

# THE JOHANNINE PASSION AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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R.E. Brown once wrote of John 19:16b-37: "The Johannine crucifixion scene is, in a certain way, less concerned with the fate of Jesus than with the significance of that fate for his followers".<sup>1</sup> Brown has correctly identified one of the features of the Johannine crucifixion scene, but I will suggest that the same feature marks the whole of the Johannine passion story. This is not to deny the importance of Jesus' suffering in the Johannine tradition,<sup>2</sup> but to insist that John 18:1-19:42 offers an interpretation of the passion of Jesus that deliberately marries Johannine ecclesiology and christology.

In a first section, I will trace the reader's experience of John 18:1-19:42,<sup>3</sup> returning in a second moment to examine the Johannine account of Jesus' appearance before the Jewish authorities (18:12-27) in more detail. There are a number of studies of the Johannine passion account, as well as the many valuable commentaries on the Gospel which necessarily devote attention to John 18:1-19:42.<sup>4</sup> My remarks in the first section of the following

<sup>1</sup> R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB 29-29a; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966-70) 2:912.

<sup>2</sup> On this, see W. Thüsing, *Die Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesu im Johannesevangelium* (3rd ed.; NTAbh XXI,1-2; Münster: Aschendorff, 1979) 78-82. For M.W.G. Stibbe, *John as storyteller. Narrative criticism and the fourth gospel* (SNTSMS 73; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 129-147, although the main literary feature of the Johannine passion account is irony, it is also marked by *pathos*, and has the tragic genre of the "killing of the king" as evidenced in the *Bacchae*.

<sup>3</sup> I am using the term "reader" primarily to mean the so-called implied reader, a heuristic device of a reader who emerges as the text unfolds. However, in a classical text there is an intimate relationship between the implied reader *in the text* and the real reader(s) *of the text*. For more detail, see F.J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word. Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 9-21.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study of the *Traditionsgeschichte* of the Johannine passion narrative, see A. Dauer, *Die Passionsgeschichte im Johannesevangelium. Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung zu Joh 18,1 - 19,30* (SANT 30; München: Kösel-Verlag, 1972) 21-

study attempt to demonstrate a unity at the level of the interplay between the author and the reader in the text, whatever the prehistory of that text may have been. I have chosen to devote more detailed attention to John 18:12-27 because even in that passage – a description of Jesus’ solitary appearance before his Jewish accusers, framed by Peter’s denials – Jesus tells his interrogators that they are to ask others if they wish to know what he taught: “Ask those who have heard me (τοὺς ἀκεκοῦτους), what I said to them; they know what I said” (18:21). Who are τοὺς ἀκεκοῦτους in 18:21?

### 1. Reading John 18:1-19:42

The author of the Fourth Gospel regularly presents episodes by first describing, with some care, the time, the place and the characters involved in each particular event (see, 2:1-2, 13-14; 3:1-2a; 4:1-7a; 5:1-5; 6:1-4, etc.). Simply on the basis of this formal criterion, the passion story can be divided into five distinct scenes: Jesus and his enemies (18:1-11. See vv. 1-3), Jesus’ appearance before “the Jews” (18:12-27. See vv. 12-16),<sup>5</sup> Jesus before Pilate

227. For recent more theological studies of the text as it stands, see I. de la Potterie, *The Hour of Jesus. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus according to John: Text and Spirit* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1989), and D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (The Passion Series 4; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), and for a number of more contemporary readings John 18-19 (practical criticism, genre criticism, sociological reading, narrative-historical reading), see M.W.G. Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 95-196. The most important contemporary study of the Johannine passion narrative is R.E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994). For a comprehensive general bibliography on the passion narrative in the Fourth Gospel, see 1:104-6.

<sup>5</sup> I will systematically place “the Jews” in quotation marks to indicate that they are not the Jewish people. “The Jews” are one side of a christological debate. They represent those (originally Jewish) opponents of Jesus and his subsequent followers who will not accept that Jesus transcends Moses and Torah (see, for example, 1:16-17; 5:16-18, 45-47; 6:31-33; 7:15-23, 45-51; 10:31-39; 9:28-29; 12:34; 19:7) and reject the possibility that Jesus might be the Messiah. S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John* (NovTSup XLII; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975) is generally most sensitive to this issue. However, on pp. 307-310 he mistakenly regards οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the passion story as no longer representing one side of a theological debate, but “The Jews as a nation appear as Christ’s enemies” (p. 308). But where does that leave a large part of the Johannine community which also had its origins in “the Jews as a nation”? The Jewish people as a whole are not indicated by the term which is strongly influenced by the situation of the Johannine community towards the end of the first century, now excluded from the Synagogue (see 9:22; 12:42; 16:2). As John Ashton insists, one must “recognize in these hot-tempered exchanges the type of family row in which the participants face one another across the room of a house which all have shared and all call home” (*Understanding the Fourth Gospel* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991] 151).

(18:28-19:16a. See v. 28), the crucifixion of Jesus (19:16b-37. See vv. 16b-18), and the burial of Jesus by his newly-found friends (19:38-42. See vv. 38-39).<sup>6</sup>

### 1.1. *Jesus in a Garden with His Enemies (18:1-11)*

Commentators generally refer to John 18:1-11 as “the arrest” of Jesus,<sup>7</sup> but this title does not reflect what actually happens in Gethsemane. There is no arrest of Jesus until vv. 12-13, and the events in the garden (vv. 1-11) are dominated by the initiative of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Jesus and his disciples move to a known location, “where there was a garden (ὄπου ἦν κήπος)”, as opposing forces, Judas, a cohort of Roman soldiers (τὴν σπεῖρην), and some Temple officers (ὑπηρέτας) gather and move against Jesus, bearing lanterns, torches and weapons (vv. 1-3). Such a combination is historically improbable, but the author indicates that Judas, the Romans and “the Jews” combine against Jesus.<sup>9</sup> The reader is aware that Jesus is the light of *the world* (see 8:12; 9:5),

<sup>6</sup> This division (but not the titles for the sub-divisions) is largely followed by commentators. Some (e.g. Barrett, Beasley-Murray, Dauer, Stibbe) follow this overall structure, but read larger blocks of material as units. Attention must be paid to changes of place, time and active characters. See the basic agreement between M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Jean* (EB; Paris: Gabalda, 1927) 454, 459, 469, 479, 488, 502; R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 637, 641, 648, 666-680; C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* (2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1978) 515, 523, 530, 546, 554; G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco: Word Books, 1987) 321; Brown, *John*, 2:802-3; Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 11; de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 43-44; J. Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (2nd ed.; 2 vols.; ÖTB 4/1-2; Gütersloh/Würzburg: Gerd Mohn/Echter Verlag, 1984) 539, 544, 555, 581, 595; M.W.G. Stibbe, *John* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary: Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 180, 186-87, 193-94; Senior, *Passion*, 45.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, W. Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium erklärt* (3rd ed.; HKNT 6; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1933) 208; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 321; Barrett, *St John*, 515; Stibbe, *John*, 180.

<sup>8</sup> This is recognised by commentators who include v. 12 with vv. 1-11 as “the arrest of Jesus”. See, for example, Brown, *John*, 2:805; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCC; London: Oliphants, 1972) 537; Kysar, *John* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Augsburg: Minneapolis, 1986) 267. Senior, *Passion*, 46, accurately calls 18:1-11: “Jesus confronts his enemies”.

<sup>9</sup> See E.C.Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (ed. F.N. Davey; London: Faber & Faber, 1947) 509; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John* (3 vols.; HTCNT 4/1-3; London: Burns & Oates; New York: Crossroad, 1968-82) 3:223, and the brief study of each character lined up against Jesus in Senior, *Passion*, 48-51, and the full discussion of both the historical and theological possibilities of the grouping in Brown, *Death*, 1:248-52. In defence of the historicity of this grouping, see Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 169-70. On the ὑπηρέται as “court servants at the disposal of the Sanhedrin when necessary for police purposes”, see Brown, *Death*, 1:249-50. Brown calls them “attendants”, but I will use “Temple officers”, in order to catch their policing function.

and that he has challenged his listeners, at the close of the ministry, to walk in the light while they have the light (see 12:35-36a). Armed for violence, Jesus' enemies, Romans and Jews, representing "the world", come in search of the light of the world, carrying their own man-made light, lanterns and torches (v. 3). The enemies of Jesus are portrayed as rejecting the claims which Jesus has made for himself during the ministry.<sup>10</sup>

Jesus knows what will befall him (v. 4a). In this knowledge, he comes forward and asks who it is they are seeking, only to level them to the ground with his self-identification as ἐγὼ εἶμι after their request for "Jesus of Nazareth".<sup>11</sup> The reader follows Jesus' address to his prone opponents as he pursues his interrogation of them, insisting that he is the one that they are seeking. Again using the formula of self revelation, ἐγὼ εἶμι, he *informs* his opponents that their designs upon Jesus of Nazareth can be pursued if they are to allow the disciples to go free (v. 8).<sup>12</sup> The narrator nudges the reader to recall Jesus' words to the Father from the immediately previous context: "Of those whom thou gavest me, I lost not one" (v. 9. See 17:12. See also 6:69; 10:28). During that prayer, Jesus prayed for his disciples (see 17:9-19), and for those who would hear the word through their ministry (vv. 20-26), that they might be swept up into the oneness of love which existed from all time between the Father and the Son, "so that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them even as you have loved me" (v. 23). As Jesus initiates the process which will lead to his being lifted up (see 3:14; 8:28; 12:32), he demands that his disciples go their way, so that they may perform their missionary task (see 13:20, 34-35; 15:5-8, 16, 26-27; 17:18-19, 20-23). Peter fails to understand the significance of the events which are about to take place, using a sword in a violent attempt to change the course

<sup>10</sup> See C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) 432: "The action of Jesus in the Garden was a σημεῖον of His action on a larger scale and on a higher plane; and this action upon a larger scale and on a higher plane is the true meaning of His action in the Garden".

<sup>11</sup> Not all would accept that ἐγὼ εἶμι is anything more than self-identification for the people who have come to arrest him. But the context demands more. Why do they collapse to the ground as a consequence of these words? See Barrett, *St John*, 520; Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:225; Kysar, *John*, 268; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 322-23. On the other hand, it is an exaggeration to see the scene as a representation of God's "going out into the world and overpowering the forces of darkness" (vv. 4-6), followed by "divine self-giving" which brings salvation to others (vv. 7-9), as does T.L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John. A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 525-26. There may be a pejorative note in the name "Jesus of Nazareth". This is only the second time in the Fourth Gospel when Jesus' origins in Nazareth are mentioned. Earlier Nathanael had commented, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth" (1:46).

<sup>12</sup> On the use of ἐγὼ εἶμι in 18:4-8a, see Brown, *Death*, 1:259-62.

of events (18:10). But he is rebuked, as the passion story must now begin.<sup>13</sup> The reader, who has followed Jesus' earlier proclamation and clarification of the arrival of "the hour" of the glorification of the Son of Man (see 12:23-28), is aware that Peter is thwarting God's design, and that Jesus willingly drinks the cup which the Father gives him (v. 11. See 12:27).

The Johannine passion story begins because Jesus allows it to begin. He is the master of the situation. However, from the very first scene, 18:1-11, the disciples are singled out for special attention. Unlike the parallel scene in the Synoptic tradition, where Jesus' loneliness is stressed (see Mark 15:32-42; Matt 26:26-46; Luke 22:40-46) Jesus is in the Garden with his disciples (John 18:1). They are mentioned explicitly three times in two verses (vv. 1-2), while Judas, another disciple of Jesus, is described as standing with Jesus' enemies (v. 5: εἰστήκει δὲ καὶ Ἰούδας ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν μετ' αὐτῶν). In the face of hostility and violence Jesus demands that the disciples be free. The reader receives a broad hint, which follows logically from what Jesus has said to the disciples and requested of his Father during his final discourse and prayer (see 15:1-8, 12-17; 17:9-19, 20-21), that the passion of Jesus will not only be about what happens to Jesus, but also what determines the future of the Christian community.

## 1.2. *Jesus' Appearance Before "the Jews" (18:12-25)*

I will return to this passage at greater length in the second section of this study, but some remarks may be made at this stage. Jesus is arrested by the soldiers and their captain, and the officers (ὑπηρέται. See v. 3) of "the Jews" and taken to Annas (18:12-14). But Annas' relationship with Caiaphas is mentioned so that the narrator can focus the reader's attention upon a theme that has been developing from late in Jesus' ministry: Jesus' death is not for himself, but for the people and, the reader recalls, for a gathering of others who are not of this fold (see 10:15-16; 11:50-52; 12:11, 19, 20-24, 31-32).<sup>14</sup> The theme of the future Christian community is kept before the reader by means of this recalling of 11:49-52.

Characters gather in the court of the high priest: Jesus, Simon Peter,

<sup>13</sup> On Peter's failure, see Stibbe, *John*, 181; Senior, *Passion*, 54-55. Against, for example, Becker, *Johannes*, 2:544, who argues that Peter's actions served no purpose for the Evangelist, except to introduce v. 11, or Brodie, *John*, 526-27, who plays on the servant's name of Malchus (meaning "king") to show that Peter is misunderstanding the nature of Jesus' kingdom.

<sup>14</sup> See Senior, *Passion*, 59-60.

another disciple and the maid who kept the door. Disciples, so present at the scene in the garden, continue in the story (vv. 15-16. See vv. 1-2, 5b, 10-11). But, as in the garden (see vv. 10-11), Peter continues his failure to understand the significance of the moment as he denies being a disciple of Jesus, and draws near to the fire prepared by the servants and the ὑπέρηται (vv. 17-18. See vv. 3, 12). He moves towards Jesus' enemies at their false light, as Jesus, the light of the world, is interrogated "about his disciples (περὶ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτῶν. See vv. 1-2) and his teaching (περὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ)". In his reply, Jesus reverses the order. He first tells them that the time of his teaching is over, as he has already preached openly. However, he refers his interrogators to a group of people who have heard what he said (τοὺς ἀκηκοότας). If the high priest wishes to know about Jesus' teaching, then he should ask those who heard him.<sup>15</sup> But the reader is aware that one of his disciples, certainly someone who has "heard him" throughout the public ministry, Peter, is outside denying any connection with Jesus, joining the forces opposing him.<sup>16</sup> Jesus was interrogated about his disciples. It is to his disciples that Jesus sends them if they wish to know about his teaching. On receiving a slap which is a sign of the rejection of his words to the high priest, Jesus demands that witness be born to his having spoken evil or well (vv. 22-23), and he is led off to Caiaphas (v. 24).

The narrator returns to one of "those who heard him", Simon Peter, to report his second and his third denial of Jesus. The weight of the accusations intensifies, as Peter's sword-wielding feats are recalled by a relative of the wounded Malchus, but so also does the vigour of Simon Peter's denials ... until the cock crows (vv. 25-27). The reader recognises that Jesus' words to Peter as they sat at table have come true: "The cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times" (13:38). The words of Jesus come true (18:27b). If such is the case for Jesus' prophecy about Peter's denials, so will it also be with his words about the role of "those who heard" what Jesus said if they wish to know his διδασκαλίᾳ, even though some may deny him. Jesus is being interrogated, but the story is told in such a way that the reader learns as much about the responsibilities and the fragility of the future Christian community as about the experience of Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> This important element in the story, which I will analyse in greater detail in the second part of this paper, is missed by scholars who concentrate on Jesus' revelation of the truth. See, for example, de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 69-77; Senior, *Passion*, 60-67.

<sup>16</sup> The alternation between "Simon Peter" in vv. 10, 15 and 25 to "Peter" in vv. 16, 17, 18 and 27, may also be a veiled indication of his ambiguous role in the story. In the Fourth Gospel his name is Simon, and Jesus gives him the name "Peter" (see 1:41-42). It is as Simon Peter that he makes his confession of faith in 6:68-69

### 1.3. Jesus Before Pilate (18:28-19:16a)

The Synoptic tradition already used the trial of Jesus before Pilate and the sign on the Cross to proclaim Jesus as “King” (see Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32; Matt 27:11, 29, 37, 42; Luke 23: 2, 3, 27, 38), but this theme is developed in such a way that it dominates the interrogation of Jesus by Pilate (see 18:33, 37, 39; 19:3, 12, 14, 15) and continues into the scene of the crucifixion (19:19, 21). The introduction sets the scene at the praetorium, and introduces the characters of Jesus, Pilate and the Jewish leaders, who – as the first light of the day breaks – ironically present the Lamb of God for trial – but remain outside the Praetorium to avoid ritual impurity on the eve of the Passover (v. 28).<sup>17</sup> The “trial” which follows is marked by seven brief scenes which take place either inside or outside the praetorium.<sup>18</sup> The narrator uses verbs of motion to show that Pilate and/or Jesus comes out or goes in. There are two “trials” in progress: one flows from the encounter between the Roman authority of Pilate and “the Jews” (see vv. 29-32, 38b-40; 19:5-7, 12-15), and the other from the encounter between Pilate and Jesus (18:33-38; 19:8-11).<sup>19</sup> For the reader, the deciding issue is how Pilate and “the Jews” respond to Jesus’ royal status.<sup>20</sup> There is only one scene where there is no mention of a verb of motion, and no dialogue: 19:1-3. In that scene, which takes place inside the praetorium, even though the narrator has not indicated a change of place, Jesus is crowned, dressed as a king, and ironically proclaimed: “Hail, the King of the Jews” (v. 3). Although the Synoptic tradition has a parallel scene (see Mark 15:18; Matt 27:29), only the Fourth Gospel has the soldiers use the definite article in addressing Jesus as “the King” in the ironic salutation: “χαῖρε ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων” (19:3).

The reader follows “the Jews” as they intensify their rejection of Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> See Senior, *Passion*, 77; Brown, *Death*, 1:744-46. It is possible that the dawning of the day is a subtle hint of an ironic victory which is being initiated. See, along these lines, Bultmann, *John*, 651; Brown, *John*, 2:866. It is not entirely clear how entry into the Praetorium would have incurred impurity. For the discussion, see Brown, *Death*, 1:744-45.

<sup>18</sup> This pattern is universally recognised by scholars. Stibbe *John as storyteller*, 105, gives credit to R.H. Strachan (1941) for this, but it was already recognised by B.F. Westcott in 1881. See his *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: John Murray, 1908) 258. This is a reprint of Westcott’s 1881 *The Speaker’s Commentary*. Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 102, argues that revelation takes place *inside*, as Jesus speaks, while *outside* belongs to the godless world. This is not the case, as Pilate regularly ironically proclaims the truth about Jesus to “the Jews”.

<sup>19</sup> Brown, *Death*, 1:743, calls this “one of the master dramatic constructions in this Gospel”. See his chiasmic structure of the seven scenes on pp. 757-59.

<sup>20</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 1:744.

They have already made up their minds that Jesus is an evildoer (see 18:30), and that he must die by being “lifted up”.<sup>21</sup> He must be slain by the Roman method of execution: crucifixion (see v. 31), and the narrator reminds the reader that this fulfills the earlier word of Jesus about the manner of his death: “When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to myself” (12:23). The reader is reminded that the death of Jesus will not be for himself, but for the “gathering” of others.<sup>22</sup> Pilate will have none of the Jewish stories of Kings and Messiahs (vv. 33-35), but he is told of the nature of Jesus’ messianic kingship: he exercises his royalty in making God known to the world, bearing witness to the truth, and drawing all who are of the truth into his kingdom (vv. 36-37). “These words are saturated with Johannine theology”.<sup>23</sup> Although Pilate questions Jesus about his royal status, Jesus does not speak about himself, but about the βασιλεία.<sup>24</sup> There is a gratuitous offer of truth from Jesus to his Roman interrogator as he tells Pilate that he reveals the truth, and draws the people of the truth into a kingdom of truth as they hear his voice. The reader recalls the only other use of βασιλεία in the Gospel, where Nicodemus was told of the need to be born again from above (ἀνωθεν), by water and the Spirit ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος in order to “see” and to “enter” the kingdom (3:3-5). The kingdom is a “place” where God reigns, the Christian community, and those who are of God, i.e., of the truth, respond to the voice of Jesus, “see” (ἰδεῖν) and “enter into” (εἰσελθεῖν εἰς) that kingdom (see again, 3:3, 5).<sup>25</sup> But Pilate rejects

<sup>21</sup> “The Jews” tell Pilate that it is not lawful for them to put anyone to death (v. 31b), and thus they bring Jesus to Pilate. It is still debated whether or not this was true at the time of Jesus. See, for a survey, Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:245-46; Brown, *Death*, 1:747-49. Pancaro, *Law*, 310-26, claims that the Johannine motivation for 18:31 (and 19:6) is highly theological, whatever was or was not possible historically. According to the Law, Jesus was innocent of the charge “the Jews” brought against him (he was an evildoer), and thus they could not put him to death. Their real problem is that he is “Son of God” (see 19:7). Jesus will be put to death by Pilate because such is the will of the Father, and Pilate executes Jesus in virtue of the ἐξουσία which he receives from above (see 19:11).

<sup>22</sup> Here, as so often through the Johannine passion narrative, historical concerns are being subjected to Johannine theology. Whether or not the Jews had authority to execute anyone is debated, but it is crucial for the Johannine understanding of the death of Jesus that he be “lifted up” on a cross. On this, see E. Bammel, “The Trial before Pilate”, in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 414-51; Senior, *Passion*, 75-76.

<sup>23</sup> Senior, *Passion*, 80.

<sup>24</sup> See Bultmann, *John*, 654; Brown, *John*, 2:868.

<sup>25</sup> The physical and spatial nature of the language must be given its full weight. For a more detailed interpretation of βασιλεία in 3:3, 5 as the Christian community, see Moloney, *Belief*, 109-14. See also Lagrange, *Saint Jean*, 477: “Rvéler la vérité était encore une manière de se faire des partisans et de créer un royaume, composé des amis de la vérité”. Brown, *Death*, 1:750-753, rightly stresses that the “kingdom” in John is different from that of the



Jesus' revelation-invitation with his brusque refusal of the word of Jesus: "What is truth?" (v. 38).<sup>26</sup>

Despite Pilate's inability to step into Jesus' kingdom of truth, he goes out to "the Jews", proclaims Jesus' innocence, and offers to free Jesus, "the King of the Jews" (v. 39). But "the Jews" ask for Barabbas, a ληστής, a man of violence, and a false messianic choice.<sup>27</sup> Ironically, it is at this stage of the story that, without any notification of change of place or actors, Jesus is dressed and proclaimed as the King of the Jews (19:1-3). Gone are the blindfolding, the punches, the spitting, the mocking genuflections, and the striking on the head with a rod of the Synoptic tradition (see Mark 14:65; Matt 26:67-68; Luke 22:63-64; Mark 15:16-17; Matt 27:27-30). In their place there is a crowning, a clothing and an ironic proclamation.<sup>28</sup> Despite the rejection involved in the scene, Jesus is crowned and acclaimed as "the King of the Jews". Ironically, the truth is being proclaimed by the narrative.

Emerging from the praetorium Pilate again declares that Jesus is innocent, and Jesus, crowned as a King and dressed as a King, "came out" (ἐξῆλθεν ... ἔξω). He is not "led out". Still master of his own destiny, he

Synoptic tradition. However, he misses its ecclesial dimension in his accentuation of its being a spiritual reality. On the link between "hearing the voice" of Jesus, and the response of the sheep to the Good Shepherd in 10:10,3-4, 8, 16, see W.A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King. Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup XIV; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967) 66-67.

<sup>26</sup> The reader is aware that the criterion for authentic belief in Jesus is an openness to his word. Pilate fails because, like many before him in the Johannine story, he refuses to hear the voice of Jesus. On this criterion for belief, see Moloney, *Belief*, 192-99.

<sup>27</sup> As is well known, ληστής is the expression used by Josephus to speak of the Zealots, whose false messianic pretension – according to Josephus – caused God to abandon his people, and thus led to the destruction of the City and the Nation. On this, see A.J. Simonis, *Die Hirtenrede im Johannes-Evangelium. Versuch eine Analyse von Johannes 10,1-18 nach Entstehung Hintergrund und Inhalt* (AnBib 29; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1967) 130-39. Against this, see Brown, *Death*, 1:808. In 10:14-18 the celebration of Tabernacles (see 7:1-10-21) culminates with Jesus' self-identification of the Messianic Good Shepherd. However, "the Jews" have chosen a ληστής, a thief and a robber who came before him to plunder the sheep (see 10:1, 8). On this relationship between 18:40 and 10:1-18, see Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 67-8. Stibbe, *John*, 190, argues that the reader notes a play on the rejection of the Son of the Father for *Bar Abbas*, "son of the father", but this is probably not intended. The name comes from the tradition, and this play is not obvious in a Greek text. On the name of Barabbas, see Brown, *Death*, 1:796-800. For a presentation of the historical difficulties in identifying the practice of releasing a prisoner at Passover, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 334. See also the more comprehensive (but still inconclusive) treatment of Brown, *John*, 1:814-20.

<sup>28</sup> On the irony of this scene, see P. D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985) 131-32, and the references given there, especially J. Blank, "Die Verhandlung vor Pilatus Jo 19:28-19:16 im Lichte johanneischer Theologie", *BZ* 3 (1959) 73-74. See also Becker, *Johannes*, 2:571-72; de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 101-3. Brown, *Death*, 1:869, misses this by claiming that the slap is the equivalent of the spitting and the striking. He does not mention the omission of the mocking genuflections.

comes out “bearing” (φορῶν) the signs of his royal status.<sup>29</sup> The narrator never indicates that the royal trappings of crown and cloak are taken off Jesus, to be replaced by his own clothing (contrast Mark 15:20; Matt 27:31). Jesus goes to the Cross dressed as a King. This is the setting for Pilate’s famous words: ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Paralleling his earlier declaration of Jesus’ innocence and his presentation of Jesus to “the Jews” as “the King of the Jews” in vv. 38b-39, Pilate again declares Jesus innocent, and presents him to “the Jews” with another title of honour, in this case, “the Man”. But as before Jesus’ coronation and investiture “the Jews” had asked for Barabbas (see v. 40), they now demand that Jesus be crucified. This sequence of events leads the reader to recall Jesus’ earlier words to “the Jews”: “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he” (8:28). The first part of this prophecy is now being fulfilled: they are taking it upon themselves to “lift up” in crucifixion the royal figure presented to them as “the Man”. As Greeks came to see Jesus, he announced: “Now is the hour that the Son of Man be glorified” (12:23). He further clarified the glorification by his words: “When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to myself” (12:32). To which the narrator added: “He said this to show by what death he was to die” (v. 33). “The Jews” are demanding that the innocent Son of Man be lifted up,<sup>30</sup> because he challenges their law in his claim to be the Son of God (v. 7). At last the real reason for their rejection of Je-

<sup>29</sup> For the use of the verb φορέω to speak of a regal wearing of clothes or armour, see LSJ, 1950-51, s.v. φορέα. The primary meaning of the verb is to bear regularly, and thus “to wear”. See BAGD, 864-65.

<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed argument along these lines, see F.J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (2nd ed.; BibScRel 14; Rome: LAS, 1978) 202-7. See also Blank, “Verhandlung”, 75-77; Lindars, *John*, 566; Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 264-65; de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 79-80; Stibbe, *John*, 191. Schnackenburg, *St John*, 1:532-33, is more cautious (“at most ... an indirect illusion”) about any link between “the Man” and “the Son of Man”, but he is more interested in history of religions background to this possibility than the narrative design of the Gospel itself. Bultmann, *John*, 659, claims that Jesus’ miserable state is the ultimate consequence of the word’s becoming flesh. See also Brown, *Death*, 1:827-28 who is close to Bultmann in suggesting that Pilate points to Jesus as a fragile human being, innocuous to both Rome and Israel. For Becker, *Johannes*, 2:572-73, Pilate presents Jesus as a “laughable King”. This interpretation (as with Schnackenburg and Brown) fails to appreciate the sequence of events: Pilate proclaims Jesus the innocent king in 18:38b-40, Jesus is ironically crowned in 19:1-3, and Pilate then proclaims him the innocent “Man” in 19:4-7. This is a prime example of the search for diachronic background losing touch with the synchrony of the narrative. C. Panackel, *ΔΟΥ Ο ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ (Jn 19,5b). An Exegetico-Theological Study of the Text in the Light of the use of the term ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ Designating Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Analecta Gregoriana 251; Rome Gregorian University Press, 1988) 215-338, has painstakingly analysed the text and its context, but exaggeratedly concludes that 19:5b is the Fourth Evangelist’s concluding use of ἄνθρωπος to proclaim that in the humanity of Jesus the Son of God is revealed.

sus has surfaced. The reader has been following this increasing tension since Jesus' first claim to work on a Sabbath as his Father was working (see 5:17, and subsequently, 7:14-20, 28-30; 8:12-20, 48-59; 10:25-30, 36-39; 12:42-43). "The Jews" cannot accept that God's former gift of the Mosaic tradition has been perfected in the incarnate Son of God (see 1:14), the further gift of God which has taken place through Jesus Christ (see 1:16-17).<sup>31</sup> Anyone who makes such claims must be eliminated, but Pilate is frightened, "more afraid", at the suggestion that Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in his second encounter with Jesus he asks the question fundamental to Johannine Christology: "Where are you from?" But he receives no answer from Jesus (vv. 8-9). The reader recalls Pilate's earlier encounter with Jesus, when Jesus openly and gratuitously revealed to him the possibility of being drawn into the kingdom of truth by hearing his voice. This offer was brusquely rejected (see 18:36-38). There is no longer any point in speaking to Pilate. What is now happening to Pilate matches Jesus' refusal to speak to "the Jews" in 18:20-21, as he has already spoken to them *παρρησίᾳ* throughout his public ministry (v. 20). He has also given witness *τῇ ἀληθείᾳ* to Pilate (18:37), but it has been rejected (v. 38).<sup>33</sup> Thus he refuses to be drawn into any further self-revelation to Pilate (19:9), who asks his question from a position of human authority and non-belief. He blusters against Jesus about his political authority (v. 10), and the reader recognises the truth of Jesus' words, conceding that the one who handed him over (*ὁ παραδούς*) has the greater guilt,<sup>34</sup> but informing Pilate that all authority comes from above. In many ways Jesus has answered Pilate's question of v. 9. He has everything "from above", because that is where he is from (see v. 11).

<sup>31</sup> For 1:16-17 as "From his fullness we have all received, a gift in place of a gift; for the Law was given through Moses, but the fullness of the gift of truth came through Jesus Christ", see Moloney, *Belief*, 46-48.

<sup>32</sup> What is meant by Pilate's being "the *more* afraid" is widely discussed. See Brown, *Death*, 1:830. Rightly Brown concludes: "Pilate is afraid because it becomes clearer and clearer that he will not be able to escape making a judgment about truth".

<sup>33</sup> As Senior, *Passion*, 83, comments in 18:38: "He joins ranks with the religious leaders; he cannot understand Jesus or his words because he is 'not from God' (8:47)". It is a more theological assessment of Pilate than is allowed by Brown, *Death*, 1:840-41.

<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to be sure exactly who is intended. It might be a reference to Judas, although it is sometimes suggested that "the Jews" are to be held responsible (see, for example, Bultmann, *John*, 662; Lindars, *John*, 569; Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:261-62; Brown, *Death*, 1:842). The singular form of the noun, however, points to an individual. Strictly in terms of the narrative it is Caiaphas who made the final decision (see 11:49-53), and who is behind Jesus' being led to Pilate (see 18:28). For this identification, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 340. In this way, the responsibility of the Roman authority is subordinated to the responsibility of the High Priest of that memorable year (see 11:49).

This is beyond the Roman soldier, faced by “the Jews” who ironically attempt to teach the Procurator a lesson on the universal authority of the Roman emperor (v. 12).<sup>35</sup> Whatever may have been his fear on hearing the words of “the Jews”, Pilate leads Jesus out and either sat himself down on the judgment seat or (less likely) had Jesus take the seat (v. 13).<sup>36</sup> On the day of preparation for the Passover Pilate proclaims Jesus as King: “Behold your King!” (v. 14), but “the Jews” demand crucifixion while Pilate expresses surprise that they want to crucify their King. At the “sixth hour” (ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη), precisely at the moment when the passover lambs were being ritually slaughtered in the Temple, “the Jews” scream out for the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God (vv. 14-15. See 1:29, 35).<sup>37</sup> Despite his initial refusal to listen to “the truth” (18:38), Jesus’ subsequent refusal to answer his questions concerning his origins (19:8-9), “the Jews” paying for the blood of Jesus (v. 6), and their threat concerning his allegiance to Caesar (v. 12),<sup>38</sup> Pilate continues to insist upon the kingship of Jesus (v. 14). This may not make much sense of Pilate’s psychological coherence, but it enables the author to use his surprising insistence on Jesus’ royal status to proclaim ironically the truth about Jesus. But in the end Pilate capitulates to “the Jews” who betray the Mosaic tradition which they have so stoutly used to accuse Jesus throughout the latter part of his ministry (see esp chs 5-10), and during this trial (see 19:7): “We have no king but Caesar” (v. 15). Paralleling their choice of Barabbas the ληστής rather than Pilate’s offer of the “King of the Jews” (see 18:39-40), “the Jews” choose Roman authority over against their King, forsake all attachment to the promised kingdom of God, and ask that a Roman form of execution be used to eliminate him (v. 15). “Their repudiation of Jesus in the name of a pretended loyalty to the em-

<sup>35</sup> For an attempt to reconstruct the historical background for a Jewish crowd’s saying such things to the Roman Procurator, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 340-41. However possible such an event may or may not have been, the dramatic irony is the major feature of the episode. See Duke, *Irony*, 134-36.

<sup>36</sup> There is the possibility that the verb ἐκάθισεν in v. 13 may be transitive, meaning that Pilate sat Jesus down, rather than the intransitive, indicating that Pilate sat down. For the transitive meaning, among many (Boismard, Bonsirven, Gardner-Smith, Haenchen, Loisy, Lightfoot, Meeks, Brodie), see de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 108-111. Against such an interpretation, see Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 269-74; Brown, *Death*, 1:844-45. The most likely meaning is that Pilate sat down, while the reader might suspect that the transitive meaning is possible. See Kysar, *John*, 282-83; Stibbe, *John*, 191. For a detailed survey of the discussion, concluding that Pilate sits on the judgment seat, see Brown, *Death*, 2:1388-93.

<sup>37</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 1:845-48; Kysar, *John*, 283-84; Duke, *Irony*, 135; Senior, *Passion*, 96-97.

<sup>38</sup> On the possible reference to “friend of Caesar” as a technical term of honour, see Brown, *Death*, 1:843-44.

peror entailed their repudiation of the promise of the kingdom of God, with which the gift of the Messiah is inseparably bound in Jewish faith, and Israel's vocation to be its heir, its instrument, and its proclaimer to the nations".<sup>39</sup>

As the account of Jesus before Pilate began with an introductory passage where "the Jews" led Jesus before the Roman authority (v. 28), it concludes with the Roman authority handing Jesus over to them, so that they might lift up the Son of Man (v. 16a. See 8:28).<sup>40</sup> The reader is now aware that the story has come full circle, and that themes have been stated and restated around the central scene of the ironic coronation of Jesus as King. He has been proclaimed King both before (18:38b-40) and after (19:4-7) his coronation (19:1-3), but the response of "the Jews" has been to choose false messianic hopes (18:40 [Barabbas]; 19:12-15 [Rome]), and to seek the crucifixion of their King (18:29-32; 19:4-7, 13-15).<sup>41</sup> The trial of Jesus before Pilate, which has really been a trial of Pilate and "the Jews" comes to its conclusion as Pilate hands Jesus over to "the Jews" to be crucified (19:16a).

The reader is aware that a violent end to Jesus' life has been in the making from the earliest days of his ministry. Yet Jesus has spoken of the need for the Son of Man to be lifted up on several occasions (see 3:14; 8:28; 12:32). Associated with the "lifting up", Jesus has also looked forward to this moment as his glorification. At the feast of Tabernacles the narrator informed the reader that the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified (7:39). In 11:4 he informed his disciples that the illness of Lazarus would lead to the revelation of the glory of God, and that the Son would be glorified through it. Further words of Jesus have indicated that such would be the case (see 12:16, 23; 13:31-32; 17:1). The reader is asked to accept that the crucifixion which must now follow will be a moment of royal glory. The reader looks forward to the resolution of a prolep-

<sup>39</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 343. See also Brown, *Death*, 1:848-49.

<sup>40</sup> See Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 131-32, 269.

<sup>41</sup> Many scholars point to the chiasmic nature of 18:28-19:16, and it is undoubtedly a chiasm. See, for example, Brown, *John*, 2:858-59; Stibbe, *John*, 187. But however obvious they are to the critical scholar, readers do not read in chiasms. On arrival at the end of a chiasmically structured section of the narrative, the reader is aware of a satisfying closure to the reading experience, but can only look back over that experience. Thus, one must follow the reader through the unfolding text, rather than pre-empt the interpretation of the passage by deciding that it is a chiasm in which the elements which flank the central statement must be interpreted as parallels. On this, see R.M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand. Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 151-52. See also Senior, *Passion*, 68-71, who warns against overplaying the significance of the chiasm, to the detriment of the linear "dynamism of the narrative" (p. 69). See also Stibbe, *John*, 187, on "progression" across the trial before Pilate.

sis which has been present throughout the narrative from Jesus' first days. Then he promised the greater sight of the revelation of the heavenly in the Son of Man (1:51), and warned his Mother that his hour had not yet (οὔπω) come (2:4). The reader has been systematically pointed toward this "not yet" through the public ministry (see 2:18-22; 3:14, 16-17; 4:21-24, 34; 5:16-18; 6:12-13, 27, 35, 51c, 57-58; 7:8, 30, 37-39; 8:20, 28; 10:11, 14-18; 11:4, 25-26, 49-52; 12:23-24, 28, 32-33). Jesus' final discourse and prayer (chs 13-17) have been dominated by the announcement of his departure (see 13:33, 36; 14:1-4, 28; 16:5-11, 16, 28; 17:5, 11, 13), and the responsibilities, difficulties and joys which lie ahead of the community (see 13:18-20, 34-35; 14:11-17, 21-24, 29; 15:1-11, 12-17, 15:18-16:3; 16:21-24, 33; 17:11b-19, 21-26). There can be no further postponement of the lifting up of Jesus (see 3:14; 8:28; 12:32), of the hour of his glorification (see 12:23), his enthronement as "King of the Jews".

The story of Jesus' appearance before Pilate is primarily christological. Here, more than anywhere else in the Gospel, has the author spelt out for the reader the fact that Jesus is King through his trial, his rejection, and his being lifted up on a Cross. However, the Christian community has not been entirely ignored, even in this most christological of passages. The question must be posed: if Jesus is King, over whom does he reign? The narrative itself has provided an answer, which Pilate refused to accept. Jesus has come into this world to reveal the Truth, i.e. to make God known in his person.<sup>42</sup> There are those who belong to this kingdom where the truth has been made known: everyone who is of the truth hears the voice of Jesus (18:38). In short, if the trial before Pilate proclaimed and crowned Jesus as King, the reader has also been invited to hear the voice of Jesus so that she or he might belong to the kingdom of truth. The reader has also discovered that Jesus will no longer make himself known to those who have refused his public revelation, neither "the Jews" (18:20-21) nor Pilate, the Roman Procurator (19:8-9). "The Jews" have opted for a ληστής (18:40) and the Roman emperor (19:15), while Pilate has refused to hear Jesus' revelation of the truth (18:38). There are, however, some who have heard what Jesus has said. They know about the διδασχὴ of Jesus, and anyone who is searching for knowledge of that teaching should ask them (18:21).

As Jesus' ministry began, with episodes which ran from Cana to Cana (see 2:1-4:54), the reader was told the crucial importance of an unquestion-

<sup>42</sup> For this meaning of ἀλήθεια in the Fourth Gospel, see I. de la Potterie, *La vérité dans Saint Jean* (2 vols.; AnBib 73-74; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977). For 18:37, see pp. 100-116.

ing acceptance of the revelation of God in and through the word of Jesus.<sup>43</sup> Jesus' has revealed himself as the Good Shepherd who calls his own, who listen to his voice (10:3-4), and Mary of Bethany has shown how one might respond to the voice of the Good Shepherd (see 11:2, 28-32; 12:1-8). Jesus may have refused to speak any further to "the Jews" and to Pilate, but now, as the narrative reaches its climax, the final word of Jesus is spoken: he will make God known by being lifted up on a Cross. For this purpose he has come into the world (see 18:37), and the reader is drawn towards the story of the crucifixion to discover how the crucified King can possibly establish a kingdom of truth. "All who encounter Jesus must ultimately choose to acknowledge the truth or be consumed by falsehood".<sup>44</sup>

#### 1.4. *The Crucifixion of Jesus (19:16b-37)*

The scene is set at the place of the skull, or Golgotha (v. 17b), and the characters are introduced: Jesus, handed over by Pilate to "the Jews" (v. 16b),<sup>45</sup> carrying the Cross, "the sole master of his destiny" (v. 17a).<sup>46</sup> He is crucified at Golgotha between two others. The Synoptic Gospels record that the two were bandits (see Mark 15:27; Matt 27:38) or evil-doers (see Luke 23:39-43). This is not said here. The narrator shows no interest in why two other people were being executed, but goes to considerable detail to indicate that Jesus, now crucified, occupies a central place between them (καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἄλλους δύο ἐντεῦθεν, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν μέσον δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν).<sup>47</sup> The reader, who has waited so long for the event of the "lifting up" of Jesus

<sup>43</sup> See, on this, Moloney, *Belief*, 77-191.

<sup>44</sup> Senior, *Passion*, 68.

<sup>45</sup> "The Jews" were the ones who cried out that he be crucified in v. 15, to whom Jesus is "handed over" in v. 16. They are the subject of παρέλαβον in v. 16b. So Senior, *Passion*, 101-2. Against those who insist that "they" must be the Roman soldiers who appear in v. 23. See, for example, Beasley-Murray, *John*, 344; Brown, *Death*, 1:856-57. Brown insists that the readers knew that the Romans crucified Jesus, and thus had no illusions about the identity of the "them". On these grounds, which ignore the dramatic flow of the narrative, he argues that "one should not press grammatical antecedents" (p. 856). A combination of what the readers know and what the text says indicates that both "the Jews" and the Romans continue to unite against Jesus.

<sup>46</sup> For the quotation, see Brown, *John*, 2:917. For a similar interpretation, see Barrett, *St John*, 549; Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:270; Brown, *Death*, 2:916-17. For a survey of other possible motifs operative in this description, which is different from the Synoptic tradition of Simon of Cyrene (see Mark 15:21; Matt 27:32; Luke 23:26), see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 345.

<sup>47</sup> Senior, *Passion*, 103, comments: "In John's version they become part of the crucified King's 'retinue' as he takes his place on the throne of the cross". Brodie, *John*, 545, suggests that from his position "in the middle" Jesus is drawing people to himself, but this is over-reading the text's possibilities.

finds that the narrator describes it in the briefest terms (v. 18b: αὐτὸν ἐσταύρωσαν). The narrator does not dwell on the bloody reality of a Roman crucifixion, but after making Jesus the centre-piece of a triptych of crucified people, moves immediately to the issue of the title on the Cross: “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews” (v. 19). Pilate continues to insist on Jesus’ kingship, in all the languages of Palestine: Hebrew, Latin and Greek (v. 20b). Indeed, these are the languages of the “cultured world” of the Roman empire. With great irony, the kingship of Jesus is proclaimed universally, and can be read by all those who pass by (v. 20a).<sup>48</sup> The theme of Jesus crucified drawing everyone to himself has been emerging since he identified himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep to gather into one fold sheep who are not of the flock of Israel (10:16). It has received fuller expression in the words of Caiaphas and the narrator’s enlargement of those words (11:49-52), and clearly spelt out as the Greeks come to Jesus, who comments: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (12:32. See also 12:23-24). The proclamation of the crucified Jesus as King, in all the languages of the world, is the first indication to the reader that this theme is now coming to a climax.<sup>49</sup> Jesus has been proclaimed and crowned as a King before Pilate; now he has been lifted up upon his throne of the Cross, and the reader waits for his exercising of his kingly ministry. “The Jews”, in perfect coherence with their response to Jesus throughout the public ministry, reject this final proclamation of the truth about Jesus, but Pilate will not allow it to be changed, because what he has written, he has written: it is true (vv. 21-22).<sup>50</sup>

Romans (οἱ στρατιῶται) continue to play a role as they divide his garments into four parts, but cast lots for the seamless inner garment, so that it not be torn asunder (vv. 23-24). Scripture is fulfilled, as the soldiers do exactly as Ps 22:19 had foretold.<sup>51</sup> By why this insistence on the fact that the intimate inner garment of Jesus is not to be torn asunder?<sup>52</sup> Is there some-

<sup>48</sup> See Becker, *Johannes*, 2:587-88; Duke, *Irony*, 136-37.

<sup>49</sup> See Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 528.

<sup>50</sup> See Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 275; Brown, *Death*, 2:964-67. As Kysar, *John*, 287, comments: “John has the unwilling Pilate proclaim the fulfillment of the redemptive act of God, which can never be changed now that it is done”. Mistakenly, Brodie, *John*, 546, sees in this a “new scripture” proclaiming Jesus’ universal kingship.

<sup>51</sup> On the use of the Lament Psalms, and especially Ps 22 in the passion tradition, see D.J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983) 224-232. On 22:18 in John 19:24, see pp. 252-257, where Moo decides against the symbol of the unity of the Church.

<sup>52</sup> The clothes in general are called τὰ ἱμάτια, but this garment is called ὁ χιτῶν, a “tunic”, an inner garment. On this, see Brown, *Death*, 2:955-56.



thing precious which belongs to Jesus whose unity must be maintained? The reader, coming from 17:20-26, is aware that Jesus has asked his Father to preserve the unity of his own, and all those who will hear his word through their ministry, so that the world might know that God has sent his Son, and that God loves the world, just as he loves his Son. The passion story has already told of Jesus' demand that his disciples be allowed to leave the garden freely (see 18:8-9), with a direct reference, from the narrator, back to Jesus' final prayer (see 17:12). Jesus has already instructed his Jewish interrogators that they must ask τοὺς ἀκηκούτους if they wish to know his διδαχή (see 18:21). Is this garment which cannot be torn apart, even when it falls into the hands of Jesus' crucifiers, a symbol of the disciples, the ones who have heard what Jesus said, i.e. the Christian community? The reader suspects that such may be the case, but must read on to find further confirmation of this suspicion.<sup>53</sup>

The scene of the gift of the Beloved Disciple to the Mother of Jesus and vice-versa now follows. The narrative thus far has led the reader to a scene where the crucified King's seamless garment is not to be torn apart so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. From his throne on the Cross, Jesus speaks to the woman who was the first to commit herself unconditionally to the word of Jesus (see 2:3-5),<sup>54</sup> and commands her to see (ἴδε) the Beloved Disciple and to accept him as her son. He then turns to the Beloved Disciple, by now clearly indicated for the reader as the model disciple, who has lain close to the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper (see 13:23), and commands him to see (ἴδε) the Mother of Jesus and to accept her as his Mother. His words are unquestioningly obeyed, but the reader does not trivialise the comment of the narrator: καὶ ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ὥρας ἔλαβεν ὁ μαθητὴς αὐτὴν εἰς τὰ ἴδια. Throughout the ministry of Jesus "the hour" was "not yet" (see 2:4; 7:20; 8:30), but with the advent of the Greeks, and the decisive turn to-

<sup>53</sup> There is a long and strong patristic interpretation of the passage in this sense. See, for a survey, M. Aubineau, "La tunique sans couture du Christ. Exégèse patristique de Jean 19:23-24", in *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. P. Grandfield and J.A. Jungmann (2 vols, Münster: Aschendorf, 1970) 1:100-127. See especially Cyprian, *De unitate ecclesiae*, 7 (PL 4:520-21), and Augustine, *In Joannem*, 118:4 (PL 35:1949). See also de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 124-32. See the more nuanced survey of the discussion, concluding that the communitarian interpretation is possible, in Brown, *Death*, 2:955-58. Against Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:274, who points to the fact that Jesus' garment is taken from him, and is to be linked with Jesus' laying aside of his garments in 13:4. For Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 176-79, the event is historical, based on the eye-witness of the Beloved Disciple (for Stibbe: Lazarus). Kysar, *John*, 288, rightly points out that clear signals to the right interpretation of the passage are missing. The reader must proceed further into the story to discover its significance within the context of the Johannine passion account.

<sup>54</sup> See, on the faith of the Mother of Jesus in 2:3-5, Moloney, *Belief*, 80-85.

wards the Cross in chs 11-12, “the hour has come” (see 12:23). From then on, throughout the description of the events of that particular Passover feast, “the hour has come” (see 13:1; 17:1). The Cross is “the hour of Jesus”, and there is a play of two possible meanings in ἀπ’ ἐκείνης τῆς ὥρας. On the one hand it has a temporal meaning: “from that particular time”. But on the other, the theological and dramatic significance of “the hour of Jesus” leads to reader to understand it as causal: “because of that hour”.<sup>55</sup> It is as a result of the lifting up of Jesus on the Cross that the beloved Disciple and the Mother of Jesus become one. The disciple leads the Mother εἰς τὰ ἴδια. The situation described in the prologue, where the Word came εἰς τὰ ἴδια but was not received (οὐ παρέλαβον), has now been reversed.<sup>56</sup> Because of the Cross, and from the moment of the Cross, a new family of Jesus has been created. The Mother of Jesus, a model of faith, and the disciple whom Jesus loved and held close to himself are one, as the disciple accepts the Mother (ἔλαβεν ... αὐτήν). There have, no doubt, been exaggerated Mariological claims made for this passage,<sup>57</sup> but the reader of the Johannine passion logically concludes that at the Cross and because of the Cross the lifted up Son of Man has established a new family. As Hoskyns commented, linking the account of the seamless robe and Jesus’ mutual gift of Mother to Disciple and Disciple to Mother:

At the time of the Lord’s death a new family is brought into being. If the unity of the Church is symbolized by the seamless robe, the peculiar nature of that unity is indicated here. The Church proceeds from the sacrifice of the Son of God and the union of the Beloved Disciple and the Mother of the Lord prefigures and foreshadows the charity of the *Ecclesia* of God.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever one’s stance on the Marian material in the Fourth Gospel,

<sup>55</sup> For this causal meaning of “because of” for ἀπό with the genitive. see BDF, 113, para 210.

<sup>56</sup> See I. de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant* (New York: Alba House, 1992) 225-228.

<sup>57</sup> See, most recently, de la Potterie’s claim that 19:25-27 is a source for later reflection on “the ‘Marian Countenance’ of the Church” (*Mary*, 229-35). For a survey of Catholic approaches to this passage, see J. McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975) 361-87; R. F. Collins, “Mary in the Fourth Gospel - a decade of Johannine Studies”, *Louvain Studies* 3 (1970) 99-142; Senior, *Passion*, 108-13, and Brown, *Death*, 2:1019-26.

<sup>58</sup> E.C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (ed. F.N. Davey; London: Faber & Faber, 1947) 530. See also Barrett, *St John*, 552. Senior, *Passion*, 114, comments: “The first impact of Jesus’ death – anticipated in 19:26-27 – is the birth of the Johannine community”. For a more detailed study, and survey of opinions, see F.J. Moloney, *Mary: Woman and Mother* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1989) 41-50.

there can be no denying that Jesus' words from the Cross to his Mother and the Beloved Disciple are more about what Jesus does for the Christian community than what is happening to Jesus.<sup>59</sup> The promise of the "gathering" that has been emerging from the last moments of Jesus' public ministry (see 11:29-52; 12:11, 19, 20-24, 32-33) has been achieved as a new family is founded below the Cross of the crucified King.<sup>60</sup>

Beginning a series of statements which indicate fulfillment and perfection, Jesus knows that he has come to the end of his life (v. 28 ἤδη πάντα τετέλεστοι).<sup>61</sup> The reader recalls the words of 13:1 which began Jesus' final preparation of his disciples for the hour of his glorification: "When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them *to the end* (εἰς τέλος)". To fulfil (ἵνα τελειωθῆ) the scriptures he cries out in his thirst and is assuaged with vinegar on "hyssop" (ὑσσώπῳ). He has drunk the cup which the Father gave him (see 18:11), and there is a possible link with Jesus' role as the Passover Lamb in the explicit reference to "hyssop". Exod 12:22-23 instructs the Israelites to sprinkle their lintels by using a "hyssop" at the moment of the Exodus.<sup>62</sup> Having thus brought his story to an end he exclaims: τετέλεστοι. This is an exclamation of achievement, almost of triumph. The task which was given to him by his Father (see 4:34; 17:4), has now been consummately concluded.<sup>63</sup> He has now brought everything to its perfect conclusion, and the narrator informs the reader that such is the case by filling in one of the consequences of the death of Jesus: "he bowed his head and παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα (v. 30). The reader recalls that earlier the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified (see 7:39). Now the Spirit is poured out. We may continue Hoskyns' reflections by saying that if the seamless robe was a symbol of the Church and the gift of Mother to Son and Son to Mother foreshadows the unity of love and faith that is the *Ecclesia* of God, then it is upon that tiny Church that the

<sup>59</sup> For a survey of possible interpretations, also concluding that the passage is a symbolic presentation of the foundation of the Christian community, see Becker, *Johannes*, 591-92.

<sup>60</sup> For a full-scale study of this theme, unfortunately overplaying many of the Marian themes, see A. Serra, *Contributi dell'Antica Letteratura Giudaica per l'Esegesi di Giovanni 2,1-12 e 19,25-27* (Scripta Pontificiae Facultatis Theologicae "Marianum" 31; Rome: Edizioni Herder, 1977) 370-429.

<sup>61</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 2:1069-70.

<sup>62</sup> On this link, see Senior, *Passion*, 117-118; Stibbe, *John*, 196. Against this identification, see Moo, *The Old Testament*, 316-17. Given the several links made with Passover (time, hyssop, the unbroken bones of Jesus), Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 113-20, reads 19:16b-42 as "the slaughter of the lamb".

<sup>63</sup> See Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 20; Brown, *Death*, 2:1077-78.

Spirit is poured.<sup>64</sup> The words of the narrator are not a euphemism for death. The text does not say that Jesus gave up his spirit (RSV, NRSV, JB, NJB, CEI. See, by way of contrast, Mark 15:37: ἐξέπνευσεν [par. Luke 23:46]; Matt 27:50: ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα).<sup>65</sup> There is a deliberate choice of a verb which has a primary meaning of “to hand over, to deliver, to entrust”,<sup>66</sup> and a definite article indicating “the Spirit”. The narrator states bluntly that in bringing to perfection the task which the Father had given to him, Jesus hands over, entrusts, *the* Spirit to his new family, gathered at the foot of the Cross (see vv. 25-27). Not even the description of the death of Jesus limits itself to describe what happened to Jesus. In his death he has perfected the task given to him by the Father, and part of that task is to pour down the Spirit on the infant Church gathered at the foot of the Cross (v. 30).<sup>67</sup>

The fifth and final scene at the Cross has two major elements.<sup>68</sup> In a first moment, the issue of the day of Preparation for the Passover necessitates that the crucified be removed from their place of torture. The concern for cultic purity, evident in “the Jews’” unwillingness to enter the Praetorium in 18:28, is ironically pursued to the end of the passion story (v. 31). The two thieves have their legs broken, but this does not happen to Jesus. As he is already dead, his side is pierced with a lance, and blood and water flow from his pierced side (vv. 31-34). Scripture is fulfilled, as the Passover Lamb is slain without a bone being broken (see Exod 12:46; Num 9:12). Once allowance is made for the obvious fulfillment of the Scriptures concerning the Passover Lamb,<sup>69</sup> this simple narrative could be no more than a reporting of facts, as everything reported could quite possibly have hap-

<sup>64</sup> On the unity of the argument which runs from vv. 23-30, see de la Potterie, *Mary*, (New York: Alba House, 1992) 213-16.

<sup>65</sup> See the precise translation of the TOB: “Il remit l’esprit”.

<sup>66</sup> See BAGD, 614, s.v. παραδίδομι.

<sup>67</sup> See especially F. Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort. Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Johannesevangeliums* (FThSt 16; Frankfurt: Josef Knecht, 1974) 327-32. See also Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 532; C. Bampfylde, “John 19:28: A Case for a New Translation”, *NovT* 11 (1969) 247-60; Brown, *John*, 2:931; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 353; de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 163-65. For the case against this interpretation, see Senior, *Passion*, 119-20.

<sup>68</sup> The reader arrives at the fifth scene at the Cross, having read of: (i) the title, (ii) the seamless garment, (iii) Mother-Son, (iv) the death, (v) the flow of blood and water. Various attempts have been made to read this section of the narrative as another chiasm, with the mutual gift of Mother to Son and Son to Mother as the central statement of the chiasm and the climax of the scene at the Cross. See, for example, Brown, *Death*, 2:907-9; Stibbe, *John*, 193-94. Senior, *Passion*, 99-100, rightly insists on “the forward motion of the story”.

<sup>69</sup> There may also be a reference to the righteous sufferer (see Ps 34:30: The Lord “keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken”). See Senior, *Passion*, 122.

pened, even the blood and the water which flowed from the side of Jesus.<sup>70</sup>

But there is more to it, as the narrator unexpectedly launches into a personal comment which has no parallel in the rest of the Gospel.<sup>71</sup> The narrator insists on a personal eye-witness link with the events which he has just reported, and on the truthfulness of his testimony. It is crucially important that the reader accept this witness – “that you also may believe” (v. 35). True belief is at stake. The blood and the water must mean something to the reader, and the narrator is anxious that the reader has no doubts about the fact that blood and water flowed from the crucified Jesus. He has just entrusted the Spirit to the Christian community; now he entrusts the blood and the water of Eucharist and Baptism.<sup>72</sup> The promise of Jesus’ words and the narrator’s comment in 7:37-39 is realised: “If any one thirsts, let him come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water”“. Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”. The “not yet” is “now”, as Spirit (v. 30) and water (v. 34) are given to the Christian community by the crucified Christ.

The use of sacramental material in the Fourth Gospel is never concerned with ritual. The author presupposes the reader’s knowledge and experience of the “water” of Baptism (see 3:5) and the “blood” of Eucharist (see 6:53, 54, 55-56),<sup>73</sup> and links them with the Cross. The Johannine passion account deals with both what happened to Jesus, and how this effects

<sup>70</sup> There have been numerous attempts to explain the effluence of substances which had the appearance of blood and water. See, for a survey, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 355-57; Brown, *Death*, 2:1091-92.

<sup>71</sup> The concluding words of 20:30-31 come close, but they are to be expected as the story comes to its solemn conclusion. The narrator’s direct addressing of the reader in 19:35 occupies no such place in the story, and comes as a surprise to the reader. They are so extraordinary that many scholars have linked it with 21:24, and thus regard it as an editorial addition to the Gospel. Once this step has been taken, there is no need to explain *why* v. 25 is in its present place, and *what it means* it within that context. See, for example, Bultmann, *John*, 678; Brown, *John*, 2:945; Becker, *Johannes*, 2:600; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 354. Not all are so sure of the secondary nature of v. 35. See, for example, Lindars, *John*, 589; Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:287, 291. For a detailed study of the history of the interpretation of this passage, see Sr. Thomas More, *His Witness is True: John and His Interpreters* (American University Studies, Series 7: Theology and Religion 42; Bern: Peter Lang, 1988).

<sup>72</sup> Rather than a sacramental reference, it is often suggested that the narrator is opposing a docetic stream in the community which claims that Jesus did not really die. See, for example, Kysar, *John*, 292.

<sup>73</sup> Against a number of interpreters who reject possible sacramental hints because they – under the fascination of 1 John 5:6-8 – find no link between “blood” and Eucharist. See, for example, Kysar, *John* 291-92.

the Christian community. Where is the pierced one in the life of a Christian community which looks back over at least two generations to the events of Jesus' death? It is precisely the *absence* of the physical, historical Jesus to the community that lies behind the narrator's passionate intervention in v. 35. Those who believe without seeing (see 20:29) need not be concerned about the absence of Jesus; he is still present to them in the blood and the water of their Eucharistic and Baptismal practices.<sup>74</sup>

The two issues at stake in vv. 31-37 – Christology and Ecclesiology – are brought together as the narrator tells the reader that Jesus has fulfilled the scriptures in two ways.<sup>75</sup> In the first place, he is the perfect Paschal Lamb, as not one of his bones were broken (v. 36. See Exod 12:46; Num 9:12). The earlier indications of John the Baptist, that Jesus was the Lamb of God (see 1:29, 35), are brought to their conclusion here. Secondly, despite his absence, the Christian community of all ages will be able to rediscover the presence of the absent one in the sacramental life of the community, and thus gaze upon the one whom they have pierced (v. 37. See Zech 12:10).<sup>76</sup> God has been revealed in the pierced one, and this revelation of God continues in the flowing water and the spilt blood of Baptism and Eucharist.<sup>77</sup> The urgency of this question for a Christian community which no longer sees Jesus, but which is being summoned to a deeper commitment of faith in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, so that they might have life in him (see 20:29-31) has led to the remarkable intervention of the narrator in v. 35:

<sup>74</sup> For a survey of patristic interpretation along these lines, see Westcott, *St John*, 284-86. This sacramental reading is often challenged. See, for example, Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:291, and Brown *John*, 2:952, who regard it as possible, but as a secondary meaning. It is rejected entirely by others. See, for example, G. Richter, "Blut und Wasser aus der durchbohrten Seite Jesu (Joh 19,34b)", *MitZ* 21 (1970) 1-21. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 428, claims that the blood and water from the side of Jesus is a "sign" of the life that flows from the crucified and risen Christ. Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:294, and Moo, *Old Testament*, 217-221, follow him. I agree, but I believe more attention must be given to the fact that it is from the crucified Jesus that the water and blood flow. The members of the new family of Jesus receive life from the pierced one, upon whom they will gaze (see 19:37); and this "life" includes Eucharist and Baptism, where the absent one is present to them. Along these lines, see Pancaro, *Law*, 359-62; Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort*, 332-40.

<sup>75</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 2:1184-88. For Pancaro, *Law*, 331-363, the theme of the fulfillment of scripture is crucial to the trial before Pilate and the crucifixion of Jesus. Not only is there a literal fulfillment of biblical prophecies, but Jesus' death as the Son of God can be regarded as *κατὰ τὸν νόμον*.

<sup>76</sup> This interpretation reads "they" who shall gaze upon the pierced one as the Johannine community and all who will later believe through them. See Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:292-94; Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 277; Moo, *Old Testament*, 210-14; Senior, *Passion*, 127-29.

<sup>77</sup> For a more detailed study along these lines, see F.J. Moloney, "When is John Talking about Sacraments?" *AusBR* 30 (1982) 10-33.

“He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth – *that you also may believe*”.

### 1.5. *Jesus in a Garden with his Friends (19:38-42)*

After the rapid-fire succession of events, the story of the burial of Jesus told entirely in gentler tones by the narrator, closes the story of the passion and points the reader to events which will take place beyond the tomb of Jesus.<sup>78</sup> Closely linked with all that has gone before (v. 38: μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα), a Christian community founded at the Cross comes to life. Two characters emerge, one of whom is known to the reader: Nicodemus. He had earlier come to Jesus by night, for fear of “the Jews” (see 3:1). As the other figure is not known to the reader, he is introduced by the narrator as another secret disciple of Jesus, because of his fear of “the Jews”. Both of these *secret* disciples of Jesus now become *public*.<sup>79</sup> Joseph of Arimathea goes to the person who had handed over Jesus to be crucified, and successfully asks for the body of Jesus. Nicodemus brings a very large quantity of myrrh and aloes (vv. 38-39). Together they anoint and bind the body of Jesus in a way that is unknown to the Synoptic tradition. Jesus, proclaimed and crowned as a King before Pilate (18:28-19:16a), further proclaimed as a King by the sign on the Cross (19:19-22), and who acted as a King in founding a new people of God from the Cross (vv. 25-27), is anointed with an exaggeratedly large quantity of spices, bound in burial cloths and placed in a new tomb. He is buried as a King (vv. 40-42).<sup>80</sup> But the reader finds that these events take place in a garden (v. 41: ἦν ... ὄπου ... κῆπος), and recalls that the passion story began in a garden (see 18:1). However, there Jesus encountered his enemies alone, as Peter misunderstood the significance of the cup which Jesus willingly accepted from the Father (18:10-11).<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> See Senior, *Passion*, 134-35.

<sup>79</sup> This may be the Evangelist’s way of encouraging so-called crypto-Christians (see 7:13; 9:22; 12:42-43), afraid to leave the Synagogue, into an act of greater courage and faith. See R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple. The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979) 71-73.

<sup>80</sup> See Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:296-97; Brown, *John*, 2:259-60; Senior, *Passion*, 130-33. Against those who read Nicodemus’ gesture as negative in the light of Jesus’ resurrection. The anointing is superfluous, and indicates that Nicodemus has not progressed beyond the limited faith he displayed in 3:1-11. See, for example, D. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988) 40; Duke, *Irony*, 110. For a survey, concluding that Nicodemus (and Joseph) are used as models to draw other crypto-Christians from the Synagogue into a public commitment to Jesus, see Brown, *Death*, 2:1265-68.

<sup>81</sup> For a careful acceptance of this parallel, see Brown, *Death*, 2:1270.

As the story returns to a garden, the situation has changed radically. Through the events of “the hour of Jesus” a new people of God has been founded (19:25-27). There is now a people who hears the voice of Jesus and thus belongs to the kingdom of truth (see 18:36-37). The crucified King has brought to perfection all that the Father asked of him, and part of this *τελεώσις* is his entrusting the Spirit to the infant Church, and pouring down the waters of Baptism and the blood of the Eucharist (vv. 34-35), so that the Christian community of all times might gaze upon the one whom they had pierced (v. 37). The royal burial of Jesus has been prefigured in the anointing of Mary, the first person in the story to recognise the significance of the death of Jesus (see 12:1-8). Now, as the passion story closes, two figures emerge from the darkness of fear and publicly accept Jesus as their King, burying him as a King should be buried. The Church has been founded and gifted during the passion. It now moves into action as the story closes by reversing the opening scene (18:1-11). There Jesus was faced by his enemies; here (19:38-42) he is again in a garden, but courageously and publicly surrounded and cared for by his friends.

The reader is now able to look back over the passion story, aware that it has been told in the following fashion:

*18:1-11:* Jesus, in a garden, with his enemies. Judas leads Romans and “the Jews” to Jesus, armed with weapons and carrying man-made light, as they come in search of the light of the world.

*18:12-27:* Jesus before “the Jews”, points to “those who have heard him” as the place where his teaching can be found, while one of “those who heard him” is in the courtyard denying any relationship with Jesus.

*18:28-19:16a:* Before Pilate Jesus is proclaimed and crowned as a King, in the midst of rejection from “the Jews”, but he instructs the reader on the nature of his kingdom, which attracts those who hear his voice.

*19:16b-37:* The crucified Jesus is proclaimed as King, and acts as a King, establishing a new family, whose unity is symbolised by the garment which cannot be torn apart. He entrusts them with the Spirit and pours down blood and water upon them, so that they may always gaze upon the one whom they have pierced.

*19:38-42:* Jesus, in a garden, with his friends. The Christian community comes to life as two secret disciples come out from the darkness and publicly bury Jesus as a King.

The reader is now aware of close links between the first (18:1-11) and the final scene (19:38-42), where the same location in a garden witnesses a significant reversal, made possible by the events which have happened dur-



ing the passion story. The central scene (18:28-19:16a), devoted to Jesus' being proclaimed and crowned as King, and his teaching that those who belong to the truth will enter the kingdom of truth, stands alone. But is there any relationship between the experiences of Jesus and Simon Peter in 18:12-27, and the events at the Cross in 19:16b-37?<sup>82</sup> The events at the Cross have long been understood as more concerned with what happens to the Christian community than with what happens to Jesus,<sup>83</sup> but what of the events which take place while Jesus is being interrogated by Annas? We have already seen that they point "the Jews", and the reader, away from Jesus to "those who have heard" Jesus. Is this also more concerned with the Christian community than with Jesus? The remaining part of this study will devote itself to a detailed study of 18:12-27 in an attempt to answer that question.

## 2. The Christian community in John 18:12-27

After setting the scene (18:12-14), why does the author tell of the three denials of Peter (18:15-18 and 25-27) as a frame around the interrogation of Jesus by Annas? Mark and Matthew both report Peter's arrival at the house of Caiaphas (Mark 14:53-54; Matt 26:57-58) before Jesus' Jewish interrogation (Mark 14:55-65; Matt 26:59-68). There is no mention of Annas, who was not the high priest,<sup>84</sup> and once they come to the report of Peter's denials, all three denials are told in sequence (Mark 14:66-72; Matt 26:69-75). Luke places Peter's arrival at the high priest's house and his betrayals before Caiaphas' interrogation of Jesus (Luke 22:54-62). There are some interesting contacts with the Markan, Lukan and Johannine traditions,<sup>85</sup> but none of

<sup>82</sup> For indications of chiasmic readings of 18:1-19:42, and his own suggestion, which combines plot structure and chiasmic reading, centered upon 19:7-11 and the question of divine sonship, see J.L. Staley, "Subversive Narrator/Victimized Reader: A Reader Response Assessment of a Text-Critical Problem, John 18.12-24", *JSNT* 51 (1993) 85-87.

<sup>83</sup> See Brown, *John*, 2:912.

<sup>84</sup> On the historical problems involved in the author's use of Annas, rather than Caiaphas, see Barrett, *St John*, 524-25. On the continuing use of ἀρχιερεύς for former high priests, see Brown, *John*, 2:820-21; Pancaro, *Law*, 66-67. For Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 173, the trial before Annas is historical, coming from the witness of Lazarus, the Beloved Disciple. Better, however, is Barrett's opinion: "It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the trial narratives have been rewritten by John in order to bring out what, in his opinion, were the points at issue" (*St John*, 525). For a detailed discussion of the question, see Brown, *Death*, 1:404-11.

<sup>85</sup> The female doorkeeper, the kindling of a fire and, in Luke, Peter's presence among the people who had seized Jesus. See Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 62-63, 91-99; K. Quast, *Peter*

the Synoptics sandwich the so-called Jewish trial between the denials of Peter.<sup>86</sup> Drowned in the oceans of ink which have been spilt in an attempt to reconstruct the historical events of Jesus' trials,<sup>87</sup> this feature of the Johannine passion narrative has been given scant attention.<sup>88</sup> The recent monograph by Kevin Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Figures for a Community in Crisis*, devotes a chapter to this section of the Fourth Gospel,<sup>89</sup> but little consideration is devoted to the splitting of the story of Peter's denials into two parts, framing the Jewish interrogation. Quast's study of the denials pays no attention to Jesus' witness before Annas, although he rightly concludes, without analysis: "The fourth evangelist constructed his narrative in such a way as to convey the sense that Peter's denials of association with Jesus were simultaneous with Jesus' uncompromising defence of himself and his disciples before Annas. A dramatic contrast is created wherein Jesus denies nothing and Peter denies everything".<sup>90</sup> This may be true, but what

*and the Beloved Disciple. Figures for a Community in Crisis* (JSNTSS 32; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) 71-76; Brown, *Death*, 1:78-79 (Mark), 87-88 (Luke), 418-19 (synoptic chart).

<sup>86</sup> R. M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 143, claims that Mark 14:53-54, 55-65, 66-72, is an intercalation of the trial of Jesus within the denials of Peter, but this is very different from the Johannine use of these events. The scene is set in Mark 14:53-54, but all three denials (vv. 66-72) are told in sequence *after* Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin (vv. 55-65). For a comparison of the ways in which Peter's denials are reported across the Gospels, see Brown, *Death*, 1:590-91.

<sup>87</sup> Some major studies, listed chronologically, are: H. Lietzmann, "Der Prozess Jesu", in *Kleine Schriften* (2 vols.; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958) 2:251-63 (Original publication: 1934); J. Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1959); A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) 1-47; S.G.F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (London: B. T. Batesford, 1968); P. Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969); D.R. Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus. A Study of the Gospels and Jewish Historiography from 1770 to the Present Day* (Studia Post-Biblica 18; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971); P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (2nd ed., revised and edited by T.A. Burkill and Geza Vermes; Studia Judaica 1; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1974). For a complete list, see Brown, *Death*, 1:315-27.

<sup>88</sup> As A. Kragerud, *Der Lieblingsjünger im Johannesevangelium* (Hamburg: Osloer Universitätsverlag, 1959) 74 n. 39, comments: "Unser Text scheint in der bisherigen Forschung allzu leichtfertig behandelt worden zu sein". Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, devotes only pp. 247-49 to the Johannine meaning of 18:19-23, and ignores the surrounding vv. 15-18, 24-27. Recent attention has been given to the whole context by Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 96-105.

<sup>89</sup> Quast, *Peter*, 71-99.

<sup>90</sup> Quast, *Peter*, 97-8. On p. 76 Quast lists "The construction of the narrative around the interrogation and the lack of any references to the passing of time" as 6th in a list of "potentially significant" features of the narrative. But his study does not develop this. Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 97-99, sees 18:1-27 as marked by contrasts between Jesus and Peter at a primary level and the Beloved Disciple and Peter at a secondary level. He comments, without detailed analysis: "In both instances, the conduct of the BD is paradigmatic and exemplary, whilst that of Peter is clearly misguided and coloured by pathos" (p. 99). Brown, *Death*, 1:623-24, claims that Peter's denials serve "as a foil for the behavior of another disciple who

of the reader's involvement in the story? J. L. Staley has argued that a deliberate rhetorical strategy is found here. The reader, who only recognises Caiaphas as the ἀρχιερεύς (see 11:47-51) is led to believe that Caiaphas conducts the interrogation in vv. 19-23, only to find in v. 24 that it was Annas. The reader has been "victimized" by a subversive narrator, joining both Peter and the attendant who strikes Jesus in "violent misunderstanding and denial", so that he might be led away from his own securities into deeper faith.<sup>91</sup> Staley correctly concentrates upon the impact which this passage makes upon the reader, but I hope to show that the relationship between the narrator and the reader is not subversive, but honest ... and challenging.

There is something unique about the Johannine version of this part of Jesus' story that has led to suggestions which include rearrangement of the text, changes in his source made by the Evangelist, uncertainties in the source itself, and editorial additions.<sup>92</sup> Already in ancient Christian interpretation, the Sinaitic Syriac version brought forward v. 24 to make Caiaphas the interrogating high priest, and took Peter's three denials together.<sup>93</sup> My reading of John 18:12-27 approaches the text in its traditional order, with respect for the theological point of view of the author. We have to "reckon with his strong and individualistic shaping of the material".<sup>94</sup>

### 2.1. *The Disciples in John 18:15-18*

Bridging the report of Jesus in the garden with his friends (18:1-11) and the Jewish interrogation (vv. 15-27), Jesus is seized (v. 12), led to the house of Annas (v. 13a), and the link is made between Annas and Caiaphas which reminds the reader that Jesus' death is not for himself, but for the nation, and to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (vv. 13b-14. See 11:49-52). The reader is then told that two disciples followed Jesus (v. 15: ἠκολούθει δὲ τῷ Ἰησοῦ). Simon Peter is already well known as a leading disciple (see 1:41-43; 6:8, 68-69; 13:6-9, 24, 36-38), and an anonymous disciple also appeared earlier in the narrative (see 1:37-42). There is

is never deflected from his following of Jesus" (p. 623). In this way the author addresses the disciples of the Johannine community.

<sup>91</sup> Staley, "Subversive Narrator", 91-98.

<sup>92</sup> See the documented survey of these suggestions in Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:228-233.

<sup>93</sup> See the remarks of Bultmann, *John*, 643-44. This transposition has been followed by Lagrange, *St Jean*, 459-62, and J. Schneider, "Zur Komposition von Joh 18,12-27", *ZNW* 48 (1957) 111-19.

<sup>94</sup> Schnackenburg, *St John*, 2:233.

some debate over the identification of “another disciple” with the Beloved Disciple.<sup>95</sup> “The other disciple” (with the definite article) appears in 20:3, 4, 8, and the Beloved Disciple, already portrayed as an intimate disciple of Jesus in 13:23, plays an increasingly important role in the narrative from that point on (see 13:23; 19:26; 20:2, 4, 8). Are they one and the same character in the story?<sup>96</sup> In 20:2 Mary Magdalene runs to a figure originally known as “the other disciple”, now known as “the one whom Jesus loved” (ἔρχεται ... πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς). At this stage of the narrative the reader is aware of the presence of two μαθηταί in the court of the high priest, along with Jesus (v. 15). Although “another disciple” cannot immediately be identified by the reader as the Beloved Disciple, the figures will eventually coalesce as the narrative proceeds further.<sup>97</sup>

Peter gains entry to the court of the high priest through the mediation of the other disciple (v. 16). We need not discuss the theories proposed which enable the other disciple to be called a γνωστός of the high priest.<sup>98</sup> The author’s point of focus is the presence of two disciples of Jesus. The introduction of the characters and the setting of the scene in vv. 15-16 has enabled the narrator to speak three times of μαθηταί, and three times of Peter. The issue of Peter’s being one of the μαθηταί of Jesus is raised by the question of the maid who kept the door: “Are you not also one of this man’s disciples?” Peter’s first denial reverses the words of Jesus, who revealed his identity at Gethsemane with the words ἐγώ εἰμι (see vv. 5, 8). Peter responds οὐκ εἰμί (v. 17). The reader is aware that a lie has been told.<sup>99</sup> Without comment the narrator moves on to describe the action of the ὑπηρέται and some servants who have prepared a charcoal fire against the cold. The

<sup>95</sup> For the discussion, see Quast, *Peter*, 76-81; Brown, *Death*, 1:596-98. For Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 98-99, “the anonymous believer here is undoubtedly the BD”, i.e. Lazarus (see pp. 78-81). The issue is further complicated by a textual difficulty. Some manuscripts add a definite article before ἄλλος μαθητής in v. 15. Others read “that disciple”, while some have neither “other” nor “that”. For my reading of “another disciple”, see Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:234-235.

<sup>96</sup> The major difficulties against identification are the lack of the definite article in 18:15, the fact that the author does not simply call him the Beloved Disciple, as in 13:23, and the special acquaintance with the high priest. See Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:235; Dauer, *Pasionsgeschichte*, 73-75.

<sup>97</sup> See F.J. Moloney, *The Word Became Flesh* (Theology Today Series 14; Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1977) 15-17.

<sup>98</sup> For a presentation of the earlier discussion around this issue, see J. H. Bernard, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) 2:592-97. For more recent discussion, see Brown, *John*, 2:822-23. On the use of the word γνωστός, see Barrett, *St John*, 525-26.

<sup>99</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 1:602-3.

reader recalls that the ὑπηρέται had come out to arrest Jesus, the light of the world (see 8:12; 9:5), carrying lanterns and torches (18:2), had seized him, that they had bound him and taken him to Annas (18:12-13a). Peter, who has just denied that he is a disciple of Jesus, is described as μετ' αὐτῶν (v. 18). He approaches the warmth and light created by characters who have sided with the powers of darkness. It is “with them” that he is standing, warming himself. This use of irony is implicit commentary upon the narrative.<sup>100</sup> Peter is moving away from the light towards the darkness. The reader recalls Judas' earlier exit from the upper room, and the narrator's comment: “And it was night” (13:30).

In the telling of Peter's first denial (vv. 15-18), the term “disciple” is used four times. In addition to the technical term μαθητής, the name “Peter”, well known to the reader as an important (see 1:41-42), faithful (see 6:68-69) but misunderstanding and fragile (13:6-9, 24, 36-38) disciple, appears five times. In six brief sentences the theme of the disciple of Jesus appears nine times, focussing the reader's attention upon the theme of discipleship. But it is a story of discipleship denied.<sup>101</sup>

## 2.2. *The Witness of Jesus in John 18:19-24*

There is an intimate link between vv. 15-18, with its theme of discipleship, and vv. 19-24 which opens with the narrator's description of the questions of the high priest. The reader is told that Jesus is asked περὶ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ τῆς διδασχῆς αὐτοῦ (v. 19).<sup>102</sup> Jesus' answer reverses the order of the issues raised. He first speaks of his διδασχῆ (v. 20), and then of “those who have heard me” (τοὺς ἀκηκοότας), those who know what Jesus has said (v. 21).<sup>103</sup>

Jesus' public ministry came to a close in 12:36b: “When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself (ἐκρύβη) from them”.<sup>104</sup> Now be-

<sup>100</sup> See also Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 100; Staley, “Subversive Narrator”, 93-94.

<sup>101</sup> Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, cxiii, 2: “Ecce columna firmissima ad unius aurae impulsam tota contremuit. ... Negavit ergo ipsum, cum se negavit eius esse discipulum. Quid autem aliud isto modo quam se negavit esse christianum?” (CCSL XXXVI, 636-37).

<sup>102</sup> I am arguing that the aorist ἠρώτησεν is complexive, describing an event from the past which went on for some time. See *BDF*, 171, para 332.

<sup>103</sup> The link between the interrogation over the μαθηταὶ and the διδασχῆ in v. 19, and Jesus' response in vv. 20-21 is rarely noticed. See, for example, the trivial remarks of Bernard, *St John*, 2:600. Barrett, *St John*, 523 states that Jesus “refuses to answer”. I am suggesting that Jesus' words are a genuine answer for both the characters and the reader *in the text*, as also for the reader *of the text*.

<sup>104</sup> The second aorist of κρύπτω produces an intransitive reflexive meaning “hid him-

fore Annas, he looks back upon that public revelation of God through word and deed, and informs his interrogator of two events, both in the past, but described with different forms of the past tense.

1. In v. 20b Jesus looks back over his preaching to “the Jews”. It developed within the context of a steadily intensifying conflict with Jesus (see chs 5-10), during which his death was plotted (see 5:18; 7:1, 19, 25; 8:22, 37, 40). As the ministry came to an end, the leadership of “the Jews” decided that one man must die for the nation (11:50). In a final appeal, Jesus associated his death with a “lifting up”, to draw everyone to himself (12:32-33). But “the Jews”, *rightly* associating the “lifting up” with the death of the Son of Man (see 12:23-24, 32-33), rejected Jesus’ promise. They preferred what they already knew about the Messiah in their own tradition (see 12:34).<sup>105</sup> After a final warning to “the Jews”, that they should walk in the light while they still have the light (see 12:35-36a), the narrator solemnly announced the end of Jesus’ public presence among them (v. 36b). The reader recalls the events and encounters of chs 5-12, with their dramatic conclusion in 12:36b as Jesus responds: “I have always taught in the Synagogue and in the Temple, where all Jews come together” (18:20b). He has taught, but he will do so no longer. There can be no going back on the definitive separation between Jesus and “the Jews” established for the reader through the narrator’s comment in 12:36b. This is involved in the use of the aorist tense of the verb ἐδίδαξα. Jesus devoted himself to a period of teaching in Temple and Synagogue in the past, but this stage has come to an end.<sup>106</sup>

2. But “I have spoken openly to the world ... I have said nothing secretly (v. 20a.c). Although the teaching (διδασχῆ) of “the Jews” has ended, the word of Jesus (λελόληκα) has been proclaimed in the world. The Fourth Gospel’s rich use of ὁ κόσμος can never be simply equated with “the

self”. Pancaro, *Law*, 64-71, rightly points out that 18:19-24 cannot be regarded as a trial. All “trials” (Jesus by “the Jews” and “the Jews” by Jesus) have taken place during the public ministry. Pancaro suggests that the material found in the Synoptic trial before Caiaphas has been transposed to 10:22-38 which he regards as “the last great confrontation between Jesus and the Jews ... meant to give us an insight into the reason which led to Jesus’ condemnation and death” (p. 71). See also Brown, *Death*, 1:423-26.

<sup>105</sup> See Moloney, *Son of Man*, 181-85.

<sup>106</sup> The aorist is, therefore, complexive. See BDF, 171, para 332. One does not have to read the aorist ἐδίδαξα in this way. It may simply be the appropriate tense to accompany πάντοτε, but the Johannine story of Jesus encounter with “the Jews” across chs 5-12, climaxing in 12:36b, suggests my reading of 18:20b. Rightly, Bultmann, *John*, 646: “In the present situation the statement of Jesus no longer signifies an indirect appeal for decision or for faith; rather it affirms, ‘You have already decided!’ It is too late for discussion; the confrontation with Judaism is at an end”. See also Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 247-49.

Jews”. The author uses it for creation (see 1:10; 17:5, 24; 21:25) or, very positively, the object of God’s saving love (see 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:51; 8:12; 9:5). It can also refer to those who reject the person and teaching of Jesus (see 1:10; 7:7; 12:31; 14:17, 22, 27, 30; 15:18-19; 16:8, 20, 33; 17:6, 9, 14-16).<sup>107</sup> It is the world which is the object of God’s saving love which is in question in 18:20a. This is indicated by the use of the perfect tense for the verb *λελόληκα*. A word has been spoken in the word which is *παρησίᾳ*. Jesus’ historical presence as a teacher, proclaiming his word, has come to an end (12:36b). But his word, spoken in the past, was never hidden or limited (18:20c: *ἐν κρυπτῷ ἐλόλησα οὐδέν*).<sup>108</sup> The perfect tense, placed in close proximity with the aorist *ἐδίδαξα* indicates that although the teaching of Jesus to “the Jews” has come to an end, the word of Jesus is still available. Something began in the past, and its consequences are still abroad.<sup>109</sup>

Jesus has answered the question concerning his teaching. He is no longer prepared to teach “the Jews” who are now interrogating him. They have already been taught and they have definitively rejected his teaching.<sup>110</sup> Yet the word of Jesus is alive in the world. The perfect tense of the verb in Jesus’ words: I have spoken openly to the world” (v. 20a) makes this clear to the reader. But if the presence of Jesus “in Synagogues and in the Temple” (v. 20b) is no longer available (see 12:36b), where is this word to be found, spoken so openly to the world (v. 20a.c)? There is no longer any point in asking Jesus (v. 21a). One must ask those who have heard him (*τοὺς ἀκηκόοτας*) what he has said (*ἐλόλησα*) to them. During the ministry of Jesus the word was spoken (complexive aorist) to “those who have heard”. They are in possession of the word to the world, and anyone who wishes to hear that word must ask them (v. 21b). They know (*οἶδασιν*) what Jesus said (v. 21c).

<sup>107</sup> On this, see N.H. Kassem, “A Grammatical and Contextual Inventory of the use of *κόσμος* in the Johannine Corpus with some Implications for a Johannine Cosmic Theology”, *NTS* 19 (1972-73) 81-91. Unacceptable, therefore, is the claim of Barrett (*St John*, 528), citing Fenton, that “the world” is represented by “the Jews” in this passage. If this were the case, why use the heavily loaded *ὁ κόσμος*? There must be more to it.

<sup>108</sup> The aorist *ἐλόλησα* is another complexive aorist, referring to the whole period of Jesus’ once-and-for-all revelation of the Father during his ministry.

<sup>109</sup> See *BDF*, 175-76, paras 340-341. See p. 175: “The perfect combines in itself, so to speak, the present and the aorist in that it denotes the *continuance of completed action*”. Brown, *John*, 2:825, sees the difficulty: “The tense is perfect while the subsequent verbs (‘taught’; ‘I said’) are in the aorist”. But he sidesteps the problem, through reference to J.H. Moulton, claiming that the strange syntax “points to this as an example of a verb in the perfect tense functioning in an aorist sense”.

<sup>110</sup> The situation of the Johannine community (see 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) lies behind this assessment of the situation of “the Jews” who are not, as mentioned above (see note 5), the Jewish people.

Who are τοὺς ἀκηκόοντας, now the custodians of the word, and the ones to whom one must go to discover the word which Jesus has spoken to the world? According to many commentators, Jesus' reply simply insists that his accusers "take testimony in the legal manner".<sup>111</sup> But the reader surely understands that they are the followers of Jesus (see v. 15a), the μαθηταί, the ones who have learnt at the school of Jesus.<sup>112</sup> Jesus is no longer available to speak his own word. He has spoken it to followers and disciples, who know what he said. As Hoskyns rightly comments: "The author insists that the teaching of Jesus must be known through attention to His disciples, who by the guidance of the Spirit preserve and interpret his words (cf. ii.22, xiv.25, xvi.4sqq)".<sup>113</sup> Ignace de la Potterie has shown that the Fourth Gospel distinguishes carefully between two verbs to express knowledge.<sup>114</sup> He has claimed, on good grounds, that γινώσκειν refers to the acquisition of knowledge which comes through its pursuit. Ἐδέναι (οἶδα), on the other hand, means "to come to know", but simply to know facts with assurance. However careful one must be in applying this distinction across the Gospel, it applies here. Those who have heard Jesus certainly "know" the facts (οἶδα-σιν), and one must go to them to learn these facts. However, such knowledge says nothing about their success or failure as authentic followers of Jesus. The high priest's question concerning Jesus' disciples has been answered, as the διδασχὴ and the μαθηταί belong together. Anyone who wishes to know the "teaching" of Jesus will find it among his "disciples" (see v. 19).

A slap greets the response of Jesus. The slap and the words which accompany it are signs of rejection. One of the ὑπηρέται (see vv. 2, 12, 18), out of loyalty to the high priest, refuses to accept the promise of Jesus (18:22). But Jesus' response to this rejection returns to the true significance of the events. If Jesus has spoken evilly (εἰ κακῶς ἐλάλησα) he asks his assailant to bear witness, but if he has spoken well (εἰ καλῶς ἐλάλησα), then the officer must explain his action (v. 23). Κακῶς λαλεῖν is used in the LXX with reference to blasphemy (see Exod 22:7; Lev 19:14; 20:9; Isa 8:21; 1 Macc 7:42). If the slap is punishment for blasphemy, then witnesses must be

<sup>111</sup> Barrett, *St John*, 528. See also Brown, *John*, 2:826; Lindars, *John*, 550.

<sup>112</sup> For the importance of this feature of a μαθητής, see K. Rengstorf, "μανθάνω κτλ.", *TDNT* IV (1967) 444-50.

<sup>113</sup> Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 514. See also Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:237-38; E. Haenchen, *John 1-2*, (2 vols.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 2:169. These scholars, however, do not see the dramatic contrast between Jesus' instructions and the frame of Peter's denials, even though Hoskyns further comments that looking to the teaching of the disciples would have been "appropriate at the time when the Gospel was written" (p. 514).

<sup>114</sup> I. de la Potterie, "Οἶδα et γινώσκω, les deux modes de la connaissance dans le quatrième évangile", *Biblica* 40 (1959) 709-725.



brought, but if this is not the case, and Jesus is proclaiming what is right (καλῶς), a truthfulness which opposes blasphemy, then the officer stands condemned by his action.<sup>115</sup> The tradition of Jesus' guiltlessness, found in both the Synoptic and the Johannine trial before Pilate (see Mark 15:14; Matt 27:4, 19, 24; Luke 23:13-16, 22; John 18:38; 19:4, 6) also emerges here. But not only is Jesus guiltless; he has revealed the truth, he has spoken well (καλῶς), and the truth has been rejected.<sup>116</sup> There is no further report of what takes place before Caiaphas. The narrator removes Jesus from the scene, only to re-introduce him in v. 28, as he is brought from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium. The author has said all that needs to be said about what happened to Jesus before "the Jews". He now returns to a character whose performance interests him at least as much as that of Jesus: one of the founding members of the Christian community, Peter, one of those who had heard what Jesus said (see v. 21).

### 2.3. *The Disciple in John 18:25-27*

The discipleship theme is present throughout the narrative. Simon Peter and another disciple appeared in vv. 15-18 where Peter has rejected his role as a disciple of Jesus. The term "disciple" was still present in v. 19 as Jesus was questioned about "his disciples and his teaching". In v. 21 the disciples became "those who have heard me", but a disciple returns in vv. 25-27, as the narrator resumes his presentation of Peter's denials. The "other disciple" has disappeared, but Simon Peter, still "with them" at the fire (see v. 18), is again asked whether he is ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ. He repeats his first denial: οὐκ εἰμί (v. 25). The almost exact repetition in v. 25 of what was done and said in Peter's first denial in v. 17 creates a tight frame around Jesus' directions that those who wish to know his teaching must go to those who have heard him (vv. 20-21). Scholars often complain that there are no changes of time mentioned throughout these alternating scenes.<sup>117</sup> There is no difficulty involved. By not interspersing the narrative with his customary expression μετὰ ταῦτα (see 2:12; 3:22; 5:1, 14; 6:1; 7:1 etc.), the

<sup>115</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 1:415-16. Despite the subtlety of his understanding of the Johannine use of *rhetorical* strategies, where the narrator supposedly misleads, this *theological* nicety is missed by Staley, who describes the ὑπηρέτης as "the chief priest's brutalizing assistants" ("Subversive Narrator", 96).

<sup>116</sup> See de la Potterie, *The Hour*, 72-74; Bernard, *St John*, 2:239; Brown, *Death*, 1:413.

<sup>117</sup> See Quast, *Peter* 75, 85; Bernard, *St John*, 2:602-3, postulates about an hour between Peter's first (vv. 15-18) and second and third (vv. 25-27) denials, on the basis of the Synoptic Gospels.

author creates the impression that these events are happening simultaneously.<sup>118</sup> As Jesus points to the disciples as the ones who have heard him and custodians of his word, one of them – indeed a leading disciple (see 1:41-43; 6:68-69) – is with the representatives of the darkness (v. 18: μετ’ αὐτῶν), denying his association with Jesus.

The final denial again looks back to the Gethsemane scene (18:1-11). On several occasions during the story of Peter and Jesus with “the Jews” (vv. 12-27) the immediately previous scene provides essential background for either the denials of Peter or the witness of Jesus.<sup>119</sup> Particularly obvious are Peter’s reversals of Jesus’ words in the garden (see vv. 5, 8: ἐγὼ εἰμι), as he rejects discipleship with the words οὐκ εἰμί (vv. 17, 25). Peter has associated with the ὑπηρέται who came to Jesus carrying lanterns, torches and weapons (v. 3) and who took him and bound him (v. 12) as they arrange further false light in the courtyard (v. 18). The ὑπηρέται are still present as one of them rejects Jesus’ words to the high priest with a slap (v. 22). A further link with the garden scene now emerges, as Peter’s active intervention with a sword to cut off Malchus’ ear is recalled (v. 26. See v. 10). This accusation, made by a blood relative of the injured man, cannot be denied, but Peter insists that he has no association with Jesus (v. 27a).<sup>120</sup> The third denial is not only an attempt on the part of Peter to disassociate himself from Jesus. His denial implies that he never was in the garden, a place known to Judas because “Jesus often met there with his disciples” (v. 2). Peter, who has drawn closer to the darkness represented by the ὑπηρέται, lyingly denies any link with Gethsemane, Jesus, and his disciples who often met there.

The report of Peter’s three-fold denial concludes: “And at once the cock crowed” (v. 27b). The reader recalls the words of Jesus from 13:38: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times”. But the point of this conclusion is not an ominous reminder to Peter or, as Lindars claims, “the sense of personal danger”.<sup>121</sup> On the contrary, it is a firm indication to the reader that the promises of Jesus are fulfilled. What Jesus said would happen (13:38) ... does happen (18:27b). This is crucial for the reader’s appreciation of the present series of events. Jesus

<sup>118</sup> See Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 143-44: “Intercalation is narrative sleight of hand, a crafty manipulation of the discourse level that creates the illusion that two episodes are taking place simultaneously”.

<sup>119</sup> Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 96-7, on the basis of these links, argues that 18:1-27 can be read “as a single act of the passion drama”.

<sup>120</sup> For a discussion of the historicity of this event, see Quast, *Peter*, 86-7. The charge that Peter had drawn a weapon and injured a servant of the high priest was, in fact, more serious than being a disciple of Jesus. See Bernard, *St John*, 2:603.

<sup>121</sup> Lindars, *John*, 552.

has indicated that his word is abroad in the world (v. 20), and that it can be found among those who have heard him; they know what he said (v. 21). But one of them is denying that he had anything to do with Jesus (vv. 15-18, 25-27). In the face of the fragility and failure of “one of those who had heard” Jesus, the reader is assured by the cock crow that what Jesus said would happen ... will happen.<sup>122</sup> However badly Peter may perform, Jesus’ teaching can be heard from those who – like Peter – have heard him.

The Christian community is the place where the word of Jesus can be found, but members of the community are capable of being disloyal to their responsibility. Here the reader finds a coherent theology of the Christian community as the custodian of the word of Jesus, but as a custodian which at times denies its association with Jesus. But the promises of Jesus come true. Those who have heard Jesus, those who know what he said, may be capable of betraying and denying him, but they will continue to be the ones from whom Jesus’ teaching may be learnt. The crowing of the cock immediately after Peter’s final denial is proof of this fact: betrayers and deniers that the members of the Christian community may be, this community remains the place where the word of Jesus can be found.

## **Conclusion**

The intended readers of this narrative, an early Christian community under the threat of death because of their belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ (see 16:2), yet summoned to an ever greater depth of belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God so that they may have life (see 20:30-31), identifies with the implied reader. It is not only the disciples of Jesus *in the story* who are the custodians of the word of Jesus but capable of denying it, but also the disciples of Jesus who are *the readers of the story*. The members of the Johannine community, faced with their own fears and disloyalties, saw their experience in the experience of Peter in the courtyard. But what of the “other disciple”? He was also present in the courtyard, but is never again mentioned during the trials of Jesus. The reader suspects, but cannot be sure, that this may be the Beloved Disciple. One of the disciples may have lost his way, but have all the disciples? Is there anything more to learn

<sup>122</sup> Against Bultmann, *John*, 648, who writes of the cock-crow: “In itself it has no particular significance for him (the Evangelist)”. Explanatory parenthesis mine. For a better appreciation of the cock-crow as belonging to Jesus’ prophecy, see Schnackenburg, *St John*, 3:240.

about “the other disciple”, who introduced Peter into the courtyard (v. 16)?<sup>123</sup> The reader can only proceed further into the narrative to discover the whole truth about both of these disciples of Jesus. At the Cross it is the Beloved Disciple who is given to the Mother, and the Mother is given to the Disciple (19:25-27). They are the beginnings of the new community of Jesus, founded and enriched with the gift of the Spirit and the life which comes from the water and the blood of the crucified Jesus (19:28-37).

There is a close – even if contrasting – relationship between 18:12-27 and 19:16b-37. Peter failed to accept his responsibility as one who heard the word of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple emerged as the one to whom the Mother of Jesus was given at the hour of the Cross. But is this the end of Peter’s discipleship, and is the Beloved Disciple “the other disciple”? Peter will run with “the other disciples” to the empty tomb (20:3-10), but this unnamed disciple is at last explicitly identified as the one whom Jesus loved (see 20:2). It is the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, who saw and believed (v. 9). Nothing is said of the faith of Peter at the empty tomb. There is a tension between these two disciples across the latter parts of the Johannine story. There can be little doubt that the Beloved Disciple provides the model for discipleship in the Johannine Church, but Peter holds a position of honour.<sup>124</sup> Throughout the Gospel, no matter how well or badly he performs, he holds pride of place. He is appointed Cephas (1:41-42), and he makes a superb confession of faith at Capernaum (6:68-69). At the supper table he lies at the right side of Jesus, able to beckon the Beloved Disciple who leans on Jesus’ breast (13:22-24). When the Beloved Disciple arrives at the empty tomb, he stands back, to allow Peter the honour of entering the tomb first (20:5-7). There is enough evidence in the Johannine narrative to inform the reader that Simon Peter, who is by no means everything that a disciple should be, still has a position of honour in the hierarchy of Jesus’ disciples.<sup>125</sup> In an appendix to the Gospel which faced problems

<sup>123</sup> Kragerud, *Die Lieblingsjünger*, 74-81, argues strongly for an ecclesiological and symbolic understanding of the Beloved Disciple in 18:15-16. He claims that there is a close link between 18:15-16 and 10:1-5 (especially the entering through the θύρα and the αὐλή [see 10:1-2; 18:16]), and that the Evangelist wished to present the Beloved Disciple as the symbol of the Good Shepherd, the true Christian leader, superior to the recognised shepherd, Peter. Similarly, but without reference to John 10, see Haenchen, *John 2*, 167-68. Stibbe, *John as storyteller*, 100-5, without reference to Kragerud, has recently proposed a close link between 18:1-27 and 10:1-21. See also Staley, “Subversive Narrator”, 87-88.

<sup>124</sup> For a succinct presentation of this issue, and further bibliography, see B. Byrne, “Beloved Disciple”, *ABD* 1 (1992) 658-661.

<sup>125</sup> On this, see R.E. Brown - K.P. Donfried - J. Reumann (eds.), *Peter in the New Testament. A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Catholic Scholars* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973) 129-47. John 21 is an attempt to further assess the relationship between Pe-

which were emerging from the evolving community, later reflection has led the Johannine community to tell of Peter's three-fold profession of love for Jesus, thus overcoming his three-fold denial. Only on the basis of an embarrassed confession of love can he be commissioned as the shepherd of the flock (see 21:15-19).<sup>126</sup>

Christian, and especially Roman Catholic, tradition often looks to Petrine texts to understand its leadership and its mission, but John 18:12-27 is *never* one of those texts. The story of Peter's denials, set as a frame around the witness of Jesus, also addresses the issue of leadership in a Christian community which claims to hear and to know the word of Jesus (see v. 21). This passage indicates that the Christian community exists and has its place within God's design only because that design, made known in and through Jesus will not be thwarted (see vv. 21, 27), despite the denials of those who know what Jesus has said (see vv. 17, 25, 27). The disciple whom Jesus loved, and the failed shepherd whose three-fold profession of love was later told to negate his three-fold denials, both represent "those who have heard him". The scenes before "the Jews" in 18:12-27 are just as concerned with the role of the fragile but all-important Christian community as with what happened to Jesus.<sup>127</sup>

ter and the Beloved Disciple in the memory of the Johannine community. Both are now dead (see 21:18-19 on the death of Peter, and 21:22-23 on the death of the Beloved Disciple).

<sup>126</sup> I accept that John 21 is a later, but important, appendix to the Gospel whose narrative design ends at 20:31. Not all would subscribe to that view. See, for example, P.S. Minear, "The Original Function of John 21", *JBL* (1983) 85-98; J.L. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (SBLDS 82; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 50-73; F.F. Segovia, "The Journey(s) of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel", *Semeia* 53 (1991) 22-54; Brodie, *John*, 574-79.

<sup>127</sup> The above study was presented and discussed as part of the Seminar on the Johannine Literature at the Annual Meeting of the *Societas Novi Testamenti Studiorum*, held in Edinburgh, Scotland, from 1-5 August, 1994.

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