all who want to be part of the redefined people of God are called to do likewise. The cost of serving

[54]Though all four canonical gospels have this story, only the Johannine account specifies when the feeding takes place.
[55]Noted also by Macgregor (*John*, p. 265).
[56]As Painter expresses it, "[The crowd] had understood Jesus' identification of himself as the Son of Man to constitute a messianic claim. They considered this claim to be ruled out by the manner of his departure" (*op. cit.*, p. 377).
[57]Brodie, *John*, p. 286.

Jesus may be great, but the reward is a deeper relationship with him and with the Father,[58] and honour from the Father besides.

It is when we consider the temporal and geographical contexts of this passage that we begin to see the Greeks as representative figures. I have already mentioned the widespread agreement that the Greeks who want to approach Jesus are representative of the entire Gentile world. "Ἴδε ὁ κόσμος ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ ἀπῆλθεν," the Pharisees complain at v. 19, without realising the significance of what they are saying. At the very moment when official Jewish rejection of Jesus is about to become complete, the Gentiles begin to turn to him in faith. Jesus is immediately aware of the significance of the moment. For himself, it means that the task for which he has been sent is almost accomplished - the hour of suffering and glory has come. For the people around him, it means that the time of choice and judgement has come. A new era in salvation history is beginning.[59]

IV

The Characterisation of the Greeks

Having set the episode of the Greeks in its context, let us turn to the Greeks themselves and discuss their characterisation. As Jesus arrives in Jerusalem for the last time, to the acclaim of the crowds, some Greeks approach Philip with a request to see Jesus. Jesus, informed of the request by Philip and Andrew, interprets it as a sign that his much-anticipated "hour" has arrived. The hour has been mentioned several times

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[58]It seems clear that this is the positive meaning of "ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ διάκονος ὁ ἐμος ἔσται." Of course, these words also have a less positive meaning, for being where Jesus is also means being with him in suffering and death.

[59]"What is plainly said in v. 32 (in mythological language) is here [at v. 24] only hinted at: the δοξασθῆναι of Jesus is not a mythological event that concerns him alone: to his δόξα belongs the gathering of his community. To this extent v. 24 can be understood as an indirect answer to the request of the Ἕλληνες: through his passion Jesus will become accessible to them as the exalted Lord" (Bultmann, *John*, p. 424).

before this point in the gospel, and always it has been said that the hour has not yet come. Nor has there been any explanation of what the hour means. Now the hour has finally come, and Jesus explains that it is the hour of his glorification. But almost immediately the implied reader begins to suspect that there is more to this than first meets the eye. For Jesus says that it is only when a seed dies that it can produce a crop. If the hour is the hour of Jesus' glorification, it is also the hour of his suffering and death, for he is the seed that must die in order to be fruitful. The thought causes him intense anguish, but he soon steadies himself with the thought that by his death the Father will be glorified. This is why the hour of death is also the hour of glorification - because Jesus seeks the Father's glory, not his own. What applies to Jesus also applies to his servants - glory comes only through suffering.

One important theme which recurs here is the distinctively Johannine one of the lifting up of the Son of Man. It first occurs at 3:14, where what is stressed is the salvific nature of the lifting up. There is also a hint of universalism about this verse, for it is immediately followed by v. 15, which says that all who believe in the Son of Man may have eternal life, and by v. 16, which repeats the idea of v. 15 and adds a reference to God's love for the world. This love is described as a love which gives, but the exact nature of the giving is not made clear. There is also an aspect of fulfilment to this text, for there is a sense in which Jesus completes what Moses began. He completes and exceeds it, for while Moses in lifting up the bronze serpent saved the physical lives of the Israelites, the Son of Man by his lifting up gives eternal life to all who believe. When the theme reappears at 8:28, the revelatory aspect of the lifting up is brought forward: when the Son of Man has been lifted up, then he will be recognised as the one who reveals the Father and does the Father's will. Since it is the Father's will that people be drawn to him and saved (3:17; 6:35,41f),[60] it may be said that the ideas of the first two lifting-up statements reappear in the third. But as with the theme of the fruitful harvest, something new is added when the theme reappears in the narrative

[60]Cf. also Lightfoot, *St. John*, p. 160.

which we are considering. The universalism which was hinted at in 3:14 is now made explicit. For at 12:32 Jesus says that it is all people whom he will draw to himself, not just those who claim physical descent from Abraham. But if the promise is offered to all people, it can only be fulfilled in those who believe. And there is something else new in this passage as well, for the surrounding verses make it clear that the lifting up of the Son of Man is connected with suffering and death as well as with glory (12:25-27, 34).

Let us now turn to characterisation. The first of our categories of characterisation is that of *direct definition*. The first thing that comes under this category is that the Greeks have come up to Jerusalem for Passover (12:20). This indicates that they are either God-fearers or full-fledged proselytes. To which group do they belong? Scholars are divided on the question. Those who think that the Greeks are God-fearers include Carson, Morris, Lindars, and Lagrange;[61] those who think that they are proselytes include Marsh, Brown, Bultmann, and Kossen.[62] My own view is that the text does not make it clear into which group they fall. This leads me to ask whether the matter is really that important to the implied author. If it were, he would specify to which group they belong. What is important to him, I suggest, is that they are Greeks, that is, that they are Gentiles.

The second thing which comes under this category follows closely on the first. At 12:21 the Greeks are said to come to Philip with a request. This sounds straightforward enough; but there is more to it than at first meets the eye. For in the Gospel of John (προσ)έρχεσθαι is a significant word.

For example, at 1:39 "Ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε" is a call to discipleship,[63] phrased in a traditional Rabbinic form.[64] At 3:2 (cf 7:20; 19:39) Nicodemus is said to

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[61]Carson, *John*, p. 436; Morris, *John*, p. 591; Lindars, *John*, p. 426; Lagrange, *S. Jean* p. 329.
[62]Marsh, *St. John*, p. 463; Brown, *John*, 1:466; Bultmann, *John*, p. 423; H. B. Kossen, "Who were the Greeks of John xii 20?" *Studies in John Presented to Professor Dr. J.N. Sevenster* (Leiden, 1970) pp. 97-110.
[63]So Brown, *John*, 1:79, Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 98.

come to Jesus. At first he is obtuse and uncomprehending, but he eventually comes to more complete discipleship.[65] At 4:30,40a the Samaritan villagers come to Jesus, and soon believe. Note especially that at v.40 when the Samaritans come to Jesus they promptly ask him to stay with them (μένειν is a key Johannine discipleship-word). At 5:40 Jesus implies that those who come to him have (eternal) life.[66] Since Jesus gives (eternal) life only to his disciples,[67] it can be said that discipleship is being referred to here at 12:20-36. There are several references to coming to Jesus in the discourse of Chapter 6. At vv. 35,37,45 Jesus promises his continuing presence with those who come to him. This is the promise he makes to his disciples (14:18, 23). At vv. 37,44f.,65 Jesus says that those who come do so because they are called by the Father. "This coming is the same as inner readiness to become [Jesus'] disciple (1:47)...Those who thus come to Jesus believe in Him."[68] But if those who come to Jesus come because they are called, then what appears to be a free human decision is in fact determined by God; the idea of election then stands behind the idea of coming.[69]

All this seems to me to indicate that the coming of the Greeks is a coming to belief and discipleship. This is what lends the event of their coming its significance. It is the coming of these Gentiles in faith, I suggest, which signals the coming of Jesus' hour. And there is another reason why it is noteworthy that the Greeks (like the Samaritans at 4:30,40) are said to come. For Jesus is also characterised as one who comes (1:15,30; 3:31; 6:14; 8:23; 11:27; 19:37). This raises again the issue of *imitatio Christi*: Jesus calls on his disciples not only to be with him but to act as he does. I will turn my attention to this issue in a section of my concluding chapter.

The second of our categories of characterisation is that of *indirect presentation*. Only one item comes under this category. At 12:21 the Greeks tell Philip

[64]So Barrett, *St John*, p. 181, who, however, says that "[t]he phrase...probably has no special significance here."
[65]This is a matter of dispute; see my discussion in chapter 1.
[66]So also Barrett, *St. John*, p. 268, who compares 6:35;7:37.
[67]Cf. Barrett, *St. John*, p. 293; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 273; Lightfoot, *St. John*, p. 161.
[68]Carl Schneider, *TDNT*, 2:672, s.v. ἔρχομαι.
[69]*Ibid.*

that they want to see Jesus - the word used for "see" is ἰδεῖν. In this Gospel ἰδεῖν often refers to more than just ordinary physical sight.

> The sight - and this includes, but must not be limited to, physical sight, is sight of the Logos 'become flesh,' become historical...the seeing is neither physical only, nor spiritual only, but the seeing which arises from belief.[70]

Michaelis goes further: "Johannine seeing involves a submission in faith to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ...Sight is for [John] the seeing of faith."[71] And yet there is a physical component to this sight, for the Jesus who is seen by faith is a historical man, the Word *become flesh* (cf. 1:14). As Hoskyns puts it, "The sight of the disciples is to be directed towards the visible historical figure of Jesus, towards his flesh,...but it is to be directed thither in order that they may see that which is beyond historical observation."[72]

According to 1:14 it was those who received the Logos who "'saw his glory'. And this sight [is] discernible only in and by the act of believing..."[73] But it must be admitted that there are instances in this gospel where seeing is merely physical. Is the seeing of the Greeks one of these instances? I suggest that it is not. Brown, commenting on 12:21, says, "'To see' may have the sense of 'to visit with, to meet'...Yet, in the Johannine theological context 'to see' may well mean 'to believe in.'"[74] Given that προσέρχεσθαι is used of the Greeks in the same verse, and given what I have just said about coming to Jesus in this gospel, I suggest that ἰδεῖν here

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[70]Lightfoot, *St. John*, pp. 84ff.
[71]Wilhelm Michaelis, *TDNT*, 5:363f, *s.v.* ὁράω.
[72]*Fourth Gospel*, p. 183. Perhaps this explains the importance in this gospel of the idea of the witness of those who saw Jesus, and the importance in the early church of having seen Jesus as a criterion for the apostolate.
[73]Lightfoot, *St. John*, p. 86.
[74]*John*, 1:466. Brown also argues (*John*, 1:501-03) that while the author of the Gospel of John uses several different words for seeing, he does not use different words to distinguish different types of seeing. "[T]here are certainly different types of sight in John. At most there may be a tendency to use one verb rather than another for a specific form of sight, but the consistency is not remarkable"(1:503).

means more than just physical sight. The Greeks do not merely want to meet Jesus. They are open to coming to faith in him.

The third of our categories of characterisation is that of *character traits.* Without reading anything into the text,[75] it is possible to ascribe to the Greeks two character traits, each of which may be described with one word: hesitancy and anonymity. The first character trait of the Greeks to which I have referred is their hesitancy. Rather than go to Jesus themselves, they go to Philip. Lagrange sarcastically remarks, *"Ces braves gens n'osent se présenter eux-mêmes..."*[76] He attributes the Greeks' hesitancy to fear. But it may be that their reaction is not fear, but that their hesitancy arises from the awe and respect which they feel is Jesus' due. If this is the case, then they give him the awe and respect which, ironically, the unbelieving "Jews" do not.

The other character trait of the Greeks which I have listed is their anonymity. Since the Greeks are not described as family members or servants of any of the named characters, we may place them in the second of Reinhartz's categories, that of "autonomous characters whose definitions are independent of those of any named character."[77] This category in turn may be subdivided into three: incidental characters, messengers and functionaries, as prteviously noted.[78] The Greeks fit into the first subcategory, that of incidental characters. "These are characters who appear or act only briefly, in one or two verses within a given pericope, and may have little or no interaction with a major or secondary named character."[79]

Reinhartz says that the very anonymity of anonymous characters serves two purposes. First, it focuses the implied reader's attention not on the anonymous

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[75]See my comment on Lagrange's statement (*S. Jean*, p. 329, cited above).
[76]*S. Jean*, p.329.
[77]*Art.cit.*, p. 121.
[78]*Art. cit.*, pp. 128-31.
[79]*Ibid.*, p. 128. The word "incidental" is perhaps not the most suitable one, since it implies that these characters are not important. But they may serve an important plot function, even though they appear only briefly.

characters themselves but on the named characters with whom the anonymous ones interact. Second, their anonymity focuses attention on their typified roles, and thus on the plot and the main characters.[80]

How does this apply to the Greeks? With respect to the first point, their anonymity keeps the reader's attention focused on Jesus. And they bring out certain aspects of Jesus' character, and keep the plot moving (their arrival signals a major turning point in the plot, the arrival of "the hour"). What aspects of Jesus' character do they bring out? They bring out his revelatory knowledge, in the form of his awareness of what their arrival means ("The hour has come...," v.23). They bring out his human qualities in the face of his own death ("Now my soul is in torment," v.27). And they bring out his acceptance of his death as part of the work which he has been sent to accomplish ("For this reason I came to this hour," v.28). The second point draws attention to their role as representative figures, representing the Gentile world, which I have already discussed. In other words, the anonymity of the Greeks focuses attention on their being Greeks.

But there is more to be said than this. David R. Beck[81] argues that the very anonymity of these characters encourages the reader to identify with them as they come to Jesus in faith. Beck discusses all the gospel's anonymous characters except the Greeks,[82] but what he says applies to them as well. Their anonymity makes it easy for the implied reader to identify with them as they come to Jesus in faith.

The Greeks interact with Philip only briefly, and with Andrew not at all; do they actually get to meet Jesus? The text does not tell us whether they do or not.

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[80]*Ibid.*, p.132, cited on p. 114 above.
[81]"The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization," *Semeia* 63 (1993) pp. 143-58.
[82]Does he omit them because they are not explicitly said to make a faith response? But I have argued that their faith is implicit in their coming and seeing.

Whether or not they get to talk with Jesus at this point, there is a sense in which they cannot truly see him until after the resurrection.[83]

Finally, it may be asked if the fact of the brief and open-ended appearance of the Greeks has some significance.[84] Stephen Barton supplies an answer to that question:

> The emphasis, rhetorically, falls upon Jesus' heavy and disturbing demand, in the face of which a decision by each individual follower has to be made. Interestingly, we are not told how the...individuals respond, so the narrative tension remains unresolved: an effective way of leaving the implied reader the question of how he/she would/should respond in the light of Jesus' demanding call.[85]

To sum this subsection up: we have seen that the Greeks are given two character traits, each of which may be described with one word - hesitancy and anonymity. The hesitancy arises from respect, and anonymity is a character trait which, surprisingly, allows the Greeks to play a significant role in the narrative. It allows the implied author to make them point up some significant character traits of the major characters, and keep the plot moving, without deflecting attention away unduly from the plot and the major characters. More than that, it allows the implied reader to identify with them.

Above I have described the appearance of the Greeks as brief and open-ended. But if it is brief and open-ended, is it unexpected? Perhaps not, in view of the idea of election which appears in this gospel. In fact the coming of the Greeks may be seen as a fulfilment of Jesus' word, in two ways. First, he has said earlier that he has "other

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[83]Cf. Carson, *John*, p. 437: "Theologically speaking, the point is irrelevant (and therefore omitted), because even if they met with Jesus at this point there is a sense in which they could not yet 'see' him, until the 'hour' is over and Jesus has been 'lifted up from the earth' (v.32) This is true, but it is also true for the disciples, and for anyone else who made contact with Jesus during his lifetime. It should also be noted that physical seeing is not what matters - hence Jesus calls down blessings on "those who have not seen, but have believed anyway" (20:29).

[84]Bultmann (*John*, p. 420, cited in n. 1 above) notes the unfinished nature of the pericope of 12:20-22, but fails to ask about the significance of this unfinished quality.

[85]S.C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Cambridge, 1993) p. 152. Barton is referring to Matt. 8:18-22, but his statement applies equally to John 12:20-36.

sheep that do not belong to this fold," whom he must bring, so that there may be one flock with one shepherd (10:16). There is general agreement that these "sheep" are Gentile Christians.[86] If this is so, then the Greeks are the first of these other sheep. As in the previous chapter, we see the people of God being redefined to include those who were previously outsiders. Second, their coming may be seen to be a fulfilment of Jesus' word in that it signals the coming of the hour, which Jesus has predicted. As I have said above, the Greeks come, something which cannot happen unless the Father draws them. More than that, Jesus makes it clear that he chooses his disciples rather than the reverse (15:16, cf. 6:70, 13:18; 15:19), even if they think that it is they who have chosen him.[87]

It may also be said here that the κρίσις does not turn people toward Jesus, or against him. Rather the choice they make shows what they have really been all along. "Just as all cats are black in the dark, so men do not show up in their true colours until the light of Christ shines upon them."[88] But this does not mean that humans have no choice in the matter. Throughout the gospel there are calls for people to believe, calls which indicate that people have the ability to make a choice, indeed that a choice is required of them. Some of these statements are placed intriguingly close to predestinarian statements - for example, 9:39 is juxtaposed with 9:41, and 12:39 with 12:42f.[89] The two strains of thought lie side by side, in tension with one another, and the tension remains unresolved.

> God may impart his 'teaching' in Jesus' proclamation, but the statement remains in the middle: the outward revelation in the word of the Son must be supplemented by an inward prompting from the Father, but the individual must also 'learn' that is, accept the word of Jesus, supported by the Father's attraction...This explanation leaves the collaboration of

[86]So e.g. Brown *John*, 1:396; Carson, *John*, p. 388; Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 252; Bernard, *St. John*, 2:361; Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 171; Macgregor, *John*, p. 240; Morris, *John*, p. 512; Barrett, *St. John*, p. 376; Lagrange, *S. Jean*, pp. 281f.

[87]These words are spoken to the guests at the Last Supper, but apply to all disciples (*contra* Macgregor, *John*, p. 290, who thinks that Jesus is here "primarily" setting the Twelve apart from other disciples, for a leadership role). And in this gospel the disciples might have reason to think that it is they who have chosen Jesus, since they have sought him out, except for Philip (1:35-51).

[88]Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 131.

[89]Schnackenburg, *St. John*, p. 259.

> God and man in the emergence of faith a mystery still but this much is clear, that faith is not possible for human beings without God's 'pull,' the prior assistance of his grace to them, and yet human beings are not spared their own decision. The paradox of the doctrine of grace remains.[90]

The fourth of our categories of characterisation is that of *evaluative point of view.* We have seen that the Greeks come, something which can only happen if the Father draws them (6:37,44f.,65), and which implies that they are disciples. They also say that they want to see (ἰδεῖν) Jesus. Jesus has come so that those who do not see may see (9:39).[91] Given what I have said about coming and seeing in this gospel, it can be said that the Greeks' evaluative point of view is aligned with that of God, as represented by Jesus.

The fifth of our categories of characterisation is that of *cultural scripts.* According to Bruce Malina, "in the first-century Mediterranean world every social interaction that takes place outside one's family or outside one's circle of friends is perceived as a challenge to honor, a mutual attempt to acquire honor from one's social equal."[92] Such a challenge, whether it takes the form of a gift given, an invitation to dinner, a proposal for a joint business venture or a request of some other kind, cannot go unanswered; it demands a response. Looked at in this way, the Greeks' request of v. 21, as a request, can be seen as an opening challenge to Jesus. The challenge is not made to Jesus directly, but through Philip (it is noteworthy that they begin the challenge with a respectful "Sir"). Jesus' statement at vv. 25f are then his counterchallenge, in which he makes clear the demands of discipleship. This counterchallenge in turn demands a response on the part of the Greeks. But the implied author has not recorded a response, and I do not believe that this is accidental, nor that material has been lost or displaced from between vv. 22 and 23.[93] Rather the

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[90]*Ibid.*, p. 262. On this whole question see e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 259-74, esp. pp. 259-65.

[91]It is interesting to note that at 9:39 there is a connection between seeing and κρίσις, a theme which is of importance in this study.

[92]*Op. cit.*, p. 37.

[93]That material has been lost or displaced here has been suggested by e.g. Bultmann (*John*, pp. 420f, and citations p. 420 n. 2).

lack of response encourages the implied reader to finish the story for himself. On one level he is asked to work out what the Greeks will do; on a deeper level he is asked to consider how he himself will respond to Jesus' challenge. It also (even more so?) focuses his attention on Jesus and his words. It is as if the implied author is saying, like John, "He must increase, and I must decrease" (3:30).

The mention of the idea of challenge and counterchallenge raises the question of honour/shame considerations. The Greeks honour Jesus by the respectful way in which they approach him. And there is another way in which honour appears in this passage. Paradoxically, those who submit themselves and become Jesus' servants thereby gain honour from the Father.

The relationship which is initiated by the Greeks has the character of a patron-client contract.[94] It is this kind of contract which Jesus describes at vv. 25f. Such a contract entails obligations on both sides. Those who want to be Jesus' servants/clients must follow him, and be where he is in suffering and death. In return, as the patron-benefactor, he will bring them to where he is in glory (cf. 14:3), and they will have honour ascribed to them by the Father besides. Seeing the relationship between Jesus and "his own" as a patron-client relationship may also explain why the Greeks go to Philip rather than to Jesus directly, for it was considered appropriate for the lower person to approach the higher through an intermediary. This also means that Philip and Andrew act like disciples imitating their Master, for just as they provide access to Jesus for the Greeks, so also Jesus provides access to the Father for all believers (cf. 14:6).

Philip and Andrew act as mediators in this patron-client relationship, just as they do in chapter 6. Their characterisation here is similar to that in chapter 12. When Jesus asks Philip what should be done to feed the crowd, Philip is at a loss (6:7). Andrew is somewhat more resourceful: he knows that there are five loaves of barley

[94]A person could initiate such a contract with someone of higher social status with a request for help, conveyed by intermediaries (*ibid.*, p.101).

bread and two small fish available.[95] But he too is slightly at a loss, because he cannot see what good this amount of food is, with so many people to feed (6:9). Similarly, Philip does not know what to do about the Greeks' request to see Jesus. When he reports the request to Andrew, Andrew is slightly less at a loss than Philip as to how to respond. That he is, nonetheless, slightly at a loss is indicated by the fact that he reports the request to Jesus, but does not, apparently, take the Greeks to him.

This same team of disciples also appears at 1:35-51. There we see Andrew and Philip acting as links between others and Jesus, just as they do at 12:20-36. But while at 1:35-51 there is no doubt that Andrew brings Simon Peter to Jesus, and Philip brings Nathanael, the narrative of Chapter 12 does not make it clear whether or not the Greeks actually see Jesus.

It is also noteworthy that at 1:43 Jesus finds Philip and calls him. Philip is the only disciple whom Jesus calls in this gospel (all the other disciples either seek Jesus themselves or are brought by others). What is the significance of this? Hoskyns[96] observes that Philip alone is given the same call which is given to Peter at 21:22. Beasley-Murray says, "That Jesus 'finds' Philip emphasises his call to be a disciple."[97] But are we to believe that Andrew, Simon Peter, Nathanael and the unnamed disciple are any less called because in their cases the expected formula is not used? It seems unlikely; Andrew and his anonymous partner are said to "follow" Jesus, and then to "stay" with him (both well-known Johannine terms for discipleship), Simon receives a new name (an event which symbolises his new relationship with God), and Nathanael is promised a vision of the Son of Man. Brodie, building on suggestions of Westcott and Haenchen, suggests that because of Philip's Greek name, his association with the evangelisation of the Greeks in Acts 8 and "finally, because within the fourth gospel, it is through Philip that the Greeks come to Jesus. The call of Philip, therefore, is in

[95]The fact that he knows this may indicate that he has made enquiries to find out how much food is available (cf. Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p.163). But it must be said that the text does not say this.
[96]*John*, pp. 181f.
[97]*John*, p. 27.

some sense proleptic of, or representative of, the call of the Greeks."[98] But the name Philip has been found, in the form פלִיפָּא and in other forms, among the Amoraim,[99] which may reduce the significance of the Greeks' approaching a disciple of that name.[100] And Philip can hardly be given more than a share of the credit for bringing the Greeks to Jesus (if in fact they ever do see him) at 12:20-22. Nonetheless, though there are difficulties with Brodie's view, his is the closest to a satisfactory one. Indeed it suggests an answer to the question of why the implied author lays such stress on the fact that Philip is from Galilee, which, as I have said, was referred to as "Galilee of the Gentiles." For it is among Galileans that Jesus finds his first disciples, and it is Philip the Galilean whom a group of Gentiles approach with a request to see Jesus.[101]

The sixth of our categories of characterisation is that of *empathy, sympathy, and antipathy.* Given all that I have said about the characterisation of the Greeks, how does the implied reader feel toward them? Because the evaluative point of view which they espouse is aligned with that of God, the implied reader does not feel antipathy toward them. Powell says that the implied reader in the gospels is likely to share Jesus' attitude toward other characters, because Jesus is the protagonist of the gospels.[102] Jesus' attitude toward the Greeks is difficult to determine; all that can be said with certainty is that he does not send them away. He has promised that he will not send away anyone who comes to him (6:35). In general it can be said that the implied

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[98]Brodie, *John*, p. 165.

[99]Barrett, *John*, p. 152.

[100]One might compare Acts 6:5, where another Philip appears as a member of the food distribution committee. It is not the same Philip who appears in the canonical gospels, for the distribution committee is a group distinct from the Twelve.

[101]I have already mentioned that the expression "Galilee of the Gentiles" occurs at Isa. 9:1(Matt. 4:15). Are there any connections between the Isaian verse and John 12:20-36? The Isaian verse is followed by the famous, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, and those who dwell in a land of deep darkness - on them has light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased its joy; they rejoice before thee with joy as at the harvest, as men exult when they divide the spoil."(9:2f RSV); the themes of light and darkness and of the harvest also appear at John 12:35f. This may suggest a connection between the two passages. [The connection is also noted by Lightfoot, (*St. John*, p. 251), who refers it to "the future, universal scope of the Gospel"]. I suggest that the author of the Gospel of John sees the promise of the Isaian passage as fulfilled by the coming of Jesus, and therein lies the connection.

[102]*Op. cit.*, p. 57.

reader probably sympathises with the Greeks, identifying with them in their desire to come to Jesus and to see him.

V

Concluding Remarks

Let us draw the threads of this chapter together. In the previous chapter we saw how a group of non-Jews turn up at a significant point in the gospel: just before real opposition to Jesus from "the Jews" begins, a group of non-Jews come to faith in him as the Saviour of the World. Here at the close of Jesus' public ministry, and after his entry into Jerusalem, another group of non-Jews, this one Greeks, want to see him. To the Jews of the first century AD Samaritans were considered neither Jews nor Gentiles, but something in between. Now in chapter 12 Jesus' ministry has expanded even further, and reached those who are undoubted Gentiles.[103]

That this is a turning point in the plot of the gospel cannot be doubted, for it signals the arrival of Jesus' hour and the climax and end of his public ministry. As soon as he is informed of the Greeks' request, Jesus is aware of its significance. For himself, it means that the hour of suffering and glory has come; for humanity, it means that the time of judgement and choice has arrived.

If the coming of the Greeks is a turning point in the plot of the gospel, it is also a turning point in salvation history. For with the coming of Jesus and the coming of his hour, the people of God are redefined. The distinction is no longer the ethnically-based one between Jew and Gentile, but between those who respond positively to

[103]It is interesting to compare this progression with the formula in Acts 1:8: "...Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus and those who do not. And at this moment when official Jewish rejection of Jesus is about to become complete, the Gentiles want to be part of the people of God.

We can see, then, that the short pericope of the Greeks is more significant than previous studies have acknowledged. When looking at the characterisation of this character group we also found that the implied author has said some significant things with their characterisation. They are said to come and to see, both significant Johannine words connected with faith and discipleship, and even their anonymity has a surprising significance.

The implied author has, then, given the implied reader two pictures of positive non-Jewish response to Jesus, one near the beginning of his public ministry and one at its climax and end. But just as there are "Jews" who believe in Jesus and other "Jews" who do not, so there are also Gentiles who refuse to believe. These will be the subject of the next chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 5

CHARACTERISATION OF THE ROMANS

Introduction

In the previous two chapters we saw how the implied author characterises non-Jewish characters positively. But just as Jewish characters are divided about Jesus,[1] so also non-Jewish characters are divided about him. Previous non-Jewish characters have reacted positively to Jesus. In this chapter we shall consider a group of non-Jews who react negatively to him - the Romans. The passages with which we are concerned in this chapter are 11:48; 18:3-12; 18:28-19:16a; 19:20,38.

It has long been noticed that of the four canonical gospels, John lays the most emphasis on the trial of Jesus by the Roman authorities and the least on his trial by the Jewish authorities; so much so that one may question whether the encounter between Jesus and Annas which John describes may be accurately called a trial.

> The Jewish legal proceedings have been reduced to a question asked of Jesus by Annas, and thus the Roman judicial process becomes *the* trial of Jesus. Is there a theological reason for John's stress on the Roman trial?[2]

This question has been answered in various ways. Brown[3] suggests that John found the secular Roman proceedings a more suitable vehicle than the Jewish for expounding the kingship of Jesus, which is an important theme throughout the Gospel of John, but especially in the Roman trial scene. Others say that the answer to the question lies in the Johannine stress on Pilate, with Ps. 2:2, which refers to Gentiles opposing the Lord and his anointed one, as the Old Testament background motif. But

[1]See my discussion in Chapter 1.
[2]Brown, *John*, 2:862.
[3]*Ibid.*, 2:863, also citing Blank. Brown does not explain why this should be so.

as Brown[4] points out, "The Synoptic accounts of the Pilate trial would fulfil this text just as much as John's account does." It has also been suggested that John wanted to portray the conflict between the secular and religious realms, with the integrity of the religious winning out over the brute force of the secular.[5] But the theme of political power comes to the fore only at 19:10f, and to a lesser extent at 18:33-38. And in these passages it is connected to the theme of kingship, which is the dominant motif of the trial; "so that the clash between the religious and the secular is scarcely a dominant motif."[6] Also, one might ask whether the terms "secular" and "religious" can be used in a first-century context without anachronism. Before the Enlightenment, every aspect of life was covered by religion, so in a pre-Enlightenment context the distinction between religious and secular is meaningless.

I suggest that the Johannine emphasis on the Roman trial may be connected to our theme of κρίσις. So far in the narrative we have seen Jews on both sides of the dividing line of faith - some believe in Jesus and some do not - and we have seen non-Jews on the side of belief. But if, as I have argued throughout this study, the theme of κρίσις runs through the characterisation of non-Jewish as well as Jewish characters, then it would not be surprising to find non-Jews on the other side of the line, that is, non-Jews who do not believe in Jesus. In this chapter I shall argue that for this reason the emphasis throughout the Roman trial narrative is on the choice which the Roman characters, especially Pilate, must make, and what it is that keeps them from coming to Jesus in faith. I shall also argue that if the implied author has not let "the Jews" off the hook with regard to responsibility for the death of Jesus, he has not let the Romans off the hook either. Pilate has the authority, and indeed the duty, to prevent the execution of a man whom he knows is innocent of the charges brought against him. But he is too afraid of the Jewish leaders, and of Caesar, to simply drop the charges, and not sufficiently perceptive or clever to get around them by more oblique means.

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[4]*Ibid.*, 2:862.
[5]Reported by Brown, *John*, 2:863, without attribution.
[6]Brown, *John*, 2:863.

Nonetheless, the picture is not entirely dark, and Pilate's actions after the trial, in the incident of the *titulus* and the granting of Jesus' body for honourable burial, may be said to lend an ambiguity to his characterisation.

I

A Survey of Research

When considering the portrayal of the Romans in the Gospel of John, it is inevitable that attention focus on Pilate, the most visible Roman in the gospel and the official representative of Rome in Judea. While extrabiblical sources[7] portray Pilate as a tyrant and a bully, we shall see that John portrays him somewhat differently. Various scholars have seen the Johannine portrayal of Pilate in different ways. Westcott sees Pilate as callous, indifferent "to matters which only concerned (as he assumes) a despised people."[8] Pilate is not interested in what seems to him to be a mere religious quarrel among the Jews. Jesus' question at 18:34 calls on Pilate to consider the nature of the case before him. "In this sense it is an appeal to his conscience."[9] But he does not want to become involved. He gives in to Jewish pressure when the Jewish leaders question his loyalty to Rome; he is condemned "of treason to his office on the plea of loyalty."[10] In other words, Pilate is so concerned about showing his political loyalty that he fails in his duty, which is to administer justice. But this may be too modern a distinction, since the way a Roman prefect would show his loyalty was in carrying out his duties the way his superiors wanted him to. Chief among these would be the keeping of public order and the prevention, or suppression, of political unrest.

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[7]For Philo on Pilate see *Legat. ad Caium* 28;#302; 38;#209-308; for Josephus on Pilate see *Bell.* 2.9.2-3;#169-74; 2.9.4;#175-77; *Ant.* 18.4.1-2;#85-89; 18.3.1;#55-59; 18.3.2#60-62; for Tacitus on Pilate see *Ann.* 15.44

[8]*St. John*, p.260.

[9]*Ibid.*

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 273.

According to Hoskyns, "Pilate represents the world in need of salvation, and half conscious of this need."[11] Hoskyns also sees Pilate as an unknowing agent in God's plan. There are, he says, two reasons for this. First, John wanted to remove the responsibility for the death of Jesus from the Romans and lay it on the Jews.[12] Second, only death by crucifixion, which could be ordered by Pilate alone, could fulfil Jesus' prophecies of being lifted up.[13] But this leaves unanswered the question of why the Jewish leaders would want Jesus executed in Roman style, in preference to the traditional Jewish method of stoning (which even under Roman *imperium* was an option, in certain circumstances).[14] They would have no interest in seeing that Jesus' prophecies were carried out; quite the opposite, in fact.[15]

It has been suggested that Pilate represents the State, which must choose between the World and the Truth and cannot remain neutral. If the State does not decide against the World, it becomes subject to the World, thus losing both its neutrality and its objectivity in matters of justice. But this theory, popular among German theologians such as Schlier and Bultmann,[16] may be a modern reinterpretation of John in light of the theological problem caused by Germany's own culpability in two world wars.[17] Brown sees Pilate as one of a group of individuals which includes Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman and the invalid at the pool of Bethesda. "We would

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[11]*The Fourth Gospel*, p. 612.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 613. I hope to show that in fact John does not remove the blame from the Romans; quite the contrary.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 617.

[14]Concessions were made to allow Jewish authority to execute those convicted of certain moral and religious crimes. A well-known concession allowed the Jews to execute any Gentile, even a Roman citizen, who trespassed into the Temple precincts beyond the Court of the Gentiles. For a full discussion of this question see e.g. Brown, *Death*, 1:363-73.

[15]Though he does not say so, Hoskyns seems to think that John sees the Jewish leaders also as unknowing agents in God's plan. There may be something in the theory that they saw Jesus as a false prophet, and that crucifixion would discredit him as such in the eyes of their people; cf. Deut. 21:23; Brown, *Death*, 1:541-44. A.J.M. Wedderburn (in a conversation) points out also that a Roman-style execution might free the Jews of direct culpability in the eyes of Jesus' followers, and of the general populace, which might protest against the Jewish leaders' treatment of Jesus (cf. Mk. 12:12; 14;2; Matt. 22:46; 26:5; Lk. 20:19).

[16]*John*, pp. 633, 637, 653,657f, 660-63.

[17]So Brown, *John*, 2:663f., also citing von Campenhausen and Haenchen. Haenchen, *John 2*, p. 182, says that "there was no abstract entity called 'the state' for the Evangelist; he knew only the *imperium Romanum*."

look on the Johannine Pilate not as the personification of the State but as another reaction to Jesus which is neither faith nor rejection."[18] Again, neutrality is impossible; it leads only to tragedy, in that one who tries to remain neutral toward Jesus is forced to stand against him. Brown is right in seeing the importance of Pilate's reaction, and the impossibility of neutrality; but I shall argue below that to describe Pilate's reaction as "neither faith nor rejection" is inaccurate.

Haenchen has "brought out the effort of John to put Pilate in the best of lights."[19] A key way in which he does this is to emphasise the role of "the Jews" in the proceedings, thus de-emphasising Pilate's role. On 18:39 Haenchen says that Pilate

> is ready to release the 'king of the Jews:' in that case, Jesus would not be acquitted; he would receive a pardon. But the Jews do not want to accept this offer. They do not want Jesus; they want Barabbas. 'Now Barabbas was a robber.' That makes it clear how things stand with the Jews.[20]

He says that Pilate "was uncomfortable with this whole trial from the beginning."[21] The Jewish leaders "treat the praefect like he was really only the instrument of their will...However, Pilate does not immediately accommodate himself to this role."[22] But does the narrator in fact emphasise the role of "the Jews" in this way? I suggest that the implied author's focus on Pilate precludes any suggestion that the implied author de-emphasises Pilate's role to incriminate "the Jews." It might be well to remember that in this gospel Jesus' appearance on trial before the Jewish authorities is reduced to a single brief exchange, and the only real trial which Jesus faces is that before Pilate.[23]

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[18]Brown, *John*, 2:866.
[19]A.M. Zabala, "The Enigma of John 19:13 Reconsidered - pt. 1," *SEAsiaJournTheol* 22 (1981) p. 26.
[20]*John 2*, p. 180.
[21]*Ibid.*, p. 182.
[22]*Op. cit.*, p. 185.
[23]It is also noteworthy that Haenchen himself says of 19:13, "it was not the Jews who put Jesus on the judgement seat (they had no right to do that), it was Pilate himself" (*ibid.*, p. 187). Thus Haenchen knocks a hole in his own case, as Zabala (*loc. cit*) also notes. There has been much debate as to what is going on at 19:13, and I shall discuss this verse below.

One scholar who has drawn attention to the political aspects of Jesus' encounter with Pilate is David Rensberger. According to Rensberger, "the political nature of the charges against Jesus is given far more emphasis in the Fourth Gospel than elsewhere in the New Testament."[24] It is generally agreed that John

> wished to relieve the Romans of responsibility for the death of Jesus and to assure them that despite appearances to the contrary, neither Jesus nor the church was a political threat to the Empire...Yet certain features of John's presentation invite the question whether his attitude toward the Romans is as conciliatory as Luke's, for instance, is sometimes said to have been.[25]

Rensberger wants to read Pilate "as a strong man rather than a weak one."[26] He notes the contradiction in the late first-century Christian portrayal of Pilate, in that Pilate was seen as reluctant to crucify Jesus, but nonetheless Jesus was crucified. Rensberger suggests that

> John has seen and capitalised on this contradiction, so that for him it is turned to irony, and Pilate too becomes an agent of 'the world,' instead of a good-hearted but inexplicably impotent governor.[27]

I hope to show in this chapter that Pilate's impotence is not inexplicable but is a matter of choice. That is, his powerlessness is a result of the choices he makes (I shall discuss this further below). In other words, Rensberger has not taken account of the theme of κρίσις, that is, of the necessity of making a choice for or against Jesus.

Rensberger claims that Pilate's "aim is to humiliate 'the Jews' and to ridicule their national hopes by means of Jesus."[28] This claim is both a basis and a result of Rensberger's choice to read this passage in a political way. From the start of the trial, according to Rensberger, Pilate's aim is to elicit from "the Jews" an admission of allegiance to Caesar, and when he gets it he is quick to hand Jesus over.[29] The proof

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[24] *Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John* (London, 1989) p. 87.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 88.
[26] *Ibid.*. p. 92. The same line is taken by Helen Bond in her unpublished 1994 Durham university PhD. thesis, "Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation."
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*, p.95.

of this lies in the incident of the *titulus*. Pilate's refusal to change the sign shows his contempt for "the hope of Israel which Jesus both fulfils and transcends."[30] But there are several problems with this exegesis.

First, Rensberger fails, in my opinion, to show from the Johannine text that this is Pilate's intention from the beginning. Brown says rightly that "Pilate's attempt to salvage political gain is by petulant afterthought."[31] Indeed one might ask how, since the Jewish leaders are hostile to Jesus, mistreatment and mocking of him humiliates them.[32] With respect to handing over, Rensberger seems to think that Pilate hands Jesus over to "the Jews" at 19:16a, as if he is giving them Jesus as a reward for saying what he wants to hear. But it is to his Roman soldiers that he hands Jesus over, not "the Jews." Rensberger says that "in spite of ['the Jews"] refusal to name any specific charges (18:29-30), [Pilate] is at once willing to proceed with the hearing when he learns that a crucifixion is in the offing."[33] But at 18:31 the Jewish leaders tell Pilate that it is a question of a capital case, and thus by implication they appeal to him in his official capacity. Once they have done this, he has no choice but to act.[34] So he begins by attempting to find out what is going on.

Second, with regard to the *titulus*, I shall argue below that Pilate's motives are not political but personal, stemming from his humiliation over the trial. The operative principle here is not politics (defined as issues of Roman-Jewish relations) but considerations of honour and shame. Rensberger finds it "not quite possible to trust

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[30]*Ibid.*
[31]*Death*, 1:753 n.45.
[32]The idea that Pilate intends to humiliate the Jewish leaders is more plausible, in my opinion, in the case of the Synoptics, where there is an ὄχλος of common people [Mk. 15:8,11; Matt. 27:15,20 (cf. 27:25, πᾶς ὁ λαὸς); Lk. 23:4 (cf. 23:13, τὸν λαὸν)], (part of) which might be favourable to Jesus (note that at Mk. 15:11, Matt. 27:20 the leaders persuade the crowd to ask for Barabbas' release). In such a case it is credible that Pilate might want to humiliate the Jewish leaders in the eyes of the common people by releasing a man who is popular among the common people but disliked by the leaders (cf. Mk. 15:10). But such a scenario is less credible in the case of the Johannine account, where there is apparently no ὄχλος present, only the Jewish leaders, and there is no indication in this scene that any of them are favourable to Jesus.
[33]*Op. cit.*, pp. 92f.
[34]Cf. Marsh, *St. John*, pp. 608f.

[Pilate's] intentions when he declares that he finds Jesus innocent."[35] But he does not give any real reason why he finds it so difficult. In general I do not find that Rensberger has made out his case.

The main problem with a reading that so greatly emphasises the political aspects of these passages is that it is not where the emphasis of the texts themselves lie. Rensberger himself "do[es] not claim that John's interests here are exclusively political. The uppermost issues are certainly theological..."[36] If that is the case (and Rensberger is correct in saying this), then surely an exegesis which emphasises a subsidiary aspect of a passage over the main aspect is putting the emphasis in the wrong place.

Culpepper is among those who see the Johannine Pilate as "a study in the impossibility of compromise, the inevitability of decision and the consequences of each alternative."[37] According to Culpepper, "In a sense Pilate defeats both his antagonists. The Jews deny their religious loyalties, and Jesus is condemned..."[38] But contrary to Culpepper's claim, the condemnation of Jesus is exactly what Pilate does not want, and strives to avoid. It can hardly be called a victory for him. Culpepper sees the *titulus*, the permission to break the legs in order to hasten death, and the giving of Jesus' body for proper burial as "efforts to atone for his concession to the Jews,"[39] but I am more inclined to see the *titulus* and the burial as the actions of a man who has decided to stand up to "the Jews." Culpepper rightly sees that Pilate "in the end stands with the world by his failure to stand with Jesus against it."[40] He is right again when he describes this characterisation as a "maneuver to force the reader to a decision regarding Jesus;"[41] I shall return to this subject in a section of my concluding chapter.

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[35] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[37] *Anatomy*, p. 143. Culpepper's discussion of the characterisation of Pilate is disappointingly brief.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*

Mark Stibbe describes the Johannine characterisation of Pilate as "a masterful achievement and a superb example of how John the storyteller manages to imply much with the greatest verbal economy."[42] For Stibbe,

> Pilate is not ultimately a character whom the reader of this narrative is supposed to condemn...His indecisiveness may be a lamentable feature of his character, but that indecisiveness is directly caused by the fact that no one, at any point, answers the perfectly legitimate questions which he asks.[43]

I find this view very surprising. It is true that Pilate, like Nicodemus, does not always get straight answers to his straight questions. But most of his questions receive answers by implication; the answers are there for him to reach if he chooses. He does not so choose, and on one occasion (18:38) he asks a question and then leaves without waiting for a reply. Stibbe himself admits that there are "a number of weaknesses in [Pilate's] approach,"[44] and that "Pilate is trapped into doing the very thing which he has taken the greatest trouble to avoid...Pilate is trapped by expediency into forsaking the very principles of justice which it is his duty to uphold."[45] And finally, "In the end, Pilate's growing fear before a man who could be divine (19.8) is not enough to make him overrule Jesus' accusers. It is the possibility of being reported to Rome as an enemy of Caesar that proves the most powerful argument."[46] More than this: Stibbe describes "the Jews" as "the *theomachus* [i.e. the enemy of God] of the fourth gospel;"[47] I shall argue below that an equally strong case can be made for describing Pilate also as a *theomachos*.[48]

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[42]*Storyteller*, p. 106.
[43]*Ibid.*, p. 109.
[44]*Ibid.*, p. 107
[45]*Ibid.*
[46]*John*, p. 188.
[47]*Storyteller*, p. 138; cf. pp. 135, 137.
[48]In comparing John's passion narrative with Euripides' *Bacchae*, Stibbe (*ibid.*, pp. 142-44) notes some similarities between Pilate and Pentheus, whom he has already described as a *theomachos* (p. 135). But he fails to see what this implies for the characterisation of Pilate.

It can be seen, then, that many scholars have seen the Johannine portrayal of Pilate as sympathetic, suggesting that the implied author whitewashes the Romans in order to blacken "the Jews." Barrett says that

> we have here an attempt on the part of John (or of earlier tradition on which he depended) to fasten the guilt of the condemnation of Jesus yet more firmly on the Jews and to exonerate the Romans - a tendency frequently visible in early Christianity.[49]

Brown says that "John, more than the other Gospels, dwells on Pilate's desire to do what was right in regard to Jesus."[50] And again, "Pilate himself is presented as favourable to Jesus. The malevolence of 'the Jews' remains the dominant note, and Jesus is handed over to the Jews for crucifixion."[51] Schnackenburg says of 18:39, "When [the Jews] reject Pilate's spirit of compromise their spite becomes even more blatant. On the other hand, the Roman appears in a better light (apologetic tendency)."[52] In this chapter I shall argue that the Johannine portrayal of the Romans is not that sympathetic; while "the Jews" are not let off the hook with regard to responsibility for the death of Jesus, neither are the Romans. This is a point of contact between my view and that of Rensberger, though, as will emerge below, I differ with Rensberger on the issue of politics and the characterisation of Pilate.

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[49] *St. John*, pp. 444f.
[50] *John*, 2:860.
[51] *Ibid.*, 2:863. It must be said again that it is not to "the Jews" that Jesus is handed over for crucifixion, but to the Roman soldiers. Grammatically, the αὐτοῖς of 19:16a could have τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις of v. 14 as its antecedent, but that is only apparent to someone who studies a written copy of the passage. The implied reader would know that it was not Jews who crucified but Romans. Also, he would be familiar with the basics of the Passion story, and would know that Jesus was in fact crucified by the Romans. More than that: at 18:31b "the Jews" have themselves admitted that they have no authority to execute anyone.
[52] *St. John*, 3:252.

II

The Literary Context

Before turning to the Johannine material on the Romans, let us begin by considering the literary contexts of the passages with which we are concerned in this chapter. Many of the items which come under this category belong in one of two subcategories: links with the Synoptics and links between the characterisation in this gospel of the Romans and that of "the Jews."

Comparison with the Synoptics

There are some significant points about the characterisation of the Romans in the Gospel of John which can only be brought out by a comparison of the Johannine narrative with the Synoptics.[53] Such a comparison makes it clear that, in relative terms at least, John portrays the Romans more negatively than do the Synoptists. In support of this I would adduce the following:

1) John lays more stress on the trial by the Roman authorities than that by the Jewish authorities, by making his version of the Roman trial longer than the interrogation by Annas; this is in contrast to the Synoptists.[54] It is true that the Johannine version is probably the one which most closely reflects historical reality;[55] but I suggest that there

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[53]I should make it clear at this point that I am not making any assumptions with regard to the question of the relationship between the Gospel of John and the Synoptics. But the fact that other versions of the story exist indicates that the story could be told in other ways. John has chosen to tell the story in a particular way, and I feel that this is worth drawing attention to.

[54]According to Brown (*Death*, 1:757), the Johannine Jewish trial is only about 60% as long as the Markan one, while the Johannine Roman trial is approximately three times as long as the Markan Roman trial. I should make it clear that I am referring strictly to Jesus' formal appearances before the Jewish and Roman authorities. There is a sense in which the evidence for and against Jesus is laid out in forensic style in the debates of Jesus with "the Jews" in chapters 5-10 [on this see e.g. A.E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, 1977)].

[55]That is, the Johannine account, in which, after a brief investigation to discover whether they have a case to put before the Roman authorities, the Jewish authorities decide that they have such a case and turn Jesus over to the Roman authorities, is the most historically plausible. Cf Stibbe, *Storyteller*, pp. 168-79, esp. p. 173.

is more to be said than this. On a literary level, I feel that it is significant that John seems to have felt free not to play down Roman involvement in Jesus' death.

2) It is clear that in John's passion narrative, the Romans are involved in Jesus' case right from the beginning. Roman soldiers make up part of the contingent that arrests Jesus. This is indicated by the use of σπεῖρα, the word regularly used to translate the Latin military term *cohors*,[56] at 18:3,12, and the use of χιλίαρχος, the word regularly used to translate the Latin military term *tribunus militum*,[57] at 18:12. The Synoptists make no mention of Roman involvement in Jesus' arrest; indeed it has been suggested that John inserted the Romans into the tradition himself.[58] Why so? If he does not follow the tradition here, there must be a reason why he does not. The most likely reason is that he wanted to involve the Romans in Jesus' trial, and that at the earliest moment possible, and in the fullest way possible.[59] In this connection it is interesting to note, with Lagrange, that Justin, who wanted to defend Christians to the Romans, does not refer to this trial scene, although he knew the Gospel of John. "*C'est peut-être qu'il a bien compris que ce procès n'avait rien de flatteur pour l'autorité romain.*"[60] And as Rensberger points out,

> The Gospel of John allows for far more official Roman involvement in the proceedings against Jesus than do the Synoptics. There is no exculpation of the Romans at the expense of the Jews.[61]

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[56]So Bultmann, *John*, p. 639; cf. LSJ *s.v.* *Contra* Ernst Bammel, "The Trial Before Pilate," in E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule eds., *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge, 1984) p. 439. Bammel [also Blinzler and Benoit, cited by Brown (*Death*, 1:248)] argues that Jewish rather than Roman forces are in view here: cf. Judith 14:11 LXX; 2 Macc. 8:23 LXX; Josephus, *Bell* 2.1.3; #1; *Ant.* 17.9.3.;#215, where Roman military terms are used of non-Roman troops. But John distinguishes these troops from the attendants of the chief priests and Pharisees (v. 3) and of "the Jews" (v. 12). This shows that the detachment is not Jewish, nor is it directly commanded by the Jewish authorities.

[57]So Bultmann, *John*, p. 644 n. 5; cf. LSJ *s.v.*

[58]So Rensberger, *op. cit.*, p.90.

[59]It is also possible that he believed that Roman soldiers were involved, and therefore felt that he had to mention them whether he liked it or not. In this case it would have to be said that the Synoptists were not so scrupulous.

[60]Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p.488.

[61]*Op. cit.*, p.91.

3) Mention must also be made of something which John does not say, and his silence may be significant. In all the Synoptic accounts, the centurion in charge of the execution unit makes some kind of profession of faith, or belief in Jesus' innocence, when he sees how Jesus dies (Mk. 15:39; Matt. 27:54; Lk. 23:47). But the Gospel of John says nothing of this. Here again, as at 18:3ff, we must ask why John does not follow the tradition.[62] The most likely reason is that he deliberately omits something positive about the Romans.[63]

The Romans and "the Jews"

There are a few interesting verbal and narrative parallels, most apparently hitherto unnoticed, which have a bearing on the characterisation of the Romans. It has long been seen that there are verbal parallels throughout the Gospel of John, which help give the entire work a unity of thought and style. But four of these, I suggest, lend a similar characterisation to the Romans as to the unbelieving "Jews" in this gospel.

At 18:37 Jesus tells Pilate, "Everyone who is of the truth ἀκούει μοῦ τῆς φωνῆς." The reader cannot help but be reminded of 10:27, where Jesus, describing himself as the Good Shepherd, says that his sheep "τῆς φωνῆς μοῦ ἀκούει."[64] At both 10:27 and 18:37, Jesus is addressing someone who should be a member of the group which he is describing, but is not. At 10:27 he is speaking to Jews, who more than any other people should be his sheep. At 18:37 he is talking to Pilate; what he says is a veiled invitation to be one of those who are of the truth.[65] It is an invitation

[62]The questions of why John has no exorcisms, and no Transfiguration narrative, are perhaps analogous to this one.
[63]Of note here also is the fact that John has also omitted the Synoptic pericope of the centurion's servant. If the pericope of the official's son (John 4:43-54) is the Johannine version of this pericope, then John has suppressed the information that the father is a Roman. Again we see John omitting, or suppressing, positive information about the Romans.
[64]It should be noted that Gentile readers would be familiar with the image of the ruler as shepherd of his people, which is as old as Homer.
[65]So Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:250; Brown, *John*, 2:869.

which Pilate promptly and firmly declines. Brown notes a similar parallel between 18:37 and 10:3, where the sheep are said to hear the shepherd's voice. He adds that "this parallel is interesting because...the shepherd motif has its background in the OT portrait of the king, and here Jesus is answering a question about his kingship."[66]

There is also a resonance between 18:37 and 8:44f.[67] At 18:37 Jesus tells Pilate that everyone who is of the truth hears his voice, that is, understands and accepts his teaching; at 8:44f. Jesus tells his Jewish listeners that they do not believe him because he speaks the truth. Satan, their spiritual father, is a liar and has no truth in him. Because "the Jews" are like their spiritual father, they have no truth in them either. They are not of the truth, any more than Pilate is (as we shall see later). Therefore they can neither understand nor accept Jesus' teaching any more than Pilate can.

At 19:1-3 the narrator describes the Romans' abuse and mockery of Jesus. He ends the description with "ἔδίδουν αὐτῷ ῥαπίσματα." There is a clear verbal echo here with 18:22, where Jesus receives the same treatment from a temple policeman: "ἔδωκεν ῥάπισμα τῷ Ἰησοῦ." While the Gospel of John does not have a pericope of Jewish mockery of Jesus, as the Synoptics do,[68] this verbal echo shows that the implied author intends a connection between the treatment of Jesus by "the Jews" and the treatment he receives from the Romans.

At 19:9 Pilate asks Jesus, "Where are you from?" To the reader, he has asked a question which is deeper than he realises. The origin of Jesus is a key question in the Gospel of John. Jesus does not answer Pilate's question, because the complete answer is one which Pilate cannot understand. The question of where Jesus is from is also raised by "the Jews," at 7:41b-42 and at 9:29f. But a complete answer to the question eludes them as much as it does Pilate.

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[66] *John*, 2:854.
[67] Noted also by UBSGNT *ad* 18:37.
[68] Mk. 14:65; Matt 26:67f; Lk. 22:63-65; 23:11.

From these verbal and narrative resonances we can see that John seems to view the Romans and "the Jews" as in some ways similar in character. It is also noteworthy that these common characteristics are all negative - untruthfulness, cruelty, inability to understand. I suggest that such shared characterisation is part of John's way of expressing the shared responsibility of the Romans and "the Jews" in the death of Jesus. Charbonneau rightly observes that "*dans cette histoire, ni Pilate ni les Juifs ne sortiront gagnants.*"[69] It also expresses the fact that both the Romans and the unbelieving "Jews" are blind to Jesus' revelation and will not receive it. This is because they both belong to "the world," which is opposed to Jesus.

The Lazarus narrative: 11:1-46

There are several connections between 11:48, the first mention of the Romans in this gospel, and the Lazarus narrative. The most obvious of these is that they are juxtaposed - not only in the narrative, but in the sense that the meeting reported at 11:47-52 is a response to the raising of Lazarus. Another clear connection is that between the resurrection of Lazarus and Jesus' own resurrection. This is made especially clear by the mention of the σινδών at 11:44 and 20:7. There is "transparent irony"[70] in the fact that Jesus' action in raising Lazarus leads to his own death, which the Jewish leaders decide at 11:47-52 to bring about.

Another connection between these two passages is that both contain statements in which a character says more than they know. At 11:16 Thomas suggests to the other disciples that they accompany Jesus to Judea and die with him. Thomas means that they will be arrested and executed along with Jesus - something which Jesus prevents (18:8f). But there is a sense in which all disciples of Jesus are called to be with him in suffering and death (12:25f.). Similarly at 11:49f Caiaphas refers to the

[69]André Charbonneau, "Qu'as-tu fait et d'où es-tu? Le procès de Jésus chez Jean," *SciEsprit* 38 (1986) p. 326.
[70] Carson, *John*, p. 405.

expediency of Jesus' death; he is thinking of the political necessity of preventing a Roman crackdown. He says to his interlocutors, "You know nothing at all;" but the narrator makes it clear that, ironically, Caiaphas is saying more than he himself knows (11:51f.). This idea of a character saying more than they know also forms a link between these two passages and the Roman trial narrative, where, as we shall see below, Pilate says more than he knows (18:38; 19:5,9,15,19). Having seen Thomas say more than he knows in the Lazarus narrative, the implied reader is prepared to find other characters doing the same in later narratives.

III

The Temporal and Geographical Contexts

Let us now turn to the temporal and geographical contexts of the passages which we are considering in this chapter. The temporal context is the beginning of Passover, as the narrator carefully specifies at 19:14. But Passover is a "feast of the Jews," as the narrator informs the narratee on numerous occasions throughout the gospel. What does Passover have to do with the Romans? Until this particular year, nothing. But at this Passover the Lamb of God will sacrifice himself for all humanity, Jews and Gentiles alike. At this festival at which the Jews are commemorating an event which defined them as the people of God, the people of God are redefined and the Romans may become part of the people of God. But it is an invitation which, sadly, they decline.

What of the geographical context? The geographical context for most of the material which we are considering in this chapter is the praetorium. How is this significant? In the praetorium Pilate may be said to be on Roman territory. Thus the

encounter between Jesus and Pilate takes place on Pilate's own turf, as it were.[71] Just as Jesus goes to Samaria and there encounters the Samaritan woman and her fellow-townspeople, so he goes to the praetorium and there encounters Pilate.[72] This is in fact part of a pattern which we can see in this gospel. For Jesus also goes many times "in[to] synagogue and in[to] the Temple, where all the Jews come together" (18:20), to teach and preach to his own people. In this gospel Jesus is not explicitly said to seek people (except at 1:43; 5:14; 9:35), rather they are usually said to seek him. But if Jesus is not said explicitly to seek people, he puts himself where those who seek him positively can find him.[73]

Within the trial narrative itself there are significant changes of location as the setting moves back and forward between inside and outside the praetorium. This change of setting is significant for Pilate's characterisation, as I shall argue below. One may also note a contrast between "inside" as the place of revelation, and of dialogue between Jesus and Pilate, and "outside" as the place of conflict between Pilate and "the Jews." In the central scene, 19:1-3, no location is specified - it is as if the scene takes place nowhere.[74] Powell[75] notes that often in literature "inside" is the place of security and safety, while "outside" is the place of danger. Pilate, as he moves back and forward between inside and outside, must choose between listening to Jesus' revelation and rejecting it. He tries to avoid the choice, and the result is that pressure from "the Jews" outside forces him to give in and act against his better judgement.

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[71]This sets up the irony that it is in the very place where Pilate should have power that he loses that power and gives in to "the Jews."

[72]Cf. Brodie, *John*, p. 532: "[Jesus'] entering of the Roman praetorium is evocative of a new relationship to the world." On another note, it may be asked whether Jesus goes to the praetorium or is taken there. On one level he is taken there by the arresting party; but on another level, Jesus is so much in control throughout his arrest and trial that there is a sense in which he goes to the praetorium of his own free will.

[73]Those who seek him negatively, to arrest or kill him, or make him do something against his will (6:15), do not find him until his hour has come.

[74]Charbonneau, *art. cit.*, p. 318.

[75]*What Is Narrative Criticism*? pp. 70f, citing Meike Bal.

IV

The Characterisation of the Romans

Let us now turn to the characterisation of the Romans. Our first category of characterisation is that of *direct definition.* The first item that comes under this category comes at 19:8. When the Jewish leaders tell Pilate that Jesus has made himself the Son of God, Pilate's response to this is fear. Why so? Is he afraid of Jewish reaction if he does not give in?[76] On one level this is probably so.[77] But it is more likely that the narrator is saying that Pilate is afraid because of what the Jewish leaders have said, which is that Jesus has claimed some kind of divinity. That is, his fear is a response to the realisation that he may have encountered the numinous, and has shown it scant respect.[78] In fact one might even say that it is a reaction to an epiphany - just as the arresting party fall to the ground at 18:6, so Pilate also is afraid. But even this will not suffice to make him release Jesus. Out of fear of other humans (and those supposedly under his authority, at that), he becomes a *theomachos.*

Brown does not think that Pilate's fear is a reaction to the numinous. Rather "Pilate is afraid because it becomes clearer and clearer that he will not be able to escape making a judgement about truth."[79] It is true that Pilate's options are being limited, and this is adding to his fear. But this does not explain his next question to Jesus, "Where are you from?" which, as we shall see, is connected with the question of Jesus' identity and the possibility that he is divine.

As an aside, there has been much debate as to whether μᾶλλον in v. 8 should have its usual comparative force, an elative force ("rather afraid"),[80] or should stand for a superlative.[81] Any of these uses is possible in New Testament Greek. But there

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[76]So Lagrange, *op. cit.* p. 482f.
[77]Cf. Matt. 27:24; and cf. my discussion of 19:12b below.
[78]So e.g. Bultmann, *John*, p. 661; Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 338 f.; Brown, *Death*, 1:840.
[79]*Death*, 1:830. But at 1:840 he says that Pilate is "more afraid in the presence of the divine."
[80]So Brown, *Death*, 1:830; Barrett, *St. John*, p. 542.
[81]So Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 401; Lindars, *John*, p. 567.

is no reason why it should not have its usual force. The narrator has not explicitly said before this point that Pilate is afraid. But as I shall argue below, his fear is evident from his actions.[82] Fear is added to fear: Pilate is already afraid of the Jewish leaders, and here he becomes afraid of Jesus as well.

There is one more thing which the implied author tells the implied reader by direct definition. In some ways it is a positive one. As Jesus is crucified, Pilate has posted a trilingual sign announcing that Jesus is the King of the Jews. This wording does not please the Jewish leaders, and they tell him so. But he refuses to change it. The sign is another petty, vengeful gesture of contempt and frustration; but at last he stands up to the Jewish leaders. It is noteworthy that the *titulus* is trilingual; noteworthy for our purposes in this chapter is that one of the languages is Latin. Pilate thus proclaims Jesus' kingship in his own language, which is also the official language of Rome. By implication he thus asserts Jesus' kingship over Pilate's own people.[83] Since this can hardly have been his conscious intention, this is a case where, ironically, he says more than he knows.

The second of our categories of characterisation is that of *indirect presentation.* The first item which comes under this category is the first mention of the Romans in the gospel, at 11:48. In fact this is the only use of the word Ῥωμαῖος in this gospel (though the cognate word Ῥωμαϊστί appears at 19:20). These two things make this verse important for this study. Indeed it could be said that this introductory mention of the Romans serves as the overture to what is to follow, sounding a note which influences the implied reader's reaction to succeeding passages when the Romans appear again. This first mention of the Romans is a general one - later the narrator's attention is focused on one representative Roman, Pilate.

[82]So also Brown, *John*, 2:877; Bultmann, *John*, p. 660. *Contra* Rensberger, *op. cit.*, p. 94 and n. 46.
[83]See below p. 194 n. 167.

What then does the implied reader learn from this verse? It is made clear that the Jewish leaders are concerned about Jesus' popularity and Roman reaction to it. Do they believe that Jesus is a political activist who wants to channel the people's messianic hopes into a rebellion against their Roman conquerors? This is not clear. What is clear is that they are afraid that the Roman authorities will so believe, and will react with a violent crackdown: "ἐλεύσονται οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ ἀροῦσιν ἡμῶν καὶ τον τόπον καὶ τό ἔθνος." This did in fact happen, when the Romans sacked Jerusalem in AD. 70, but this historical question bears on the subject of the date of the gospel, which is outside the scope of this study. The Romans will not be mentioned again until Jesus' arrest in chapter 18. But this first mention is full of foreboding.[84]

The second part of 11:48 makes clear the exact nature of the Jewish leaders' concern. They are afraid that the Romans will destroy the Temple (this is surely what is meant by τόπον)[85] and the Jewish people. The Temple has frequently been mentioned in this gospel, as the place where Jesus celebrates the Jewish festivals, preaches, and debates with opponents (2:12-22, 23; 3:14-47; 7:14-36; 10:22-39). The mention of destruction of the Temple forms a verbal link between this verse and 2:19-21, the only other place where destruction of the Temple is mentioned. There it is Jesus who raises the subject of the destruction of the Temple. In a (perhaps understandable) case of misunderstanding, "the Jews" think that Jesus is referring to the holy building in which they are standing. But this is not what he means, as the narrator makes clear. He is referring to his death, and at the end of Chapter 11 the Sanhedrin decide to bring that death about.[86] But the execution requires the approval of the Roman authorities (cf. 19:31). I suggest that the implied author is hinting, by mentioning the destruction of these two temples - the Temple of Herod and the temple of Jesus' body - at Roman involvement on both occasions.

[84]So also Richard J. Cassidy, *John's Gospel In New Perspective* (Maryknoll, 1992) p. 42.
[85]Τόπον could refer to the entire city of Jerusalem. But the parallel which I note here suggests that the Temple specifically is being referred to here (cf. Lindars, *John*, p. 405).
[86]The Sanhedrin meeting of 11:47-52 is the Johannine version of Jesus' trial by the Jewish authorities. So Barrett, *St. John*, p. 404; Brown, *Death*, 1:79 *et passim*, esp. 1:382 n. 28; *contra* Carson, *John*, p. 414, who says that Mk. 14:1 presupposes an earlier Sanhedrin meeting, here reported by John.

The next mention of the Romans is at 18:3-12, the narrative of Jesus' arrest. I have argued above that there are indications that there are Roman soldiers in the arresting party, and that this is significant. The soldiers' involvement implies that the Roman authorities have already given thought to Jesus, and consider him a danger. This leads the implied reader to wonder, right from the start of the trial, how objective Pilate is and what his motives are.[87] There are also Jewish Temple police in the arresting party. Judas is also standing with them (v. 5), in a metaphorical as well as a literal way, because he has chosen to side against Jesus and with his enemies. As usual he is identified as Jesus' betrayer (cf. 6:71; 12:4; 13:2; 18:2). This means that here, at the beginning of the Johannine Passion narrative proper, all the parties who are opposed to Jesus are represented, gathered against him. This will happen again at the climax to the Passion narrative, the Roman trial.[88] There is irony in the statements that the arresting party comes with lamps and torches against the Light of the World,[89] and that they come armed against a man who eschews violence (cf. 6:15, and Jesus' rebuke of Peter at 18:11).

It is easy to see that although he is the one being arrested, Jesus is in fact the one who is in control throughout this scene, and indeed throughout the entire Passion narrative. He knows what is about to happen, and goes out to meet the arresting party as they arrive (v. 4). He is so much in control of the situation that he is able to make sure that his disciples go free (v.8), something which, as the narrator points out, fulfils his own word given earlier (v. 9, cf. 6:39, 17:12). When Jesus identifies himself using the divine formula ἐγώ εἰμι, the arresting party fall to the ground, the usual response to a theophany. Just as evident as his control of the situation is Jesus' acceptance of his coming suffering and death, which he makes especially clear at v. 11 (cf. 12:24).

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[87]So Brodie, *John*, p. 532.
[88]So also Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:223; cf. Lightfoot, *St. John*, p.322.
[89]Cf. the similar irony at 18:25. It may be objected that artificial lights might in fact be necessary, even with the Paschal full moon, if the night were cloudy, or if the garden were such that there would be shadows in which to hide. This is true; but there is no reason why this historical detail could not also have literary significance.

One word which occurs more than once in this passage is ζητεῖν (vv. 4, 7, 8). The idea of seeking is an important one in this gospel. Throughout the narrative people have been seeking Jesus, in either positive or negative ways. Since chapter 5 the Jewish authorities have been seeking Jesus in order to kill him; but they have been unable to find him because his hour has not yet come (cf. 8:20). Now they have finally caught him.[90] But the implied reader knows that the arresting party has caught Jesus only because, knowing that his hour has come (13:1), he has allowed himself to be caught.

The next appearance of the Romans is at 18:28-19:16a, the narrative of the Roman trial itself. It is generally agreed that the narrative can be broken down into seven scenes,[91] according to whether the action takes place outside or inside the praetorium:

18:28-32	outside: "the Jews" refuse to enter the praetorium, so Pilate comes outside
18:33-38a	inside: Pilate and Jesus talk about kingship
18:38b-40	outside: "the Jews" choose Barabbas over Jesus for the Passover amnesty
19:1-3	inside[92]: the Roman soldiers scourge and mock Jesus
19:4-8	outside: "*ecce homo*"
19:9-11	inside: Pilate and Jesus talk about power
19:12-16a	outside: Pilate capitulates and sentences Jesus to death

Table 7: Structure of 18:28-19-16a

This alternation between inside and outside, with Pilate moving back and forth between them, is significant for his characterisation, as I shall argue later.

When the Jewish leaders bring Jesus to the praetorium, they refuse to go inside, for fear of ceremonial defilement at Passover time. So Pilate comes out to them

[90]Stibbe (*John*, p. 184) remarks flippantly that the arresting party fall to the ground out of shock that they have finally been successful!

[91]The word "scene" attracts attention to the dramatic nature of the narrative. In chapter 2 of this study I discussed the dramatic nature of this gospel; that nature is nowhere more apparent than in this passage. The sevenfold division goes back to Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel*, (London, 1941) p. 315.

[92]While it is not explicitly said that the scourging and mockery take place inside, Pilate is explicitly said to go outside at 18:38, and to go outside again at 19.4. This implies that the intervening action takes place inside.

(18:29) - and in doing so shows his weakness, in yielding to their pressure.[93] This is the first of several back-and-forth trips which Pilate will make between Jesus, whom he has taken inside, and the Jewish leaders, who remain outside. By thus separating Jesus and "the Jews," Pilate separates the two forces which have been in conflict throughout much of this gospel. He must choose to side with either one party or the other. The trips he makes between the two parties are an outward sign of his inward vacillation and indecisiveness.[94] This back-and-forth movement is a sign of the necessity of choice and attracts the attention of the implied reader to the theme of κρίσις.

Since "the Jews" will not enter the praetorium, Pilate comes out to them, and asks formally what charges are being brought against the prisoner (v.29). Some scholars suggest that this question is merely a literary device to lead to "the Jews'" reply;[95] they point out that Pilate must have known the nature of the charges against Jesus, because Roman soldiers could not have been in the arresting party except on Pilate's orders. But Pilate's question is more likely to be the formal opening of the trial, an order that the charges be read out in the prisoner's hearing.[96] "The Jews" reply (v. 30) only that the prisoner is a criminal (they do not identify him by name, nor does Pilate ask the prisoner's name). They are unwilling to tell Pilate the nature of their real accusation against Jesus, because it is religious rather than political (cf. 19:7), and thus not within Pilate's jurisdiction. Pilate's reply at v. 31a is dismissive; he is not interested in what he can only see as a mere religious quarrel amongst the Jews, since he has not

[93]So Brodie, *John*, p. 532.

[94]Cf. Brown, *John*, 2:858: "Pilate's constant passing from one setting to the other gives external expression to the struggle taking place within his soul..."

[95]Brown (*Death*, 1:746) describes the question as "an example of the Johannine dialogue technique" whereby what is said is used to uncover things lying beneath the surface. On one level he may be correct.

[96]So Carson, *John*, p. 590; Lindars, *John*, p. 555. Another possibility is that Pilate is informing himself (so also Haenchen, *John 2*, p. 178); he is aware that a contingent of his men has been sent out to arrest a potential troublemaker, but does not know the troublemaker's name, nor that the prisoner now being brought to him is the troublemaker in question.

been told that it is anything else.[97] Pilate thus tries to avoid hearing the case, but he will not escape so easily.

There has been much discussion of what is meant at v. 31b. Why are "the Jews" not permitted to kill anyone? Fergus Millar,[98] following Augustine, suggests that they are not allowed to execute anyone on that day, under Jewish law, because it is the eve of a festival. There are two objections to this theory. First, they could easily have refrained from arresting Jesus, or held him in prison, until after the festival.[99] Second, they wanted Jesus executed on the same day that sentence was passed, which was not permitted under Jewish law either; so they were willing to ignore the law in order to accomplish their purpose.

A more likely explanation for "the Jews" not being allowed to kill has to do with Roman law. Roman occupation forces throughout the empire kept the *ius gladii* to themselves; not to do so would have invited retribution against local collaborators. A turbulent province like Judaea would hardly be an exception to this policy. Therefore, the Sanhedrin had to obtain Roman authorisation for any execution, with a few exceptions.[100]

So much for the historical question with regard to verse 31b. But the narrator makes it clear at v. 32 that there are more issues to be considered than the historical. For there the narrator says that the word of Jesus, indicating the manner of his death, is being fulfilled in his death by the Roman method of crucifixion, as opposed to the traditional Jewish method of stoning. There is a theological issue here; God's plan for the salvation of the world is being worked out in human actions, even though the humans involved have no idea of the significance of their actions.

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[97]Cf. Gallio's reply to the Jews who accuse Paul of teaching things contrary to the Jewish Law at Acts 18:12-17, especially vv. 14f. One might perhaps also compare the attitude expressed by Pliny in his letter to Trajan, in which he makes enquiries about what he should do about the Christians (*Ep.* 10.96).

[98]"Reflections on the Trials of Jesus," in *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (Sheffield, 1990) pp. 355-81.

[99]Cf. Acts 12:3f.

[100]See note 14 above.

The next scene (18:33-38a) takes place inside. That Pilate has Jesus taken inside may indicate that he is suspicious of the Jewish leaders' motives in bringing the charge, and therefore wants to talk with Jesus apart from them.[101] Pilate's question to Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" asks, by implication, for a plea of Guilty or Not Guilty to the charge of sedition which has been brought against him. Jesus replies with a question of his own, by which he challenges Pilate to remain unbiased, or just, and not give in to pressure from the Jewish leaders. But Pilate refuses to hear. Since the leaders of Jesus' own people have handed Jesus over to him, Jesus must have committed some crime.[102] All Pilate wants to know is what Jesus has done (v. 35). This response indicates that Pilate has already made up his mind that Jesus is guilty.[103]

Instead of replying to Pilate's question, Jesus answers his earlier question, "Are you the king of the Jews?". He begins answering the question by defining his kingship. He does this negatively, explaining what his kingship is not. By implication, he is saying that he is indeed a king. But his kingship does not have its origin in this world, and the proof he offers of this is that his followers would offer no violent resistance to his arrest (Peter's brief attempt at resistance, promptly suppressed by Jesus himself, apparently does not count as resistance, because Jesus has not approved it).

Vv. 37f. show Pilate's lack of understanding. At v. 37, he has heard Jesus use the word βασιλεία, assumes that Jesus is speaking politically, and gets no further than the political, or temporal, meaning. It is as if he does not hear the phrase "οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου." His understanding of kingship works on only one level, that of this world. Therefore he cannot conceive the idea of a kingship which does not have its origin in this-worldly politics. It is noteworthy that he does not ask, "What do you mean, not of this world?" Instead he replies, "So you're a king, then?" At v. 38 he

[101]So Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, pp. 315f; cf. Mk. 15:10.
[102]A point made also by Morris, *John*, p. 769.
[103]So also Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:251.

asks sarcastically,[104] "What is truth?" and leaves without waiting for an answer,[105] which indicates that he does not understand what Jesus has just said.[106] And unlike Nicodemus in chapter 3, he does not want to understand.[107]

By this point Pilate is convinced that Jesus is no revolutionary, though he has not understood all that Jesus has said to him.[108] So he begins to attempt to release him (18:38b-40). The first step in his plan is to offer to release Jesus under the customary Passover amnesty. This betrays a distinct misunderstanding of the Jewish leadership, and lack of insight, in that he fails to anticipate their reaction.[109] The idea that he wanted to offer them a way of releasing Jesus in such a way that they would not lose face[110] is implausible. None of them has shown any interest in having Jesus released, nor any sign of feeling the need to save face. Pilate's cowardice is also plain here, in that he states clearly that he finds no case against Jesus (v. 38b), and he has the authority to dismiss the charges. But he does not do this. Rather than stand up to the Jewish leaders openly, he tries to get around them by means of the Passover amnesty. And the result is that he finds himself becoming further enmeshed in a case of which he is desperately trying to be rid, and the number of his options decreasing. It is for this reason that Pilate's impotence is a matter of choice. Once he chooses not to take a stand for Jesus, he becomes increasingly "boxed in," until he has no choice but to give

[104]It is not a philosophical question, as Brown rightly says (*Death*, 1:753). "It does echo the imperiousness of the Roman when challenged (see also 19:22); but ironically it is a self-condemnation" (*ibid.*). The sarcasm may stem from the fact that Pilate is trying to get at the truth (i.e. the facts of the case) and is aware that he is not receiving straight answers to his straight questions.

[105]So also Rensberger, *op. cit.*, p. 93; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 142. It may be asked, "Does Pilate leave without waiting for an answer, or does Jesus remain silent, as he does at 19:9?" But at 19:9 the narrator says that Jesus is silent; he does not say so here. Therefore I conclude that it is not a matter here of Jesus remaining silent, but that Pilate does not wait for a reply. On another level, the fact that the question is unanswered encourages the implied reader to consider the answer for himself. He will remember that Jesus has already answered the question, at 14:6. The implied reader is also aware that the answer to Pilate's question stands embodied in front of him.

[106]So Brodie, *John*, p.535.

[107]Nicodemus does not understand what Jesus says to him about spiritual birth. But he continues to ask questions, which shows that he wants to understand. Pilate, on the other hand, does not show such willingness.

[108]Cf. Haenchen, *John 2*, p. 186.

[109]*Contra* Stibbe, *Storyteller*, p.107, who describes the idea as coming "in a moment of diplomatic inspiration"(?!).

[110]So Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:252.

in to pressure and act in a way which he knows is wrong.[111] Beasley-Murray says rightly that Pilate is "[c]aught in a trap *of his own making*, unable to escape."[112]

To modern ears, the next step in Pilate's plan to release Jesus sounds even stranger than the first, and unspeakably cruel. He has Jesus flogged (19:1-3), and it is likely that the flogging in question is the most severe of the three types administered under Roman law enforcement, the *verberatio*.[113] This would not surprise the implied reader, who knows that Romans are arbitrary and cruel toward subject peoples, and that the rights which protected Roman citizens accused of a crime do not extend to non-citizens.[114] The singular verbs ἔλαβεν and ἐμαστίγωσεν of 19:1 fasten the responsibility on Pilate as the commander who gives the order to his soldiers.

> The violence originates in Jewish pressure, but there is no suggestion that Pilate is without guilt. Unlike a commander-in-chief who after a military operation shrugs off responsibility by saying, 'I never fired a shot,' Pilate's role is highlighted.[115]

Why does Pilate have Jesus scourged? On a historical level, we see here a trace of the brutal and ruthless Pilate of the extra-canonical sources. On a narrative level, this is noteworthy. The implied author has not hesitated elsewhere to give us a portrayal of Pilate which differs from that of our other ancient sources. Why has he coincided with them here? The most likely reason is that he is willing to use this piece of tradition to inculpate the Romans by showing Pilate's cruelty. It has also been suggested that by flogging Jesus Pilate hopes to satisfy the Jewish leaders' desire for Jesus' punishment, without having to crucify a man of whose innocence he is convinced.[116] Less plausible is the suggestion that Pilate hopes thus to incite pity for

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[111]Cf. Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:253; Haenchen, *John 2*, pp. 186f.
[112]*John*, p. 340 (emphasis added).
[113]So Beasley-Murray, *John.*, p. 335f.
[114]On this last point see Brown, *Death*, 1:176f.
[115]Brodie, *John*, p.536. Similarly Schnackenburg, who calls the flogging "an unjustified measure" (*St. John*, 3:253). *Contra* Brown, *Death*, 1:828: "Pilate has a lesser role in this than in any other episode, for the soldiers carry out the brutality."
[116]Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, p.334, who compares Lk. 23:16.

Jesus in his accusers.[117] Either way he has once again badly misjudged the Jewish leaders. Schnackenburg is right when he says that the point is not to mock "the Jews," but to show that Pilate does not believe that Jesus is a royal pretender.[118] An inconsistency in Pilate's character also becomes apparent here. He says that Jesus is innocent, but he treats him as if he were guilty. In other words, what happens on the phraseological plane is inconsistent with what happens on the spatio-temporal plane. If Pilate as commander bears the responsibility for the mistreatment and mockery of Jesus, his soldiers also bear their share. None of the Romans is exempted.

At 19:2 the spotlight shifts from Pilate himself to the Roman soldiers under his command. In a macabre case of adding insult to injury they play a cruel game of "mock king," as Brown calls it,[119] putting a crown of thorns on his head and a ἱμάτιον πορφυροῦν - probably a military-issue red cloak - around him, slapping him in the face and hailing him as King of the Jews. Pilate may have permitted this treatment, but that does not lessen the guilt of the soldiers themselves. "The parts are assigned, each carries his share of responsibility."[120] In fact, the guilt of the Romans is aggravated by the fact that their actions are legally and morally questionable. Jesus has not been uncooperative, nor has he been found guilty.[121] More importantly, Pilate believes that he is innocent, and has said so. Here is another point where the Johannine portrait of Pilate can be said to align itself with that of our extra-canonical sources.

The discussion in the preceding paragraphs has dealt with two levels of the text, both of which are accessible to any reader. There is yet another level, accessible only to the believing reader. The Roman soldiers mock Jesus as a would-be "king of the Jews." Jesus' kingship does not have its origin, nor its function, in the realm of politics. But that kingship is nowhere in this gospel more apparent than in the trial

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[117]So Haenchen, *John 2*, p. 181.
[118]*St. John*, 3:256. For this reason Schnackenburg rejects any symbolic interpretation of the *ecce-homo* scene (*ibid.*, 3:256f).
[119]*John*, 2:888f.
[120]Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:254.
[121]So Brodie, *John*, p.536.

scene. In the eyes of the believing reader, the one whom the Romans are mocking is the true king, not only of the Jews but of the Gentiles as well. Structurally, it can be seen that vv. 1-3 form the centrepiece of the trial's sevenfold structure, with three pericopae on either side. The structure is also chiastic, for on each side of the centrepiece there are two scenes outside featuring Pilate and "the Jews" and a dialogue inside between Jesus and Pilate. The dialogues balance each other, for the subjects of discussion are similar. All this means that the trial reaches its climax here, with Jesus' mock investiture.[122] The soldiers, of course, have no idea of the significance of what they are doing (we shall see this again).

All this mistreatment of Jesus has apparently been taking place inside the praetorium, out of sight of the Jewish leaders. At 19:4 Pilate goes back outside to the Jewish leaders and affirms his belief in Jesus' innocence. At 19:5 he brings Jesus outside, wearing the crown of thorns and the red military cloak, and shows him to the Jewish leaders: "Look at the man!"

The phrase "look at the man" is deserving of some attention. What does it mean? Several interpretations have been suggested, some of which give it a christological meaning and some of which do not. If the phrase does not have a christological meaning, it is equivalent to something like "look at the poor fellow." Pilate is thus trying either to make "the Jews" pity Jesus,[123] or to show that he does not

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[122]So also Charbonneau, *art. cit.*, who describes this passage as "*à la fois un temps d'arrêt, un tournant, un centre et un sommet*;" and Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 260 and 264, where he says that 19:1-4 is "the centrepiece of John's chiastic $abcdc^1b^1a^1$ format and thus focuses his readers' attention on the kingship of Jesus, which is so central to the whole of...18:28-19:16." *Contra* Rensberger, *op. cit.*, p. 96, who, in line with his view that Pilate's intention all along is to make "the Jews" admit allegiance to Caesar, places the climax of the trial at v. 15. For the centre of a chiasmus as its most important part, see Ian H. Thompson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (Sheffield, 1995) p. 43: "By the very fact of its being the 'turning point' of a chiasmus, ideas employed [at the centre] enjoy a special prominence, and attention tends to focus on it. As such, these ideas characteristically may have any one of three functions: forming the climax of the argument, indicating its purpose, or acting as an apophthegmatic summary of its contents." Cf. ibid., pp. 224-26. So also Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, (Peabody, 1992), pp. 40-44.

[123]So Barrett, *St. John*, p. 541; Bernard, *St. John*, 2:616.

take him seriously as a royal pretender.[124] Lohse[125] suggests that Jesus' courage and dignity throughout the trial have made such an impression on Pilate that he exclaims, "Here is a *man*!"

Some scholars give the phrase a christological meaning. The most common such interpretation associates the phrase with the Son of Man.[126] It has also been suggested that "Man" was an eschatological title in Hellenistic Judaism (cf. Zech. 6:12, "Behold a man whose name is the Branch...he shall build the house of the Lord.")[127] There is general agreement that the title "Branch" has Davidic/messianic implications;[128] therefore the phrase is connected with the issue of Jesus as king of the Jews. But Zech 6:12 LXX has ἀνήρ, not ἄνθρωπος. For Carson, the expression means,

> here indeed is the Man, the Word made flesh (1:14). All the witnesses were too blind to see it at the time, but this man was displaying his glory...in the very disgrace, pain, weakness and brutalisation that Pilate advanced as suitable evidence that he was a judicial irrelevance.[129]

How to resolve this question? I suggest that an answer on two levels is required here, that is, that Pilate says more than he knows. On one level, Pilate means that Jesus is no threat; on another, the implied reader catches an allusion to the Son of Man, who is being lifted up as he predicted (cf. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32).

Pilate's action is part of a second attempt to free Jesus. But as I have already said, if Pilate thinks that showing him in this battered and bleeding state to the Jewish leaders is a way of appeasing them, he has badly misjudged them. Once again,

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[124]So Bultmann (*John*, p. 659), Charbonneau, also Blinzler and Flusser, both cited by Brown (*Death*, 1:828). Similarly Brown himself "favour[s] the simplest explanation, that Pilate was demonstrating Jesus to be pathetic and no challenge to either Rome or 'the Jews'"(*ibid.*).
[125]*History* p. 93, cited by Brown (*Death*, 1:828).
[126]So Blank, de la Potterie, Dodd. Brown (*ibid.*) asks, "Why would John in this one instance change the title to 'man'?" But one would not expect to find the Jewish expression "Son of Man" on the lips of a Roman.
[127]So Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, pp. 70-72.
[128]So Brown, *ibid.*
[129]*John*, p. 548. Similarly Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 337.

although he affirms Jesus' innocence (for the second time), he does not have the courage to use the authority he has and dismiss the case. The result of this second attempt to free Jesus is even more negative than the first; now the Jewish leaders call openly for his crucifixion (19:6a). Pilate's reply at verse 6b indicates his mounting frustration: he dares the Jewish leaders to exceed their authority and themselves crucify a man whom he himself has found innocent.[130]

Pilate's fear is at its most evident in vv. 8-16. At v. 9 Pilate asks Jesus, "Where are you from?" To the reader, he has asked a question which is deeper than he realises. As I said earlier, the origin of Jesus is a key question in the Gospel of John. It is noteworthy that in the ancient world, where a man comes from is an important part of his identity, and he is often identified by his place of origin or residence (e.g. Jesus *of Nazareth*). Thus the question of Jesus' origin is connected to that of his identity.[131] Jesus does not answer Pilate's question, because the complete answer is one which Pilate cannot understand.[132] Has he taken the Jewish leaders' statement seriously enough that he is in fact asking Jesus whether or not he is divine? Or is he speaking geographically (cf. Lk. 23:6)? Brown takes a very positive view here, going so far as to say that "Pilate has grown during the trial: the identity of Jesus is a more profound issue than what Jesus has done (18.39)."[133] The last part of this statement is true. And it is also true that his fear seems to be a reaction to an awareness that he may have encountered the numinous. The question is, is Pilate aware of what he is asking? I suggest that a clue to the answer to this question can be found in Jesus' response. He does not withhold a response from those who seek him, asking questions

[130]It is unlikely that he is actually giving them permission to crucify Jesus, as he is aware of their limitations in this area (cf. 18:31). Some form of sarcasm is indicated (so also Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 401). Similarly Brown, *Death*, 1:74, although I cannot also agree with Brown that Pilate also "speaks in irony" (*ibid.*) at 18:31. Brown notes elsewhere that "the Jews" do not accept Pilate's offer because they know that he is not serious (*John*, 2:877). Brown describes Pilate's exclamation as "an expression of Pilate's exasperation" (*ibid.*).

[131]So also Brown, *Death*, 1:840; Ludger Schenke, *Das Johannesevangelium: Einführung - Text - dramatische Gestalt* (Stuttgart, 1992) pp. 29-31. Schenke says, "*Die Frage, wer Jesus wirklich ist, beantwortet sich aus dem Wissen darum, woher er stammt...Wer die Herkunft Jesus kennt, weiß damit, wer er ist*" (p. 29).

[132]So also Sanders and Mastin, *St. John*, p. 401.

[133]*Death*, 1:840.

or for help, in earnest:[134] here he remains silent. This suggests to me that Pilate is not aware of what he is asking; if he were, Jesus would answer.

Alarmed and uncertain of what to do next, Pilate begins to bluster about the power he has. His question at v. 10 is "a question that exhibits the extent to which Pilate thinks 'from below.'"[135] He is blustering because he is afraid:[136] has Jesus' silence made him even more afraid than he was? On one level he is correct; his *imperium* gives him the authority to condemn Jesus to the cross or to drop the charges.[137] And therein lies his culpability in the situation. Instead of using his legitimate authority to prevent an injustice, he tries to use more oblique means, in hopes of evading the responsibility which accompanies authority. And in so doing he ends up abetting the injustice he is trying to prevent. It is noteworthy that Jesus' reply at 19:11a supports Pilate's claim. It is not a contrary-to-fact condition. What Jesus affirms is that Pilate's power has its source in God. Whether this is a general statement about temporal power (cf. Rom. 13:1-7) or refers specifically to Pilate's temporary power over Jesus, given to him in order that God's plan might be fulfilled,[138] is irrelevant to the question under discussion here.

At 19:11b Jesus tells Pilate, "He who handed me over to you has the greater sin." It has been said that in this saying John lays the blame for Jesus' death squarely on the Jews.[139] But I am in agreement with those[140] who maintain that this is not so. Jesus does not say that the one who handed him over to Pilate has all the sin. "Pilate

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[134]At 4:48 he demurs: but when the man persists, Jesus responds positively.
[135]Brown, *Death*, 1:841.
[136]So Brown, *ibid.*
[137]On another level Pilate's claim is in contrast to Jesus' claim (10:17f.) that he lays his life down of his own accord and no one takes it from him (Brown, *Death*, 1:841f.)
[138]So Bultmann, *John*, p. 662; Brown, *Death*, 1:842; Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:261; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 524; Lagrange, *S Jean*, p. 483; Carson, *John*, p. 602.
[139]So e.g. Brown, *John*, 2:893; Lindars (*John*, p. 569), who says, "As this verse is to some extent exonerating Pilate, it is best to take it in line with the whole tendency of the dialogue to cast the blame on the Jews, and so to mean the people as a whole"; and Brodie, who gives the blame to the Jews as part of a process that goes back to Judas and thence to Satan (*John*, p. 538). So also Haenchen (*John 2*, p. 183), who says that God has assigned Pilate his role in the matter; but if Pilate can be excused in this way, then the same can also be said of Judas and "the Jews."
[140]E.g. Bultmann, Marsh, Schnackenburg, Stibbe.

may be guilty of a lesser sin...but he is still guilty."[141] Why is his sin the lesser? Westcott points out that the Jews had the opportunity to know who Jesus was; therefore they have no excuse (he compares 9:41; 15:22). Lagrange[142] believes that Pilate's sin is the lesser because he has not tried to kill an innocent man. This is true, as far as it goes. But Pilate is in a position to prevent others from killing an innocent man, and this he does not do. Marsh[143] suggests that Pilate's sin is the lesser because once he has been appealed to in his official capacity he must act. This is true; but in his official capacity Pilate has the authority, and indeed the duty, to prevent injustice. In a similar vein, Sanders and Mastin say that the one who hands Jesus over "causes Pilate to abuse his God-given authority."[144] According to Brown, Pilate "did not instinctively hate the truth, and so his sin is less than that of Caiaphas and 'the Jews' who want to kill Jesus."[145]

To answer this question it is first necessary to answer another one, namely, who is the one who has the greater sin? Five possibilities have been suggested: Satan, Caiaphas,[146] Judas, "the Jews" in general,[147] and the entire human race for whose salvation Jesus is about to be sacrificed.[148] Of these five the last two can be eliminated, because ὁ παραδούς is singular. If the reference were to a group, the narrator is quite capable of using a plural form to indicate this. Of the three singular choices, Satan can be eliminated because Jesus has said that Satan has no power over him (14:30c; cf. 12:31). Of the two remaining individuals my choice inclines to Judas, who more than any other character is associated with the word παραδιδόναι (6:71; 12:4). Why then is Judas' sin the greater? My own answer to this question is a development of

[141]Stibbe, *John*, p.192.
[142]*S. Jean*, p. 483f.
[143]*St. John*, p. 608f.
[144]*St. John*, p.402.
[145]*John*, 2:893.
[146]So Charbonneau, *art. cit.*, p. 323.
[147]So, besides those cited above in note 137, Lightfoot, *St. John*, p. 306, who then adds that Judas is more guilty than "the Jews." Also Brown, who says that those who have the greater sin are "those named in 18:35" (*Death*, 1:842), i.e. the nation and the chief priests, i.e. "the Jews."
[148]R. Thibaut, "La réponse de Notre-Seigneur à Pilate (Jean,xix,11)," *NouvRevTheol* 54 (1927) p. 210, reports the suggestions of Satan and "*tous les pécheurs pour le salut desquels Dieu sacrifie son Fils*" without attribution.

Westcott's. The polarity between knowledge and ignorance is a prominent one in the Gospel of John.[149] Connected to it is what may be described as the subtheme of "you should know better."[150] The Jews had the teachings of Moses and the prophets, as recorded in the Scriptures. They had studied them for centuries. They had the necessary information at hand to recognise Jesus for what he was, as he points out to them at 5:39. Because the Romans had not had such information at hand, less was expected of them. For this reason Pilate's sin, and that of his countrymen, in not recognising Jesus for who he is, is less than that of the individual who betrayed him, an individual who is one of his disciples (a fact which the narrator stresses by repeating it several times) and is in the best position of all to be able to recognise who he is.

"The Jews" hit on the real source of Pilate's fear when they mention Caesar, hinting that they will report him if he does not co-operate. At this Pilate makes one last attempt to free Jesus. The offer is rejected, in language that mentions Pilate's superiors once more. Pilate now has no choice remaining: he is too afraid to do anything but give in to pressure. It is not until 19:22 that he is able to set this fear aside and finally stand up to the Jewish leaders in the matter of the *titulus*.

At verse 12b the Jewish leaders play their trump card. They accuse Pilate of disloyalty to Rome if he releases Jesus, and by implication threaten to report him. This is not mentioned in any of the other gospels. And it is a point where Pilate is vulnerable, for Tiberius took very badly indeed any suggestion of *maiestas*.[151] Here we come to the source of Pilate's weakness and cowardice. If the Jewish leaders are afraid of the Romans (see 11:48), Pilate is afraid of his own superiors[152] (I shall return

[149]Cf. 3:10f; 7:28f; 8:14,43,55; 10:38; 11:49-51;12:16;13:7;14;7.
[150]Cf.3:10; 5:39; 9:41; 15:22.
[151]On Tiberius' suspiciousness and cruelty see Suetonius *Tib.* 58; Tacitus *Ann.* 3,38. Cf. Ellis Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus?* (London, 1984). Rivkin, a Jewish scholar, comes to a "no-fault" answer to the question of responsibility: "It was not the Jewish people who crucified Jesus, and it was not the Roman people - it was the imperial system, a system which victimized the Jews, victimized the Romans, and victimized the Spirit of God" (p. 79). The idea of blaming "the system," and thus avoiding blame of any individual or group of people, sounds very modern to me.
[152]The Jewish leaders' threat to report Pilate thus produces a fine piece of Johannine irony - Pilate and the Jewish leaders are afraid of each other!

to this matter later). If the crucifixion of Jesus is to be dated to the Passover of AD 32 or 33, Pilate would be especially vulnerable. For in October of 31, Aelius Sejanus, who may have been Pilate's patron at Rome, fell out of favour with Tiberius and was executed on this very charge of *maiestas*.[153] Pilate now has no choice but to give in to the Jewish leaders. But before he does so, he makes one last petty gesture. He brings Jesus outside again and shouts to the Jewish leaders, "Look at your 'king'!"

There has been discussion of what is going on at 19:13. Does Pilate bring Jesus out and sit on the judgement seat, or does he make Jesus sit on the judgement seat, or have we here a case of Johannine ambiguity, in which Pilate sits on the judgement seat, but the eye of faith sees, seated behind the Roman prefect, Jesus as Judge of his accusers? The answer to this question depends on whether ἐκάθισεν at 19:13 is considered to be used intransitively, transitively or ambiguously. Since Pilate's actions are important for his characterisation, it is important to determine what his actions are here. A complete discussion of this problem is outside the range of this study, but a summary is in order.[154]

At first glance there are three ways in which ἐκάθισεν may be taken: transitively, intransitively, or ambiguously. But a closer look reveals that the range of choices is in fact not quite so broad. The ambiguous view seems at first to have the best advantages of both of the other views. But there are difficulties. First, given the Johannine emphasis on the cross as the place where Jesus is enthroned, a presentation

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[153]There is some question as to the exact nature of the relationship between Pilate and Sejanus. It is known that Sejanus was Tiberius' right-hand man in AD 26, when Pilate was appointed. From this it has been inferred that Sejanus was responsible for the appointment, and therefore that there was a patronage relationship between them. Whether this was true or not, it is true that Tiberius would have reacted to anyone who seemed to be opposing him. Therefore Pilate was at risk, whether his appointment was due to Sejanus or not. Brown (*Death*, 1:695) points out that after Sejanus' fall Tiberius dismissed many who owed their appointments to Sejanus, but Pilate remained in office another five years. This may lead one to question whether he owed his appointment to Sejanus. But as Brown says, "Unfortunately there are too many 'ifs' to draw any conclusions from the Sejanus connection." (*Death*, 1:844)

[154]The most complete discussion of this issue of which I am aware is that of Zabala [*art. cit.*, *SEAsiaJournTheol* 22, (1981), pp. 16-28; 23 (1982) pp. 1-10]. Another good discussion is that of Brown (*Death*, 2:1388-93). The discussion in the following paragraphs is informed by these two discussions.

of Jesus as enthroned on the βήμα is unlikely. More importantly, the ambiguous view calls for an inconsistency in the use of the double-meaning device which is not seen elsewhere in the gospel.[155] For these reasons I reject the ambiguous view, and there are two remaining choices.

There are four types of argument for the transitive use: the philological arguments, the evidence of Justin Martyr and the *Gospel of Peter*, the historical question and the argument from the theological context. But of the philological arguments, the first argument, based on the use of prepositions, is weak,[156] the second, involving Johannine style, does not advance the discussion in one direction or the other,[157] and the third, involving the fact that ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ βήματος is anarthrous,[158]

[155]Zabala, *art. cit.*, p. 18: "Given a term with two meanings, Johannine usage is careful to prevent an opposition between the second and first meanings...To say John intends ἔκαθισεν to be taken intransitively from the grammatical-historical perspective but transitively from the theological perspective is in fact to make John require of his reader the performance of an impossible mental gymnastic, a procedure which does not on the whole accord with Johannine employment of symbolism."

[156] This argument says that John maintains the classical distinction between ἐν and εἰς, using ἐν only with static verbs and εἰς only with verbs of motion. This means that εἰς τόπον λεγόμενον Λιθόστρωτον must be governed by ἤγαγεν rather than the static ἐκάθισεν. There are two difficulties with this argument. First, even in classical Greek καθίζειν is often used pregnantly with εἰς + accusative. Second, it is the Johannine style that "when a phrase follows the second of two verbs it goes with that verb alone" [J.J. O'Rourke, "Two Notes on St. John's Gospel," *CBQ* 25 (1963) p. 125; cf. 6:11; 12:3; 13:5; 18:12f,31; 19:19; 21:3]. Therefore εἰς τόπον κτλ. should be taken with ἐκάθισεν alone and not with ἤγαγεν. Even those who read ἐκάθισεν transitively consider this argument weak.

[157] This argument maintains that it is the Johannine style that when two verbs share a direct object, that object is usually placed between the verbs, and not repeated pronominally afterward (5:21; 6:11; 7:34,36; 10:12;11:44;12:14,47;13;5;14:7,17; 17:26;18:12f.,31;19:6,16,19;21:13). This means that τὸν Ἰησοῦν is the direct object of both ἤγαγεν and ἐκάθισεν. Acts 2:30 Codex Bezae and Eph. 1:20 are then drawn in as examples of transitive ἐκάθισεν without αὐτὸν. But this pattern only occurs where the meaning of the sentence is unambiguous, and where both verbs are unquestionably transitive. But this is exactly what is in question at 19:13. Finally, most readers of a trial story would expect to find the judge sitting on the judgement seat, rather than the accused, unless they were told otherwise. This second argument shows that in spite of the lack of αὐτόν after ἐκάθισεν, ἐκάθισεν *can* be transitive. But this does not mean that it *must* be transitive. The lack of αὐτόν after ἐκάθισεν does not advance the discussion in one direction or the other.

[158] This argument maintains that by Hellenistic usage, arthrous ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος describes the physical act of a judge sitting on the judgement seat, but anarthrous ἐπὶ βήματος has one of two nuances. In factual narratives, a judge sits on a bench which is not the usual judgement seat (this calls attention to the tribunal's provisional nature). In other types of narrative, the emphasis is on the juridical nature of the setting referred to and the act described, so that "to sit on the judgement seat" means "to carry out the duties of a judge," or "to install someone as judge." This means that the anarthrous construction in our verse indicates that the narrator is not asserting that Pilate sits on the judgement seat. Neither nuance fits if ἐκάθισεν is intransitive. This makes the Johannine picture similar to that depicted in the *Gospel of Peter* and Justin; Pilate seats Jesus on a seat on the dais (but not the judgement seat) and gives him a judge's function.

is both over-subtle[159] and methodologically flawed.[160] The evidence of Justin Martyr and the *Gospel of Peter* shows that a transitive interpretation did exist, but does not prove that such an interpretation was John's original intention.[161] With regard to the historical question, what the implied author describes is not historically implausible.[162] With regard to the argument from the theological context, the theme of Jesus as judge,

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[159] Would John, literary genius that he was, have been capable of all this syntactic and legal subtlety? If he were, would his original audience have been capable of understanding it? It is worth noting here that the gospel's original audience would have heard the gospel read aloud in a worship setting. In such a situation the close reading of a critic who has access to a written copy is not possible. And since he was concerned to reach people, would he make his message understandable only to those who were capable of picking up on such subtleties?

[160] This argument first asserts the possibility of a transitive use for καθίζειν, then finds examples of anarthrous καθίζειν ἐπὶ βήματος and asserts the general juridical nature of the expression, in order to make the jump of combining the results of these two inquiries to produce a juridical formula with a transitive use. But is such a jump justified? More than that: Dauer, having considered all the passages adduced by this argument, concludes that not one of them means "to install as judge;" they all mean "to act as judge" [*Die Passionsgeschischte im Johannesevangelium* (München, 1972) p. 272, cited by Zabala, *art. cit.*, p. 22.]

[161] The passages are short, so I shall quote them. *Gosp. Pet.* 3:7 "καὶ πορφυράν αὐτὸν περιέβαλον καὶ ἐκάθισαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ καθέδραν κρίσεως λέγοντες, δικαίως κρίνε, βασιλεῦ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ." *Apol.* I, 35f: "καὶ γὰρ, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ προφήτης διασύροντες αὐτὸν ἐκάθισαν ἐπὶ βήματος καὶ εἶπον, κρίνον ἡμῖν."

It is clear that in both of these passages ἐκάθισεν/ ἐκάθισαν is transitive; the Jews seat Jesus on a judgement seat. Two other things are also clear at a glance. First, both passages have αὐτὸν as the expressed direct object of κάθιζειν, so that the reader has no doubt about what is happening. Second, the context in both of these passages is mockery, but that is not so in the Johannine verse. There has been mockery before (vv. 1-3); but I suggest that at v. 14 the time for mockery is past (cf. Lindars, *John*, p. 570). In the end, this argument tells us little, only that a transitive interpretation existed. It does not tell us whether or not that transitive interpretation originated with the Johannine text, nor whether it was the interpretation intended by John.

[162] It is asked, "How could Pilate demean the *sella curulis*, the symbol of Roman justice, by making an accused prisoner sit on it?" Brown says rightly that "[t]he seriousness of Roman law militates against such buffoonery" (*John*, 2:881; so also Lagrange, *S. Jean*, p. 486; Bernard, *St. John*, 2:622). And could Pilate treat an uncondemned prisoner this way during a trial?

It may be objected that the implied author is not concerned here with historical verisimilitude but with symbolism, which he is using to communicate his theology. It is true that his orientation is primarily theological; but he never completely discards historical reality. It is perhaps worth noting that if he had abandoned credibility for symbolism, his original audience, who were familiar with the basics of Roman justice, would have known it.

On another historical note, it may be objected that if it is Pilate who sits on the judgement seat, he does so too late. Some court sessions were conducted from off the bench (*de plano*) and others were conducted from the bench (*pro tribunali*), but a mixed session is unknown [so Corssen, "Ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ βήματος," ZNW 15 (1914) p. 339, cited by Zabala, *art. cit.*, p. 4]. But it is historically plausible for Pilate to have conducted the trial *de plano* and then sat on the *sella curulis* to pronounce the death sentence, which had to be pronounced *pro tribunali* [so e.g. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (London, 1963) p. 47].

which is shown up by a transitive use, is subsidiary to that of Jesus as king.[163] For all these reasons, I suggest that the arguments for a transitive use of ἐκάθισεν here are insufficient and that the verb is being used intransitively. This means that it is Pilate who sits on the judgement seat. How is this significant? Since in other Hellenistic Greek sources "to sit on the judgement seat" is a technical term for formally pronouncing judgement,[164] this means that at some point Pilate gives a formal verdict on Jesus.

Bringing Jesus out again, still in his mock-king garb, Pilate shouts to the Jewish leaders, "Look at your 'king'!" This is not, as Blinzler suggested, part of the formal pronouncement of sentence,[165] nor can one imagine how this enigmatic phrase could have been substituted for a pronouncement of sentence. Rather it is an attempt to salvage political gain from a situation in which Pilate has been outmanoeuvred and shamed by "the Jews."[166] They, predictably, are furious, and call for Jesus' crucifixion. They will have nothing to do with the mock-king whom Pilate offers them. "We have no king but Caesar," they insist. Here Pilate has scored at last, for he has made "the Jews" admit allegiance to the hated occupying power. This is a point of contact between my interpretation of Pilate's characterisation and Rensberger's. On another level, the implied reader will note the irony that the admission comes at the very time when the Jewish people were celebrating their distinctiveness as God's people, and

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[163] According to this argument, these two themes have run through the gospel, and here they reach their climax. Pilate's mocking installation of Jesus as judge symbolises the fact that judgement has come upon the Jews, a truth realised when they reject Jesus. The two themes of Jesus as king and Jesus as judge are of equal importance, but the judgeship of Jesus is not apparent to the reader unless Pilate seats Jesus on the judgement seat. This argument carries weight, for the themes of Jesus as king and Jesus as judge do indeed run through this gospel, and reach their climax here in the trial. But are they of equal importance? It is to be noted that in the key line at v. 14 Pilate says not, "Look at your judge," but "Look at your king." Also, the symbolic gesture is unnecessary. "If it is in fact the Jewish rejection that gives reality to the evangelist's message that Jesus is the judge...then John did not need to posit any previous symbolic gesture in order to make the truth of Jesus' judgement of unbelief real" (Zabala, *art. cit.*, p. 7). The message is heard clearly enough in "the Jews'" cries for crucifixion (v. 15). All of this indicates that the theme of Jesus as judge is in this scene subordinate to that of Jesus as king. "[T]he judgement theme is not another hook on the same level with the kingship theme; the former hangs on the hook of the latter" (*ibid.*).

[164] So Zabala, *art. cit.*, pp. 21f., and citations there.

[165] *Der Prozeß Jesu* (Regensburg, 1969) pp. 350-52, cited by Brown, *Death*, 1:848.

[166] So Brown *Death*, 1:173 n.45, cited above.

singing a hymn which ends, "We have no king but you."[167] With this gesture he turns Jesus over to his soldiers to be crucified. No formal pronouncement of sentence is recorded, but it is implied in Pilate's sitting on the judgement seat and in the use of παρέδωκεν (a legal technical term for handing a prisoner over for carrying out of a sentence) at v. 16.[168]

At vv. 19f is recounted the pericope of the *titulus* on the cross. Pilate writes a sign describing the charges against Jesus: "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews." Because the execution site is near the city, many Jews read the *titulus*. The *titulus* is trilingual, written in "Hebrew" (i.e. Aramaic), Latin and Greek. The narrator is careful to point this out: why is it significant? Aramaic is the language of first-century Palestine, Latin the official language of Rome, and Greek the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire in the first century. This lends a universalistic note to Jesus' kingship, for all the civilised world of the time is represented (it is significant for our purposes in this chapter that one of the languages is Latin - I shall return to this later). The Jewish leaders are not pleased with the phrasing of the sign, perhaps because they feel that Pilate is insulting their national hopes, or perhaps because they feel that the phrasing implies their acceptance of Jesus as their king. When they ask Pilate to change the *titulus*, he refuses, finally standing up to them.[169] He has given in to them, but will do so no more.

This encounter shows Pilate in a better light than he has appeared in up to this point. Brown says,

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[167]So Stibbe, *John*, p. 192, who notes that the Nismat, part of the Passover haggadah, concludes,

> From everlasting to everlasting thou art God,
> Beside thee we have no king, redeemer, or saviour,
> No liberator, deliverer, provider.
> None who takes pity in every time of distress or trouble.
> We have no king but thee.

[168]So also Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3:266.

[169]On one level, it may be, as Brown suggests, that Pilate's leaving of the *titulus* is an ironic hint that the Gentiles accept the king whom "the Jews" deny. Jesus has been lifted up and, as he predicted, is drawing all people to himself (*John*, 2:919f).

> By way of drama, this confrontation restores dignity to Pilate and fits in with the evangelist's sympathetic portrayal of the prefect. Pilate has been weak but he will cower no longer. If Pilate has been forced to yield to 'the Jews' in the matter of crucifixion, his final words are words of defiance.[170]

While I have argued that John's portrayal of Pilate is less than sympathetic, that balance is somewhat redressed here.

Vv. 23f. describe the conduct of the soldiers at the cross after the actual process of crucifixion. As was customary, the soldiers divide Jesus' clothes among themselves. The two co-crucified are not mentioned.[171] This is in keeping with Johannine narrative style, which keeps the implied reader's attention focused on what is important.[172] The soldiers decide to throw dice for Jesus' tunic, instead of tearing it up, because it is woven in one piece. The narrator stresses that the tunic is seamless and woven from top to bottom. From earliest times interpreters have taken their cue from this and exercised their imaginations over what it could mean.

One interpretation is based on the fact that the High Priest's robe was to be seamless and woven from top to bottom. This suggests that the tunic symbolises Jesus' role as High Priest of the new people of God.[173] The difficulty is that the High Priest's garment is a robe, not a tunic. Another interpretation sees the tunic as symbolic of the church.[174] The tunic's seamlessness represents the unbroken unity of the church, and its being woven from top to bottom represents the church's origin in God, or from above. The difficulty with this view is that Jesus has had his tunic taken from him.

As appealing as the idea of seeing the tunic as symbolic is, one may ask whether it is that aspect of this scene which is the most important to the narrator. For

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[170]*John*, 2:918.

[171]They are mentioned openly only at vv. 19b, 32b, though the plural αὐτῶν at v. 31 clearly has them in view.

[172]Cf. Michaelis, *TDNT* 5:348: "The real point is that for the eyewitness accounts what was to seen, and what had to be described as visible was the actions of Jesus, his deeds, encounters with Him."

[173]So e.g. Westcott (*St. John*, p. 275); Macgregor (*John*, p. 346); Morris (*John*, p, 809), Sanders and Mastin (*St. John*, p. 407).

[174]So e.g. Hoskyns (*Fourth Gospel*, p. 529), who contrasts the unity of the believers with the divisions seen among "the Jews;" de la Potterie, *The Hour of Jesus* (Middlegreen, 1989), pp 124-31.

he makes it very clear that the soldiers' activities are in fulfilment of Scripture, the Scripture in question being Psalm 22:18.[175] As at 18:32, God's Word is being fulfilled in the actions of humans who do not perceive the significance of their actions.

The *quaternion* of soldiers seem to be contrasted with the four women who are standing near Jesus' cross (vv. 25-27). This is indicated by the μὲν...δὲ construction at vv. 24c-25a.[176] While the soldiers show no signs of awareness that anything is happening but a routine execution,[177] it is among these faithful women (and "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the only male disciple present) that the nucleus of the new family of faith is formed.

The next mention of the Romans is at vv. 31-34. "The Jews," because it is the Day of Preparation of the Passover, are anxious that the bodies of Jesus and the co-crucified be removed from the crosses as soon as possible. So they ask Pilate to authorise the breaking of the prisoners' legs to hasten death. Pilate accedes, and the soldiers carry out his orders. The breaking of the legs, although it sounds cruel to modern ears, can be seen as merciful, since it hastens an agonising death process. The soldiers discover that Jesus is already dead, so they do not break his legs. But one of the soldiers stabs Jesus' side with a lance to make certain that he is dead, and a flow of blood and water issues from the wound.[178]

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[175]It is also to be noted that the Gospel of John has few fulfilment citations. For this reason the fulfilment citation here is all the more significant.

[176]There is some dispute as to whether there are four women at the cross (if Jesus' mother's sister is unnamed) or three (if Jesus' mother's sister is named as Mary of Clopas). I incline to the former view, because otherwise there seem to be two sisters with the same name (cf. Carson, *John*, p. 615). Perhaps the contrast of these women with the four soldiers sheds some light on this matter.

[177]This is also in contrast to the centurion of the Synoptics.

[178]It is at approximately this point that the Synoptists place the centurion's confession, which John lacks. He has substituted something even more powerful - his own eyewitness confession, written down so that others may believe (19:26f). The confession is all the more powerful because it is unexpected; the narrator has given no indication before this point that he is also a character in the story (see my discussion of this matter in chapter 2). A modern example of this technique is James A. Michener's *Hawaii*, in which, the narrator, in the last paragraph of the story, identifies himself as Hoxworth Hale, a main character in the last part of the story, always referred to in the third person until this point.

This passage is so rich in symbolic, christological and theological meaning that a full discussion of all the issues raised is impossible here. But there is one issue which is relevant to this study. It is a theological issue, one which I have already mentioned. As at 18:32 and 19:23f, God's Word is being fulfilled in the actions of humans who do not understand the significance of their actions (cf. vv. 36f). This illustrates the sovereignty of God in earthly and human affairs, even among those humans who do not acknowledge him, or who, like "the Jews," acknowledge him with lip service only and not with obedient action.

The last reference to the Romans in the gospel involves Pilate alone. At 19:38, when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus approach him for permission to take the body of Jesus for honourable burial, Pilate grants it. This is a noteworthy gesture, for the corpses of executed criminals were usually hastily disposed of in a common grave. It is a sign of Pilate's belief in Jesus' innocence, for he surely would not have granted permission for a man whom he believed to be a criminal to be buried honourably. It may be asked why, if John has deliberately left out the centurion's positive confession, he should recount this positive action of Pilate. Perhaps he does so because he wants to show again that Pilate believed in Jesus' innocence, and still permitted him to be executed.[179] But it is difficult not to see this action in a positive light. Whatever the implied author's intention, this action, and the incident of the *titulus*, lend an ambiguity to Pilate's characterisation.

There is an issue connected with these passages which it will have been noticed that I have not yet discussed - that issue is politics. I discussed above the interpretation of Rensberger, that Pilate, far from being a weak figure, is a strong one who sets out to humiliate "the Jews" by ridiculing their national hopes, and ends up by eliciting from them an admission of allegiance to Caesar. But I suggest that such a reading has not been supported by exegesis.

[179]It must also be noted that Pilate's giving of the body of Jesus makes it possible for Nicodemus to take a public stance for Jesus [something which he has been afraid to do before now (cf. 3:1)] as he performs this final act of devotion.

First, it must be noted that it is "the Jews" rather than Pilate who are in control of the situation, and that right from the start, when they make Pilate come outside to them by refusing to go inside to him. Second, I fail to see any indications from the text that Pilate's intention from the start is to ridicule "the Jews'" national hopes. If Pilate makes "the Jews" admit allegiance to Caesar, he does so only as an afterthought,[180] in revenge for their humiliation of him in making him condemn a man against his will and his better judgement. Rather from early in the trial his intention is to avoid making a decision. It may be asked, "Is Pilate being portrayed as a coward, or as a politician trying to play one party off against the other?" But as I said above (see n. 32), the latter idea is, in my opinion, more plausible for the Synoptics than for the Gospel of John. With regard to "the Jews'" admission of allegiance to Caesar, Rensberger[181] raises the question of how genuine the admission is. This suggests that "the Jews" do not really mean what they are saying, but say the words which Pilate wants by this point to hear in order to make him give in to their wishes and condemn Jesus.[182]

In general I suggest that the emphasis in the encounter between Jesus and Pilate is on Pilate's response to Jesus rather than any issue of Roman-Jewish relations or any other issue of issue of temporal power.[183] This is in line with the encounters of Jesus with other characters throughout this gospel. Through the course of the narrative, various characters encounter Jesus and react to him in different ways. The implied author brings them forward as examples of different responses to Jesus.

This is not to say that this encounter is entirely lacking in political overtones. For Pilate, like Nicodemus, is a man of high social and political status. His status is at risk if he takes a stand for Jesus. There is a sense in which the choice Pilate must make is a choice between Jesus and Caesar, and this is a political choice as well as a spiritual

[180]So also Brown, *Death*, 1:173 n. 45, cited on p. 158 above.
[181]*Op. cit.*, p. 95.
[182]Cf. Carson, *John*, p. 605: "[Pilate] is perfectly aware that the ostensible allegiance of the Jewish authorities to Caesar [v. 12] is no more than political hypocrisy deployed to ensure that he will condemn Jesus to the cross."
[183]So also Brown, *John*, 2:866, cited above.

one (thus the political overtones of the encounter also point to the theme of κρίσις). Pilate tries to avoid making a choice one way or the other, but this is impossible. And if one's allegiance is to the king whose kingdom is not of this world, it cannot also be to Caesar or any other king whose kingdom is of this world. But I feel that what is most important in this encounter is not politics but Pilate's response to Jesus - where he will take his stand in the κρίσις. It is also this which makes Pilate a representative figure. He, like Nicodemus, is representative of those whose high social and political standing make it difficult to take a stand for Jesus.[184]

The third of our categories of characterisation is that of *character traits.* The most obvious character trait exhibited by Pilate, the representative Roman in this gospel, is indecisiveness. This indecisiveness is shown outwardly by his back-and-forth trips between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Faced with the necessity of choosing to take a stand either for Jesus or against him, Pilate tries to remain neutral. But neutrality is impossible. Since Pilate is unwilling to take a stand for Jesus, he is forced to take a stand against him. To paraphrase the final clause of Lawrence Olivier's famous introduction to his film version of *Hamlet*, the tragedy of Pilate is the tragedy of a man who is trying to avoid having to make up his mind.

The root of this indecisiveness is in fact fear. Pilate is too afraid of the Jewish leaders to stand up to them and drop the charges against a man whom he knows is innocent. He becomes even more afraid of them when they threaten to report him to his superiors; and that is because he is also afraid of his own superiors, and how they will react if they believe that they have reason to question his political loyalty. He also becomes afraid of Jesus when he learns that Jesus has claimed some sort of divinity. But this fear is not great enough to overcome the others, and this shows up another of Pilate's character traits: weakness.

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[184]J.F. McGrath ["Uncontrived Messiah or Passover Plot?" *IBS* 19 (forthcoming,1997)] points out also that the implied author "does not in any other passage appear to be concerned with the Romans for their own sake." If he were, one would expect the Romans to appear in other parts of the gospel besides the Passion narrative. A political focus would, I suggest, call for greater prominence in the narrative for the Romans.

Finally there are some less obvious character traits ascribed to Pilate and the other Romans. Their cruelty is hinted at in 11:48 and manifests itself in their abuse of Jesus. Pilate is not of the truth, and not one of those who hear Jesus' voice - therefore he is of "the world." He is also a bad judge, both in the judicial sense and as a judge of character.

The result of these character traits is that Pilate becomes a *theomachos*. Stibbe describes the Jewish leaders as "the *theomachus* of the fourth gospel."[185] They refute Jesus' teaching, attempt to stone him on several occasions, and contribute to his arrest and execution. I have pointed out above that the implied author characterises "the Jews" and the Romans similarly. Stibbe says of "the Jews,"

> [T]hey are the embodiment of tragedy's most perverse emotions. Not only do they suffer from lack of recognition and pride, but they also suffer from *agnoia*: they are ignorant throughout the story that Jesus is God's only Son who points them to their Father.[186]

These things, according to Stibbe, make "the Jews" a *theomachos*, and the same things, I suggest, may be said of Pilate. During his conversations with Jesus, Pilate makes no attempt to understand what Jesus is saying. If he himself does not mistreat Jesus physically, he shares in the culpability of the Roman soldiers who do, and in the end he gives the order that Jesus be crucified. This is a trait which the other nameless Romans who appear in the gospel share with their prefect. Roman soldiers make up part of the arresting party, and it is they who abuse and insult Jesus with their game of mock-king.

The fourth of our categories of characterisation is that of *evaluative point of view*. It can be seen that the evaluative point of view of Pilate and the Romans is opposed to that of God. This wrong point of view may be said to stem from two sources. First, they belong to "the world" which is opposed to God. Second, Pilate's fear of other people is greater than his concern for truth and justice. Indeed it may be

[185] *Storyteller*, p. 138.
[186] *Ibid.*

that the second factor is a result of the misplaced priorities of the first. It is for these reasons that he cannot understand what Jesus tells him, and refuses to respond positively to Jesus' challenge and invitation to make the right choice and side with Jesus. His fear leads him to mistreat and condemn to execution a man who he knows is innocent. But perhaps there is a hint of a change of evaluative point of view at 19:38.

The fifth of our categories of characterisation is that of *cultural scripts*. The most evident cultural script in the passages with which we are concerned in this chapter is that of patron-client contracts. "If you let this man go you are not Caesar's friend," say "the Jews" at 19:12; the term "Caesar's friend" describes a patron-client contract between the emperor and his subordinates.[187]

This is the sort of contract which existed between Tiberius and Pilate, with Pilate exercising his duties in the emperor's name and carrying out the emperor's orders in return for the protection and prestige provided by the emperor. "Friend of Caesar" may have been an actual title, conferred as an honour upon certain close associates of the emperor. Whether it was an actual title or not, the patron-client nature of the relationship between Tiberius and Pilate is what is important.

> On this "friendship" with the emperor, Millar says,
>
> '[F]riendship' with the emperor involved a complex of undefined relationships, with privileges and dangers which were both essentially dependent on the character or passing whim of the emperor himself.[188]

And again,

> That a man was a 'friend of Caesar,' was likely to be a publicly known and significant fact about him...In the case of a governor the fact might

[187]On "Caesar's friend" see Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, (London, 1983) pp. 110-22; Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, 1982) pp. 42-58; John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield, 1992) pp. 38-51.
[188]*Op. cit.*, pp. 111 f.

> even on occasion be used to bring pressure on him...If a friend of Caesar fell, the pleasure of his enemies was all the greater...[189]

Pilate's status as client to Caesar entailed certain responsibilities on Pilate. Among these was to frustrate the efforts of anyone who set themselves up in rivalry to Caesar (this is what "the Jews" mean at 19:12c). If Pilate releases Jesus, who has set himself up in rivalry of Caesar ("the Jews" say), he will be failing in his duty to his patron. And Tiberius would not take such failure lightly, as I have said above. By reminding Pilate of all this, "the Jews" are by implication threatening to report his failure to Tiberius. It is for this reason that Pilate finally gives in and acts against his better judgement. Once "the Jews" have invoked his patron-client contract with Tiberius, he has no choice but to act in accordance with his side of that contract.

There is also another patron-client contract in view, though less clearly, in the trial narrative. That is the relationship between Jesus and "everyone who is of the truth" (18:37), that is, those who hear his voice. Jesus describes this relationship at 15:1-7; it is noteworthy that he describes his disciples as friends (this sets up a verbal link between 15:1-7 and 19:12).[190] At 18:37 Jesus by implication invites Pilate into a patron-client relationship with him. This is noteworthy, for a patron-client contract is usually initiated by the person of lower status, appealing to someone of higher status.[191] But perhaps this is not inappropriate, for the patron-client contract between Jesus and "his own" is an unusual one, in two respects. First, this patron-client relationship is based on Jesus the patron's own example of self-giving and humble service (15:9a,10b; cf. 13:14-16). Second, while friendship with Caesar is a

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[189] *Op. cit.*, p. 116 - in this context Millar alludes briefly to John 19:12.

[190] It may be objected that the language of friendship is not appropriate for a patron-client relationship. But *amicitia* (the Latin equivalent of the Greek φιλία) is exactly the word used of Roman patron-client relationships (see the secondary sources cited in note 185 above). And Jesus' stress on obedience as a component of friendship with him also makes it clear that the relationship being described is a patron-client one.

[191] Malina, *op. cit.*, pp. 102, 107. Is it because the relationship between Jesus and "his own" is seen as a patron-client contract that in this gospel people usually seek Jesus rather than the reverse?

relationship based on fear,[192] friendship with Jesus is a relationship based on love for Jesus and for those who are also his friends (15:9,10,12,17; cf. 13:1). Jesus' invitation requires Pilate to make a choice, for he cannot serve as client of two patrons (cf. Matt 6:24). "The friend of Caesar cannot also be the friend of Jesus."[193] But Pilate is too afraid of his current patron to leave him for another.

Considerations of honour and shame are the most important cultural script in first-century Mediterranean society, and it is no surprise to see them operating in the passages with which we are concerned in this chapter. They can be seen in the manoeuvring between Pilate and "the Jews" during and after the trial. "The Jews" manoeuvre Pilate into a position where he has no choice but to do what they want. Their last move in this direction is to appeal to the patron-client contract between Pilate and Tiberius, reminding Pilate that it would be shameful for him not to uphold his side of the contract. He, finding himself humiliated and outmanoeuvred, shames "the Jews" by eliciting from them an admission of allegiance to Caesar, thus salvaging some political gain from the affair. It is also considerations of honour and shame which prompt Pilate to stand up to "the Jews" in the matter of the *titulus*; he will endure no further humiliation from them. The same might be said of 19:38, where his granting of an honourable burial to Jesus might be seen as another snub of "the Jews."

There are considerations of honour and shame operative with regard to Jesus as well in these passages. The Roman soldiers flog him, insult him and humiliate him by presenting him as a mock-king. But to the implied reader, Jesus displays his glory in this very humiliation as the Son of Man is lifted up in both crucifixion and exaltation.

The sixth and last of our categories of characterisation is that of *empathy, sympathy and antipathy*. Given the characterisation of the Romans which we have seen, how does the implied reader react to them? They are characterised in a way that

[192]For "the Jews'" fear of Pilate see 11:48; and for Pilate's fear of his own superiors see 19:12, and cf. my discussion of 19:12 above.
[193]Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 524; contrast Rom. 13:1-7.

is almost entirely negative. It is not until after the trial that there are positive references to the Romans, in the incident of the *titulus* and the granting of an honourable burial. That these are the last two references to the Romans in the gospel, and that they come one after another, may give them added weight. Are they enough to counterbalance the negative image which has been held up before the implied reader up to that point? They do not completely counterbalance it, but the balance is redressed somewhat. Even so, I do not feel that the implied reader is likely to empathise with the Romans, or sympathise very greatly with them.

Can the implied reader sympathise with the Romans in the more common sense of feeling pity for them? Perhaps slightly, if Pilate is seen as a man caught between a rock and a hard place. But this kind of sympathy is lessened when it is remembered that it is Pilate's own choices which lead him into his dilemma.

V

Concluding Remarks

It has generally been said that in this gospel the Romans are whitewashed at the expense of "the Jews," but I have argued that it is not in fact so. There can be no doubt that the implied author makes them take a share of the responsibility for the death of Jesus. This he does in several ways. By comparison with the Synoptics, John lays more stress on the role of the Romans than do the Synoptics. The Romans appear earlier in the Johannine Passion narrative than they do in the Synoptics, and the Johannine Roman trial is longer than the Synoptic Roman trials, and also longer than the Johannine Jewish trial.

The first mentions of the Romans are general ones, but attention is soon focused on Pilate, the representative Roman. The Johannine Pilate is a weakling and a coward. He is a bad judge, both in the judicial sense and as a judge of character. He

has the authority to prevent the crucifixion of a man he knows to be innocent; but he is too afraid of the Jewish leaders to do so openly, and not sufficiently perceptive or clever to do so by more oblique means. More than that, he is a *theomachos*. The implied author also characterises him, and the other Romans, as in some ways similar to the unbelieving "Jews;" for him, both groups are part of "the world" which is opposed to Jesus. Above all, Pilate tries to avoid a decision about Jesus, but this is impossible. Therefore since he refuses to take a public stand for Jesus, he is forced to take a stand against him. And yet the picture is not entirely black, for Pilate redeems himself somewhat in the matter of the *titulus*, and in granting Jesus an honourable burial. This does not completely cancel out what has come before, but it may be an indication that even for Pilate, and thus for the Romans, the door is not closed. They are on the wrong side of the κρίσις brought about by the coming of Jesus, but there may be the hint of a possibility of change.

With reference to cultural scripts, we saw that two cultural scripts are in evidence in these passages; they are considerations of honour and shame and patron-client relationships. It is the latter which dominates in these passages, and which explains Pilate's weakness and cowardice. For the terms of his patron-client contract with Caesar will not allow him to drop the charges against a man who might be seen to be a rival to Caesar. It is considerations of honour and shame which motivate Pilate's final actions as he seeks vengeance for his humiliation by "the Jews."

Given this characterisation of Pilate and the Romans, how is the implied reader meant to respond? It is unlikely that the implied reader will identify, or sympathise greatly, with such characters. He is hardly likely to want to make the same choice about Jesus as the Romans do. The Romans may be said to illustrate the negative side of the theme of κρίσις which runs through the Gospel of John. But the picture is not entirely dark, and the possibility of a change is hinted at.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Now that we have studied the characterisation of all the non-Jewish characters in the gospel, let us draw the threads of this study together and see what may be learned. In this chapter I shall begin by summarising the previous chapters and offering some conclusions. I shall then consider the issue of *imitatio Christi*. Then I shall move from the area of narrative criticism to that of reader-response criticism, asking, "What has the implied author done by characterising non-Jews as he has done, and why has he done this?"

I

Summary

In chapter 1 of this study we considered the question, "Why a new look at this subject?" We saw that the theme of κρίσις runs through the gospel. This theme has been taken account of in studying the characterisation of "the Jews," but has never yet been taken account of in studying the characterisation of non-Jewish characters. In chapter 2 we considered the question of method. First we reviewed the history of Johannine literary criticism as it has been practised from the beginning of this century to the present, and the various types of literary criticism which are being practised today. This allowed us to see that the type of literary criticism best suited to a study of characterisation is narrative criticism, because of its interest in characterisation. Then I

set out a method which, I argued, covered all the important aspects of characterisation, including both anthropological and rhetorical interests.

In the third, fourth and fifth chapters, the method set out in chapter 2 was applied to the gospel's non-Jewish characters. In the third chapter I considered the Samaritans; attention was inevitably focused on the woman whose wellside conversation with Jesus forms a substantial part of the narrative. I argued that the woman's faith is tentative and hesitating at best. Throughout her conversation with Jesus, her practical levelheadedness prevents the woman from understanding Jesus' double entendres. She takes on the literal level things that are meant on the spiritual/symbolic level. In spite of Jesus' self-revelation at 4:26, the woman, I argued, sees him as a prophet; this, in the view of the implied author, does not go far enough. But the woman does go and tell the townspeople about Jesus, and they come out to meet him. The woman's faith, then, is not unambiguous, but it is not ineffective either.

There is no ambiguity about the faith of the townspeople of Sychar. They believe in Jesus, first on the basis of the woman's word, then on the basis of Jesus' own word. They invite Jesus to stay with them, and hail him as Saviour of the World. The title indicates that Jesus has transcended their expectations: he is saviour of the world, not only of Samaritans or of Jews. This, and their offer of hospitality to Jesus, which he accepts, indicate that the issue of Jew-Samaritan relations which has been prominent in this narrative has been resolved. Another issue which is prominent in this narrative is that of Jesus' identity. This too is resolved when the Samaritans give him the title Saviour of the World. A progression can be seen here, as Jesus appears first as a thirsty and exhausted Jewish traveller, then as a prophet, and finally as Saviour of the World. Another kind of progression is also seen, from the tentative and hesitating faith of the woman to the more complete faith of the townspeople. The ambiguity in her faith is resolved in theirs. Also noteworthy is the irony that "the Jews," who are God's people, who should welcome Jesus, have shown him only scepticism and rejection, but the Samaritans, who are considered to be outside the people of God, welcome him. In

this narrative Jesus inaugurates a new worship "in Spirit and in truth" (4:24) which transcends all the old racial and geographical barriers, as his ministry moves beyond the boundaries of Israel.

In the fourth chapter we turned our attention to the characterisation of the Greeks. Just as a group of non-Jews - the Samaritans, who are neither Jews nor Gentiles but something in between - appears at a significant point in the gospel (just before real opposition to Jesus begins), so also another group of non-Jews, these ones Greeks, undoubted Gentiles, appears at another significant point in the gospel (at the end of Jesus' public ministry). The pericope in which the Greeks appear is brief, but it is important, for their arrival signals a major turning point in the plot of the gospel: the coming of Jesus' "hour" and the end and climax of his public ministry. At the moment when Jewish rejection of Jesus is about to become complete, a group of Gentiles ask, in effect, to become part of the redefined people of God.

The pericope of the Greeks is brief and unresolved, and I argued that this is significant. On one level, the lack of a response from the Greeks encourages the implied reader to work out for himself what the Greeks will do. On another level, the implied author is asking the implied reader what he himself will do in response to Jesus' challenge about the costliness of discipleship.

In the fifth chapter I considered the characterisation of the Romans; attention was inevitably focused on Pilate, the most visible Roman in the gospel and the official representative of Rome in Judaea. The Johannine Pilate is, I argued, a weakling and a coward. He wants to avoid taking a stand for Jesus, and therefore is forced to take a stand against him. He has the authority to simply drop the charges against Jesus. But although he soon becomes convinced that Jesus is no revolutionary, he is too afraid of the Jewish leaders, and of Caesar, to drop the charges, and not sufficiently perceptive or clever to get around the Jewish leaders by more oblique means. As a result, he soon has no choice but to give in to pressure and act against his will and his better

judgement. More than that, his indecisiveness and fear lead him to become a *theomachos*.

With reference to cultural scripts, we saw that the most prominent cultural script in the passages under consideration in this chapter is that of patron-client relationships. "The Jews" force Pilate to give in by appealing to his patron-client relationship with Caesar, threatening to report him for not fulfilling the obligations which this relationship entailed upon him. Once they have done this, Pilate has no choice but to give in. Balanced against this patron-client relationship is another, and different, one, namely that between Jesus and "his own."

The other cultural script which has force in these passages is that of considerations of honour and shame. I argued that this is the factor which explains most of Pilate's actions. He is outmanoeuvred and shamed by "the Jews" in the trial, and his actions in the "Look at your 'King'!" scene are an attempt to salvage some gain from the affair. Honour/shame considerations also explain why Pilate refuses to change the *titulus*, and grants Jesus an honourable burial: he will endure no further humiliation. I also turned my attention to the issue of politics. I argued that, while political considerations are not absent from these passages, they are not in the forefront. What is in the forefront here is not Roman-Jewish relations but Pilate's reaction to Jesus. Pilate, like Nicodemus, is representative of those whose high social and political standing make it difficult for them to take a stand for Jesus.

Now that we have reviewed the characterisation of all three of the gospel's non-Jewish character groups, what trends can we see developing, or what connections do we see between these groups? I noted in earlier chapters that there are many connections between the narratives of the Samaritans and the Greeks. These verbal and thematic connections allow us to see patterns developing. The most obvious is a racial one, as Jesus' ministry progresses outward from Jews to Samaritans to Gentiles. Another interesting connection is that both the Samaritans and the Greeks are

anonymous. I argued that this anonymity serves three purposes. First, it helps to keep the implied reader's attention focused on Jesus. Second, it draws attention to the characters' typified roles, to their function as representative characters. The Samaritans may be said to be representative of those who must overcome ethnic and religious prejudice in order to come to faith. The Greeks are representative of the Gentile world which comes to faith in Jesus. Third, these characters' anonymity makes it easier for the implied reader to identify with them as they come to Jesus in faith. I suspect that the implied author's intention here is rhetorical; I shall return to this shortly. Another connection between these narratives lies in the theme of the fruitful harvest, which appears only in these two narratives. What Jesus says at 4:34-38 is illustrated by the arrival of the Samaritan townspeople and developed at 12:24-26, where Jesus makes it clear that the harvest is not reaped without cost. Finally, it is to be noted that both of these non-Jewish groups who come to faith in Jesus are characterised positively.

There are some things that connect all three of the character groups which we have considered in this study. First, all three groups are said to come to Jesus. But while the coming of the Samaritans and Greeks is a coming in faith, the coming of the Roman soldiers at 19:3 is a coming in mockery. We also saw that the theme of κρίσις appears in connection with each of the character groups which we have considered in this study. In the narrative of the Samaritans, it appears in Jesus' discourse on true worship: "the hour is coming *and now is*" (4:23); it also appears, I argued, in the irony in the narrative, a device by which the implied author encourages the implied reader to make a choice for or against Jesus. The word κρίσις actually appears in the narrative of the Greeks, at 12:31, where the Greeks' arrival signals that the κρίσις has come. In the narratives connected with the Romans, the theme appears in the judicial nature and setting of these passages; and in Pilate's back-and-forth trips between Jesus and "the Jews" as he tries to avoid making a choice. I also argued that it is this theme which explains why the Johannine Passion narrative focuses more on the Roman trial than its

Synoptic counterparts do; the emphasis is on the choice which Pilate must make, where he will take his stand in the κρίσις. Because Pilate tries to avoid making a choice for Jesus, he is forced to make a choice against him. The κρίσις does not allow for neutrality. It is to be noted that the κρίσις does not turn people toward Jesus, or against him. Rather the choice they make shows what they have really been all along. All this suggests that attention to the theme of κρίσις has yielded some significant results. Finally it may be said that all three of the groups with which we have been concerned in this study are faced with a challenge which they must overcome if they are to come to faith in Jesus. The Samaritans must overcome old ethnic and religious prejudices; the Greeks must overcome the challenge of the costliness of discipleship; and Pilate, like Nicodemus, must overcome the difficulty caused by his high social and political standing. But unlike Nicodemus, Pilate is not up to the challenge, because of his indecisiveness and fear.

II

The Issue of *Imitatio Christi*

In chapter 3, I mentioned that Philip at 1:43-46 and the Samaritan woman at 4:28f both act like Jesus in the matter of evangelism (cf. 1:39). We have also seen similar occurrences elsewhere. Philip and Andrew, in two passages, act as mediators between Jesus and those who are seeking him (1:25-51; 12:20-22), just as Jesus acts as mediator betweeen the Father and all believers (cf. 14:6). And in chapter 4, I said that the Samaritans and the Greeks, like Jesus, cross boundaries and are relatively marginal figures. Finally, both the Samaritans and the Greeks are said to come; so also Jesus is characterised as one who comes (1:15,30; 3:31; 6:14; 8:23; 11:27; 19:37). All this seems to indicate that the idea of *imitatio Christi* is an important one to the implied author, since the idea appears so frequently.

Looking at the instances cited in the preceding paragraph, it can be seen that those characters who are characterised positively are also those characters who are characterised as acting like Jesus. Does the implied author have a purpose in such characterisation? A clue to the answer to that question lies in the fact that on several occasions Jesus calls on his disciples to imitate him (12:26; 13:14-17; 14:12a; 15:12; cf. 17:18,21). These calls for imitation are dramatised in the implied author's characterisation of those who believe in Jesus as those who imitate him. It is noteworthy that the open calls to be imitators of Jesus come near, or in, the last half of the narrative, and the dramatisations in the first half. It is as if the implied author, having tried to make his point by characterisation, then uses the less subtle means of direct speech, just to make sure that the implied reader has got the point. Why has the implied author done all this? As with characterisation in general, I suspect that his intention here is rhetorical, and to that issue I now turn.

III

The Issue of Reader Response

On several occasions throughout this study I have suggested that the implied reader's intention in doing something is rhetorical. I have said this with regard to the positive characterisation of the Samaritans and Greeks and the negative characterisation of the Romans, with regard to the brief and unfinished nature of the pericope of the Greeks, and with regard to the characterisation of those who believe in Jesus as those who imitate him. In this section I shall consider what the implied author's purpose in doing these things might be.

One of the categories of characterisation which I have used in this study is that of empathy, sympathy, and antipathy. This category, I said, is concerned with how the implied reader reacts to the character. As the study progressed, we saw that the

implied reader would identify and sympathise with the Samaritans and the Greeks, but was unlikely to do so with the Romans. Another way of saying this is that the implied reader reacts positively to the Samaritans and the Greeks, but not to the Romans. We also saw that the Samaritans and the Greeks come to faith in Jesus and the Romans do not. The conclusion we can draw from this is that those non-Jewish characters who come to faith in Jesus are portrayed positively, and those who do not are portrayed negatively. The implied author has, I would argue, done this with a purpose. That purpose is expressed plainly at 20:31 - the implied author has written what he has written so that the implied reader might believe.[1] Therefore we may say that the implied author has portrayed the non-Jewish characters who believe positively, as a way of encouraging the implied reader to choose as these characters do, and believe. It is probably in line with this purpose that the implied author has not presented the picture of negative non-Jewish reaction to Jesus until after he has presented two pictures of positive non-Jewish reaction to Jesus. The positive image thus built up in the implied reader's mind makes it easier for him to come himself to believe.

This persuasive intent, plus the theme of κρίσις, may also explain why the pericope of the Greeks is brief and unfinished. This quality of the story encourages the implied reader to finish the story for himself, as I said in chapter four. In this regard it is also probably not accidental. Jesus' public ministry is coming to an end: "the hour has come" (12:23) for the implied reader to decide for Jesus or against him. "Now is the κρίσις" (12:31) indeed. It is not surprising that a pericope which so strongly encourages a choice should be placed here.

Thus we can see that the implied author has made the literary resources at his disposal serve his purpose. The characterisation of the characters in the gospel, both Jewish and non-Jewish; the selection of the stories which he records; and the literary and theological themes which bind the entire gospel together (including the theme of

[1]Whether the correct reading is πιστεύητε or πιστεύσητε is irrelevant to the discussion here. What is important is the implied author's intention, which is to persuade.

κρίσις which we have seen is an important one) - all are used to accomplish the implied author's intention, which is to persuade the implied reader to be on the right side of the dividing line of faith. As the implied author himself puts it, "These things are written so that you might believe" (20:31).

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