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Agapios AbuSaada

John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel

An Exegetico–Theological Study





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Introduction

1. Theme, Limitations of the Present Research and Purpose

1.1. *Theme*

The purpose of this study is to examine John the Baptist (hereafter: JB) in the Fourth Gospel (hereafter: FG) in the light of his true representative role of the Scriptures in the context of his Christocentric Testimony (1:6–8.15.19–37; 3:22–30; 5:33–36a and 10:40–42). His representative role relies on what the Scriptures of Israel testify about Jesus, since all the Old Testament (hereafter: OT) characters, according to the Johannine theological view, are considered as witnesses to Jesus.

1.2. *Limitations of the Present Research*

The fact that the FG calls JB 13x by name (1:6.15.26.28.32.35; 3:23.24.27; 4:1; 10:40.41[2x]) makes him a noteworthy object. It is striking that these passages are concentrated in the first ten chapters. Most Johannine scholars divide the Gospel, excluding the Prologue (1:1–18) and the Epilogue (21:1–25), into two parts in general, namely «the Book of Signs» (1:19–12:50) and «the Book of Glory» (13:1–20:31).¹

One should recognize that, with the exception of the first two mentions in the Prologue, all mentions are made in the first part of the Gospel,

1. Cf. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel according to John I–XII*, CXXXVIII; G.R. BEASLEY–MURRAY, *John*, XCI–XCII; G. ZEVINI, *The Gospel according to John*, 30–32.

«The Book of Signs», in which Jesus reveals himself through miracles and words, and in which the conflict with the Jews intensifies. Moreover, the Johannine John is not mentioned as a great character of Judaism, but from the very beginning of the Gospel, the FE places him in Jesus' closed circle, namely «his own», those who received him, who believed in his name (1:12), and thus became his own, his bride. This suggests that the FE does not give him an independent role as much as he instrumentalizes him in the salvation history.

I will have a deeper look into this theme with the means that the FE offered us in his Gospel through an attentive listening to the literary language and the theological message that belong to the biblical texts. I will limit myself to the research of the useful elements for understanding the representative role of the Johannine John, to arrive at defining how this theological character develops through all the occurrences that appear throughout the first part of the Gospel. My study of the Johannine John is limited to one work of the Johannine corpus only, namely, the FG, making mention of its relationship with the rest of the OT and the NT writings, when useful in developing a point.

1.3. *Purpose*

The Fourth Evangelist (hereafter: FE) places him firmly in the central time of salvation history as a character that is parallel to Jesus but in a limited sense. It is most significant that the FE intends to call a special attention to the place of his JB in salvation history. He is «the last representative» in the long line of God's messengers who announced the coming of the Christ.² In this context, his role agrees with that of the Scriptures: the positive, theological meaning of both JB and the Scriptures within the FG is that they testify to Jesus. It may truly be affirmed that JB embodies and epitomizes the OT prophecies and «testifies» the inauguration of the NT era by drawing his follower's attention to Jesus as «the Lamb of God» (cf. 1:37). In this sense, as such, John's testimony appears to be an integral part of the salvation history.³

2. S.M. AHN, *OT Characters*, 108.

3. A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *John*, 45.

But what does the adding of the term «true» mean? Is there a false representative role within the FG?

Of course, yes. For this reason, the FE introduces the role of his John as a *true* representative of the Scriptures in contrast to the false representative role of the Jewish authorities who search the Scriptures, and thus refuse to believe in Jesus (5:39–40) as «the Son of God» (1:34). In this context, two expressions will summarize this role of the Johannine John: the noun ἀλήθεια, «truth» announced by Jesus himself (5:33) and the adjective ἀληθής, «true» announced by the crowd (10:41). Representing the Scriptures emphasizes his role as an authentic witness who speaks what the Scriptures testify about Jesus. On the other hand, representing the prophets means that he no longer stands in the period of prophecy as one of a line of prophets; his prophetic character stands in the time of fulfilment of prophecies alongside with Jesus.

Consequently, this study, through an analysis of all the passages regarding JB, will try to show how it is possible to consider him as a true representative of the Scriptures in the context of his Christocentric testimony. This means, for the immediate environment of Jesus, he seems to have a hermeneutic relevance. The following consideration of the individual places is thus based on the premise that his character serves the revelation of Jesus before the Jewish environment, thus relying on what the Scriptures of Israel say about him. The theological intention could be summarized as follows: whoever places his hope on Jesus, hopes for the God who speaks his word of promise in the Scriptures⁴ as well. Therefore, this is the main role of the Johannine John as it will be shown in the course of this study. He is portrayed very positively in the Gospel, appearing as a true representative of the Scriptures.

2. Methodology

The synchronic approach is the adopted approach. It allows to establish the theological significance of JB's character in the text of the FG that has come to this day. However, the main synchronic purpose does not prevent, where necessary to better understand the text, to recourse to the his-

4. K. WENGST, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 92.

torical–critical approach⁵ or other valid approaches in the current exegesis. Consequently, it is unforgettable that the different natures of texts and the richness of the ways in which a scholar can examine the text of the Scriptures, allow different approaches to be used. In order to understand the richness of the biblical text today, the researcher cannot limit himself to the horizon offered by a single exegetical approach. My thoughts, therefore, draw various techniques.

In carrying out this approach, I will adapt the integral approach proposed by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in the document «The interpretation of the Bible in the Church»: «The text is explained as it stands, on the basis of the mutual relationships between its diverse elements. Rather than considering the text’s development through time (diachronic analysis), synchronic study considers the text as the reader encounters it in its completed form».⁶ With this approach, the final form of the text is examined in terms of language and literature.⁷ It concentrates on the present «text» and, even more, on the present «reader». In this context, my choice of synchronic approach aims mainly to extract the theological message that is transmitted by the final text of the FG: what matters is to explain the text.⁸

Therefore, my study of JB’s character in the FG is *exegetico–theological*. In this light, through the chosen methodology, my exegetico–theological study will seek to answer two principles questions: the first is *if* JB described as a true representative of the Scriptures; and the second is *how* the FG explains this representative role.

3. The Arrangement of the Study

Bracketed between an Introduction and a Conclusion, the study is arranged in five chapters.

5. Pontificia Commissione Biblica, *L’interpretazione della Bibbia nella Chiesa*, 119. Williamson also argues this point by stating that «This is the reason why a historical–critical study that examines the development of a biblical text must be completed by a synchronic study of the text now in our possession». (P.S. WILLIAMSON, *Catholic Principles*, 31).

6. P.S. WILLIAMSON, *Catholic Principles*, 68.

7. For further details about the synchronic approach, see W. EGGER, *Metodologia*, 75–167.

8. A. NICCACCI, *Metodo*, 45.

The Introduction concentrates on the purpose of the study: JB is the true representative of the Scriptures in the FG. This purpose is mainly reached through his Christocentric testimony. His representative role relies on what the Scriptures of Israel testify about Jesus, since all the OT characters, according to the FG's theological view, are considered as witnesses to Jesus.

Chapter I is entitled: «A Line of Development of John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel». It includes four different points as follows:

- The Synoptics.
- The Beloved Disciple (hereafter BD).
- The State of the Question (Status Quaestionis).
- The Originality and Newness of the Study.

Chapter II, which is entitled: «John the Baptist's Mission as a Divine Choice», analyzes the mentioning of JB in the Prologue, specifically Jn. 1:6–8 and 15. This chapter is divided into two scenes as follows:

- Scene I: A Prophetic Character (Jn. 1:6–8).
- Scene II: A Prophetic Witness (Jn. 1:15).

Chapter III is dedicated to JB's three-fold testimony, which is entitled: «As a Prophet-like-Deutero-Isaiah». This chapter is divided into three scenes as follows:

- Scene I: The Voice of Deutero-Isaiah (Jn. 1:19–28).
- Scene II: The Isaianic Influence on John's Testimony (Jn. 1:29–34).
- Scene III: The Concluding Voice of the OT (Jn. 1:35–37).

Chapter IV, which is entitled: «The Friend-Witness: A Prophetic Imagery» (3:22–30), examines the role of JB as the *shosh^ebin* (יְשׁוּבֵינִי = best man) of the new messianic wedding. Jesus, the unknown Bridegroom in Jn. 2:1–11 becomes known in Jn. 3:29 through JB's testimony. He appears here as a character from the NT, i.e., the Bridegroom's friend of the messianic community.

Chapter V, which is entitled: «Scriptural Interpretation of John's Testimony», deals with his testimony as an event in the past but still sounds in

the life of Jesus and the Johannine community. This chapter is divided into two scenes: the first indicates the testimony of Jesus about JB, while the second deals with the testimony of «many» about him:

- Scene I: The Witness to the Truth (5:33–36a).
- Scene II: His Testimony was True (10:40–42).

The Conclusion bears the fruit of our research; in other words, the comprehensive image of JB as it is depicted in the FG. The conclusion also takes into consideration the message of his character to the church of the day.⁹

9. Note: All the English quotations from the OT, unless noted otherwise, are from the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB). However, the English quotations from the NT are from Nestle–Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (28th ed.). Despite that, the Johannine texts that are related to the passages of JB in the FG are my own translations (1:6–8.15.19–37; 3:22–30; 5:33–36a; 10:40–42).

A Line of Development of John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel

1. The Synoptics

The purpose of this study is to examine the special theological significance which the FG's assigns to JB. To appreciate the specificity of the Johannine presentation, we should first review briefly how far all four Gospels concur in their treatment of JB and the Synoptics portray him for their own purposes. Therefore, a comparison between the Synoptics and the FG regarding JB will show the motivation that lies behind the FE to create the character of his John, since this Gospel differs, both literarily and theologically, from the Synoptics.¹ Thus, the image of the Johannine John is literally and theologically different from the Synoptics.

There is a lot of his history and life-events from the standpoint of historical biography² that are found in the Synoptics narrative, but they are not mentioned in the FG's narrative, as contained, for example, the childhood narrative in the Gospel of Luke (1:5–25.39–45.57–80); his explicit designation as a «prophet» and his role as a preacher of repentance (Mt. 3:11; 11:9; Lk. 3:3).³ Moreover, there are no references to the beheading narrative like Matthew (14:1–12) and Mark (6:14–29). The description of John as «the Baptist»⁴ in the Synoptics is also striking for its absence from

1. J. ERNST, *Johannes der Täufer*, 186.

2. W. WINK, *John the Baptist*, x.

3. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John the Baptist», 46.

4. Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής (cf. Mt. 3:1; Lk. 7:20) or Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων (cf. Mk. 1:4).

the FG's narrative. The FE has John «the Baptist» baptizing although «Baptist» is not given to him as a surname.⁵

According to the Synoptics, Jesus' baptism inaugurates his public ministry, while according to the FG, it is John's testimony that inaugurates Jesus' public ministry. As a matter of fact, the only textual similarity between the FG and the Synoptics is found in the phrase τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον ὡς περιστερὰν, «The Spirit descended as a dove» (Jn. 1:32; Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22).⁶

Obviously, he who compares the Johannine narrative with that of the Synoptics realizes that the Johannine John is quite different from the Synoptic John. The FG portrays him as a witness *par excellence*,⁷ but at the same time, this role is inseparable from his other roles such as prophet, teacher, friend, and the lamp. He is indeed the authoritative witness who was ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, «sent from God» as a prophet to reveal Jesus' identity as it is drawn in the Scriptures. Thus, our study intends to highlight, especially, the FG's profound and authoritative teaching on JB's character and his testimony in relation to Jesus: God sent him to testify and to reveal the Christ to Israel and likewise will send all who believe in him to testify and to reveal him in the world: «As the Father has sent me, so I send you» (20:21).

2. The Beloved Disciple

2.1. *The Witness–Motif in the Fourth Gospel*

The significance given to the witness–motif characterizes the FG in relation to the Synoptics. In the Acts of the Apostles, the notion holds an important place, as we see from the beginning: «You will be my witnesses», declares the Glorified Jesus to his apostles and thanks the help of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

The FG is among the Gospels and Acts that speaks more frequently and with greater depth and richness of the testimony, especially regarding

5. J.M. BOICE, *Witness and Revelation*, 81.

6. H.T. ONG, «The Johannine Community», 118.

7. R.G. MACCINI, «Testimony/Witness», 812.

JB's testimony. It could be called «the Gospel of Testimony». A vastness of texts that deal with the witness–motif in the FG such as the testimony of JB, the Samaritan Woman (4:29.39), the works of Jesus (5:36; 10:25), God the Father himself (5:37), the Scriptures (5:39), the multitude (12:17), the Holy Spirit (15:26), the disciples (15:27) and the BD (19:35; 21:24).⁸ Thus, the witness theme, or rather the characters who play the role of major witnesses of Jesus in the FG, might have a structuring function in the organization of the Gospel.⁹

Two greatest testimonies are present in the FG, thus interesting to our topic: JB and the BD, since the first testimony dominates the first part of the Gospel, the so-called «The Book of Signs», where the second dominates the second part of the Gospel, the so-called «The Book of Glory».¹⁰ Therefore, the FG is framed, in its definitive edition, by two proclamations indicating well the orientation of the book: ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος [...] ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν [...] Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου, «A man came into being [...] came for testimony [...] and this is the testimony of John» (1:6–7.19) and καὶ ὁ ἑώρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία [...] οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν, «He who saw this has testified, and his testimony is true [...] this is the disciple who is testifying» (19:35; 21:24).¹¹ In this context, the credibility of the Gospel itself relies on JB's testimony and that of the BD.¹² Accordingly,

8. Boice mentions seven types of witnesses. These are: (1) John the Baptist. (2) Other human witnesses (among whom he includes the Samaritan woman, the multitude who witnessed the raising of Lazarus, Jesus's disciples, the beloved disciple, and the blind man). (3) The Father. (4) Jesus Christ. (5) Christ's works. (6) The Scriptures. (7) The Holy Spirit. (J.M. BOICE, *Witness and Revelation*, 25–27; see also L. MORRIS, *John*, 80). However, Marti argues that the witness–motif in the FG could be divided into four groups: (1) People's testimonies (John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman, the people who say Lazarus raised from the dead, Jesus' disciples, and the Evangelist). (2) Objects' testimonies (Jesus' works and the Scriptures). (3) Deity's testimonies (the Father and the Son either alone or together, and the Holy Spirit). (4) Other testimonies (Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, Nicodemus, the Samaritans, the multitude on the mountain, Peter, the officers of the Pharisees and the chief priests, the man born blind, many beyond the Jordan, and Martha). (F.A. MARTI, «Witness» and «Bearing Witness», 162).

9. J. ONISZCZUK, «Testimonianza», 3.

10. J. ONISZCZUK, «Testimonianza», 7.

11. R. VIGNOLO, *Personaggi*, 173.

12. «From John (the Baptist) to John (the Apostle) witness has been borne, and continues to be borne, as long as the Gospel is read, having as its purpose, which is stated in John 20:31». (A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *A Theology*, 244).

John's testimony, in the first part of the FG, conforms to Scriptural expectations and requirements, while the BD's testimony fulfil these Scriptural prophecies.¹³

2.2. *A Johannine Overview of the Two-Witnesses*

The witness-motif, in which the FE's proclamation is summarized (20:30–31), characterizes the role which JB — pretty much like «the disciple whom Jesus loved» (19:25–27; 21:24) — fulfils in the FG (1:68.15.19.34; 3:26; 5:33; 10:41). He holds a special place. He is already named twice in the Prologue (1:6–8.15); he testifies first before οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, «The Jews» (1:19–34), then before δύο μαθηταί, «Two disciples» (1:35–37); he is found at the end of the third chapter (Jn. 3:22–30); Jesus himself testifies to him in 5:33–35 as well as the πολλοί, «Many» in Jn. 10:40–42.

The mention of the «disciple whom Jesus loved» is found 5x in Jn. 13–21 (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7.20). According to the FG, he is an unknown character; he is «the disciple whom Jesus loved» (13:23; 19:25–27; 21:7.20); he is the other disciple (20:3–9; 21:8) and he is the disciple who gives testimony (19:34–35; 21:24). At the Last Supper, he stands next to Jesus, and then describes himself as lying on the chest of Jesus (13:23.25); a position that puts him in a perfect proximity to Jesus. The BD has accompanied Jesus to the Cross manifesting an unshakeable faith, as a true friend, who can be trusted. He is a welcoming model, to whom Jesus entrusts his mother (19:26–27).¹⁴

In addition to that, he gives testimony of having seen the pierced side of the Crucified Jesus (19:34–35). He is the first one to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus (20:8). For this reason, he is also the first one to recognize him in the daily life (21:4–7), reminding Peter that ὁ κύριός ἐστιν, «He is the Lord».¹⁵ Therefore, he may give testimony for the generations of disciples of all times (21:24a). However, it is the community itself that reaffirms that what is said by this disciple is a true testimony and so can be trusted (21:24b). The same progression applies to JB as well. He is the first believer in Jesus (1:6–8.15); he is the first to recognize Jesus' true identity, thus confesses him as «the Son of God» (1:29–34). And it is the «many»,

13. C.A. EVANS, *Word and Glory*, 174.

14. A. VALENTINI, «Maria», 198.

15. R. VIGNOLO, «Il discepolo che Gesù amava», 4.

that is, the voice of the Johannine community that confirms that what he said was a true testimony (10:41).

One can notice that the FG is eager to keep the anonymity of the disciple «whom Jesus loved». This name has its meaning. The love of Jesus becomes his name. Through anonymity, this disciple is presented as a typical character of Jesus' disciple; he expresses the type of the disciples: he is the man of faith.¹⁶ This disciple carries a symbolic dimension for believers. At the same time, he is a historical character in the story. By his quality of disciple, his testimony in Jn. 19:35 is of a particular significance.

The act of seeing «from him who has seen» (ὁ ἑωρακώς) in Jn. 19:35a is highlighted by the verb ὁράω. This verb expresses a penetration of the mystery of the one who sees (1:34; 19:35; 20:8.18.25.29). At the same time, the verb ὁράω with the other verbs of vision θεάομαι, βλέπω and θεωρέω imply a physical vision. The verb ὁράω, in the form of participle perfect active ἑωρακώς (19:35a), underlines the status of the eyewitness: one must see to testify. The FG uses the testimony of the BD in order to strengthen the faith of the community that does not see Jesus with their eyes.

According to the FG's theology, the witness is not a witness of facts as much as he is a witness of his faith. The BD, therefore, becomes a witness of the fulfilment of the Scriptures in the Crucified Jesus. This testimony of the fulfilment of the Scriptures was already prepared in JB's testimony, who was the true representative of the Scriptures. In the same line of thought, the FE tends to show that he is also a witness of his own faith. In this context, he does not introduce him in his salvific-historical «once-for-allness» but also as the permanent beginning of the faith and formation of *the coming church*, represented in the character of the BD, especially that the whole passage of Jn. 21 is devoted to his ecclesiastical mission.¹⁷

JB's testimony continues as an active and permanent testimony through the presence and the testimony of the BD. His character and that of the BD testify to Jesus and his Johannine identity.¹⁸ Thus, both greatest witnesses act as two WINGS of the same EAGLE by whom this message of salvation is brought to the reader.¹⁹

16. M. DIBELIUS, «Traditions problem», 127.

17. I. DE LA POTTERIE, «Le témoin qui demeure», 349.

18. D.A. LEE, «John the Baptist and the Beloved Disciple», 3.

19. J. ONISZCZUK, «Testimonianza», 26.

JB	The BD
The witness of the first part of the FG known as «The Book of Signs» (1:19–12:50).	The witness of the second part of the FG known as «The Book of Glory» (13:1–20:31). ²⁰
The purpose of his testimony: «in order that all believed through him» (1:7).	«So that you also may believe» (19:35).
Oral testimony: «This is the testimony of John» (1:19).	Written testimony: «This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them» (21:24).
καὶ γὰρ ἑώρακα καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα, «I myself have seen and have testified» (1:34).	καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν, «He who saw this has testified» (19:35).
John's standing next to the Bridegroom (3:29).	The BD's standing next to the cross of the Bridegroom of the church (19:25–27).
The special friendship relationship: «The friend of the Bridegroom» (3:29).	The special friendship relationship: «The disciple whom Jesus loved» (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7.20). ²¹
«All that John said about him was true» (10:41).	«His testimony is true» (21:24).
His character was connected to the first coming of Jesus (1:6–11).	His character is connected to the second and definitive coming of Jesus (21:22–23). ²²

As this table shows, under the profile of the testimony, it is first and foremost with JB, «And I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God» (1:34; see also 1:7.19). At the end of the FG, there is an inclusive reference, with almost analogous words, applied to the BD, «He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe» (19:35; see also 21:24).²³ The whole Gospel marks the essential progress between the testimony of JB and that of the BD, expressed in the variation from «to testify» (1:7) to «so that you may come to believe» (20:31): the first announces a dominating Messiah, without seeing the glory of the Cross, while the second, in front of this, brings the Cross back to the announcements of the first.²⁴

The «ancient» testimony, summarized and symbolized in that of JB in the book of Signs, can be recovered and understood in the light of the

20. H. MAHFOUZ, «The Disciple Who Testifies», 11.

21. R. VIGNOLO, «Testimonianza», 182.

22. R. VIGNOLO, *Personaggi*, 173.

23. For further details, see L.S. NAVARRO, «Estructura testimonial», 514–516.

24. L. CARDELLINO, «Testimoni», 83.

«new», given by the BD in the book of Glory. Consequently, one cannot access the revelation of Jesus as the «Lamb of God», and as the One who gives the Spirit without measure, while disregarding the testimony of these two characters. This is true for the early historical disciples (true Israel), who welcome Jesus on the indication of JB, and for the post-apostolic church of all times, which welcomes the Book of the BD.²⁵ We can deduce then that JB is the true representative of the Scriptures through the OT's lens, while the BD is the representative of the Apostolic church.

3. The State of the Question (Status Quaestionis)

The texts, which present JB in the FG, though seem to belong to the relevant themes of the Gospel, have not been analyzed in a precise and detailed way in a specific study but only hinted at by the Johannine commentators without an in-depth analysis, except for the study carried by M. Stowasser as we will see soon. The exegetical and theological introductions on the FG seem to neglect the character of JB.²⁶ Among the investigations that are closer to our specific topic, we may list the following studies of which we do not intend to present their content but consider only their main trends. We do not intend to present the entire history of the research here; we will mention only some works that offer a significant contribution in this regard.

3.1. W. Wink (1968)²⁷

Wink's book consists of an introduction, a conclusion, and five chapters. Four chapters are dedicated to discuss JB in the Canonical Gospels. Chap-

25. For further details about the relationship between JB and the BD in the FG, see R. VIGNOLO, «Il doppio letterario tra Giovanni Battista e Discepolo Amato», 83–108; D.A. LEE, «Witness in the Fourth Gospel: John the Baptist and the Beloved Disciple as Counterparts», 1–17.

26. Cf. R.E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 2003; A. CASALEGNO, «Perchè contemplino la mia gloria» (Gv 17,24): Introduzione alla teologia del Vangelo di Giovanni, 2006; A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 2009; P.A. RAINBOW, *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, the Epistles and the Apocalypse*, 2014; R. BAUCKHAM, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*, 2015.

27. W. WINK, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*, 87–105.

ter two is dedicated to JB in Q. His approach swings between tradition and redaction. Wink has devoted one chapter in his book to JB in the FG. He divides it into three parts: analysis, polemic and apologetic, and role.²⁸ His thesis seems to focus on JB's relationship with Jesus as a witness²⁹ without using the language of exaggeration in describing his role as it appeared in the Synoptics. The reader of Wink's hypothesis can discover its polemical–apologetic interests against his disciples, thus saying that the FE «makes John a witness against his own disciples to the messiahship of Jesus».³⁰ Moreover, Wink concentrates on the ecclesiastical aspect by saying that «the church is regarded as a direct outgrowth of the Baptist movement (1:35ff.; 3:22ff.; 10:40ff.) ».

3.2. F. Manns (1982)³¹

Manns' article includes two points with a brief introduction. He builds his article upon the redaction–criticism approach, since he deals with the texts as the final editor has delivered. The emphasis of his study is on the testimony in its historical context.³² It is obvious that Manns focuses in his texts–analysis on their concentric–structures in order to draw the light on the themes they consist of. Through his analysis, Manns draws a close attention to define JB as a witness to Jesus.

3.3. J. Ernst (1989)³³

The book includes an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The author adopts the historical–critical approach. Ernst has devoted one chapter in his book to JB in the FG. He agrees with Wink's hypothesis that the author of the FG has a Christological–Theological tendency against the over–evaluation of the Baptist by directing the reader towards an antithetical parallelism

28. Wink concentrates, in his study, on how the early church understood the role of JB in God's redemptive purpose, proceeding from his role in the Gospels and Acts. (W. WINK, *John the Baptist*, xii).

29. W. WINK, *John the Baptist*, 89, 105.

30. W. WINK, *John the Baptist*, xi.

31. F. MANNS, «Jean–Baptiste, témoin de Jésus d'après le quatrième Évangile», 97–119.

32. F. MANNS, «Jean–Baptiste», 97.

33. J. ERNST, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation – Geschichte – Wirkungsgeschichte*, 186–215.

between Jesus and JB.³⁴ He recapitulates his study by asserting that the Johannine John is not the false Messiah nor is he an Antichrist, but he is the ideal witness of Christ. He appears as the model of the Christian preacher, the FE's prototype and the man sent by God (1:6; 3:28) who is to lead others to faith in Christ (1:7). In addition, the «Christianization» of the Baptist³⁵ is also a noteworthy motif for the church more than it is for the Baptist sect.

3.4. M. Stowasser (1992)³⁶

His doctoral dissertation accepted at the University of Vienna in 1992 was, in numerous directions, truly a ground-breaking attempt to account for the Johannine John. This study remains to this day the first and most recent monograph entirely devoted to the Johannine John. It concentrates on his status — role and activity — within the FG through an analysis of the Johannine texts that are related to him in the Gospel (1:6–8.15.19–34; 3:22–4:3; 5:33–36; 10:40–42). Two different points are to be considered here. Firstly, he swings between history, tradition and redaction approaches.³⁷ Secondly, he downplays the role of the Johannine John as a witness to stress the main concern of the FE in presenting his John: he is inferior to Jesus. So, he is placing JB's texts in an apologetic context. It seems that Stowasser has not come to a full light in Johannine literature.³⁸

3.5. C. Bennema (2009)³⁹

In a lengthy essay on the character of the Johannine John, Bennema argues for a one-fold thesis through using the narrative-criticism method. He points out the various ways in which JB's character may be

34. J. ERNST, *Johannes der Täufer*, 212.

35. J. ERNST, *Johannes der Täufer*, 216.

36. M. STOWASSER, *Johannes der Täufer im Vierten Evangelium: Eine Untersuchung zu seiner Bedeutung für die johanneische Gemeinde*.

37. M. STOWASSER, *Johannes der Täufer*, 3.

38. It is noteworthy that the well documented bibliographical tool of FJ. MOLONEY, *Johannine Studies 1975–2017* (WUNT, 372), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017 does NOT mention JB in his table of contents as if no single study had been done on him. In addition, the study of M. Stowasser is not mentioned.

39. C. BENNEMA, «The Character of John in the Fourth Gospel», 271–284.

revealed within the context of the FG (such as: the baptizer; the herald and forerunner; the teacher; the best man and the lamp) to clarify and define his decisive role as a witness. On the basis of this latter fact, Bennema considers JB's character as a flat character whose single role is to testify to Jesus.⁴⁰ In addition, Bennema concludes his article by stating that «in this world where Jesus is still on trial, we need witnesses like John».⁴¹

3.6. *C.H. Williams (2013)*⁴²

Williams divides her article into four parts with an introduction and a conclusion. Her approach to the study of JB's character in the FG is based on the narrative–criticism approach. She emphasizes the significance of his character in the FG, who «is ascribed more direct speech than any other character apart Jesus», thus describing him as a decisive character,⁴³ for his testimony is a theological key to comprehend Jesus. She draws attention to various literary techniques in order to present JB's character as a decisive witness to Jesus.⁴⁴ In her conclusion part, Williams christianizes John, describing him as a paradigm of the Christian preacher/believer, since no other «disciples» in the FG reveals such a deep understanding of Jesus' identity.⁴⁵

3.7. *S. Brown (2013)*⁴⁶

Brown divides her article into four parts with an introduction. In her article, Brown builds upon the narrative–criticism approach to examine the role of JB in the FG. Her study relates to three Johannine texts (1:1–18; 1:19–42 and 3:22–36). In her analysis of these texts, Brown underlines JB «as

40. C. BENNEMA, «The Character of John», 271.

41. C. BENNEMA, «The Character of John», 283.

42. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist): The Witness on the Threshold», 46–60.

43. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist) », 46.

44. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist) », 48.

45. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist) » 59.

46. S. BROWN, «John the Baptist: Witness and Embodiment of the Prologue in the Gospel of John», 147–164.

the witness to perfect faith».⁴⁷

3.8. R. Zimmermann (2016)⁴⁸

His article is divided into four parts with an introduction. In his study, Zimmermann builds upon the narrative–criticism approach. His thesis about JB as a witness runs counter to that of Williams and Brown. He claims that JB is not *the* witness but he acts as a witness;⁴⁹ he is not stated to be the witness, but rather he is shown as the one who witnesses. He also reviews a number of approaches to character and characterization in the FG to shed light on a variety of dimensions found within the text. Then he analyzes, in a simple manner, the texts where JB appears. Zimmermann concludes his study by saying that JB can be presented «as a performative figure who effects a powerful reader response».⁵⁰

3.9. M. Marcheselli (2016)⁵¹

His article contains seven parts with an introduction and an abstract. Marcheselli builds his study upon the narrative–criticism approach. He points to Stowasser study as the most recent entirely dedicated to the Johannine Baptist.⁵² He also relies on three works of R. Vignolo regarding JB's character in relation to that of the BD.⁵³ Then he makes a brief analysis of the texts where JB is mentioned in the FG. His conclusion is that, in the FG, John appears not simply as a witness among others, but rather as *the witness par excellence*.⁵⁴

47. S. BROWN, «John the Baptist», 148.

48. R. ZIMMERMANN, «John (the Baptist) as a Character in the Fourth Gospel. The Narrative Strategy of a witness Disappearing», 99–115.

49. R. ZIMMERMANN, «John (the Baptist) », 99.

50. R. ZIMMERMANN, «John (the Baptist) », 115.

51. M. MARCHESELLI, «Una testimonianza che perdura: profilo e funzione di Giovanni nel Quarto Vangelo», 605–633.

52. M. MARCHESELLI, «Una testimonianza che perdura», 608.

53. M. MARCHESELLI, «Una testimonianza che perdura», 610.

54. M. MARCHESELLI, «Una testimonianza che perdura», 630.

3.10. R.L. Webb (2016)⁵⁵

Webb's article is divided into four parts with an introduction and a conclusion. Webb builds his article upon the historical-criticism approach in order to throw light on the question of the historical Jesus in relation to JB as both «a baptizer and a prophet with an eschatological announcement concerning a coming character».⁵⁶ Thus, relying on multiple witnesses from Q 3:7–9, Mk. 1:4–8 and Josephus *Ant.* 18.5.2, 116–119 in addition to the early Christian communities.⁵⁷ According to him, John's historicity in the FG is built upon his disciples, who are mentioned in Jn. 1:35, 3:25 and 4:1. At the same time, the mention of «Bethany beyond the Jordan» (1:28, 3:26 and 10:40) and «Aenon near Salim» (3:23) throws light on the historical aspect (see also Mk. 1:5).⁵⁸ He also makes a historical allusion to Jesus' relation to John based on Baptism's ministry, claiming that «Jesus' ministry is rooted in John's eschatological framework».⁵⁹ Webb concludes his article by saying that «the Fourth Gospel's portrayal of Jesus in relation to John is consistent with that found in the Synoptic Gospels».⁶⁰

4. The Originality and Newness of the Study

From this survey, it turns out that many of the Johannine exegetes addressed JB in the FG from a narrative perspective, and, according to their exegesis, the Johannine John appeared as a «witness» *par excellence*, a «Christian witness» and a «model» for Christians.⁶¹ In my opinion, these are true definitions of him. But a thorough analysis of the Johannine texts that are related to him will allow us to open a new perspective on this eminent Johannine character. Therefore, from this survey, I learned that no publication a thorough and comprehensive study of the Johannine texts

55. R.L. WEBB, «Jesus in Relation to John “the Testifier” and not “the Baptizer”»: The Fourth Gospel's Portrayal of John the Baptist and its Historical Possibilities», 215–230.

56. R.L. WEBB, «Jesus in relation to John», 216.

57. R.L. WEBB, «Jesus in relation to John», 220–221.

58. R.L. WEBB, «Jesus in relation to John», 222.

59. R.L. WEBB, «Jesus in relation to John», 228.

60. R.L. WEBB, «Jesus in relation to John», 230.

61. R.F. COLLINS, «The Representative Figures», 32–34.

that are related to JB, but the dissertation of Martin Stowasser accepted at the University of Vienna in 1992. Some articles were of good quality in approaching the character of JB in the FG. But all the above-mentioned studies were floating between tradition and redaction, or they were stressing his witness status and his inferiority towards Jesus. What was missing and where I could reach through my synchronic analysis is stressing the prophetic character of JB and discovering in him, a true representative of the Scriptures.

In fact, he is beyond a simple witness. What I will try to prove throughout the study is that JB, in his quality of «witness», is the true representative of the Scriptures, which also plays the role of a witness through his prophetic voice.⁶² Since the Scriptures testify to Jesus (5:39) and since the first qualification of him is «the sent one» (1:6), having a prophet speaking out like the Scriptures, and since his testimony is Christocentric, this gives him the ἐξουσία, «authority» to be a true representative of the Scriptures. Thus, he is the first human being who will reveal Jesus' messianic identity, and consequently, he will urge many others to have faith in Jesus (1:35–37: his first disciples; 10:42).

Each theme, and each section, is related to the prophetic character of the OT, thus preparing a further development of the Johannine narrative regarding the ministry of Jesus, especially in the first part of the FG (1–12). JB's representative character plays an essential role in the FG as the one who represents the Scriptures of Israel. Therefore, my study will be a direct answer to the key question about JB's identity and his role within the FG, which is asked by the Priests and the Levites, the representatives of the Jews, at the very beginning of this Gospel: σὺ τίς εἶ, «You, who are you?» (1:19).

62. «God's life was revealed in God's spoken and written word. God's Word is now alive» (D.O. BALES, «John 5:31–47», 418).

John the Baptist's Mission as a Divine Choice (Jn. 1:6–8.15)

Perhaps JB, after Jesus, is the most remarkable character of the FG despite his short appearance. From the monumental time of the Prologue, his mission as a witness will be indissolubly referred to Jesus (1:6–8.15).¹ He is presented as a symbol of the Scriptures that lived in expectation of the fulfilment of the messianic promises and, at the same time, as a prototype and an example of faith since he is marked as the one who believes before the realization of the sign of Cana — when the sign is the line that leads the disciples to believe. Consequently, this chapter simply tries to provide a focal point that concentrates mainly on his character and his testimony as stated in the present form of the Prologue (1:6–8.15), where JB appears as a Johannine τόπος, «topos» as a representative of the Scriptures, and consequently, represents those who believe on the basis of the OT.

1. There is a moot point pertaining to a literary structure whether the Baptist verses (6–8.15) belong to the original poetic hymn or are considered additional verses or a secondary addition. Some scholars (such as Haenchen, R. Brown, R. Schnackenburg, J.C. O'Neill and R. Bultmann) consider that the verses which speak of John (6–8.15) are additional verses. These commentators think that the hymnic part of the Prologue, earlier and the redactor of the Gospel, added the references to the Baptist. On the other hand, P. Lamarche, H. Ridderbos, E. Käsemann, M. Hooker and C.K. Barrett, believe that these verses are original and indispensable within their context. McGrath supports this hypothesis: «The key argument in favour of this position is the fact that Jn. 1:19 presupposes that the identity of 'John' is already known» (cf. J.F. MCGRATH, «Prologue as Legitimation», 101). These verses are essential, for the FE's intention is theological.

Scene I
A Prophetic Character
 (Jn. 1:6–8)

This part introduces an exegetical analysis to JB's identity, his mission as a divine act, and the purpose of his witness that all might believe in Jesus through him. It will be noticed that Jn. 1:6–8 consists of the description of the FE and his commentary.² Before the mention of the Incarnation (1:14), Jn. 1:6–8 make JB the model of all the prophets who, in one way or another, have prepared men to receive the Logos. He represents the men of God of the First Covenant; hence the OT look of Jn. 1:6. Thus, these verses refer to the prophetic witnessing in the light of the Logos, before its appearance manifests. JB appears initially as the last witness of Israel for Jesus. That is why he will define his role in the light of Isa. 40:3.

1. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation ³
⁶ Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης·	⁶ A man came into being sent by God his name [was] John.
⁷ οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ.	⁷ This came for testimony in order that he might testify about the light so that all might believe through him.
⁸ οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.	⁸ He was not the light but in order that he might testify to the light.

2. J. STAELY, «Structure», 247.

3. The English translation is my own translation, and thus it is as close as possible to the Greek original text, regardless of the English syntax and grammar. This is applied to all the texts that are related to JB in the FG.

2. Exegesis

2.1. A Prophet

2.1.1. The Historical John (1:6a)

– Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος

It is true that the mission of JB is indicated by means of the verb of which the Evangelist has used in Jn. 1:3 concerning the creation of the world by the Logos, ἐγένετο. But this verb has a special significance here: it does not mark the origin like the verb ἦν (1:1), but simply the existence in an indeterminate way. The verb ἐγένετο is simply historical.⁴ It denotes a presentation of JB's historical manifestation into the revelation of the Light. His coming into the world, therefore, introduces a continuation of God's plan that begins with creation as it is depicted in the Johannine Prologue (1:3.10).

With the verb ἐγένετο, which marks his historical appearance, a new chapter begins; after the Logos has been viewed beyond time and in the creation, his testimony, for the first time in the Prologue, looks at the Logos in the human history.⁵ Thus, the special appearance of the Johannine John points out that the incarnation of the Logos is set forth in the history of Israel. From within the cosmic setting of the initial verses of the

4. The appearance of JB establishes a new ἀρχή: the first ἀρχή (1:1–2) in an absolute sense is the life of the Logos in God, which will be revealed in history. Nevertheless, there is also «a historical ἀρχή»: The Messianic revelation begins with his testimony, which comes at an accurate moment of history: his appearance. (cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Cristologia*, 39). The significance of his testimony comes, then, from his fundamental role in inauguration of the messianic revelation, which is the ἀρχή of the Christian faith and the climax of salvation history. (cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Cristologia*, 48). The FG, then, begins with JB because he stands in contact with the Two-Covenants: the end of the OT, the inauguration of the New one. With his testimony begins the NT's era: the absolute beginning of life in God's Word coincides with a historical beginning, the testimony of the one who comes to reveal Jesus to Israel, to reveal the One who was before him in transcendence (1:30): his testimony is the beginning of Jesus' revelation in history, representing in this way the Scriptures. This idea is supported also by Wink who argues that «John the Baptist was, from the very first, and, through the faithful mediation of the New Testament Evangelists, continues to be, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ». (W. WINK, *John the Baptist*, 115).

5. P. VAN DEN HEEDÉ, *Der Exeget Gottes*, 43.

Prologue (1:1–5), he comes directly into view as a human witness who provides the historical anchoring for the eternal Logos and Light story.⁶ Accordingly, his appearance is the first encounter with a historical character. His presence anchors the supra–historical presence of the λόγος firmly in human history, in which the reader is a participant.⁷ It is interesting to observe that Jesus is described with verbs in the imperfect temporal form, where the author of the FG represents an action in progress or a state that occurs in the past without specifying the end of the action that maintains continuity.

In our case, it is conceived as a state of existence. It is a historical event with a sustained result: already existing before the creation; while he is described with verbs in the aorist temporal form that basically denotes a one–time–action that took place in the past and this time does not refer to the continuity of the action like the imperfect. Thus, the expression already has an orientation towards the history. Within the Johannine Prologue, the verses of JB’s testimony indicate a new subject comes next to the Logos, unlike this Logos, which is ἦν, «was» since the beginning of time, the new subject belongs to the side of ἐγένετο, «becoming» as ἄνθρωπος, «person».

It is important to note the contrast between John as «a man» who began to exist in time, and therefore is a creature of God,⁸ and Jesus, who has always existed, by the Self–Existence of the «Logos» (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), which is based on his Godhead. His becoming contrasts with the eternal being of the Logos. This means, he belongs to the created world, to the sphere of becoming and not to the permanent eternal being. This finds further defence with the use of ἐγένετο, which implies that John came on the scene⁹ but Jesus preceded him. Jesus has not yet been introduced by name when JB is several times the focus of attention by way of contrast to one yet unnamed who was with God at the beginning, the true light that was coming into the world. What the FE has to say about JB is intimately bound up with what he has to say about nature of Jesus.

Accordingly, there is a series of contrasting parallels between JB and Jesus:

6. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist) », 48.

7. D.R. BECK, *The Discipleship Paradigm*, 40.

8. L. MORRIS, *John*, 88.

9. G.R. BEASLEY–MURRAY, *John*, 12.

JB	Jesus
John came into being (1:6).	The Logos was in the beginning (1:1).
John is a man (1:6).	The Logos is «God» (1:1). ⁵
God has sent John (1:6).	The Logos is with God (1:1).
John is a witness to the Light (1:7-8).	The Logos is the Light (1:4). ⁶

In light of these observations, the word ἄνθρωπος confirms the σύγκρισις (*synkrisis*, «comparison») between the human existence of JB and that of the divine origin of the Logos. He, as a man, is distinctly distinguished from the Logos; but as a messenger, he has a special order, and therefore also a higher one. Then, with the ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, the known history is finally reached. The meaning of the expression can be described by «appeared». This is also clear from the context: he was sent by God and came to give testimony.

At this point, we can see the increasing concretization, which we have recognized as the fundamental feature of the Johannine Prologue: from the creation to human history in general up to the present moment of the appearance of JB.¹⁰ Therefore, the FE speaks of a historical person living in a concrete historical situation,¹¹ introducing his historical narrative (cf. Judg. 13:2; 19:1; 1 Sam. 1:1) with his appearance, drawing from this the conclusion that the FE emphatically associates the beginning of the earthly ministry of the Logos with that of JB's coming and witnessing. Therefore, ἄνθρωπος is not a title, it is an expression to indicate a person who has a prophetic function such as JB.

2.1.2. A Chosen Character (1:6b)

– ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ

The verb ἀποστέλλω occurs 700x in LXX. The object of the «sending» is often the «angels». However, ἀποστέλλω has a point of reference «the

10. J. BEUTLER, *John*, 43.

11. P. WILSON, *Incarnation and Covenant*, 61.

prophets»,¹² «the person of Moses»,¹³ «the Word of God»,¹⁴ «the Spirit of the Lord».¹⁵ There is another messianic significance ἀπέσταλκέν με of Isa. 61:1, the parallel text of Lk. 4:16–22.¹⁶

In the FG, we find that the verb ἀποστέλλω occurs 28x (of which 17x describe Jesus' mission). These references are to the Father sending Jesus except for Jn. 1:6.33; and Jn. 3:28, which refer to God's sending JB and Jn. 14:26, which refers to the Father's sending the Paraclete.¹⁷ Equally substantial in this passage is the fact that this Johannine verb indicates primarily the task and authorisation of an emissary.¹⁸ It is used in relation to a divine task and a divine authorisation. Accordingly, the divine origin of his sending is not therefore stated for self-interest, but rather functions to verify the legitimacy of his testimony.¹⁹

Although JB is never called a prophet in the FG, this verb points to the language of the prophetic call,²⁰ which is consistent with the implicit role that JB will perform in the Gospel. In Jn. 1:21, he is not denying that he is a prophet but that he is an eschatological one. In fact, ἀπεσταλμένος makes him a prophet because it seems that the FE wants him a witness in the line of the prophets. In this way, his mission is not of human, but of divine origin, much like that of the OT prophets (Isa. 6:8; Jer. 1:7 and Ezek. 2:3).²¹ Accordingly, from the very beginning of his Gospel, the FE pays a special attention to JB's representative role of the Scriptures.

12. Cf. 2 Chr. 25:15; 1 Sam. 15:1.20; Isa. 6:6.8; Jer. 14:15; Ezek. 2:4. Müller states that the divine commission of JB evokes the calling of the OT Prophets. (U.B. MÜLLER, *Johannes der Täufer*, 164; see also K.V. VREDE, «Nicodemus and John the Baptist», 717).

13. Cf. Exod. 3:10.13.14.15; 5:22; 1 Sam. 12:8.

14. Cf. Exod. 4:28; 2 Sam. 15:36; Jdt. 11:19; Ps. 106:20.

15. Cf. Exod. 15:10; Jdt. 16:14; Isa. 48:16.

16. In the Synoptics, the verb appears 67x (22 in Mt., 20 in Mk. and, 25 in Lk.). The verb concerns both the mission of Jesus and that of his disciples. It also designates the prophetic mission and the sending of Angels in the last days. Out of the Synoptics, it designates the mission of Jesus (Acts 3:20.26; 10:36); the mission of the Apostles (Acts 8:14; 10:20; Rom. 10:15); the mission of Paul (Acts 22:21; 26:17; 1 Cor. 1:17); the mission of Moses (Acts 7:34.35) and finally, sending the Holy Spirit from heaven (1 Pt. 1:12).

17. J.G. VAN DER WATT – R.A. CULPEPPER – U. SCHNELLE, *The Prologue*, 14.

18. D.J. MACLEOD, «John 1:6–9», 309.

19. S.M. AHN, *Old Testament Characters*, 112.

20. R. ZIMMERMANN, «John (the Baptist) », 106; see also B.C. DENNERT, *John the Baptist*, 69.

21. L. MORRIS, *John*, 89.

From this Johannine perspective, he is the only one among all the characters of the Gospel, who shares this Johannine characteristic with Jesus, and thus is closely associated to the mission of the Son, which has a salvific scope: the creative and salvific presence of God in the world is found only in the person of Jesus, and therefore JB's function is clearly defined. His dignified mission is to be a witness, by the authority of God.

To estimate JB's development of this theme, it is important to mention that «sending» and «coming» apparently represent two sides of one relationship: the sender sends, and the sent comes in obedience to his commission.²² This requires from the sent one to be conscious about his divine mission. As a «sent one», he seeks the will and glory of the One who sent him, rather his own. This means that the authority behind his message is not human, but has a divine origin,²³ that is, a divine mission, much like that of the calling of the OT prophets in Israel's past, who are sent by God²⁴ to perform a special task, and God speaks to them in return.²⁵ Thus, he is presented as the heir of the prophets and men of God of the First Covenant. He is characterized as a connecting link between the heavenly and the earthly, the eternal and the historical, the old and the new.²⁶

In this context, the participle ἀπεσταλμένος is to be understood in relation to the OT: God sends his prophets (cf. Exod. 3:10; Isa. 6:8), so that his word might be proclaimed. JB belongs to them, since he identifies himself with the word of Isaiah (1:23). In addition to the name, the origin of the sent one is of a special significance. In this context, the FE says that he is from God, at least in his specific occurrence: ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ. The Johannine text stresses a beginning of a new period in the history of salvation that consists in his activity as a messenger sent «from God» and thus, enjoying all God's authority as the vanguard of the divine invasion into the darkness.²⁷

With his allocation to the sphere of creation, he is simultaneously subordinated to the Logos. Within this context, however, this ἄνθρωπος has

22. A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *Father, Son and Spirit*, 115.

23. J.F. MCHUGH, *John* 1-4, 23-24.

24. Cf. Exod. 3:10-12; 4:13,28; 5:22; 7:16; 1 Sam. 1:1; 12:8; 15:1; 16:1; 2 Sam. 12:1; 2 Kgs. 2:2.4.6; Isa. 6:8; Jer. 1:4ff; 14:14; 19:14; 23:21; Ezek. 2:3,4; 13:6; Zech. 2:13, 15; 6:15; Mal. 4:5.

25. Cf. Exod. 3:10-15; Isa. 6:8; Jer. 1:7.

26. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist) », 48.

27. B. BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, 26.

a special quality: as an ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, he has the legitimation and function of an «Apostle». His depiction as fulfilling a subordinate role to God, is the language used by FE to illustrate the act of sending: he is «sent» from God to identify God's purpose.²⁸ This means, then, the commissioning of a representative to perform tasks, and in the case of Jn. 1:6 that commission is by the authority of God, who is, per this verb, the subject of the act. All the emphasis is on the authority of the sender, to whom the person of the envoy is wholly subordinate, and consequently, on the respect due to his delegate.²⁹

What is important for us is that God's commissioning of the Johannine John is an integral part of God's message of salvation to the whole world as indicated in Jn. 20:31. Here, therefore, the sense of ἀπεσταλμένος indicates that JB is a part of the divine plan; his mission is to announce the decisive events that will occur; more precisely, to submit the entry of Jesus into scene as the divine Logos coming.³⁰ From this point of view, the Johannine usage of the verb ἀπεσταλμένος is significant. The perfect tense indicates the permanent character of his mission, for he continues in the character of a sent man. He is, therefore, a God-appointed witness to Jesus³¹ so that «all might believe through him». Not least of all, the FG draws an image of the first disciple in the simple terms of witness that leads others to faith.³²

Moreover, the genitive construction παρὰ θεοῦ also differentiates JB from Jesus (πρὸς τὸν θεόν). He «was not, like Jesus, sent out from the very presence of God, but one whose coming was brought about by God».³³ In other words, this preposition παρά indicates the origin of the messenger rather than his sender. In this respect, God is mentioned in the story of Jesus through the activities of human agents. It is God who «sends» JB and reveals to him how to identify Jesus (1:6; 1:29–34).³⁴

28. C. COWAN, «The Father and Son», 117.

29. J.F. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 23.

30. J. ZUMSTEIN, *Saint Jean*, 1:60.

31. C. BENEMMA, «The Character of John», 272.

32. W. HOWARD-BROOK, *Becoming Children of God*, 54.

33. W. BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 756.

34. God himself is behind JB's testimony in two ways: he authorizes his office as a witness, and he guarantees the content of his testimony. (cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St John*, 1:304). In this regard, his commission by God makes his testimony more authoritative because he was appointed and

In this context, what qualifies him to testify is that he does not appear on his own, he is «sent by God» and precisely to bring this testimony (1:7). God himself made John a witness, opening his eyes so that he could see and say what he saw (1:33–34). Thus, he was put by God himself in possession of the testimony that leads to Jesus «the Lamb of God» those who listen to him (1:35–37).³⁵ Here, JB's role is also consistent with that of the Scriptures. Whoever hears their words [voices], thus following Jesus, will have the eternal life.

Particularly significant for the FE's theology is that he was not, like Jesus, sent out from the very presence of God, ὁ μονογενής παρὰ πατρός, «The only Son of the Father» (1:14), but one whose coming was brought about by God. Arguably, then, the expression «God sent» stresses God's initiative and suggests that the activity of the sent person can be understood only in terms of God's purpose. This will enable us to better understand that his testimony has a decisive goal: to perform the will of God. The FE, then, introduces him as the object of a divine mission which is expressly defined as a witness to the divine light.³⁶ His divine provenance is recognized in that he is ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, which indicates that his historical appearance is characterised as «God sent». In other words, a historical character sent to fulfil a definite and divine purpose is so characterised. In this context, this Johannine characterization is to verify the legitimacy of his testimony.³⁷

This divine commission «from God» is related to the privilege of the Johannine Jesus.³⁸ Per this Johannine categorization, the FG does not miss, with special features, to develop a Christological typology of his John. The FE gives him the privilege of being sent from God, the same as Jesus himself, in order to testify to the truth (5:33; 18:37). Consequently, and before the mention of the Incarnation (1:14), Jn. 1:6–8 make him the model of all the prophets who, in one way or another, have prepared men to receive the Logos. He represents the men of God of the First Covenant (1:6).

sent by God himself. He himself calls God «the one who sent me to baptise in water» (1:33; cf. also 3:28). He is, within the FG, the only person apart from Jesus (and the Paraclete, Jn. 14:26) about whom such statements are made. (cf. M.J.J. MENKEN, «Observations», 133).

35. C. MASSON, « Le témoignage », 123.

36. E. HARRIS, *Prologue and Gospel*, 31.

37. S.M. AHN, *The Christological Witness*, 123.

38. F.J. MOLONEY, *Johannine Studies*, 322.

Certainly, he is the recipient of a divine call, thus God will reveal to him all the truths concerning Jesus' identity.³⁹ In this line of thought, as the one «sent from God», the Johannine John appears to have another representative role, in addition to his role as a representative of the Scriptures and prophets, *the representative of God himself*.

2.1.3. A Unique Man (1:6c)

– ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννης

This human messenger is simply called «John». He is the first historical character in the FG, who is introduced by name.⁴⁰ He plays a key role within the history of salvation that begins with the testimony of a real man: «His name was John». This is history, but it is also a part of theology, for that God sends a man, a unique man, who has a name, into the world that is theological before it is a historical proposition.⁴¹

By introducing his character, the FE gives the impression that from Jn. 1:6 onward the hymn deals with the recent history of the coming of Jesus in the flesh. The FG uses JB's proclamation to signal Jesus' entrance into human history. Thus, the first concrete revelation of Jesus is carried through JB. The beginning is always influential; what he says about Jesus can be considered as a kind of heading over the entire historical revelation. Supposedly, the theme and concept of the Prologue seem to vary from the Logos to the story of JB, who is the first human witness that appears in the FG.⁴²

At this stage, it is noted that the second human character within the Johannine Prologue is Moses (1:17), who represents the First Covenant with all its expectations. Thence, the FE wants to show to the reader of his Gospel that JB is the voice of the fulfilment of the Scriptures — not the witness of the fulfilment since the FG reserves this role for the BD — that speak of Jesus Christ, from Moses, through the prophets, to JB.

39. R.E. BROWN, «Three Quotations», 292–293.

40. F.J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 34.

41. C.K. BARRETT, *The Prologue*, 23.

42. C. BENNEMA, «The Character of John», 271.

2.2. The Witness

Jn. 1:7 is made up of a main clause (ἦλθεν), which holds two sentences introduced by the subordinating conjunction ἵνα. The first ἵνα should be understood as a special or an exegetical⁴³ one: it specifies the testimony. The second ἵνα is rather consecutive/final («so that»). Therefore, in this verse, his testimony is firstly explained in its content (testimony related to the Light) and then in its purpose (the belief of all); therefore, in the view of the FE, ἵνα confirms the fact that he is doing the will of God through his testimony.⁴⁴

2.2.1. The First Witness (1:7a)

– οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν

The FE has not shown any interest in the historical background in treating JB's character, but he focuses on his role within the divine economy.⁴⁵ In this context, his high value in the first pages of the FG is nevertheless considerable. He mainly acts as someone whose role is to testify. Throughout the first chapter of this Gospel, we see a constant testimony to Jesus.

Contrary to the method described in Jn. 1:6, the ascetic life of JB is not revealed to the reader; neither about his penitential preaching nor his baptismal activity in the Jordan (cf. Mt. 3:1–17; Mk. 1:1–11; Lk. 3:1–22) — this last point is then evoked — but only that he came as an ideal prophet to be a witness; he is destined to testify to the Light, which is already present in the darkness, so that all may believe through his testimony.⁴⁶ In this context, Jn. 1:7a brings the specific role of the Johannine John, namely, testimony. For the FE, he is the witness, who is like the Scriptures, testifies to Jesus: καὶ ἐκεῖνάι [the Scriptures] εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ (5:39). Herein, it is prominent that the testimony given to Jesus by a human word, such as the word of JB, that of the Scriptures and Jesus him-

43. Epexegetis means the addition of a word or words to explain a preceding word or sentence.

44. E. A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 114.

45. R. ZIMMERMANN, «John (the Baptist) », 1:100.

46. H. THYEN, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 74.

self, is valid only if it is the testimony of God.⁴⁷ This is what the FE aims to show that his testimony and that of the Scriptures fully coincide with Jesus' testimony, for it is derived from the same source, God.

His ἦλθεν, which corresponds to the ἀπεσταλμένος of Jn. 1:6, has its purpose in εἰς μαρτυρίαν. «To give testimony» περὶ τοῦ φωτός that is the final purpose of his sending and mission. Jn. 1:7a begins with the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος that brings us consequently to Jn. 1:2. It creates a sense of contrasting — as we have already seen in the contrast between the two verbs: ἦν (1:1–2) and ἐγένετο (1:6a) — between the role of the Logos and that of JB. Οὗτος (1:2) describes the creative work of the Logos in the pre-history (1:1–5), whereas οὗτος (1:7a) weaves the role of JB as a witness to the Light in human history. Thence, the aorist ἦλθεν indicates a unique coming, thus placing him in a special way within the salvation history.⁴⁸ Therefore, he, as a human character, ἦλθεν, «came» to testify the True Light, thus «introducing the salvation-history situation which prepared the coming of light in history».⁴⁹ This coming is apparently subsequent both to the historical John (1:6) and to his permanent testimony to Jesus noted in the decisive and final εἰς.

In this connection, οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν expresses that the purpose of his coming is not to baptize but to testify. The reason for this process lies in Johannine theology, which sees in him Jesus' witness in the context of his representative role of the Scriptures without being separated from it. We cannot have a deep-understanding of his testimony without understanding that it is completely in harmony with the Scriptures. Moreover, although his main role is a witness, this does not mean that his other roles have no significance, for the FE sees him as a theologically important and fertile character and gives to him a manifold part to play in his Gospel.⁵⁰

Herein we encounter, for the first time, the term μαρτυρία, «testimony», which is characteristically a Johannine word, thus forming a central theme in the FG.⁵¹ We can affirm that this Gospel in whole is built upon

47. C. MASSON, «Le témoignage de Jean», 123.

48. K.V. VREDE, «Nicodemus and John the Baptist», 717.

49. P. BORG, «Logos was the True Light», 129.

50. R.T. FORTNA, *The Gospel of Signs*, 169.

51. «The introduction of John the Baptist as a witness of the Logos also establishes a theological significance, a theme that will be repeated in the Gospel narrative. The theme of witness in

the sign of testimony,⁵² as its penultimate verse significantly states: «This is the disciple who witnesses these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true» (21:24). The FE uses two Greek terms to express the theme of «testimony» in his Gospel. The noun μαρτυρία occurs 14x, and the verb μαρτυρέω 33x. It is difficult, therefore, to over-emphasise the centrality of the witness words μαρτυρέω and μαρτυρία in the FG.⁵³

In the majority of the uses of the verb μαρτυρέω (19x), it is constructed with περί + genitive with the purpose of focusing on the object of an inclusive testimony «about» or «concerning». Meanwhile, the word μαρτυρία is used in the Johannine Gospel to describe JB's ministry as a witness to Jesus during his earthly ministry (1:7 [2x].8.15.19.32.34; 3:26; 5:33).⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that the word «testimony» is not used in any other NT book to describe JB's role.⁵⁵

However, this word is based, per several occurrences in the FG, on the court-language of the OT where the truth of any matter had to be confirmed by several witnesses (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Jn. 8:17–18). This is the most fundamental distinctiveness of the FE's treatment of his John, who is the first of many witnesses⁵⁶ concerning Jesus that the FE identifies in his Gospel, and therefore, orders them as they come into action in the salvation history. It can be seen that he is the witness *par excel-*

the FG is significant since witnesses establish the legitimacy of another's testimony, a principle that was emphasized in the Old Testament». (S.S. KIM, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 84).

52. M. BIANCHI, «La Testimonianza», 119.

53. R.G. MACCINI, *Her Testimony is True*, 49.

54. The testimony will be related to verbs such as «cry» (1:15), «confess» (1:20) or «frankly announce» (1 Jn. 1:2). According to the Johannine lexicon, the terms designate the messianic role of Jesus, establish the assignment of the believing community, and therefore mark the witness of John to Jesus' salvific role. The recurring Johannine use of the term favors this interpretation and seems to speak in a more specifically Christological sense. In most cases, the FG's testimony has a Christological content, referring directly to the person of Jesus.

55. The presentation of a «witness» as a herald who cries his message has an echo in the Synoptics. Nevertheless, this is a unique case in the FG. When the mission of John himself will be described in detail, it is not the vocabulary of the kerygma which will return, but the verb marture, w (1:19.32.34); at the beginning of the Prologue, his whole mission is summarized in the words: «He came for testimony in order that he testifies concerning the light» (1:7). This is clearly intended to highlight his significance in the realm of witness.

56. See the introduction, «The Witness-Motif in the Fourth Gospel», 14–16.

lence who proclaims the mystery of Jesus to Israel. In this line of thought, «testimony» appears as a term of revelation. This is the most paramount distinctive point of the FE's treatment of his John.

This messenger of God «came» with only one mission εἰς (final) as if he appeared from nowhere as an act of creation, made for a purpose.⁵⁷ His coming corresponds to his mission as a representative of the Scriptures in the context of his Christocentric testimony. This Johannine characterization identifies him as a typical character of «human-coming» and «divine-sending».⁵⁸ In this regard, the term describes the ministry of JB; it is an introductory, preparing the way for the revelation of God in Christ.⁵⁹

2.2.2. A Witness to the Light (1:7b)

– ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός

The ingressive aorist⁶⁰ μαρτυρήσῃ also indicates the goal of this permanent (not only punctual) testimony. It introduces a purpose clause. At this point, we encounter, for the first time in this Gospel, a purpose clause introduced by ἵνα. It applies, therefore, to all instances regarding JB's character: Faith through him (1:7c); testimony to the «True Light» (1:8b); revealing his identity (1:19b.22); his subordination to the Coming One (1:27), and revealing Jesus to Israel (1:31). Thus, the ἵνα-clause here refers to the sole purpose of his commission, that is, to testify to the Light.⁶¹

Another striking feature in this verse is that the connection of the verb μαρτυρέω with the preposition περί in the sense of the testimony to a person – τό φῶς is not yet identified with a human name like in Jn. 1:17 (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός). As a rule, a testimony to Jesus is meant to be by JB. Our text speaks of the testimony to the «Light». He testifies to the «Light» of God's revelation but also to the person of who is «the Light

57. J. PAINTER, «The Prologue», 49.

58. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St John*, 1:251.

59. M.C. TENNY, «Witness», 230.

60. The ingressive aorist expresses the action or event from its beginning or entrance of the action or state.

61. «As in the rest of the Gospel, John here functions primarily or solely as a witness to Jesus — a theme in the Fourth Gospel that extends far beyond whatever significance the author attaches to its particular application to the Baptist». (C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:391).

of the World» (8:12). The FE puts the true beginning of the Gospel before creation, before time. «The Logos, who is prior to Israel as he is prior to creation, is the glory of the Father's arena. His testimony is a declaration that the glory has appeared (17:5) »;⁶² consequently, he is the witness to the Light.

Accordingly, he plays in the FG's Prologue a crucial role as the Light's witness *par excellence*, and therefore, his existence in the Prologue is not so out of place because the FE shows «how important this witness is for him».⁶³ As the Word came to bring light to all of humanity, God sent JB to illuminate the identity of the Light to individuals. The Logos is the ultimate truth for all human history that was made known through witnesses, of whom JB was a historical example.⁶⁴

It is God's perfect preparation for the coming of the Light to make people aware of the depth of the darkness in their lives. This means, his first testimony to the Light comes from God, because it originates from the decision of God. This classification of the witness commits the one who testifies. He commits to Christ-truth, who is the whole reason for his appearance and the main subject of his witness, and therefore, the Evangelist's desire to portray him as the ideal witness to Christ, one who diverts all attention away from himself and direct it unto Christ. Between «sending» and «witnessing», there is a personal commitment that explains his ἀπεσταλμένος from God.

All the mentioned above considerations bring us consequently to confirm that the Johannine John is a typical example that experiences the Light of Jesus and becomes a true witness to him. The connection between the light and his testimony is based on the Scriptures, thus having a messianic perspective.⁶⁵ He is the one who says the Scriptures, «The Lord is my light» (Ps. 27:1) and «The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light» (Isa. 9:2; see also 42:6). Light characterizes the nature of God as stated in the first letter of John: ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία, «God is light and in him is no darkness at all» (1:5).

Concentrating on these Johannine words, they mean that the Light

62. J.T. DENNISON, «Prologue», 4.

63. R. BULTMANN, *John*, 49.

64. C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:391.

65. M. GRILLI, *Giovanni*, 53.

shines in an environment that is absolutely foreign and refractory to it. Men, participating in this darkness, are themselves incapable of recognizing the Light. The revelation of Jesus as the Light is a gift from God (3:27), who reveals Jesus' identity to JB (1:32–34). From this point of view, it is evident that the sending of JB, the inspired witness, by God precedes the sending of his Son, for this witness will make him known to Israel (1:31). In this way, the FE emphatically asserts that this Light, which φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, is Jesus, who declares himself as the Light of the world.

JB, therefore, is a representative of the hermeneutical performance of the Light, and the objective of his testimony is to evoke a commitment to the Light that it generates in the world.⁶⁶ Origin poses a question concerning the reason underlying him not bearing witness to Life, or to the Logos, or to some other title of Christ, and answers that what the people who dwelt in darkness most urgently needed was Light.⁶⁷ In this context, the FE stresses the contrast between darkness and light «among individuals who had a true faith before meeting Jesus».⁶⁸ This is one of the reasons that makes the FE introduce his character from the very beginning of his Gospel. Thus, he is the first human character that walks and remains in the light of Jesus the Light (1:5.9; 8:12).

2.2.3. Faith through Testimony (1:7c)

– The ἵνα–πιστεύω Clauses

The construction of ἵνα with the verb πιστεύω occurs 10x in the FG. On the syntactic level, this construction is used either in aorist subjunctive (1:7; 6:30; 11:15.42; 13:19; 14:29) or in present subjunctive (6:29; 17:21) or in the two cases (19:35; 20:31). These ἵνα–πιστεύω clauses refer to a «condition of salvation». They are used in the subjunctive because they are in a purpose clause. Because purpose is not a statement of reality (indicative), it should be moved into the subjunctive.

On the basis of the context of these Johannine clauses, one can deduce that the FE's use of ἵνα–πιστεύω clauses aims to promote the faith of the

66. H.C. WAETJEN, «Logos πρὸς τὸν θεόν», 273.

67. J.F. MCHUGH, *John 1–4*, 25.

68. A. YONG, «The Light Shines», 40.

Johannine community. Giving a particular focus on the compelling comparison between JB and the BD; the testimony of both characters aims to provoke the faith in Jesus and this is obvious in the use of ἵνα-clause here and in 19:35, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεῦ[σ]ητε, «So that you may also believe» (see also 20:31); they represent a type of faith response to Jesus.⁶⁹

– ἵνα πάντες πιστεῦσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ

One of the characteristics of the FG is its peculiar vocabulary. Πιστεύω is one of the most important vocabulary in the Gospel.⁷⁰ It is used 98x in the FG. What is noteworthy is that the FE nowhere uses the noun, but only the verb.⁷¹

This second ἵνα is a result clause. Relying on JB's testimony, all might come to believe in Jesus.⁷² It is an original sequel to εἰς μαρτυρίαν (1:7b), the purpose of his testimony is, quite naturally, that men might believe.⁷³ True biblical faith is more than a first response; it must continue in the discipleship. This means, the belief-motif in the FG is a gift from God with a view to (ἵνα) fulfilment of divine purpose. Faith is primarily not an intellectual or emotional response, but basically a willing reaction.⁷⁴ JB

69. R. ZIMMERMANN, «Der Freund», 129; see also A.T. LINCOLN, *Truth on Trial*, 65.

70. The verb can be used in eight different constructions: (1) Πιστεύω absolute with no express object of preposition following, is in John a technical term of faith in Christ (1:7). (2) Πιστεύω followed by the preposition εἰς, literally «into». It implies a definite committal to a person, usually the person of Christ (2:23–24). (3) Πιστεύω with the accusative case merely states the thing believed (2:23). (4) It refers to a principle or fact accepted as credible (11:26). (5) Πιστεύω is followed by an object clause introduced by the conjunction ὅτι to state belief in the truth or authority of some statement or fact (6:69). (6) Πιστεύω with the dative. It refers to the acceptance of a fact or a principle, or to the belief in the truth of what someone has said (8:46). (7) Πιστεύω with ἐν (3:15). It involves the agreement that a certain principle or person is good, without declaring any lasting relationship. (8) Πιστεύω ἐπί, is not Johannine. It is almost equivalent to John's use of πιστεύω εἰς. (cf. M.C. TENNEY, «Topics from the Gospel of John», 343–345).

71. Three different objects of Johannine faith could be considered: (1) The personal allegiance to Jesus (4:39). (2) The statements Jesus makes (2:22). (3) Statements about Jesus (11:27). (R. KYSAR, *John*, 109–110).

72. «The Baptist's intention was that all those who heard his testimony might embrace Christ by a living faith». (W. HENDRIKSEN, *Exposition*, 77).

73. R.T. FORTNA, *The Gospel of Signs*, 164–165.

74. «Faith can be defined as faithfulness in trusting the God who is made known in Jesus Christ [...] There is in the Fourth Gospel an emphasis on the importance of persevering, continuing,

is aware that in the person of the Son sent from God, there is outburst of polemics between those who reject him and those who receive him.

Opposed attitudes towards Jesus are already announced in the Prologue and are later continued throughout the Johannine narrative. Jn. 1:11–13 clearly speaks of those rejecting and accepting the Incarnate Logos. Faith is an encounter with Christ and the acceptance of the Son of God, who comes to humanity as the Father's revealer. Thus, faith is closely related to two fundamental themes for the Johannine theology:

- The mystery of the Incarnation.
- The mystery of the revelation of God the Father in his Son, Jesus Christ.

In this context, the Johannine faith is always an action and is rightly described in terms of process, or better, as a journey.⁷⁵

The idea of the testimony is one of the fundamentals of our Gospel. It is correlative and inseparable from faith. Testimony, in the Johannine sense, is essentially ordered to faith; it is a call to faith, an invitation to believe. JB's testimony always serves to awaken faith in Jesus. Jn. 3 ends with a promise of life for those who accept Jesus in the faith: ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον, «Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life» (3:36). The whole section of Jn. 5:31–40 serves as the purpose of believing in him because of the manifold testimony to Jesus. The same case is in Jn. 8:12–20, even though the verb πιστεύω is missing. The related concepts are recognizable and directed.

In our text, the ἵνα-clause is formulated to introduce a telic purpose,⁷⁶ i.e., the decisive result of JB's testimony: πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ. This emphatic πάντες leads to reveal God's universal salvific will⁷⁷ (3:15–17). One can notice that the FE tends to give his John a high status, by suggesting a universal response (πάντες) to his ministry. When John the

being steadfast in faith». (M.M. THOMPSON, «Signs and Faith», 95). In my opinion, this definition is consistent with the FE's view of JB, who remains faithful and steadfast, in front of the Jews (1:19–28), to his messianic faith (1:29–34) and therefore makes Jesus reveal to Israel through his water-baptism (1:31).

75. C.W. SKINNER, *Characters and Characterization*, 160.

76. D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 472.

77. M.J. HARRIS, *John*, 26.

witness is at one point on the time–line, his testimony turns to πάντες, even to the present believers. This verse also provides an instance of the *subjunctive aorist* πιστεύσωσιν signifying a coming to faith. This aorist represents a genuine belief, but it is an initial belief in its first formation. The above reasoning matches one characteristic of the Johannine theology, namely that the appearance of faith depends on an initial testimony⁷⁸ — for example: the belief of many Samaritans in Jesus through the testimony of the Samaritan woman in Jn. 4:39. Therefore, JB comes to bring men to decide, without lessening the need for personal decision,⁷⁹ to make a definitive act of faith. The FE sees all faith as a response to testimony. From this point of view, the Johannine characters are not described based on their physical characteristics but because of their interaction with the protagonist Jesus.⁸⁰

The importance of his testimony in the divine plan is crucial: «So that all believe through him». This aims to show that the FE had a coherent purpose when he introduces his testimony into the beginning of his Gospel, for it links up with his original goal in writing this book (20:30–31): faith in the Word made flesh, Jesus, who is the object of faith. From this perspective, the activity of JB as a witness that inspires faith in Jesus is part of the purpose of the FG, which is a call to faith that allows men to fully open themselves to God's revelation. This purpose is clearly emphasized in the testimony of the BD (19:35) and in the first epilogue of the Gospel (20:30–31).

Therefore, the witness–motif should be related to present Jesus' identity and mission, to achieve the faith in Jesus as «the Son of God». By nature, no one comes to Jesus; only through the Word, by means of the testimony of the true witnesses, Jesus is made known to men. As a character in this world, JB is committed to proclaim to all humans the presence of the light of the Logos that they might recognize it.⁸¹ This means, JB, who was sent to call men to believe in the universal Light, was the first to recognize the

78. C. MASSON, « Le Prologue », 299.

79. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St John*, 1:251.

80. «All the characters must be classified according to their responses to Jesus because John demands it. He wants us to evaluate the responses in the light of the purpose of his Gospel, mentioned in 20:30–31 ». (C. BENNEMA, *Encountering Jesus*, 23).

81. X. LÉON–DUFOR, *Giovanni*, 96.

Logos Incarnate.⁸²

It should be noted that the Greek clause δι' αὐτοῦ may indicate several meanings. «Through him» may mean «through John's testimony», «through the Light» or «through the Logos». The first reading that comes in accordance with the Johannine reading: ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη (1:17) is the most adequate for the following reasons:

- Nowhere else does the FE use the expression «to believe through him», meaning «to believe through Jesus». Jesus always appears as an object (not as an agent) of faith (3:16).
- The subject of Jn. 1:7 is JB, and Jn. 1:8 is the same. The natural construction is to refer the pronoun ἐκεῖνος (1:8), which certainly refers to JB, to the pronoun αὐτοῦ (1:7).

In our case, it is worthy to remark that δι' αὐτοῦ implies that his witnessing activity and his mission have an absolute and enduring power because, as a paradigmatic witness, God the ἀπεσταλμένος of JB gives him the divine authority to testify. Therefore, his ultimate purpose was eliciting belief in Jesus (1:35–37) as a subordinate agent. His intention is that all those who heard his testimony would embrace Christ through a living faith. Therefore, his testimony is not faith in God through Christ, but faith in Christ through him.⁸³ In this context, Jn. 1:7 emphasizes his testimony and makes it clear that his message and his person should not be understood as an object of faith but as an introduction to faith.⁸⁴

Now that we are aware of an opposition to the Light, a historical person, JB is characterized as sent by God to testify to the Light.⁸⁵ In this respect, he is introduced as the object of a divine mission, which is expressly defined as a witness to the Divine Light, and as the necessary agency for believing the response to the Light upon its appearance.⁸⁶ This pays a close attention to the fact that faith is thus essentially mediated by a witness;⁸⁷ in our case, it is JB.

82. J.C. O'NEIL, «The Prologue», 50.

83. J. BEUTLER, *Martyria*, 245.

84. W. BINDEMANN, «Der Johannesprolog», 351.

85. M. DAVIES, *Rhetoric and Reference*, 122.

86. E. HARRIS, *Prologue and Gospel*, 31.

87. J. BEUTLER, *Martyria*, 245.

2.3. A Subordinate Role (1:8)

- οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς

This is the first among four occurrences in the FG of negative statements with respect to JB, as follows:

- The FE says that he is not the light (1:8).
- He says to a delegation of Jews that he is not the Christ, not Elijah, and not the Prophet (1:20–21). He also tells his disciples that he is not the Christ (3:28).
- Jesus says that he did not receive a testimony from a man (5:34).
- The crowd say that he did not perform signs (10:41).

These denials attempt, in every method, to withhold all official status from JB and omit all reference to his personal ministry, to focus on his sole status: being «a witness».⁸⁸ By doing so, on the one hand, the FE intends to gain a mighty grip upon his reader, concerning the wide attention of JB among the Jewish society, much so that his followers have seen in him the Messiah; on the other hand, the FE declares JB's own subordination to the Coming One. Therefore, these negative statements are not attacks upon JB, but rather a distinctive characteristic of the FG's treatment of his John, for they aim to depict how Jesus has the absolute superiority and that he has no greater role than that of a witness to Jesus (1:8.15.29–33; 3:26–30; 4:1; 10:41).

He was not the light that the darkness could extinguish. Herein, it seems that he typifies the prophetic light, which its light was derived from the only Light. Later, Jesus will describe him as a «lamp» (5:35), but the Light is him (3:19; 8:12; 9:5). The FE pretends to demonstrate that all the light that could exist in the Scripture was intended to prepare the way for the arrival of the True Light, of which that was only a pale reflection, as Jn. 1:9 will immediately highlight.

88. R.E. COLLINS, «The Representative Figures», 33. For further reading, see B. MARCONCINI, «Dal Battista "storico" al Battista "giovanneo"», 467–480.

– ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός

Quite apart from this argument, JB's role is clearly «to testify» that the Logos is the True Light, and not himself. It seems reasonably clear that he is, indeed, the OT Evangelist of the light, for he is a light (5:35) in so far as he is a witness to the one who is the True Light.⁸⁹ This conveys «a sense of expectancy and movement: The True Light is on the way and is about to come into the world»,⁹⁰ that is, the Light is to be incarnated. Therefore, these words are designed to define more definitely who the Light is by declaring that he is not the Light. On this reading we should surmise that the introducing of JB in the Prologue would reinforce from the very beginning the distinction between him, who was a witness to the Light, and the Logos, who was the Light.⁹¹ Specifically, the main feature of his testimony is that, he defines himself and his role as subordinate to Jesus.⁹²

3. Concluding Observations

JB's testimony authorizes the Johannine faith, which is Christological by nature, for it is directed to the person of Jesus: «All who have ever come to faith are indirectly dependent on his [JB] opening proclamation of the identity and saving purpose of Jesus Messiah».⁹³ In this respect, he acts according to the Scriptures. The fact that all men are to be brought to faith by his testimony shows that the FE was not thinking of the historical situation of his preaching, but that he was referring to his witness as it was constantly re-presented through the tradition and which in this way retains its actuality.⁹⁴

Consequently, the Johannine John is mentioned from the very beginning of the Gospel as the prophetic witness through whom all may come to believe; in this way, the story that begins in Jn. 1:19 is integrated into the framework of the Prologue, which serves to provide the perspective from

89. J. PAINTER, «The Prologue», 51.

90. J.W. PRYOR, «Jesus and Israel», 204.

91. M. GORDLEY, «The Johannine Prologue», 795.

92. C. BENEMMA, *Encountering Jesus*, 61–62.

93. D.A. CARSON, *John*, 121.

94. R. BULTMANN, *John*, 51.

which the gospel story is to be understood.⁹⁵ All the above considerations give him a Johannine colouring from a theological point of view. JB as a «witness» becomes a link between the faithful witnesses of the OT (Heb. 12:1) and the witnesses of the Gospels (cf. Lk. 24:48; Jn. 15:27; Acts 1:8).

In the light of his significant place in the Gospel, the FE commences his narrative of the public ministry of Jesus with JB's testimony as a true representative of the Scriptures. In this regard, the epiphany of the Logos is concretized through his testimony to Jesus.⁹⁶

Scene II A Prophetic Witness (Jn. 1:15)

With Jn. 1:15, we meet with a second mention of JB. In contrast with the first section (1:6-8), where the Johannine reader is told about his prophetic character, the second section (1:15) that indicates a first-person testimony, his voice is heard in direct speech about the Logos. It is, therefore, linked to this: he is now more concrete than in Jn. 1:6-8, and appears as a witness to the Incarnate Logos and is quoted with literal speech, which is the first figurative speech within the FG and the only one within the Prologue.⁹⁷

Now it is JB's voice that will be heard. Per Jn. 1:15, his testimony is an event of the present: he gives testimony for the Logos and cries aloud. He testifies (the present μαρτυρεῖ) to Jesus' earthly mission, identifying the Incarnation of the source of that Light, the Logos, and linking it concretely, for the first time, to the person of Jesus Christ. In this context, the content of his testimony is not only the Logos, but rather the relationship between the latter and himself.

His testimony is introduced into the text in such a way that it is lasting and up-to-date. He confesses Jesus' Pre-Existence. He testifies, therefore, that the man Jesus, who came into history after him, is the eternal Logos. His testimony, therefore, forms the basis of the confession of those who believe (1:7). By the end of this scene, we will be aware that he represents the Scriptures through his prophetic testimony. Since the FE presents Je-

95. J. PAINTER, «The Prologue», 44.

96. E. DURAND, «ΛΟΓΟΣ», 94.

97. F. KUNATH, *Die Präexistenz Jesu*, 50.

sus symbolically as «The Logos» and JB as «The witness» to this Logos in its eternity, this makes us stress the representative role which he will play within the Gospel.

1. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation
<p>¹⁵ Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων· οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον· ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.</p>	<p>¹⁵ John testifies about him and has shouted, saying, this was what I have said of him, «He who is coming after me, was before me, for first of me was».</p>

2. Exegesis

2.1. *John's Prophetic Role: A Unique Witness (1:15a)*

– Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ

John's name emerges for the second time and the content of his testimony is indicated. This is, so to speak, JB's first testimony in the FG.

If we accept that the Divine Light has enlightened JB, his testimony here should be a normal response to his faith in Jesus as both the True Light and the Logos made flesh. This identifies the one who is the Light (1:9) with the λόγος and the coming one to whom JB also refers in Jn. 1:27.30.⁹⁸ Accordingly, JB's testimony is addressed — strictly speaking — to the Logos that becomes Sarx and not yet to Jesus.

Formerly, the FE introduces JB in general terms, such as, his identity and his mission (1:6–8), in order for the reader to possess an initial idea about him. Now, he indicates his function as giving testimony in more personal and historical terms⁹⁹ through his role as a witness to Jesus of his-

98. J. PAINTER, «The Prologue», 48.

99. C.H. GIBLIN, «Two Complementary», 92.

tory (1:14)¹⁰⁰ in the post-incarnation period μαρτυρεῖ¹⁰¹, which is a striking characteristic of JB, who testifies to the Incarnation, recalling his prophetic utterance before he has seen the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus.

This vivid historic present μαρτυρεῖ assumes that his testimony continues to be perpetually living, active and valid, up to the time of the writing of the Johannine Gospel even though he was long dead. It still heretofore resonates in the Johannine community. In other words, his testimony is always present because of its enduring nature. The same testimony (1:6–8) is now actualized in the life of the believers. This interpretation seems preferable, in the present context, to show that the FE now describes the current situation of the community's faith by using present tense verbs. According to the FG's theology, JB's testimony will always be active in the life of the church exactly as the Scriptures do. Thus, the FE has succeeded in reworking his image to fit neatly into his vision of salvation history and Christology as an essential witness to the Logos.

– καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων

This conjunction is a coordinating conjunction. It is an adverbial conjunction because it focuses on a significant idea, which is JB's first testimony. Therefore, two relevant verbs are to be considered here.

The first is the verb κράζω;¹⁰² it is a technical term that is used to introduce a prophetic testimony style:

καὶ ἐκέκραγον ἕτερος πρὸς τὸν ἕτερον καὶ ἔλεγον ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος
σαβαωθ πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ

«And they were shouting these words to each other: Holy, holy, holy is YHWH
Sabaoth, His glory fills the whole earth». (LXX Isa. 6:3).

100. In this regard, the witnessing of JB is introduced to connect his ministry with that of Jesus, to state what the FE understood to be the facts. This is what the latter intends to clarify when he has linked the historical narrative of JB's appearance (1:6) with the historical epiphany of the mystery of the Logos, that is, the Incarnation (1:14).

101. This is the first time that the FE uses the historic present.

102. This verb is used by Jesus himself in the FG to proclaim a «divine command» (7:28.37; 12:44).

Accordingly, the FE associates him with a prophetic activity.¹⁰³ He informs his readers that the salvation history hidden in the Hebrew Scripture reaches its climax in his prophetic witness, making him the primary witness to the continuity of God's plan. From this point of view, he is set out as exemplar and apex of the prophetic tradition (1:23).

The usage of the resultative perfect¹⁰⁴ κέκραγεν in the sense of a present means an action which began in the past and continues in the present for its prophetic value: the perfect tense implies that while JB's proclamation was a past event, the substance of what he proclaimed is permanently true.¹⁰⁵ At this point, it is worthwhile looking more closely at the combination of the two verbs in different tenses that characterize this speech-event: the historic present μαρτυρεῖ (1:15a) and the perfect κέκραγεν (1:15b) indicate that the witness of the Johannine John is presented both vividly and comprehensively.

This interpretation foregrounds the still testifying and proclaiming voice of JB. The kerygmatic resonance of these two verbs is undeniable. The Evangelist, henceforth, updates the testimony of JB: the calling out of the Precursor continues sounding in the church so that all might believe through him (1:7).¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, his former testimony (1:6–8) still resounds in the Gospel (1:15). In other words, the FE still hears his voice which is still effectively sounding and calling out, inviting all of us to believe in Jesus — the Logos, and the Greater than himself.

This emphatic verb κέκραγεν aims to show that his voice is more than that of a witness; it is a loud and clear voice of the herald who boldly proclaims his message so all might hear it. This verb designates the Johannine John as both the appointed voice of God himself and the mouth of the divinely ordained witness. So the Johannine usage of this verb indicates that it is a solemn proclamation in the name of God because his legitimation is hidden behind his prophetic role as an ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ (1:6). In this context, Jn. 1:6.15 complete each other concerning JB's mission and

103. F. MANN, « Jean-Baptiste », 100.

104. «The perfect may be used to emphasize the results or present state produced by a past action». (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 574).

105. F.F. BRUCE, *John*, 42.

106. I. DE LA POTTERIE, « Structure du Prologue », 372.

its Christological message, for the verb is one of the central expressions of the Johannine Christology.¹⁰⁷

His testimony begins as a cry and continues as a cry into the present. This combination, «testify» and «proclaim» that introduces JB connotes a kind of divine revelation in the context of the value of a prophetic announcement.¹⁰⁸ The present comes from the nature of his divine mission. He is a voice appointed divinely the same like the Scriptures. This aspect presupposes a permanent witness to the Johannine Jesus; it is complete, as it is directed towards the ultimate purpose of his testimony, which is based on his confession that Jesus is «the Son of God»: «And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God» (1:34).

Consequently, these two tenses (μαρτυρεῖ and κέκραγεν) indicate the ongoing significance and the permanent validity of JB's testimony about Jesus for all times.¹⁰⁹

The second verb is the *verbum dicendi* λέγω, in the present participle form λέγων, indicating that the direct discourse begins for the first time regarding JB's testimony to the Logos. Moreover, this participle indicates «contemporaneous in time to the action of the main verb»,¹¹⁰ which is, in our case, μαρτυρεῖ.

2.2. Jesus' Absolute Primacy (1:15b)

– οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον·

Certainly, his testimony represents the first tract of explicit placement of the Logos/Sarx on the stage of history, with the identification of a historical character. This testimony is placed here as the starting point of an arrival point of the story; in fact, only in Jn. 1:29 does the FE present the scene of the encounter between JB and Jesus.

Two aspects characterize this Johannine phraseology: on the one hand, it indicates ambiguity and openness. It is about someone who is characterized in a certain way, but whose identity remains unknown; on the other

107. B.F. BINIAMA, *Les Missions*, 118–119.

108. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 125.

109. M. MARCHESSELLI, «Una testimonianza che perdura», 620.

110. D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 625.

hand, it indicates definiteness. The «Someone» is the Incarnate Logos because the readers of the Prologue know about it. It is presented as a self-quote by JB. It is characterized by a new subject change. This is an identification sentence with the subject οὗτος, the copula ἦν and the predicate ὃν εἶπον, which is designed as a relative sentence. The literary speech of John has not been heard so far but is revealed in its meaning by the following text (1:27.30). JB's testimony refers to a form of the past indicating the status of the Pre-Existence (6:62; 8:38; 17:2.5) — ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

The content of his testimony, in the light of this verse, is the Pre-Existence of the Logos. His words, οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον, contend that he is made to be the witness, who confesses the truth of what has just been said¹¹¹ about Jesus in the Prologue: the Pre-Existence of the Logos, the shining of the light in the darkness and seeing the glory of the Incarnate Logos. All this means that he does not cease witnessing to the light of the Logos, for he testifies now to the Logos who became flesh along with the Pre-Eminence of the historical Jesus.¹¹²

JB was not sent from God simply to announce a revelation; rather, he was sent to prepare humankind for the revelation, and to bear witness to the salvific truth that «The Logos became flesh and dwelt among us». As such, these words serve as a bridge between what has been said before in the Prologue and what will be said later on the second day of his testimony, where he declares Jesus as «the Lamb of God»: «This is what I have said of him, after me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me» (1:30).

It is worthwhile noting the different tenses used in this connection: on the one hand, the FE employs the past tense, i.e., the timeless imperfect: this ἦν (1:15) that refers to a character from the past, whilst the word of JB comes after the earthly life of Jesus; on the other hand, he uses the present tense that indicates the contemporaneity, ἔσται (1:30), which rightly means the continuing of his testimony about Jesus as a reality that must always be recognized.¹¹³ This is confirmed by the fact that JB testifies before the ancient community of the covenant, Israel, but his testimony does not stop there for it is a continuous call (1:15a). The Prologue paints a contrasting picture between JB and Jesus in terms of the status or rank

111. E. HARRIS, *Prologue and Gospel*, 27.

112. M.D. HOOKER, «Johannine Prologue», 357.

113. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 126.

of both of them. Thus, the content of his testimony is not only the Logos, but rather the relationship between the latter and JB himself. It is a theme that dominates JB's passages within the FG.

– ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος

The origin of this peculiar use of ὀπίσω, «after» may derive from the Hebrew translation *לְאַחַר*, «walk behind». In the OT, often figuratively translated, it is used for describing Israel walking behind gods.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, JB's statement concerning Jesus, ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος, has a theological meaning, since the use of this preposition in the Scriptures contains a divine call from YHWH to the Israelites not to follow other gods; the FE puts these words, pronounced by JB, to invite his readers to follow Jesus as the first disciples will do after hearing his words (1:37). Herein, the Johannine John shares with the Scriptures the same purpose: to reveal the true God.

In our text, this Johannine phraseology might mean: «Whoever comes after me». But the preceding words, «This was what I have said of him» underline that a special person is intended, and make the meaning clear. Thus, this formula deals, on a historical level, with the testimony given by JB to the Christ who is about to come. The «coming» after him is the One who has the fullness of the revelation in himself, and replacing, by this fullness, the ancient Mosaic Law. His testimony is, therefore, the crossing point from the Law of Moses to the faith in Jesus.

In this respect, and from a Christological standpoint, JB's formula underlines his subordination to Jesus, proceeding from the thrice use of the personal pronoun μου (ὁ ὀπίσω μου [...] ἔμπροσθέν μου [...] πρῶτός μου), which provides a comparative status between him and Jesus: his inferiority of status vis-à-vis Jesus. This expression, therefore, confirms not only the temporal priority of Jesus' Pre-Existence emphasized at the beginning of the Prologue, but also Jesus' absolute primacy.¹¹⁵ According to these records, the Johannine formula ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος is therefore to be read in a twofold complementary level:

114. H. SEESEMAN, «ὀπίσω», 290 (cf. Deut. 6:14; Judg. 2:12; 1 Kgs. 11:2; Jer. 11:10; 13:10; 16:11).

115. D.G. VAN DER MERWE, «The Historical and Theological Significance», 272.

- «In recto», on a historical level (Jesus came after JB: Horizontal aspect).
- «In obliquo», on a level of «being» (the coming is the Pre-Existent, the Son of God: Vertical aspect).¹¹⁶
- ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν

It is impossible to find ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν an analogous language usage in the NT. Moreover, the preposition ἔμπροσθέν appears with the verb γίνομαι only in the FG. At the same time, one can understand the places in the local sense, because γίνομαι occurs more frequently with prepositional or adverbial locations, and therefore, designates a spatial change, with persons in the sense of coming. Thus the preposition ἔμπροσθέν with the genitive pronoun μου can function in the domains of place, time, or degree/status and consequently, can have two meanings: temporal or spatial.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, when JB speaks of Jesus' historical manifestation, «the coming one after me», he says γέγονεν — in parallel to the former verb ἐγένετο — which expresses cosmological (1:3) and historical activities or events (1:6.14).¹¹⁸ This indicates that JB knows the difference between the heavenly character of whom he had spoken and the man Jesus of history. Accordingly, the FE acknowledges the historical priority of JB because his ministry begins earlier than that of Jesus (1:15.27.30; 3:28). Nevertheless, JB's historical priority is immediately shown by stressing his meta-historical inferiority to Jesus (1:15.30). It must be unforgotten that JB retains the role bestowed on him by God (1:6).

- ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν

This conjunction is a subordinating conjunction. It is declarative: it declares Jesus' Pre-Existence.

The use of the preposition ἔμπροσθέν from the FE's side is differenti-

116. V. PASQUETTO, *Incarnazione e Comunione con Dio*, 125.

117. G.A. VAN DEN HEEVER, «John and the Pre-Existence of Jesus», 59.

118. H.C. WAETJEN, «Logos πρὸς τὸν θεόν», 283.

ated from that of the adjective *πρῶτός*, which has a superlative force in terms of comparison, namely «priority» and «superiority».¹¹⁹ Besides, one can clearly observe that the preposition *ἔμπροσθέν* is linked up with the verb *γένουεν*, which implies «a historical fact», that is, the Incarnation of the Logos, with an implicit reference to the Pre-Existence of the Incarnate Logos.

However, the adjective *πρῶτός* is followed by the verb *ἦν* that implies solely a theological fact, namely, the eternal being of the Logos with God: the One who is coming «after» him in terms of historical human existence ranks «before» him because that One had an existence before him in the eternity of God.¹²⁰ This priority of the Johannine Jesus is based on the conjunction *ὅτι*, which indicates an absolute chronology, which is that of the Prologue. Therefore, it indicates Jesus' real Pre-Existence. The antecedence of JB, then, in the order of history, is not an argument in favour of his superiority, because this temporal antecedence is meaningless in front of the ontological antecedence of the Pre-Existent.

The temporal past *ἦν* is, in the view of the FE, the form in which the superiority is unmistakably expressed. When he uses the language of «time», he expresses the notion of «quality» as contained in Jn. 8:58: *πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί*, «Before Abraham was, I am». In this context, the Christological temporal priority, which is typically a Johannine characteristic, is equally applied to JB just as it is applied to Abraham. This brings us consequently to the Incarnation itself that enables us to understand the deep thrust of JB's prophetic words.¹²¹

Following his fundamental synkrisis with the one to whom he bears witness, one might understand that the one who follows him in the story, Jesus, is in fact the one who was before him, whose glory is spoken of in the pages of the OT.¹²² In the light of this interpretation, JB becomes «the first» one who names the Incarnation of the True Light, which was the object of his witness from the very beginning of the Prologue, i.e., Jesus of history. Besides, he was «the first» one to proclaim the priority of the

119. Ernst argues that the temporal priority, which for the Baptist community was an argument for the factual primacy of JB, is devalued in importance by the FE. (J. ERNST, *Johannes der Täufer*, 191).

120. B. BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, 34.

121. H. RIDDERBOS, *John*, 55.

122. M.D. HOOKER, «Prologue», 55.

one who was «first» (1:1–2), which means that he is the «first» one that proclaims the fulfilment of the Scriptures in the person of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the chronological posteriority is evidently perceived as a handicap. The chronological meaning is not the final meaning of these statements. «He was first» means that he will be the coming One, ὁ ἐρχόμενος. He is present in a special way in the present time. In this sense, the Johannine Jesus calls himself ἐγὼ εἰμί (8:58) that explains only his eternal existence.¹²³ This means, even if Jesus comes later from the historical appearance point of view, one must profess his excellence, because in truth, he was there before. This concluding statement takes up again (1:14): in the flesh (that is, in Jesus of Nazareth that comes after him) JB saw the glory of the Only Begotten from the Father (that is, the Pre-Existing Logos).

3. Concluding Observations

The progress of JB's testimony in the Johannine Prologue is striking. While the first testimony simply designates the Logos as the predicate Light, the second one pictures the Johannine Christology: the historical appearance of the man Jesus is related to his eternal origin in God. Thus, the Johannine John is the representative believer, the first and chosen prophetic messenger, sent from God, who confesses the Logos as the True Light that, has come into the world, and testifies to Jesus' absolute primacy.¹²⁴

Hence, the function could be to confirm between the testimony of the believing community represented by the «we» of Jn. 1:14 and the premise of the testimony given by JB, who was before the Logos, thus anticipating his coming. By doing so, the FE prepares the following narrative that is intended to show how his testimony corresponds to that of the believing community, of his followers: the passage of discipleship between John and Jesus is significant to emphasize a logic continuity between the two characters. This logic continues to appear in the chapters of the Gospel, especially in Jn. 3:22–30; 4:1; 5:33–36a and 10:40–41.

123. G. SIEGWALT, «Der Prolog», 161.

124. J. ERNST, *Johannes der Täufer*, 191.

As a Prophet-like-Deutero-Isaiah (Jn. 1:19-37)

This section has two key aspects: literal and theological.¹ The literal aspect has a connection with the Johannine Prologue (1:1-18) regarding the function of John as a witness to the Light and to the Pre-Existent Logos. However, the theological aspect attracts the attention to JB's self-identification regarding his own identity and thereby, to the Christological titles of the Promised Christ (1:29-51).

In this connection, the FE considers his John as a great witness. The testimony of JB in Jn. 1:19-37 has a clear plan. Approaching those verses by considering stylistic features, such as favourite words, grammatical usage, and theological standpoint, we can see that this section aims to stress the Johannine Soteriology and Christology. Thus, his testimony here is organized in three principal testimonies and these are framed by three consecutive days. This division is underlined by the adverb τῆ ἐπαύριον, «the next day» placed at the head of Jn. 1:29.35. Hence, the present chapter could be divided into three successive days:

- On the first day, the voice of Deutero-Isaiah (1:19-28).
- On the second day, A Scriptural and Prophetic testimony (1:29-34).
- On the third day, discipleship through testimony (1:35-37). JB's testimony shows now, with his two disciples, the effect of Jn. 1:7 that all might believe in Jesus and therefore, this promise of the Prologue finds its fulfilment: men find their faith by his testimony. The focalization here is upon the process of faith in the first disciples.

1. S.S. KIM, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 89.

After having read the poetic Prologue (1:1–18), we are therefore, faced with this «narrative Prologue» (1:19–51) in which the importance of JB's testimony emerges.

In his character, the expectation of the people of Israel is condensed so that the Promise that God has repeatedly renewed over the centuries, through the voice of the Hebrew Prophets, finally reaches its fulfilment. In fact, the FE presents his John as the one who spiritually personifies the best part of his people, the one who welcomed Jesus, thus giving continuity to the First Covenant stipulated by God with the Patriarchs of Israel.

Scene I

The Voice of Deutero–Isaiah

(Jn. 1:19–28)

In Jn. 1:6–8 and Jn. 1:15, the FE indicates the purpose of John's ministry, namely to focus the attention on the True Light, Jesus, as the object of faith. In the scene that we are now studying, we have a detailed account of JB's testimony, just as he gives it before a delegation sent from Jerusalem. The scene is absent from the Synoptics. It is an investigation to ascertain John's identity and his baptism. At stake is the conflict between two authorities legitimated by two sendings: on the one hand, the messengers of the Priests and Levites and the Pharisees; on the other hand, the Johannine John who is sent from God as it is stated from the Prologue (1:6).

An opening statement of the Gospel that is made as a confession: JB's testimony before the Jewish authorities about the messianic significance of his person and his announcement of «the Coming One». He enters the scene as a defense witness in a trial (1:19). His testimony lies in an investigation by the Jewish authorities. The FG, therefore, opens with a trial that goes through the rest of the story. In this scene, he completely acts as the Prophets act towards Israel,² and thereby he is depicted, unlike the Jewish authorities, as the true representative of the Scriptures, especially Deute-

2. «The prophets often drew upon Jewish legal proceedings and terminology to illustrate God's controversy and accusations against Israel (cf. Amos 2:4–16; Hos. 2:1ff; Isa. 1:1–18; 3:12–15; 5:1–7; Mic. 2:6–11; 6:1–2; Jer. 2:9; 12:1; 15:10; Ezek. 17; 20:33–44)». (A.S. BANDY, «Word and Witness», 10). One can notice that the same prophetic role is also performed by JB concerning Israel represented by the Jewish authorities.

ro-Isaiah,³ by indicating to an unknown messianic character that is already presented in the midst of them and they, those who have an authoritative knowledge of the Scriptures, οὐκ οἶδατε, «do not know» who he is.

I. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation
<p>¹⁹ Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου, ὅτε ἀπέστειλαν [πρὸς αὐτὸν] οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας ἵνα ἐρωτήσωσιν αὐτόν· σὺ τίς εἶ;</p>	<p>¹⁹ And this is the testimony of John, when sent [to him] the Jews from Jerusalem Priests and Levites in order to ask him, «You, who are you?».</p>
<p>²⁰ καὶ ὡμολόγησεν καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσατο, καὶ ὡμολόγησεν ὅτι ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ χριστός.</p>	<p>²⁰ and he confessed and denied not, and he indeed confessed that I am not the Christ.</p>
<p>²¹ καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν· τί οὖν; σὺ Ἠλίας εἶ; καὶ λέγει· οὐκ εἰμὶ. ὁ προφήτης εἶ σύ; καὶ ἀπεκρίθη· οὐ.</p>	<p>²¹ And they asked him, who then; are you Elijah? And says: I am not the Prophet, are you? And said: no.</p>
<p>²² εἶπαν οὖν αὐτῷ· τίς εἶ; ἵνα ἀποκρισὶν δώμεν τοῖς πέμψασιν ἡμᾶς τί λέγεις περὶ σεαυτοῦ;</p>	<p>²² They said to him then; who are you? In order that we give an answer to those who sent us what do you say about yourself?</p>
<p>²³ ἔφη· ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· εὐθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου,</p>	<p>²³ Said, I [am] a voice of the one that</p>
<p>²⁴ καὶ ἀπεσταλμένοι ἦσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων.</p>	<p>²⁴ And those who had been sent were of the Pharisees.</p>
<p>²⁵ καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· τί οὖν βαπτίζεις εἰ σὺ οὐκ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς οὐδὲ Ἠλίας οὐδὲ ὁ προφήτης;</p>	<p>²⁵ And they asked him and said to him, why then you do baptize if you are not the Christ nor Elijah nor the Prophet?</p>
<p>²⁶ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγων· ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι· μέσος ὑμῶν ἕστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε,</p>	<p>²⁶ John answered them, saying, I baptize in [with] water in the midst of you stands someone whom you do not know,</p>
<p>²⁷ ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ [ἐγὼ] ἄξιος ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδήματος.</p>	<p>²⁷ the one who is coming after me who I am not worthy that I untie the thong of his sandal.</p>
<p>²⁸ ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ὅπου ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων.</p>	<p>²⁸ This in Bethany took place beyond the Jordan where was John baptizing.</p>

3. «John demonstrates his awareness of the historical and scriptural example of Isaiah and claims that he is operating according to the Isaianic paradigm set before him». (A.D. MYERS, «A Voice in the Wilderness», 134).

2. Exegesis

2.1. *John's Testimony: Trial–Motif (1:19)*

– Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου

It is quite strange to see a narrative that begins with the conjunction *καί*; this conjunction functions as a bridge, bringing together John's former testimony (1:6–8.15) and that of the present (1:19b–37), which commences with the use of the perfective present (or the *testimonioum* present⁴) in the opening statement ἐστίν. This shows how closely the Prologue and the Gospel narrative are linked and how essential Jn. 1:6–8.15 are for that connection.⁵ It is interesting that Jn. 1:19a begins with a sentence that is found word by word in 1 Jn. 5:11:

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεός, καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.

«And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son».

These words, that refer to the testimony of the Johannine community, are consistent with JB's testimony that will reveal Jesus as «the Son of God» in Jn. 1:34.

At the beginning of Jn. 1:19a, there is a headline, which is a typical Johannine style: with a demonstrative pronoun at the beginning of a definition sentence (cf. 15:12; 17:3; 1 Jn. 3:11). This conjunction marks the beginning of the clause. This is a unit with a subject [ἡ μαρτυρία] and verb [ἐστίν]. This is a mainline phrase with a coordinating conjunction [καί] and an indicative verb [ἐστίν]. Moreover, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου indicates a subjective genitive.⁶ This demonstrative formula serves as a brief introductory sentence that indicates the end of the Prologue and

4. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 126; see also D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 532.

5. H. RIDDERBOS, *John*, 62.

6. The substantive genitive functions semantically as the subject of the verbal idea implicit in the head noun. If a subjective genitive is suspected, attempt to convert the verbal noun to which the genitive is related into a verbal form and turn the genitive into its subject. Thus, in our case, «The testimony of John» becomes «[What / the fact that] John testifies».

establishes the outset of the first scene in the story and as a title for the following narrative, for it is JB's testimony that dominates the whole. With these words, the FE takes up again the thread of his first μαρτυρία of the Prologue, laid down in Jn. 1:8. This sentence can be read also as an introduction to his answer to the Jerusalemites' questions about his role in salvation history⁷ and thereby as preparation for the FG's narration of Jesus' public ministry.

– ὅτε ἀπέστειλαν [πρὸς αὐτὸν] οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων

The use of the subordinating conjunction ὅτε indicates concrete time and place.⁸ At the same time, the use of the verb ἀποστέλλω, in the form of the aorist ἀπέστειλαν (3rd person plural), is significant. Sending messengers to a prophet characterizes biblical tradition (2 Kgs. 19:2 = Isa. 37:2; 22:15).⁹ In this context as well, he appears to be the true representative of the Scriptures.

To understand well the value of JB's testimony, it is necessary to clarify what is derived from the term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι that appears 194x in the NT; 71 occurrences of them in the FG. Almost always, it occurs in the plural and in the pen of the FE.¹⁰ In our text, «the Jews» were included not only to give «official» status to the delegation, but also, to appear, as in the rest of the Gospel, as the opponents of Jesus. They appear in the role of instigators as inquisitors. This sounds hostile, anticipating that attitude and refusal

7. M.J.J. MENKEN, «Allusions to the Minor Prophets», 72.

8. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist)», 51.

9. C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:431.

10. The term is used by the FE with many different meanings, depending on the context: (1) Jewish religious authority's hostile to Jesus (8:37–59). (cf. E.L. ALLEN, «The Jewish Christian Church», 88–92). (2) The compatriots of Jesus whose rites are explained to the readers of non-Jewish origin (2:6.13; 18:20). (3) The members of Judaism as distinct from the Samaritans and Gentiles (4:9; 18:35). (cf. M. LOWE, «Who were the Ἰουδαῖοι», 103). (4) The people of God (4:22). (5) The inhabitants of the province of Judea (19:31). (6) In some passages the FE uses the term in the sense that it could have at the time of writing the Gospel, to designate the Pharisees, who represented Judaism opposed to rival Christianity (9:22 with 12:42). In this context, the Jews are so closely regarded as typical representatives of the world, that those who have separated themselves from the world by faith are no longer regarded as Jews, although they are by their origin. (cf. H. SCHLIER, «Le monde et l'homme», 284). In a contrary way, the FE uses the term in a positive sense (4:22; 8:31; 9:16; 10:19; 12:11.42). (cf. S.B. MARROW, «κόσμος in John», 100).

that they will nurture towards Jesus: it is an attitude that distinguishes the classes of religious leaders (see in particular Jn. 5, and Jn. 7, and Jn. 18–19).

As a rule, the FE uses this term to describe the hostility of the Jewish leaders and authorities to Jesus and this brings us consequently to the historical reality: they are a group of characters who refuse to believe in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God and seek his death (5:18; 7:1.20; 8:37.40; 11:53; 18:28–32; 19:7.12).¹¹ From this point of view, the FE uses this term to give official status to JB's testimony. Therefore, they appear as the opponents of his testimony as well. They simply represent the status of disbelief.¹² This means, the function of the Ἰουδαῖοι might be epitomized in the following three traits:

- Associated with Jerusalem.
- Have authority to send other people.
- Skeptical about John's identity.¹³

Accordingly, the negative depiction of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the FG is based on their behaviour,¹⁴ and not on their identity.¹⁵ In this sense, the examination of the texts leads us to conclude that this Johannine term does not have a univocal but analogous meaning,¹⁶ that is to say, it designates people who have some common traits but they do not always think and act in the same way.¹⁷ In light of these considerations, if we want to make a comparison between the representative role of the Jews, who considered themselves as «Masters» of the Scriptures, and that of JB, one will discover that the true representative of the true Jew, who searches and believes in the Scriptures (5:39) is the witness and the prophet, JB. In introducing

11. R. SHERIDAN, «οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι», 672.

12. R. BIERINGER – D. POLLEFEY – F. VANDECASTEELE–VANEUVILLE, *Anti-Judaism*, 68.

13. D.F. TOLMIE, «The Ἰουδαῖοι», 378.

14. «The term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, characteristic of the Evangelist, gives an overall portrayal of the Jews, viewed from the standpoint of Christian faith, as the representative of unbelief». (R. BULTMANN, *John*, 86). To my mind, this Johannine standpoint is consistent with the role of JB in the FG as a representative of the Scriptures and the prophets, and thereby, as a representative of the belief in Jesus as the Christ.

15. M. DIEFENBACH, *Der Konflikt*, 269–270.

16. J. BEUTLER, «Die „Juden“», 60.

17. For further details about «the Jews» in the FG, see J. ASHTON, *The Identity and Function of the Ἰουδαῖοι in the Fourth Gospel*, 40–75; J. FREY, *The Glory of the Crucified One. Christology and Theology in the Gospel of John*, 39–72.

him, the FE intends to show that JB is the first Jew who believes in Jesus as the Christ, thus belongs to the messianic community, the Jews that will believe in Jesus throughout the Gospel.

Moreover, the use of the term «Jerusalem» is striking. Ἱεροσόλυμα occurs 12x in the FG.¹⁸ In our text, Jerusalem is consistent with the role of the Jewish authorities: it is the seat of opposition to JB and later on, to Jesus himself.

– ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας

This is the only place where the unique expression «Priests and Levites» appears in the FG. The Priests are the specialists of the Law and of the ritual purity rules. The Levites are a lower priestly class, and constitute the Temple police. This was an official troop of fact investigations sent by the religious institutions in Jerusalem. The Priests and Levites were usually Sadducees, while the scribes were usually Pharisees. Both groups participated in the questioning of JB. The political and religious opponents allied themselves against Jesus and his followers.

– σὺ τίς εἶ

This scene is replete with lawsuit imagery and forensic connotations.¹⁹ In this way, the trial-motif is significant, since he «is the first witness called in the trial proceedings, it is not surprising that so much attention is given to his functioning in this role»,²⁰ especially that the FG is depicted as a «lawsuit calling forth several testimonies to authenticate Jesus».²¹

In Jn. 8:25, Jesus is asked the same question by the Pharisees. JB and Jesus taught and acted in a manner that was deemed inconvenient to the authorities, because they recognized, in both men, certain eschatological themes and concepts. This question, therefore, refers to the Jewish expectations of the end-time and the important characters of the NT.

18. Four categories could be considered: (1) Geographical location (1:19; 5:2; 11:18; 12:12). (2) Religious location regarding the feasts of the Jewish people (2:13,23; 5:1; 10:22; 11:55). (3) Cultic location (4:20,21). (4) The location that testified Jesus' works (4:45).

19. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 126.

20. A.T. LINCOLN, *Truth on Trial*, 58.

21. A.A. TRITES, *Witness*, 80.

There is no need to remind the Johannine reader that JB was sent from God (1:6). It is the first of innumerable instances wherein readers are expected to look back to the Prologue to interpret the scene.²² It is clear from the very beginning of this dialogue that the core intention of the messengers is not his personal background but: $\sigma\upsilon\ \tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\hat{\iota}$; this use of the personal pronoun $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}$ in a direct speech draws the attention to his person and identity.²³ Thus, the question is about his role in salvation history;²⁴ in addition, his eschatological or salvific–historical identity, which determines everything in his ministry.²⁵ The fact that the conversation is directed from the beginning to JB in person can be explained again with a view to the literary and theological interests of the FE. Since the Prologue, the relation between Jesus and JB is a central theme. Herein, the antagonistic role of the first part will be represented by the Priests, Levites and Pharisees sent by the Jews from Jerusalem to question him. Their actantial function is not accusatory but it is investigatory within the judicial process that is about to begin.

From this point of view, the question of the Priests and Levites: $\sigma\upsilon\ \tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\hat{\iota}$ will be the occasion that will allow the Johannine John to testify, not to himself, but to Jesus. The emphatic position of the expression «this is the testimony of John» clearly shows that the whole scene has a sole purpose: to bring out this testimony. The theological motive is clear, from the beginning of his Gospel, the FE wants to establish the guilt of the Jews, the leaders of the people, who refuse to believe in Jesus and to recognize in him the Messiah sent from God, despite his testimony which they themselves provoked.²⁶

2.2. *John's Public Confession of Faith (1:20–22)*

2.2.1. The Confession–Motif (1:20a)

– $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\omega}\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\ \acute{\eta}\rho\eta\nu\acute{\eta}\sigma\alpha\tau\omicron,\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\omega}\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon$

22. W. HOWARD–BROOK, *Becoming Children of God*, 63.

23. S. BROWN, «The Priests and Levites», 111.

24. M.J.J. MENKEN, «Minor Prophets», 72.

25. H. RIDDERBOS, *John*, 63–64.

26. The witness of the Messiah to Israel, he is, on the eve of his death (3:24), a witness against the Jews. (cf. H. VAN DEN BUSSCHE, «La Structure», 85).

Two key verbs are to be considered in our verse: ὁμολογέω and ἄρνέομαι. Both verbs concentrate on a major theme presented in the FG, namely the concept of witness and confession.²⁷

The first verb ὁμολογέω, that belongs to the semantic field of μαρτυρέω, appears 4x in the FG (1:20 [2x]; 9:22 and 12:42). As we can see, it occurs twice in our text. This verb holds a public declaration of profession of allegiance including its legal sense.²⁸ The Jews, that are, the Jewish authorities of Jerusalem, sent Priests and Levites to JB at the Jordan to ask him about his identity: σὺ τίς εἶ. His solemn response does not wait: καὶ ὠμολόγησεν καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσατο, καὶ ὠμολόγησεν.

In Jn. 9:22, the verb indicates a similar bold confession to that of JB's, expressed by «the man who was born blind» who is portrayed by the FG as an excellent witness to Jesus,²⁹ while on the contrary, his parents refuse to do this. This is substantial for the answer of the Johannine reader's faith.³⁰ On the other hand, Jn. 12:42 indicates the unbelief of «many» because of their fear of the Pharisees.³¹ As per these texts, the FE expresses a judgment on Jesus' public activity among the Jewish people, since the Pharisees «refuse to see Jesus in this light».³² He explains the fact of the lack of faith of most the Jews as a cause of a great scandal for the early community in general, with a testimony of the Scriptures from the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 53:1; see also Jn. 12:38).

For the FE, faith is lived fully only if one is ready to confess it publicly and bear the consequences of such a confession in a hostile context. The FG connects in a contrasting way the lack of faith's confession of some believers among the Jews with the idea of δόξα, «glory»: the witness is always a confessor who prefers the glory of God to that of men, does not

27. K.V. VREDE, «Nicodemus and John the Baptist», 725.

28. O. MICHEL, «ὁμολογέω», 207–209.

29. B. LESLIE, *One Thing I Know*, 82.

30. Such a decision by the Jewish authorities does not seem to correspond as much to the historical circumstances of the narrative in Jn. 9 as to the situation of the Johannine community. To profess Christ was risky, full of difficulties. The man born blind assumes this risk. His parents, however, refuse to do this. Moloney states that, «One of the reasons for the writing of the Gospel of John was to support those Jewish Christians who “confessed” that Jesus was the Christ (9:22; 12:42)». (F.J. MOLONEY, *Johannine Studies*, 317).

31. H. THYEN, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 110.

32. B. LESLIE, *One Thing I Know*, 62; see also C.H. DODD, *Interpretation*, 379.

hide when he is asked to say publicly who Jesus is for him;³³ the Jews, in contrast, prefer the human glory over the divine glory — that is visible in Jesus (12:41) — so that they were afraid to confess publicly their faith in the Christ (12:43).

In our text, JB's affirmation is twice defined as a «confession» and is certainly more than a rhetorical expedient. The use of this repetition is to express the form of the confession.³⁴ He does so but not in a verbal form but with a prophetic action which functions as a faith confession. In his role, therefore, the confession becomes explicit. It is reassured that he never wanted to be the Christ and his confession makes him equal to others who in the FG take a serious personal decision regarding Christ. In this sense, he also functions as a model both like the OT Prophets and for the witnessing future community, who did not hesitate to publicly confess their principles and beliefs. In conclusion, the terminology of confessing, in the FG (and in the first Johannine letter) indicates the public dimension of faith (cf. 9:22; 12:42; 1 Jn. 2:23; 4:2.3.15).

The opposite of confessing is denying. The verb ἀρνέομαι occurs 4x in the FG and twice in the first Johannine Epistle (2:22.23). In three of the four instances (1:20; 13:38; 18:25.27), the verb refers to the denial of Peter. It states that there is a matter that is not true,³⁵ thus suggesting that JB is denying any implications that the question of the religious leaders has in itself. In Jn. 1:20, the FE puts the confession of JB in contrast to that of the Jews, as we have mentioned earlier. In our text, the interrogation has an interest that lies beyond the historical moment as well. His response is given as an introduction by the twofold use of ὡμολόγησεν and the emphasized οὐκ ἠρνήσατο. It is more than a way of giving information; it is about stating a confession, which not only articulates his self-understanding, but also has the *other* in mind.³⁶ Consequently, the verbs ὁμολογέω and ἀρνέομαι belong to the vocabulary of the public confession of faith before the authorities,

33. M. MARCHESELLI, «Una testimonianza che perdura», 623.

34. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 128.

35. H. SCHRIER, «ἀρνέομαι», 469.

36. «The Baptist introduces the messianic theme into interrogation by denying that he is the Messiah (v. 20). The pleonastic introduction to these first words of the Baptist, “He confessed and did not deny but confessed,” is an indication that the right confession of messiahship will be important to the right understanding of the identity of both the Baptist and Jesus». (F.J. MOLONEY, *John*, 52).

so that he will appear here as the ideal prophet, who proclaims publicly the Word of God and, at the same time, knows his limitations.

2.2.2 The Christ (1:20b)

– ὅτι ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ὁ χριστός

JB formulates his first answer with an ἐγὼ εἰμι, precisely with the Johannine formula ἐγὼ εἰμι that refers to the Johannine Jesus. He uses this emphatic pronoun constantly, and each time he contrasts himself with Jesus and takes the lower place. He says: ἐγὼ φωνή (1:23); ἐγὼ βαπτίζω (1:26); οὐκ εἰμι [ἐγὼ] ἄξιος (1:27); ἐγὼ εἶπον (1:30); καὶ ἐγὼ οὐκ ἤδελον αὐτόν (1:31.33); ἦλθον ἐγὼ βαπτίζων (1:31), and καὶ ἐγὼ ἐώρακα (1:34). The series is noteworthy, and the effect is to make it quite clear that JB claimed a subordinate position.

The first ἐγὼ εἰμι narrated in the FG is announced by JB, albeit in a negative formulation (ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι). In our text, the personal pronoun ἐγὼ in Jn. 1:20b indicates that JB's emphasis in his denial of his Messiahship may suggest that he is about to confess that there is another person who is the Christ (1:23.27). Subsequently, when he says οὐκ εἰμι ὁ χριστός, he abruptly reveals the real object of the inquiry. He immediately switches the attention away from himself and points it towards Jesus. Indirectly, he points out to the One who is coming, and he himself is expecting, «but who, at this point, remains in the shadows of the narrative».³⁷ In this context, the presence of Jesus remains physically concealed, but he will be gradually revealed by his first day's testimony (1:19–28).³⁸

Thence, the testimony he will give of himself denies that he is the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet (1:20–21). Unlike Jesus, who takes up the sacred expression of the OT, by which God makes himself «known» to his people: ἐγὼ εἰμι, JB will repeat ad nauseam «I am not». It is suggestive that the last three times Jesus says «I am» in the FG (18:5.6.8) also take place in a context of interrogation, during his arrest, and the same representatives of the Jews intervene.

Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ which means

37. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John the Baptist», 52.

38. T.F. GLASSON, «John the Baptist», 245.

«anointed one». In the OT, the anointing was considered to emphasize God's special reputation and equipment for a special function. Kings, Priests and Prophets were anointed. Later, this was considered as a hallmark for the one who should herald the new age of justice. There were many thoughts that JB was the promised Messiah (Lk. 3:15), for he was the first since the writers of the OT who spoke through a divine inspiration and in the name of YHWH.

His denial being therefore ὁ χριστός means that he unambiguously refuses to establish a link between the Jewish messianic hope and his person. In this respect, his negative witness constitutes a kind of confession of Jesus' Messiahship;³⁹ giving him the opportunity to point out that Jesus is the expected Christ: his explicit denial is a confession of his faith in Jesus as the Christ.

2.2.3. Elijah (1:21a)

– καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν· τί οὖν; σὺ Ἡλίας εἶ καὶ λέγεις· οὐκ εἰμί

The second question to JB (1:21a) deals with a certain expectation. The hypothesis of an allusion to Elijah is entirely on the historical level, has no theological level, except in the sense that per the category of the late Jewish apocalyptic, Elijah had to appear before the last judgment. Thus, it is about the expectation of the biblical designation of Elijah's eschatological role (as expressed in Mal. 3:22; Sir. 48:10; Mk. 9:11–13).

The foundation of Elijah as a representation of the provisional is a role that is always denied to the Johannine John. Jesus' origin is of a different kind, and so he cannot have any predecessors from the FG's viewpoint, because, in the Gospel's view, this identification suggested that Jesus counted on JB. The avoidance of the identification of JB with Elijah, the emphasis on his complete dependence as a witness on God's revelation, and the use of the divine passive in Jn. 1:31 go back to the desire to avoid any suggestion that Jesus, the Christ, would count on.⁴⁰ Consequently, the FG and the Gospel of Luke refuse the title of Elijah to the precursor. He announces the eschatological times and takes up the text of Isa. 40:3.

39. E. HARRIS, *Prologue and Gospel*, 40.

40. M. DE JONGE, «John the Baptist and Elijah», 304.

His preaching announces therefore, «the One who is coming».⁴¹ For the FE, it is Jesus who is the New Elijah.⁴² But the question that posits itself here, why the FE, on the contrary to the Synoptic traditions (especially Matthew and Mark), does not want JB to be Jesus' forerunner, although limited theories espoused the claim that he is the Elijah-like figure.⁴³ The FE's intention does not seem to posit the dependence of the Messiah on his forerunner; a tension that he tries to avoid in his Gospel.⁴⁴

2.2.4. The Prophet (1:21b)

– ὁ προφήτης εἶ σύ; καὶ ἀπεκρίθη· οὐ

The FG designates Jesus as «Prophet» 4x (4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17). Also, the connected question «The prophet, are you?» can be directed to the expectation of the coming Elijah.⁴⁵ This could be pointed out by the crowd after «feeding the five thousand» in Jn. 6:14.

The fact that the term προφήτης is preceded by the determinative article ὁ makes it clear that the Prophet spoken of is the Eschatological One, and that the FE puts himself in the line of those who were expecting with confidence the coming of such a character. This Eschatological Prophet was to serve as a sign that indicates the end of time; it was sometimes linked to the coming of messianic times. In this connection, the article

41. F. MANNS, «Jean-Baptiste », 102.

42. S.M. AHN, *The Christological Witness*, 110. This idea is supported by Cullmann, who argues that «His particular emphasis of the fact that the Baptist rejected for himself the title of the Prophet, the returned Elijah, suggests that the writer of John wants to reserve this title for Jesus — along with other Christological designations and concepts». (O. CULLMANN, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 37). Robinson also writes in consistent with this idea that «Jesus was indeed to be the Christ. But he was Elijah first». (J.A.T. ROBINSON, «Elijah, John and Jesus», 277).

43. M. DE JONGE, «Jewish Expectations», 246–270; «John the Baptist and Elijah», 299–309. His theory is based on a testimony of a church father, Justin Martyr who claims that, «in the time of Jesus, there was a popular belief of Elijah anointing the Messiah». De Jonge continues to say that, «until the anointing by the prophet, the messiah is unknown and powerless». (see also J.B. POLHILL, «John 1–4», 457, n. 10).

44. S.M. AHN, *The Christological Witness*, 115; see also J. BEUTLER, *John*, 55.

45. «When John the Baptist denies that he is “the prophet” or an eschatological figure of salvation like Elijah (1:21.25), this indirectly reinforces the idea that Jesus is this “prophet” or “Elijah”». (R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Jesus in the Gospels*, 1:271).

here is so important and it brings us to the thought that lies behind this title stands an expectation of a Prophet that is not identical to any prophet in the history of Israel. Herein, the FE is plausibly speaking of a specific Prophet.⁴⁶ This title that is given by the FG is an echo to the declaration of Moses himself about a great Prophet raised by God, who would serve as his voice (Deut. 18:15.18).⁴⁷

This is stated in the declaration of Philip to Nathanael: «We have found him about whom Moses wrote in the law» (1:45). The first Maccabees speak of a true prophet who would arise to promulgate a new law (4:46; 14:41). Jesus' miracles (6:14) and his new teaching about the Holy Spirit (7:40) underlie the FE's use of this term. It is not necessarily, therefore, to be a messianic term but may refer to a common belief of a genuine prophet that acts like a king or is a king.⁴⁸

The reason for rejecting the association of him with messianic titles seems to be due to the FE's intention to limit his role to that of witness (esp. 1:7.15)⁴⁹ under a prophetic context, like the Deutero-Isaiah. On the other hand, by his threefold denial, he categorically denies, in one way or another, being the bearer of the eschatological Bringer of salvation.⁵⁰ Along the same lines, the FG expresses clearly the tendency to deprive JB of any eschatological meaning, to deprive him of any soteriological role, fixing him completely in his role as a witness of Christ. Accordingly, the FE's intention is to show that Jesus is to perform these messianic titles, and this is confirmed by the rest of the story.⁵¹

46. This idea is supported by the using of the article par excellence, ὁ προφήτης εἶ σύ. Wallace argues this point by stating, «Here the interrogators are asking John if he is the prophet mentioned in Deut. 18:15. Of course, there were many prophets, but only one who deserved to be singled out in this way» (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 222).

47. «He [JB] is not the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15. But that does not mean that he rejects a prophetic function». (J.M. BOICE, *Witness and Revelation*, 85). I do completely agree with Boice, for the first description of him in the very beginning of the FG was ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, which includes a divine commission the same as all the prophets of ancient Israel, especially Isaiah. Therefore, JB has this prophetic role.

48. H.A. FISCHER, «Jewish Gnosticism», 158.

49. M.D. HOOKER, «John the Baptist», 358.

50. R. BULTMANN, *John*, 90.

51. C.R. KOESTER, *Symbolism*, 180.

2.3. A Prophet Prepares the Way for «The Prophet» (1:22–23)

2.3.1. What Do You Say about Yourself? (1:22)

- εἶπαν οὖν αὐτῷ· τίς εἶ; ἵνα ἀπόκρισιν δώμεν τοῖς πέμψασιν ἡμᾶς τί λέγεις περὶ σεαυτοῦ.

After his negative statements about the titles that the Jerusalemites presented to him (1:20–21), they insist on having a direct answer about what his real identity is. Thus, Jn. 1:22 recalls the first question formulated in Jn. 1:19c, «Who are you?» again. The Jerusalemites change their questions from the content of his ministry to what he says about himself, τί λέγεις περὶ σεαυτοῦ.

2.3.2. The Prophetic Identity (1:23a)

Jn. 1:23 is the first quotation from the OT in the FG. These conclusive words will qualify JB's words as a quotation from the Deutero-Isaiah that become a Midrash.⁵²

- ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ

JB's ἐγὼ is included by the FE without «am», which is usually, in the FG, reserved for Jesus. This absence is not only a literary nuance that is intended to underline the admirable concealment of his ἐγὼ. In this case, the witness, speaking of himself, identifies himself with the prophecy. This voice has an eminent function; through a voice, the Word is made present.

The term φωνή, «voice» (Heb. בִּיָּדָה) occurs 3x in Isa. 40:1–11 as an anonymous voice of a messenger, who announces the word of YHWH.⁵³ Isa. 40:3 and 9 announce the coming of YHWH. The fact that the «voice» remains anonymous indicates that the emphasis is placed on the message rather than on the messenger, thus becoming an emphasizing rhetorical

52. Midrash means an ancient commentary on part of the Hebrew Scriptures, attached to the biblical text.

53. J. GOLDINGAY – D. PAYNE, *Isaiah* 40–55, 1:79–80; see also H. SIMIAN-YOFRE, *Avvento*, 118–120.

device.⁵⁴ This anonymous voice of the Isaianic messenger will be JB, since he is directly connected with the past and with the expectation of Israel. Subsequently, he is presenting himself as a prophet and witness. As a prophet, he represents the Prophets of Israel, while as a witness he represents the Scriptures that testify to Jesus (5:39).

He expressly refers to the Prophet Isaiah, whose prophecy is fulfilled in his person. The aim and summit of the first survey (1:19–23) is JB's self-identification, which is presented in a literal speech in Jn. 1:23: he is the voice, as an instrument of the greater One, God; he is what the Scriptures, i.e., what God says of him.⁵⁵ Thus, it is the self-identification of an envoy. This means that the FE's purpose of this Isaianic quotation is to direct the attention to JB's individual and anonymous φωνή for God. In this context, φωνή appears as an expression of a divinely authorized message that qualifies the speech.⁵⁶ In other words, as a messenger from God, he «invokes Scripture and speaks with the Isaianic voice».⁵⁷ Identifying himself with the «voice» indicates his function as a continuator of the mission of the OT Prophets. They [the Prophets] were to prepare the people of Israel to meet the Messiah by reminding them with the Word of God and speaking in the name of God. He, as a calling voice, assumes the prophetic role of witnessing to Jesus.

It should be noted that JB, independent on the Synoptic baptismal tradition, appears as a witness to Christ. In the context of this testimony-function, he adopts the words of the prophet Isaiah and identifies himself with the voice in the wilderness. Subsequently, his response that formulates for the first time his positive role will be seen in the context of his commission as a witness to Jesus, describing himself with the quotation from the prophet Isaiah, but with a significant change.⁵⁸ Furthermore, these opening words of Isa. 40 are considered as a key expression of JB's role in relation to Jesus: he is the voice that makes the prophecy of salvation resound again and is sent for making straight the «way of the Lord».

54. P.D. MISCALL, *Isaiah*, 121; A. KÖSTENBERGER, *John*, 426.

55. B. PETERS, *Johannes*, 69–70.

56. A. OBERMANN, *Die christologische*, 107.

57. A.D. MYERS, «A Voice», 121.

58. M.L. COLOE, «Witness and Friend», 50.

In this respect, the motif of the present speech also expresses the present participle βω̄ντος that indicates a prophetic present participle. This adjectival participle derives from the verb βω̄ω, a Johannine *hapax legomenon*.⁵⁹ The voice is essentially a calling one. The speaker of the voice is unambiguously determined in the FG and is also filled with its location. For with the word ἔρημος,⁶⁰ the dimension of salvation sounds, since it is the place of the divine adoration for his people, that is, in the messianic expectation, it is the place where, as formerly, God will meet his people again.⁶¹

It is important, therefore, to observe the Johannine presentation of JB as the voice of the OT prophecy, leaving his human personality almost in «anonymity». This highlights what the FG wants to tell the reader of this Gospel: JB's role is to be the witness who is totally at the service of Jesus, and he is the one who embodies the voice of the Scriptures of Israel, so that, through his testimony, it is the Scriptures that recognize the Messiah in Jesus. Quite evidently, the Johannine changing of the Isaianic verb accords with the picture the FE wants to draw of his John. He is not the «precursor» of Jesus as much as he is a contemporaneous witness to Jesus.⁶² In this regard, through the explicit quotation of Isa. 40:3, he presents himself as a prophet and witness.⁶³

– εὐθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου

JB came to prepare the way for the Messiah. All the gospel writers agree on this, but in the FG the radical break from the tradition of the Prophets is stated more strongly by the way that JB is compared with the great

59. S.M. AHN, *The Christological Witness*, 122.

60. The wilderness ἔρημος was central in Israel's history (cf. Hos. 2:14). Many Jewish people awaiting the new exodus in the wilderness were open not only to renewal movements but to Prophets (cf. Acts 21:38) and messiahs (cf. Mt. 24:26) appearing in the wilderness, and it was appropriate from the Baptist to read a theological significance into his requisite exile from population centers. (cf. C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:438–439).

61. JB is «the voice» preparing «the way for the Lord», that is, «for God's coming in the person of the Messiah to his people Israel in order to inaugurate a new exodus, as it were, through the wilderness». (A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *A Theology*, 189).

62. M.J.J. MENKEN, *Old Testament Quotations*, 35.

63. A. CAVICCHIA, «Is 40,3 in Gv 1,23», 315.

prophet Elijah who was expected in Jewish tradition to return before the Messiah came. The coming of Jesus is seen here is something new and different and so in the FG, JB is treated differently in relation to the ancient tradition; not only is his difference from Jesus emphasised, but he who points to Jesus as the Messiah is himself also different from the Prophets of the past, so the break with the past in the coming of Jesus is further emphasised.

LXX	קול קורא במדבר פנו דרך יהיה	ישרו בערבֵה מסלה לאלהינו
The Synoptics (Mt. 3:3; Mk. 1:3; Lk. 3:4)	φωνῆ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου,	εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ·
The FG	ἐγὼ φωνῆ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· εὐθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου.	

As this table shows, the quote from Isa. 40:3 is used in the FG to identify JB and his mission. However, while in the Synoptics the two parallel formulas that are found both in the original text and in the LXX, only one formula appears in the FG that structurally coincides with the first formula of the other translations.

On the other hand, the textual characteristics of the quotation and the problematic presence of εὐθύνατε, «straighten»⁶⁴ (imperative aorist active 2nd plural) instead of ἐτοιμάσατε, «prepare» (imperative aorist active 2nd plural) is found. This change of verb between the Isaianic text and that of the Johannine text comes in line with the FG view of JB's mission. The prophecy would, therefore, indicate John's mission, which is not identifiable, however, with that is suggested by the Synoptics, i.e., of preparing, a concept that is given by ἐτοιμάζω, the coming of the Messiah, so that when the Messiah arrives, he will finish his role⁶⁵ but that of straighten-

64. The verb in the OT has the meaning of «correct» or «make correct». The same imperative form that the FE uses also has been said by Joshua, who exhorts the people to renounce foreign gods and correct their hearts towards the Lord (Josh. 24:23). This last exhortation also appears in the book of Sirach (2:2). There is an expression similar to that of JB: eu;qunon ta.j o`dou.j sou, «Straighten your ways» (2:6). The meaning of the way in Isaiah differs from Sirach. In Isaiah, it is understood as the return trip to be undertaken, while in Sirach it means the way of proceeding of the reader, who should not depart from the Lord but adhere to him as a sign of true fear (6:17). I do think that this is another aspect that illuminates the words of JB who, through his voice, which cries out, makes a strong call to conversion.

65. A. CAVICCHIA, «Is 40,3 in Gv 1,23», 303.

ing — a concept that is given by εὐθύω — thus giving continuity to his mission as a straight voice in the life of the church throughout the ages.

The next step in our verse will be the term ὁδός, «the way». What does this term mean in the biblical theology? In order to answer this question, three aspects are to be considered in analysing the term «way»:

- An eschatological aspect. As long as the «way» is closely linked to YHWH himself, thus having this significance. This eschatological aspect is fulfilled in Jesus, who, according to the Johannine theology, is the only «way» to go to the Father (14:6).
- An ethical aspect. Isa. 40:3 concentrates also on ὁδὸν κυρίου (Heb. הַדֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה), «Lord's way», which presents also in few Scriptural passages.⁶⁶ This syntagma presents an ethical aspect of fidelity to YHWH,⁶⁷ to his word and to the Law. Many OT texts emphasized that the Law is the «way» to reach God.⁶⁸ The Law is the expression of the divine will, and the person who practices it completely and rigorously enters into a kind of communion with God. Hence, the term «way» becomes a privileged metaphor to designate the commandments of God.⁶⁹
- A physical–geographical aspect. The geographical indication ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (Heb. מִדְבָּר, «in the wilderness») can refer to the epoch of the Exodus for all that concerns the tension between fidelity and infidelity of the people to the word of YHWH (cf. Hos. 2:16–17).

The original text indicates that the prophet was the voice calling for a way through the eastern desert, so that the God of Israel could lead the exiled people returning from the Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, especially that Deutero–Isaiah (chapters 40–55) refers clearly to the «New Exodus».⁷⁰ This call was a prophetic image that indicated the return of Israel to his God, a return from spiritual darkness and alienation to spiritual redemption through the Messiah. In this context, the way that must be prepared

66. Cf. Gen. 18:19; Judg. 2:22; 2 Kgs. 21:22; 2 Chr. 17:6; Pro. 10:29; Jer. 5:4.5.

67. Cf. 2 Sam. 22:22 = Ps. 18:22; 25:4; 138:5; Hos. 14:10.

68. Cf. Deut. 5:33; 9:12.16; 11:28; 13:6...

69. W. MICHAELIS, «ὁδός», 51.

70. A. NICCACCI, *The Exodus Tradition*, 26–29.

is the way of YHWH towards Jerusalem.⁷¹ Here the theme of the Exodus could be brought into focus: it is the movement of YHWH, who had abandoned Jerusalem and his people because of the destruction of the Temple and of the exile (Ezek. 11:22–23).⁷² In the light of all these considerations, JB appears to be the one who will make the new way of YHWH realized through a new event, i.e., the event of the Incarnate Logos, who will inaugurate the epoch of the the New Exodus (cf. Isa. 43:18–19; 48:20–21). Thus, the subject is JB, the listeners are the people of God, and the effect expected by the message transmitted, which comes from God (1:6), is to direct the listeners to Jesus, the Lord.⁷³

Another particularly significant element is the title κύριος, «Lord» which is used here for a purpose and for the first time by JB. With this title, the NT indicates to the reader the new status reached by Jesus in his Paschal Ministry.⁷⁴ Also the FG uses and refers to Jesus the term κύριος, both in a more generic way in the appellative κύριε in the vocative, and also in the meaningful title ὁ κύριος in an absolute sense with the article (4:1; 6:23; 11:2). The most important occurrences of the title are mentioned in the two concluding chapters (20–21).⁷⁵ Hence, he is not only a prophetic character but also a Paschal character (1:29.36), since the way of the Lord, according to the Johannine theology, is the way of the Glorification through Cross and Resurrection.

71. A. OBERMANN, *Die christologische*, 109.

72. J. GOLDINGAY – D. PAYNE, *Isaiah 40–55*, 1:75.

73. The Johannine John «cites a prophecy from Isaiah which is full of Exodus imagery, and then announces that what God had begun to do in history of Israel, he now would bring to fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth». (R.L. MORGAN, «Fulfillment in the Fourth Gospel», 158).

74. This title has a paschal indication to the early paschal faith in Jesus. (cf. A. GANGEMI, *I racconti post-pasquale*, 2:55).

75. In the Resurrection narrative, this term is expressed absolutely with the article, both in 20:20, where we read that the disciples rejoiced having seen τὸν κύριον, «the Lord», and also in 20:25, where it assumes a greater emphasis in the declaration of the disciples ἐωράκαμεν τὸν κύριον, «We have seen the Lord». Herein, one can also refer to the confession of Thomas ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου, «My Lord and my God!» (20:28). On the other hand, the term, still with a greater emphasis, has already been used in the context of the previous narrative of the apparitions of Jesus to Mary Magdalene and always said by Mary (20:2.13.18). Finally, this title appears in the narrative of the manifestation of Jesus on the beach, in chapter 21, when the BD tells Peter: ὁ κύριός ἐστιν, «It is the Lord» (21:7a). (cf. A. GANGEMI, *I racconti post-pasquale*, 2:195).

2.3.3. John and the Prophet Isaiah (1:23b)

– καθὼς εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας ὁ προφήτης

The entry ἔφη as well as the conclusion καθὼς εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας ὁ προφήτης are unique in the FG. The ἔφη connects the quotation seamlessly to the conversation of JB with the messengers from Jerusalem and integrates the word of Isaiah into dialogue, making it a present day spoken word. On the other hand, the source of the quotation is remarkable in its origin to the FE that he mentions Isaiah by name.⁷⁶ Isaiah is also mentioned by name in Jn. 12:38.39.41. In all places, his name is related to Scriptures.

Isaiah thereby proves himself as an authoritative witness of Christ, because he has already beheld his glory (12:41) and, therefore, was able to write his book in the light of Christ, and now in the form of the quotations from his book. Thus, even at the beginning of the Gospel, Isaiah is said to be the essential guarantor of JB's testimony to Christ (1:19). The emphasized naming of the prophet signals an essential characteristic of the Johannine scriptural understanding: Scriptures are the valid and appealing Word of God to this day.

The Johannine John is presented in a distinct way; all four Gospels apply the Isaianic text to him, but only the Fourth has JB himself cite, in a direct speech. The Isaianic source that has been taken from the book of Israel's consolation, and pronounces the identification in front of an embassy from Jerusalem. The words of the prophet Isaiah, as per JB, which are familiar to the audience, hold a theological dimension: behind his voice is that of the prophet. The Scriptures authority is the only authority that can be recognized within Judaism.⁷⁷ But, will the Jews believe their prophet (12:38–40)? Their official representatives, at all events, remain unaffected by the testimony of JB and the prophet.⁷⁸

76. The prophet Isaiah is found 22x in the NT (Mt. 6x; Mk. 2x; Lk. 2x; Jn. 4x; Acts 3x; Rom. 5x). In his interesting article, Williams states that «Isaiah occupies a prominent, if not the highest, position among the scriptural texts that have contributed to the shaping of John's gospel [...] allusive modes of verbal and thematic scriptural reference attest the deeply embedded and thoroughly absorbed character of John's use of Isaiah, and reflect the extensive process of christological reflective on scripture from which this gospel emerged». (C.H. WILLIAMS, «Isaiah in John's Gospel», 101).

77. J.F. MCHUGH, *John 1–4*, 119.

78. L. SCHENKE, *Johannes*, 35.

The use of the particle καθώς from the part of JB is significant. This participle occurs 31x in the FG, mostly in a comparative sense. The bond between JB and Isaiah is expressed in καθώς describing here the agreement between both characters. As Isaiah prophesied the consolation of Israel through a voice that cries out in the desert (Isa. 40:3), so he is that Isaianic voice that will prepare the way of the One who will console Israel, Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, the FE's intention that lies behind the use of Isaiah's words is to prove the authenticity of JB's person and his message. The message proclaimed by him is authentic since that is what the Scriptures prove, and in consequence, coincide with the message of Isaiah, or at least with the interpretation that JB makes of it. He does not make a new religious proposal nor asks for a change of religion, but he repeats in his own voice the message that had already been transmitted by Isaiah.⁷⁹ Only those who are willing to live fully Judaism, to correct the way of the Lord, can take a further step: should believe in Jesus (cf. 1:47.49).

Therefore, we can say that after affirming that he is neither the Christ, nor Elijah nor the Prophet, he openly confesses that he is, the same as the prophet Isaiah announcement, «the voice of the one that cries out in the wilderness», so that the ways are prepared where the Lord will return again, in front of his people, to the Promised Land. Isaiah, therefore, announced that a New Exodus much more glorious than the first, will take place, not under the guidance of Moses — who is represented in JB's character — but of YHWH himself who, like a shepherd, would lead his flock with a firm hand (Isa. 40:1–11). Thus, it is in the frame of the prophet Isaiah, eminently messianic, where we should place and understand him and his testimony in favour of Jesus. Thus, his quote from Isaiah has a double purpose: to indicate who he is, and therefore, to answer the question that has been asked to him.

2.4. *Legitimacy of John's Baptism (1:24–27)*

2.4.1. A New Delegation (1:24)

– καὶ ἀπεσταλμένοι ἦσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων

79. A.T. HERGESEL, *Preparare la via*, 225.

There is a difficulty to justify the dual mention of the delegation sent to JB. In Jn. 1:19, we learn that the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to inquire about his identity. In Jn. 1:24, the delegation is mentioned for the second time in this form: Καὶ ἀπεσταλμένοι ἦσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων.⁸⁰ This verse clarifies the theme expressed in Jn. 1:19. The subject of the extensive (or consummative) pluperfect⁸¹ ἀπεσταλμένοι is implied. It is the Priests and the Levites mentioned earlier. The ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων is partitive genitive.⁸² The FE wants to make clear that the Priests and the Levites belong to the party of the Pharisees because the ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων indicates the origin of the mission (it is equivalent in 18:3 τοῦ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων).⁸³ We would then translate: «And those who had been sent (the Priests and the Levites) were of the Pharisees». This translation seems preferable, since it shows the traditional sense of the way in which this verse has been translated from the original Greek; this shows the idea that this group of «Priests and Levites» (1:19b) were sent by the Pharisees.

In the FG, indeed, the Pharisees are not sent; but they send (7:32.45–51). The delegation, therefore, included Priests, Levites and Pharisees. Priests and Levites intervene first, then the Pharisees, named only now they intervene. The first one asks «Who are you? » while the second one asks «Why do you baptize? »; in other words, as they are the Law and the Traditions specialists, the question becomes: «By what authority? ».⁸⁴

Through the renewed use of ἀποστέλλω in Jn. 1:24 a new narrative section begins by indicating a new delegation from the Pharisees.⁸⁵ While at the beginning of the narrative it is mentioned that the interlocutors of JB, «Priests and Levites», have been sent by «the Jews», the interlocutors are now sent from «the Pharisees». The sentence does not tell of a second legation but is a parenthetic comment. It does not say that the messengers belong to the Pharisees, but they have been sent by the Pharisees.⁸⁶ The FE uses once again the verb ἀποστέλλω in an ironic way to say that this

80. E.W. KLING, *John*, 130.

81. «The pluperfect may be used to emphasize the completion of an action in past time, without focusing as much on the existing results». (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 585).

82. M.J. HARRIS, *John*, 43; see also D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 371.

83. M.-É. BOISMARD, « Les Traditions Johanniques », 14–15.

84. E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 2213.

85. C.G. MÜLLER, «Der Zeuge und das Licht», 493.

86. R. METZNER, *Das Verständnis der Sünde*, 125–126.

delegation was sent ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων in contrast to his usage of Jn. 1:6, when he described JB as the sent one παρὰ θεοῦ: two «missions» confronting one another, herein his mission is from God and the delegation's mission is from «the Jews».⁸⁷ Then the preposition ἐκ serves to characterize the origin, the cause and the motivation.

This is the first time that the Pharisees are mentioned in this Gospel and that is why this would be a good opportunity to introduce the role they would play during Jesus' earthly ministry. They are traditionally regarded as a relatively small but still influential group of Jews during the NT period. In the Gospels, they are described as antagonistic to Jesus. They are also described as greedy, hypocritical and as people who lack the sense of justice. Furthermore, the Pharisees were excessively preoccupied with the details of the Law instead of being sensitive to the spiritual message of the OT. They are the ones who worry about the unusual religious movements (11:46–47; 12:19) and even sometimes they are identified with «the Jews» as leaders of the people (9:18.22 after 13–16). As in Jn. 6, «the Pharisees» of Jn. 1:24 would be practically identical to «the Jews» of Jn. 1:19. Therefore, between the sacerdotal authority and the Pharisees, the FE wants to reveal the following traits to his readers:

- Skeptical about JB's identity.
- Concerned about religious matters (baptism).

In a certain sense, the FG' strategy makes it more a substandard note as a reading signal: «the Pharisees» get a special weight and are thus placed in the focus of attention. They stand constantly as opponents of Jesus, and further, they stand out as the central opponents.⁸⁸ Therefore, it is not by chance that the FE equates them with «the Jews» (9:13–23).⁸⁹

2.4.2. John's Authority to Baptize (1:25)

- καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· τί οὖν βαπτίζεις εἰ σὺ οὐκ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς οὐδὲ Ἡλίας οὐδὲ ὁ προφήτης;

87. J.R. MICHAELS, *John*, 101.

88. Cf. Jn. 4:1; 7:32.45–48; 8:3; 9:13–16.40; 11:47.57; 12:19.42; 18:3.

89. C. BENNEMA, «The Identity and Composition», 247.

The survey continues; the questioning is no longer aimed at JB's personal identity, as indicated in Jn. 1:19–23. If he is «only» a witness and therefore does not have a dynamic function as Christ, Elijah and the Prophet, the question arises: τί οὖν βαπτίζεις. As we saw earlier, he had dispelled all messianic and prophetic pretensions that the Jews might have had about him, but there is still a problem that «the Pharisees» want to solve based on the relationship they understand of the universal baptism that would take place at the end of time. It seems that they saw the future baptism of the Jews as an eschatological rite that was to be performed by a messianic character.

In the OT, there are verses that some might have used to hope that this type of baptism or Jewish ritual would take place at the end-time. Passages like Ezek. 36:25 and Zech. 13:1 seem to support this interpretation. In their respective contexts, these OT verses seem to support the idea that during the coming of the end-time, the Jews believed that universal baptism would be associated with the coming of the Messiah. The OT associated the coming of the Messiah with repentance and spiritual purification. This makes us understand the standpoint of the Jews that JB was performing rites of messianic purification: they saw baptism as an eschatological rite that would be performed by a leader at the end-time.

Accordingly, «the Pharisees» appear to interrogate him about his performance, about the legitimacy of his baptism and its messianic meaning by considering it as a preparation for the messianic age. In other words, they question his authority to baptize, which is evidently understood to be an eschatological act.⁹⁰ On the one side, the Pharisaic delegation inquires him about the validity of his baptismal activity that is the authorization from God Himself. On the other side, they question him about the claiming to be the protagonist of the end-time.⁹¹

2.4.3. The Unknown Character (1:26)

– ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγων.

JB's answer would seem to indicate more than a question like «why? ». He actually understands that this question would mean: «With what authority do

90. R.L. WEBB, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 72.

91. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 157.

you baptize? » or perhaps, what he tries to do is to divert the question from his person to that of Christ, in order to bring the conversation to the topic of the coming salvation through the True Messiah. In this way, the question of the Pharisees is therefore, about his messianic dignity, who baptizes.⁹² With or without eschatological implications, his answer would indicate that he understands that the question (1:25) is about his authority; or that he simply tries to divert the question to Jesus in order to fulfil his mission in this life, to prepare the way of the Lord; or maybe (as it seems to me at least) his answer will reflect these two arguments as we will see in the following points.

– ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι

In the wake of JB's denial of messianic identity, «the Pharisees» question the foundation of his ministry of baptism. Like his answer to the question about his identity (1:23), the answer to the question of his function also seems rather cryptic (1:26–27). He reacts to the question of the reason for his baptism (τί οὖν βαπτίζεις, 1:25) with the tautologically acting indication that he «baptizes with water».

It is useful to observe that the term ὕδωρ, «water» occurs 21x in the FG. What is important to us at this stage is the occurrences regarding his baptizing activity in Jn. 1, since it occurs 3x as per his words (1:26.31.33).⁹³ From this Johannine perspective, these texts pay a close attention to the water imagery of the FG, which contains several aspects of Christology, soteriology, eschatology, pneumatology and ecclesiology. The study emphasizes on the Christological aspect of the FG, since his baptism with water has a Christological nature, because «Water serves a revelatory function in relationship to Jesus»⁹⁴ (see 1:31).

In our text, JB responds with an emphatic personal pronoun ἐγὼ, which indicates the self-identification of his baptism as «baptism with water». The Jews thought that baptism was an act which characterized the Messiah only; but what characterized the Messiah is not the baptism with water but the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵ Thus, the ἐν ὕδατι should be instrumental; this

92. C. PAYOT, «Jean-Baptiste », 27.

93. M.C. DE BOER, «Jesus the Baptizer», 95.

94. R.G. CRUTCHER, *Water Imagery*, 158.

95. B. PETERS, *Johannes*, 73–74.

self-presentation of his own baptism awakens the question of the other «baptisms» or of «another baptism». In consequence, this suggests that another person should appear in order to offer a different baptism in a different medium, the Holy Spirit⁹⁶ while JB intends to shift the focus of attention away from himself. His words imply that a new character will soon come on stage.

Nothing is said about baptism administered by Jesus in the Holy Spirit. This is mentioned only in Jn. 1:33 of the next scene. Instead of explaining why he baptizes, he states simply, «I baptize with water».⁹⁷ The clause ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι, therefore, confirms that he is not a messianic character and implies, at the same time, that the true baptism is to be performed in the Spirit.

– μέσος ὑμῶν ἔστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε

This part of Jn. 1:26 includes two key verbs that are referred to the perfect tense with a present force: ἔστηκεν and οἴδατε.⁹⁸ The first, 3rd person singular, refers to an unknown character; while the second, 2nd person plural, refers to the Pharisses.

The verb ἵστημι has a special prominence here. This Johannine expression has a dynamic aspect, which gives a more absolute character⁹⁹ to the perfect with a present force ἔστηκεν; one would say that Jesus from his position where he is, makes a movement through his testimony to be in the midst of his own. The verb evokes the text of the Prologue (1:1–18), for he already is in the world, thus waiting to be revealed to Israel through his baptism (1:31).

In his answer to the difference between the baptism of water and that of the Spirit, the Johannine John fades directly into another semantic counter-

96. D.A. CARSON, *John*, 146.

97. There are some significant monographs on the theme of the «water». For example, L.P. JONES, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, which analyses 12 narrative sections of the FG in which the FE uses the term «water», in an attempt to deepen its meaning and its symbolic function (2:1–11; 3:1–21.22–30; 4:1–42.46–54; 5:1–18; 6:16–21; 7:37–44; 9:1–41; 13:1–20; 19:28–30.31–37); W.Y. NG, *Water Symbolism in John. An Eschatological Interpretation*, which examines the literary development of the symbolism of «water» in the FG by paying special attention to the eschatological meaning.

98. «This usage occurs especially with verbs where the act slides over into the results. They are resultative perfects to the point that the act itself has virtually died; the results have become the act». (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 580).

99. A. GANGEMI, *I racconti post-pasquale*, 2:34.

part, into the opposition between «known/unknown». As we have already seen, Priests, Levites and Pharisees questioned him about his identity and baptism from traditional messianic references: the Christ, Elijah and the Prophet. Above all, the FE will reveal an irony through JB: they are the ones who, because of their knowledge of the Scriptures, can recognize the coming of the Messiah, however, «In the midst of you stands someone whom you do not know». The unknown Coming One, for whose sake he baptizes, comes into view in Jn. 1:26–27, but first of all *via negationis*: he baptizes with water but there is already among the Jews an unknown character.¹⁰⁰

The FE knows more than the Pharisaic delegation whose baptism is a messianic action¹⁰¹ because it focuses the attention on Jesus and aims to reveal him to Israel, i.e., to make known the unknown one who is already present and he is the awaited bringer of salvation. He, then, is God's sign by which all should know the Christ. For the first time, he speaks of Jesus in an indirect way, using the relative pronoun ὃν (in the accusative form) that for the moment leaves his identity unknown. Apparently, he puts this pronoun in correlation with both of his interrogators and himself. To reveal Jesus' relationship with his interlocutors, he uses the 2nd personal pronoun plural, so he affirms that Jesus μέσος ὑμῶν ἔστηκεν.

Consequently, this brings us to the hidden language μέσος ὑμῶν ἔστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε that represents a typical Johannine expression. It recalls the repeated reading of the FG that Jesus Christ remains unrecognized for the unbelief of the Jews, for «they are blind»¹⁰² (7:27–29; 8:19, 37–59; 15:21–24). However, this is the first time that JB speaks directly to his interrogators, as it can be seen from the use of personal pronoun ὑμεῖς, while he does intend to speak of himself, but, instead, of another. This information about this unknown character has an ironic aspect: ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε.

100. «The Jews» were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. According to a popular belief, this Messiah was to remain unknown to all, in the sense that nothing could distinguish him from other men. On the other hand, it was known that the Messiah would be invested with the power of the Spirit (cf. Isa. 11:1; 42:1–2 and 61:1) and that this outpouring of the Spirit would mark the advent of the new times. It is from this perspective of the Messianic expectation in Israel that JB's testimony lies. He solemnly affirms that a man is there, in the midst of all, who fulfils the conditions required to be recognized as the Eschatological Envoy of God. (cf. M.-É. BOISMARD, « Les traditions johanniques », 21).

101. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 131. For further reading, see C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:440–448.

102. R. BULTMANN, *John*, 91.

At this stage, JB's words serve as a rebuking testimony to his interrogators for their lack of knowledge of the one who stands among them.¹⁰³ In this context, it is important to note that he criticizes the Pharisaic delegation for their lack of knowledge of the One who is already among them, specifically in view of their possession of the Scriptures which testified of Jesus (5:39). They should have been able to discern that Jesus is the Christ.

2.4.4. An Allusion to the Marriage-Motif (1:27)

– ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος

JB's statement reiterates the words announced by him in the Prologue (1:15). This formula can be read as self-deprecating response «that redirects attention squarely on the One who is to come, for whom his ministry is preparatory».¹⁰⁴ Once again, the FE uses an auto-synkrisis, with which JB subordinates himself to the one who comes (ἐρχόμενος) after him.¹⁰⁵ From the very beginning, he places himself in the shadow to declare «someone» who is already present but still unknown to all.

– οὐδὲ οὐκ εἰμι [ἐγὼ] ἄξιός ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδήματος

JB does not identify the person whom he speaks of, and thereby, establishes uniqueness. Rather, he reinforces the existing ambiguity by using a pictorial word to imitate a greatness of incomparable borders. The distance is greater than that between a slave and his master. Again, the knowledgeable reader can remember the text of the Synoptics (cf. Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7; Lk. 3:16). He will, however, find that the FE replaces the more general ἱκανός, «able» by a more highly qualified term ἄξιός, «worthy».¹⁰⁶

As in a previous turn, the relation is negated by an οὐκ, «not». A distance which again meets the Johannine readers in Jn. 5:31–38. Thus, in a kind of confession initiated with οὐδὲ οὐκ εἰμι ἄξιός, he expresses his inferiority. The subordination which he himself undertakes, makes the super-

103. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 132.

104. A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *Theology*, 189.

105. C.G. MÜLLER, «Der Zeuge und das Licht», 494.

106. For further reading, see R.E. BROWN, *John*, 1:51–52.

ordinate (ὑπεροχή) explicit, since this Johannine formula is considered as a metaphor for «supreme devotion». Herein, his words continue the theme of Jesus' Pre-Existence and foreshadow his self-abasement.

However, «The untie of the sandal» was part of the rite of the levirate's law, an ancient-testamentary law, common with the Semitic culture. It happened when one gave up marrying the brother's wife. Then, when the one who was to marry refused to fulfil his duty, he lost his right, which passed to the nearest relative. Then, the one who assumes the obligation of giving the offspring to deceased relative, removed the sandal from the other, who from that moment, lost all rights over the woman. In the book of Ruth, we have the case of Boaz (4:7). It was an ancient ceremony reflected in the book of Deuteronomy, when one speaks of the house of the shoeless in a pejorative sense (25:9–10).¹⁰⁷

In the light of these considerations, we understand, then, that JB's initiative action is not dictated by a gesture of humility, as was commonly understood in the tradition, but reserves a deeper significance. It is as the Baptist reiterated that the bride is dedicated to him, but to the Messiah, to Jesus. Moreover, it corresponds to what has already been anticipated at the end of the Prologue (1:15).¹⁰⁸ In this case, Jesus is considered as the one who has the right to the bride, meaning that only one who is the Bridegroom. Therefore, his phrase in relation to the sandal of Christ, as well as his status as the friend to the Bridegroom (3:29), introduces us to this NT in which the bride will no longer be unfaithful to the Bridegroom.¹⁰⁹ His testimony is also here consistent with the Scriptures.

2.5. *The Significance of «Bethany Beyond the Jordan» (1:28)*

- ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ὅπου ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων.

It is the FE who specifies the place of baptism, precisely with the same words: «This in Bethany¹¹⁰ took place beyond the Jordan, where was John

107. L. PEDROLI, «Il trittico sponsale», 164; see also J. MATEOS – J. BARRETO, *Giovanni*, 92.

108. L. PEDROLI, «Il trittico sponsale», 165.

109. P. PROULX – L. ALONSO-SCHÖKEL, «Las Sandalias del Mesías Esposo», 30–31.

110. Some manuscripts (K, 33, the Old Syriac versions, and the Sahidic Coptic) and Origen

baptizing». He speaks well of a village near Jerusalem, also called Bethany, where Jesus sometimes spent time to rest with his friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary (11–12). But, the place of baptism is the Jordan Valley, and even the eastern bank of the river. «Bethany» of this region does not occur elsewhere in the Bible. Thus, Jn. 1:28 belongs to the typical style of the FG. Only this Gospel speaks of Bethany, where Jesus meets JB for the first time.

This geographical indication points out that JB's testimony is an incontestable fact that is unfolded in an identifiable and known place.¹¹¹ This significant location emphasizes the importance of the event and its irrevocable character; it obviously applies to the next scene (1:29–34). The place of the action changes only in Jn. 2:1: from «Bethany, beyond the Jordan», it goes to Cana in Galilee. This change of location is already announced in Jn. 1:43. It thus divides the event but does not break it. The time specifications (1:29.35.43; 2:1) do not have the function of separating the illustrated events, but connecting them, especially as they result in the period of a week. In this context, the beginning of Jesus' public ministry takes place in a week. The first sign of Jesus forms an inclusion with the second in Jn. 4:46–54. The narration of Cana's wedding serves as a bridge between the end of the inaugural week and the beginning of the next sequence that has a new temporal indication: the first Feast of Passover and the location of Jerusalem (2:13).

This verse makes an implicit reference to JB's baptismal activity, adding more strength that makes such activity stand subordinate to the testimony he bears. But why doesn't he merely say «Bethany, beyond the Jordan», which would have been sufficient to clearly identify it? The notion *πέραν*

(the 3th century) prefer the reading of Bḡqabara («Bethabara»), where the vast majority of the manuscripts have the reading of Βηθανία | («Bethany»). The name of «Bethabara» is the preferable place for Origen because it may have a symbolic–theological value. Its name means «House of the Crossing» and the site was to commemorate the Cross of the Jordan by the Jewish people. The Codex Sinaiticus replaces Bethany by the amendment «Betharaba», «House of the Desert» (cf. Josh. 18:22). (J.E. TAYLOR, «John the Baptist», 379). To conclude this dialectic, there are unanimous scholars at the present time who believe that Βηθανία | is the correct reading. (B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary*, 199f). Besides, this reading is supported by the literal composition of the FG itself. «Bethany» is mentioned 3x in the first part of the Gospel: Jn. 1:28 and Jn. 10:40, we have the reading «Bethany beyond the Jordan» and in Jn. 11:1, we have the reading «Bethany», which is described to be «near Jerusalem» in Jn. 11:18. (R. RIESNER, «Bethany», 33).

111. J. ZUMSTEIN, *Saint Jean*, 1:76.

τοῦ Ἰορδάνου which is constantly related to the person of JB (3:26; 10:40) is not insignificant. It should be noted that the place-name has more than geographical significance. It has a theological purpose, since the expression has great significance in the salvation history of the people of Israel, thus giving a special attention to his eschatological message.¹¹² Moreover, this place has a core value connected to Jesus in the FG:

- It is the place that testifies the call of the first disciples from his circle (1:35–51).
- After an attempt to arrest Jesus in Jerusalem at the feast of Dedication, he went out to Bethany (10:31–40).
- Many people from his circle came to Jesus and believed in him (10:41–42).¹¹³

More pointedly, in choosing this location for his baptismal activity, the FE does not simply intend to inform about the place where the event takes place, but rather gives his own judgment, reminding the reader of the events that happened in Scriptures and made the history of the people of Israel (such as the proclamation of Deuteronomy and the passage of the Jordan River). In this regard, the words *πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου* remind the reader of the place in which Moses addresses the people of Israel for the last time and consigns them the book of Deuteronomy as their spiritual testament (Deut. 1:1).

The people came under the leadership of Moses to east Jordan, and after the death of Moses, Joshua led the people across the Jordan, or, more precisely, through Jordan into the land, which God had promised to their fathers (Josh. 3:6–17).¹¹⁴ In «Bethany, beyond the Jordan», JB baptizes and testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the new Joshua, who leads his people, not from one land to another, but from one life to another, so that all who believes in him have eternal life (3:15). As then, and now, it is from across the Jordan that a voice is crying-aloud in the wilderness, to inaugurate the NT as Isaiah the prophet said: ἰδοὺ ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν, «Behold your God» (Isa. 40:9).

112. J.E. TAYLOR, «John the Baptist», 365.

113. R. RIESNER, «Bethany Beyond the Jordan», 32.

114. B. PETERS, *Johannes*, 75; see also J.E. TAYLOR, «John the Baptist», 371.

3. Concluding Observations

In relation to the legal–testimonial genre in the FG, the first scene indicates that the Gospel begins with a trial in which JB is subjected to interrogation and he has already been presented in the Prologue as «the witness». Therefore, his first words are the testimony of the defense. This confirms that his characteristic testimony has been chosen intentionally, because in the great process with the Jews, as developed in the FG, he is interrogated as *the main witness* of the Messiahship and Divine Sonship of Jesus.

The first day of the historical Jesus has ended without revealing his identity, he has remained an «unknown» character. It concludes formally in 1:28 with an indication of the place where he was baptizing, in Bethany, beyond the Jordan. According to the Johannine typology, Bethany has a special theological significance. The preparations have already begun for the future arrival of Jesus. The FE converts such a fundamental character as JB into the character of the Scriptures, in such a way that through his witness, it is the Scriptures of Israel that recognize and designate Jesus as the Christ. This perspective, adopted since the beginning of the Gospel, is a central theme to the whole Gospel.

Scene II

The Isaianic Influence on John's Testimony

(Jn. 1:29–34)

JB's testimony in the present passage contains a number of Scriptural and prophetic references, and thus becomes a direct Christological confession and testimony about Jesus. His testimony about the «Coming One» will form, under a series of titles, the Johannine Christology.¹¹⁵ He will appear, therefore, as a man of eye, since his testimony in this passage is characterized by the use of the different verbs of seeing. He will be the first human character that belongs to the OT, who sees God physically in the person of the Incarnate Logos. More pointedly, he is the first seer of Jesus' theology according to his deep Scriptural and prophetic experience.

In this scene, the FE takes a distance and allows him to offer a testimony of his understanding of Jesus' mission (ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου); of his position in front of him (ὀπίσω μου

115. E.D. FREED, «Egō Eimi», 289.

ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν); of the reason of his baptism (ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῇ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων); in the way he recognizes him by the descent and permanence of the Spirit (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ) and finally, in his revealing the deepest identity of Jesus (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ).

In this way, JB as the first witness offers testimony, which is absolutely crucial in establishing who Jesus is.¹¹⁶ He will appear during the course of this scene as the Deutero-Isaiah and therefore, as a true representative of the Scriptures in regard to the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, his current testimony will be a direct testimony in the presence of Jesus, thus becoming the witness *par excellence* in a Christological terminology.

I. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation
<p>²⁹ Τῇ ἐπαύριον βλέπει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει· Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.</p>	<p>²⁹ The next day sees Jesus coming to him and says, «Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.</p>
<p>³⁰ οὗτός ἐστιν ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον· ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.</p>	<p>³⁰ It is about whom I said, a man comes after me who before of me was, for first of me was.</p>
<p>³¹ καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῇ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων.</p>	<p>³¹ I myself knew him not but in order that he might be revealed to Israel through this I came baptizing in [with] water».</p>
<p>³² Καὶ ἐμαρτύρησεν Ἰωάννης λέγων ὅτι τεθέσθαι τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον ὡς περιστερὰν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν.</p>	<p>³² And John testified, saying, «that I have seen the Spirit descended as a dove from heaven and remained on him.</p>
<p>³³ καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ὁ πέμψας με βαπτίζειν ἐν ὕδατι ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν· ἐφ' ὃν ἂν ἴδῃς τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον καὶ μένον ἐπ' αὐτόν, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ.</p>	<p>³³ I myself knew him not but the one who sent me to baptize in water that one said to me, the one on whom you see the Spirit descends and remains on him, this is the one who baptizes in [the] Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>³⁴ καὶ γὰρ ἐώρακα καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.</p>	<p>³⁴ I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God».</p>

116. J.D. CHARLES, «John 1:29–34», 83.

2. Exegesis

2.1. A Confessional Statement: «Lamb of God» (1:29)

2.1.1. A Temporal Datum (1:29a)

- τῆ ἑπαύριον

The passage begins with a temporal datum τῆ ἑπαύριον that connects it closely to the previous one and, at the same time, indicates the beginning of a new day and, therefore, signals «a change of time/scene»,¹¹⁷ which creates the impression of continuity. It binds a chain of preceding events with that of under consideration. In this regard, it probably refers to the day after JB gave the delegation from Jerusalem an answer. Thus, τῆ ἑπαύριον highlights the continuity of his testimony that begins in Jn. 1:19–28, which will take a new aspect through his kerygmatic proclamations about Jesus' identity (1:29.33.34). The FE also introduces a series of days (1:43; 2:1), which finds its climax in the miracle of Cana (2:1–11), on the day of the Christ, that is, the seventh day.

2.1.2. John's First Encounter with Jesus (1:29b)

- βλέπει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει

Three verbs are to be considered here.

The first is the verb βλέπω in the indicative present 3rd person singular βλέπει. It occurs 17x in the FG, especially in the story of the healing of the man who was born blind in Jn. 9 (9x). As for the Johannine vocabulary, this verb in general is to express the durability action or the simultaneity. It indicates the physical act of «seeing», and accordingly, the idea of «seeing» Jesus as a simple external perception is expressed in Jn. 1:29b. This verb is transitive and is followed by an object, Jesus.

This means, the scene begins with JB's act of «seeing» in the present indicative, referring to a character that is not presented by the FE but by JB himself: Jesus. Jesus does not play any active role, but acts as the catalyst

117. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist)», 51.

that unleashes the testimony (1:29–34). From this perspective, the reader will discover the connection between Jn. 1 and 9 based on the characters that play an important role, JB and the blind man. Both «see» and «give testimony» to Jesus as the True Light, «which enlightens everyone» (1:9) receive him with the eyes of faith, and thus, make a public profession of faith (v. 34; 9:38).¹¹⁸

The second is the verb ἔρχομαι in the present participle form ἐρχόμενον. It has a special significance in the NT writings.¹¹⁹ In our text, the verbal form of Jesus' coming towards JB can be inter-textually interpreted in the deepest sense of the Prologue; the One who is to come is τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον (1:9). In this connection, when Jesus appears for the first time in the FG, he is presented in the act of ἐρχόμενον.

In a spatial sense, ἔρχομαι designates the coming of Jesus, by a physical movement in space. Here, in Jn. 1:29, it indicates a spatial movement of Jesus in favor of JB. The first action with which the FG presents Jesus is the participle ἐρχόμενον; although this action is not direct in the scene but is mediated by JB's observation/vision. Consequently, he sees Jesus and says something about him — curiously, the FE does not indicate where Jesus comes from, or to what audience he addresses himself. In this way, Jesus becomes the image recipient, «the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world».

Accordingly, the ἐρχόμενον of Jesus πρὸς JB is immediately taken in its messianic significance. Thus, the FE wants to take his readers by the hand, guide them through the body of the Gospel with the purpose that they will «see» Jesus, confess him as Christ and receive eternal life.¹²⁰ This is exactly what happens with the blind man in Jn. 9. He becomes a true witness to Jesus in front of the Pharisees; then he proclaims his faith without reservation.¹²¹

118. A. GANGEMI, *I racconti post-pasquale*, 1:132.

119. It almost refers to Jesus, recalls different types of his coming: (1) The eschatological coming at the end-time (Mt. 10:23; 16:27.28 [...]; Mk. 1:7; 11:9; Lk. 9:26; 12:37.38.39.40.43.45 [...]). (2) The coming of Jesus into the world (Mt. 5:17; 9:13 [...]; Mk. 10:45; Lk. 9:56; 12:49). (3) The verb εἰσέρχεται is used in the context of the manifestation of Jesus to the disciples in the Resurrection story (20:19). (4) The coming to the throne of God (Rev. 5:7). (A. GANGEMI, *I racconti post-pasquale*, 2:33).

120. J.G. VAN DER WATT, «The Presence of Jesus», 90.

121. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 623.

The third is the verb λέγω in the perfective present¹²² 3rd person singular λέγει. Herein, the type of this present is contextual: this use of the present is especially frequent with λέγει as an introduction to an OT quotation.¹²³ It could be treated as a *testimonium* present, which is followed by a content clause: ἴδε ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.

2.1.3. The Lamb of God's Typology (1:29c)

– ἴδε

It is the translation of an aorist imperative of the Greek verb ὁράω, which indicates seeing precisely in the sense of a vision illuminated by understanding: «Behold», «observe very carefully». It is an expression that has the tone of an official presentation.¹²⁴ A truth that is not externally evident to human eyes will be declared through this particle. Its basic function is to attract the attention in order to present a new or an unusual truth, sensed or seen by the one who sees.¹²⁵

This demonstrative particle has, in the FG, an application, where the presence of the true «see» indicates that the one who «sees», reveals, to the bystanders, an aspect or a function of the «seen» person, remained hitherto unknown. Herein, JB's description «Lamb of God» will reveal the mystery of Jesus' mission — a mystery that is not yet recognized by the Jews. It is, therefore, «a formula of revelation».¹²⁶ In the light of these considerations, the frequent references in the FG to seeing, looking, or beholding mark it as being the visual Gospel.¹²⁷ There are several Johannine examples:

– Jesus sees Nathanael coming toward him, saying: ἴδε ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλῆτης ἐν ᾧ δόλος οὐκ ἔστιν, «Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!» (1:47).

122. The perfective present «may be used to emphasize that the results of a past action are still continuing». (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 532).

123. D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 532. This case is applied to Jn. 1:36 as well.

124. The FE uses this stereotyped particle several times in his Gospel (1:36, 47; 3:26; 5:14; 7:26; 11:3, 36; 12:19; 16:29; 18:21; 19:4, 14, 26, 27).

125. E. PERETTO, «Agnello di Dio», 344.

126. R. BROWN, *John*, 1:58.

127. B.W. ROBINSON, «A Study of John 1:29–34», 30.

- Pilate declares the Jesus' Kingship before the Jews: ἴδε ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑμῶν, «Here is your King!» (19:14).
- Jesus the Crucified declares Mary's spiritual maternity upon the new community through the BD: γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου, «Woman, here is your son» (19:26), ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου, «Here is your mother» (19:27). These Johannine examples hold the manifestation of a truth, which cannot be ascertained, if it is not revealed or more simply expressed.

In our text, JB looks at Jesus. This is an occasion for him to express a confession and to emphasize, ἴδε, the other with a call of attention, which points to the «seeing». Without being told what he can see about Jesus, he is told of an identification, which is given in a literal speech: «Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world». With this metaphorical predication, he addresses a very decisive characterization of the activity of the Johannine Jesus. Here, we unequivocally expressed to whom the soteriological function belongs: Jesus, not JB.

Besides, and more important, this particle is consistent with that of Isaiah, אֲרֵם that uses to identify the Servant of God in Isa. 42:1. It will serve, therefore, to identify «the Lamb of God» with that of the Isaianic Servant of God. It is a facet of the Isaianic influence on the Johannine John as Jn. 1:29–34 emphasises.

- ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

On the second day of the inaugural week, JB, specifying the terms of the testimony offered the day before about Jesus, says unexpectedly: «Behold the Lamb of God». Of all the titles that are given in Jn. 1 to Jesus, this one is the strangest, and yet it is the one we repeat most often for twenty centuries.¹²⁸ The richness of this symbol, one of the main ones in the

128. This title is still alive in the liturgical tradition to this day through the Eucharist or the so-called «the Divine Liturgy». The Byzantine liturgy has a special tradition. In the center of the bread is the square section which is known as the «Lamb» because it is the part which shall be changed into the Body of Christ. On the Lamb is written IC XC NIKA, which is a Greek abbreviation meaning, «Jesus Christ Conquers». Taking the spear and cutting along the right edge of the Lamb (on the priest's left), the priest says, echoing the prophecy in Isaiah: «Like the Lamb that is led to the slaughter» (53:7). Consequently, Jesus, «the Lamb of God», appears, according to litur-

FG's Christology,¹²⁹ is only perceptible in the light of the Scriptures. This uniquely Johannine title — a *hapax legomenon* — does not appear in the OT and it appears only in this verse (repeated verbatim in 1:36). The origin of the designation of Jesus as «the Lamb of God» is controversial.¹³⁰ The FE «often entertains more than one level of meaning and introduces one sense only to lead the reader to see a higher meaning».¹³¹ It is not a purely literary and linguistic choice but theological. In this context, four OT types could suggest to be the explicit textual reference of the Johannine Lamb: The Paschal Lamb; the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah; the Messiah and Isaac's typology.

The Paschal Lamb springs to mind. The characterization of the lamb as the Paschal Lamb, symbol of the redemption of Israel (cf. Exod. 12:1–28), is the traditional image of the OT theme. It is the very symbol of the Exodus and the Pascha; it is the animal sacrificed on Pascha night, whose blood on the doors of the Israelites allowed their salvation and the Paschal dinner with the lamb is the memorial, year after year, of God's salvific intervention.

The FG's theology is a Paschal theology, since Πάσχα is mentioned 9x in the FG (2:13.23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28.39; 19:14). In this context, the significance of Passover throughout the FG suggests that JB intends to identify Jesus as a New Eschatological Paschal Lamb (Jn. 19)¹³² that has a

gical tradition, as the Suffering Servant, the New Passover and the triumph Lamb of Revelation.

129. C. COULOT, *Jésus et le disciple*, 223. The titles like «The Lamb of God» (1:29.36), «The Saviour of the world» (4:42), «The Christ» and «The Lord» are in line with the other titles («The Logos», «The Son of Man», and «The Son of God») and reflects also a high Christology. They serve to indicate the messianic role of Jesus. (F. PAULET, «John's Christology», 33).

130. Brown lists three possible indications of this title: (1) The Lamb as the apocalyptic lamb. (2) The Lamb as the Suffering Servant. (3) The Lamb as the paschal lamb. (R.E. BROWN, *John*, 1:58–63). On the contrary, Morris lists nine possible indications of this title: (1) The Passover Lamb. (2) The lamb «led to the slaughter» in Isa. 53. (3) The Servant of the Lord in Isa. 53. (4) The lamb of daily sacrifices. (5) The «gentle lamb» of Jeremiah 11:19. (6) The scapegoat. (7) The triumphant Lamb of the apocalypse. (8) The God-provided Lamb of Genesis 22:8. (9) A guilt-offering. (L. MORRIS, *John*, 127–129). However, Kim lists four possible indications of the Johannine Lamb: (1) The Johannine Apocalypse. (2) The «Suffering Servant» of Isaiah. (3) The Passover Lamb. (4) The sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis. (S.S. KIM, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 94–97).

131. J.G. VAN DER WATT – R.A. CULPEPPER – U. SCHNELLE, *The Prologue*, 67.

132. K. WENGST, *Bedrängte Gemeinde und verherrlichter Christus*, 324.

Soteriological significance («take away the sin of the world»)¹³³ The Jesus of the Christian writings cannot be separated from the historical Jesus who has been Crucified and finds in the image of the sacrificed lamb an appropriate expression.

The Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah also comes to mind. From the beginning, the Christian community has identified Jesus with the Isaianic servant of YHWH. The FE has merged into a single reality the image of עֶבֶד יְהוָה, «the Servant of God» on whom YHWH put his Spirit (Isa. 42:1)¹³⁴ and on whom «YHWH brought the guilt of all of us and the sin of many» (Isa. 53:6.12).¹³⁵ This picture becomes an important aspect of the understanding of Christ on the part of the church, and it may be that JB was the first to see it that way.¹³⁶ Moreover, the text of Isa. 61:1 («The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is on me for Yahweh has anointed me») is in relation to Isa. 42:1 which mentions the Servant of God as a bearer of the Spirit¹³⁷ (1:33). Strictly speaking, JB's lamb is a permanent bearer of the Spirit.

The early Christian tradition associated the idea of the atonement with the prophecy of the Suffering Servant of YHWH in Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 52:13–53:12).¹³⁸ We can say that the use of the Isaianic texts in this part of the Gospel reinforces the idea that the FG is concentrated on the Christology of the Eschatological Prophet, modulated as «the Servant of God».

The Messiah also appears in the FE's thought. «The Lamb of God» is synonymous with the title of «Messiah». It gives a coherent reading of the passage in Jn. 1:19–37 along with a valuable rehabilitation of JB's historical testimony. It is confirmed by the messianic confessions of Andrew: «We have found the Messiah — which means the Christ» (1:41)¹³⁹ — and

133. H.K. NIELSEN, «The Death of Jesus», 251–252.

134. M.-É. BOISMARD, *Du Baptême à Cana*, 47–48; W.J. TOBIN, «The Lamb of God», 23–75; I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Gesù verità*, 27–38

135. This concept is consistent with the Levitical expiatory lamb, victim of atonement for sins (Lev. 14:12–13). In fact, we could say that all the sacrificial of the Levitical system were symbols or shadows of the final sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

136. Isa. 53 is crucial in the Judean-Christian controversy over the identity of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah. For Christianity, the fundamental idea of the Suffering Messiah is deduced from here — an idea recovered from the apocalyptic tradition sustained mainly by the Essence-Qumranite sect in the decades prior to the earthly life of Jesus.

137. J. COPPENS, «Les Logia Johanniques», 313; J. BEUTLER, «The Use of Scripture», 150.

138. J.A. JÁUREGUI, «Testimonio de Juan el Bautista», 104.

139. D.B. SANDY, «Lamb of God», 456–457; see also R. VIGNOLO, «Testimonianza», 183.

Nathanel: «Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel» (1:49).

Finally, *Isaac's typology* also makes an impact on the FE's thought. A further factor reinforcing the interpretation underpinning of the Lamb of God is that of Isaac's typology. What distinguishes the Johannine Lamb is that it is a Lamb offered or provided by God himself as the genitive construction τοῦ θεοῦ reveals. According to the linguistic framework, there are four kinds of genitive construction:

- Possessive¹⁴⁰ (Lamb of God/belonging to God) or origin¹⁴¹ (Lamb coming from God).
- Objective (Lamb consecrated to God).
- Attributive (God-lamb).
- Subjective (Lamb sent by God).¹⁴²

In our case, I think that ὁ ἄμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is an expression of origin¹⁴³ and at the same time, it is typically Johannine, especially when we compare it with ὁ ἄρτος τοῦ θεοῦ, «the bread of God» in Jn. 6:33. Therefore, this ἄμνὸς is an exceptional lamb that is unlike the other lambs of the OT, for it belongs to God himself through the genitive construction τοῦ θεοῦ. Jesus is not a lamb offered in sacrifice. This genitive construction is identical in both places: he is ὁ ἄμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. The Lamb is, thereby, linked with God. But the Lamb, at the same time, referred to Jesus,¹⁴⁴ through ἴδε, which is, in the first sentence, stated in the foreground of both (1:29.36). In this classification, ὁ ἄμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ can be read as «Lamb of God» or «Lamb for God».

Herein, it is interesting to focus the attention on another striking typology of «the Lamb of God» which is the immolation of Isaac (Gen. 22:8).

140. L. NORTJÉ-MEYER, «The Lamb of God Metaphor», 4.

141. J.G. VAN DER WATT, *Dynamics of Metaphor*, 86.

142. D.A. ACKERMAN, «Grammatical Notes», 12.

143. From the very beginning of his Gospel, the FE draws a close attention to Jesus' identity based on his origin as the Logos and the Pre-Existent Divine who was with God (1:1).

144. It is important to note the article οὐ that is used to point out a unique object. It suggests a monadic notion, since the articular substantive has a genitive construction ὁ ἄμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. Wallace argues this point by stating that «John's description of Jesus may be regarded as monadic as long as the gen. "of God" is considered part of the formula, for it is used of Jesus alone in the Bible». (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 224).

Jesus as «the Lamb of God» pre-charactered Isaiac and sent to his death on the Passover's eve (3:16), has been assimilated by the FE to the victim of whom Abraham has prophesied that «God will provide for himself a lamb for the burnt offering».¹⁴⁵ Therefore, in declaring Jesus as «the Lamb of God», JB has the *Aqedah* motif in his background.¹⁴⁶ Substantially, the related theme of Jesus as ὁ ἄμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, sacrificed to take away the sin of the world, treated most fully in the FG, makes of him another Isaac,¹⁴⁷ the prototype of God's Suffering Servant.¹⁴⁸

In a certain sense, there is a parallel here with the sacrifice of Abraham, with the great difference that the latter did not sacrifice his son, while the eternal Father allowed his only begotten Son, the Beloved, to be a burnt offering of atonement for the world's sin. It is the ultimate test of true love, to give one's life for the beloved ones (15:13) and to give it voluntarily, driven only by love (10:18). This symbol is, then, within those comparisons that try to manifest the greatness of God's love from the most various perspectives.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, ὁ ἄμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is the symbol of «love without measure» in the self-giving, but it is also a splendid sign of supreme hope. Behind the immolation of the lamb is eternal triumph and final victory.

From this Johannine standpoint, Jesus appears throughout the FG as the True Lamb of the NT and the New Exodus and this, therefore, makes JB a key witness of this newness. In this context, his prophetic testimony regarding Jesus as «the Lamb of God» at the very beginning of the Gospel corresponds to that of the eyewitness testimony of the BD regarding Jesus as «the Passover Lamb» at the end of the Gospel (19:35–37).¹⁵⁰

145. «When God provided the ram, he not only spared Isaae (and Ahraham) but showed Abraham that the price of redemption was greater than he could pay. The Lord himself must provide the offering that brings salvation [...] The One descended from Ahraham must come, in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. "The Lord Will Provide" promises the coming of Christ [...] Not Isaac but the Lamb of God was the Sacrifice that the Father would provide». (E.P. CLOWNEY, *Preaching Christ*, 76–77).

146. J.E. WOOD, «Isaac Typology», 583–589.

147. Vermes supports the connection between the sacrifice of Isaac with the new sacrifice of Jesus, saying that «The fullest Johannine expression of the Christian Akedah appears in John 3:16, with the sacrifice of the new Isaac». (G. VERMES, *Scripture and Tradition*, 225).

148. R.A. ROSENBERG, «Jesus, Isaac and Suffering Servant», 385.

149. E.E. POPKES, «The Love of God», 623.

150. D.A. LEE, «Witness», 15.

2.1.4. Jesus' Salvific Act (1:29d)

– ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου

This part of Jn. 1:29 emphasizes the soteriological role of the Johannine Lamb of God through the use of the soteriological participle ὁ αἴρων.

The verb αἴρω occurs 26x in the FG. Αἴρων is a present participle nominative of αἴρω used in an atemporal way¹⁵¹ hence referring to continuity. It expresses the action against sin and, it is particularly rich in meaning. It should be understood as an attributive participle and certainly not as a new title. Between ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ and ὁ αἴρων there is an inseparable connection: «taking away the sin» is an action that defines the lamb. It is important to bear in mind that the present participle αἴρων can have a future strength and properly the verb means «to take away», «to eliminate», «to make it disappear».

This soteriological participle¹⁵² has a radical meaning, referring precisely to the radical sin that characterizes the world not so much in its immoral acts but rather in its own state, a way of being, and a basic situation. From this tragedy, Jesus as ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ came to liberate the world; his αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου will consist in bringing the world to a vital communion with God. JB, baptizing «with water», and through his baptism, he will make Jesus known to Israel (1:31). He motivates his people to receive Christ and to accept the liberation from the condemnation of sin.

Therefore, by choosing the verb αἴρω, the FE keeps in mind two aspects. The first is that he wants to distinguish this Lamb from OT parallels. Several texts in the OT show that God asked his people to offer sacrifices of atonement in order that their sin will be forgiven (cf. Lev. 4:6–7; 16:30; 17:11). The second is that he aims to detect to his reader that Jesus, the True Passover Lamb, is truly able to take away the sin of the world.¹⁵³ Accordingly, Jesus is described as an Eschatological Redeemer. In this context, in calling Jesus, «Lamb of God who takes away the sin of

151. M. ZERWICK – M. GROSVENOR, *A Grammatical Analysis*, 288.

152. «John's particular expression for "taking away" sin probably means that it is lifted up with him on the cross (3:14; 8:28; 12:32.34)». (C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:456).

153. P. HOSKINS, «Deliverance from death», 289.

the world», JB wants to proclaim Jesus' divinity, since God *alone* who could remove and forgive the sin of the world. These words that specify who is this Lamb of God, for it seems that this title includes in itself a meaning other than that of lamb, it proclaims precisely the divinity of this lamb, therefore of Jesus.¹⁵⁴

The term ἁμαρτία is significant. Two expressions are to be considered to describe the OT's concept about «sin». The first is חַטָּה (238x) and the second is חַיִּיב (70x). In the LXX, the noun often acquires the moral and religious meaning. The concept of «sin» has a new meaning, because it is determined by Law. In the OT theology, «sin» is the transgression of every single command of the Torah and its gravity from the knowledge of the Law.

According to the Johannine lexicon, the term ἁμαρτία does not designate the idea of «transgression» but rather the «attitude» of those who refuse to accept, by faith, the Word of God. In this context, whoever accepts the divine Word is «cleansed» inwardly by sin, as for example Jesus announces when he says, «You are clean [καθαροί] already, because of the word that I have announced to you» (15:3). «Sin», then, is synonymous with the «lack of faith» (8:24) or, in other words, is a «radical opposition» to the word of Christ. In the light of this interpretation, we can understand the reference of the FE to the sin of the world as οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς Jesus (16:9). It draws, therefore, attention to the fact that the root of all sins is the unbelief — the antithesis of belief — that means the rejection of the light (3:19; 9:41), namely the rejection of Jesus as the One sent by God (9:41; 15:22–24; 16:8–9).¹⁵⁵

It is significant to notice that the FE chooses the singular ἁμαρτία (1:29) in order to understand the totality of the sin of the world as a unity,¹⁵⁶ insofar as in it there is a contradiction to the revelation of God manifested in Jesus Christ (8:21.34; 9:41; 15:22.24; 16:8–9; 19:11). «Sin», therefore, means not to confess that Jesus is the epiphany of the divine salvation.

154. A. NEGOITSA – C. DANIEL, «L'agneau de Dieu», 28. As we will see in JB's proclaiming Jesus as «The Son of God» in Jn. 1:34.

155. M.J.J. MENKEN, «The Lamb of God», 588.

156. «Both the use of the singular (τὴν ἁμαρτίαν) as well as the inclusive genitive modifier that indicates universal scope (τοῦ κόσμου) in John's the Baptist announcement signify sin is a condition that enslaves creation, including all people». (C.A. GIESCHEN, «Original Sin», 363).

This means that ἁμαρτία in the FG is a relational concept.¹⁵⁷ It is not a question of transgressing a moral norm, but rather the breaking of the relationship between God and man. In this sense, the concept of ἁμαρτία is at the center of the Christological plot, which unfolds the Gospel.

Thus, JB's statement (1:29) points to the Passion history and, from the outset, places the problem of ἁμαρτία in a relationship with the Cross.¹⁵⁸ These observations show that the FE wants to be consistently understood from the Cross. If, at the same time, the beginning of the public activity of Jesus in this way points immediately to its end, then it might be justified to understand Jn. 1:29.36 as a programmatic guide to the FE's Christology. In this context, ἁμαρτία represents the rejection of the True Light (1:10–11), rejection that gives the world to the power of the devil. By his death on Cross, Jesus has defeated the role of Satan: «Now the ruler of this κόσμος will be driven out» (12:31).¹⁵⁹ This means that the power of sin is broken once and forever on the Cross.¹⁶⁰

The term κόσμος is remarkable. The κόσμος word group is a significant one within the Johannine corpus.¹⁶¹ Of the 185x occurrences in the NT, 78x are in the FG. Normally, the word κόσμος, «world» can indicate both the physical environment, in which we live, and humanity. The FE uses it by attributing specific theological meanings that vary from time to time.¹⁶² The FE seldom writes the «world» in the sense of «physical universe» (1:10b; 16:21; 17:5.24), while more frequently the word «world» takes on the meaning of humanity that is separated from God.¹⁶³

In different cases, the reaction of the world, that is, of humanity, to the work of Jesus may be different, including that reaction of rejection expressed by those who decide to remain servants of the «prince of this world», or Satan. This is the reason that leads Jesus to say that those who follow him «do

157. C.R. KOESTER, *The Word of Life*, 65.

158. J. ZUMSTEIN, «Die Sünde», 27.

159. C.A. GIESCHEN, «Original Sin», 364.

160. R. METZNER, *Das Verständnis der Sünde*, 129.

161. B. SALIER, «What's in a World? », 106.

162. According to BRAUN, the term ko,smoj has multi-purpose (plurivalent). From the world of the universe (17:5.24) to the concrete world of men, who are distant from God and prisoners of darkness, the transition takes place through several immediators, whose discernment is not always easy. (cf. F.–M. BRAUN, *Jean le Théologien*, 221).

163. C.R. KOESTER, *The Word of Life*, 81.

not belong to the world» (17:14.16). In the second part of the Gospel, and particularly, in the chapters usually called «farewell discourse» (Jn. 13–17), the disciples–world dualism recalls the light–darkness dualism that was developed by the FE in the Prologue. Therefore, κόσμος is an analogous term, which does not always express identical concepts, but prevails a pejorative sense (1:10–11). However, the κόσμος is also examined by the FG in a positive sense. It is the object of God’s love and redemption (3:16¹⁶⁴; 4:42; 6:33.51; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9 and 12:46–47).¹⁶⁵ In our text, the use of the singular «sin» in connection with the expression τοῦ κόσμου suggests that Jesus’ sin–sacrifice extends potentially to all mankind, without exception (cf. 1 Jn. 2:2).

But, how does the Johannine phrase ὁ ἄμυλός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἄλρων τὴν ἄμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου work?

The theological interpretation of the Cross (1:29) can be seen exclusively from the Johannine baptismal scene (1:32–33). The FE works out a parallel relationship between the mentioned verses. Formal analogies, through the participle construction, connect the concept of «the Lamb of God» with «the Spirit–Fullness» of Jesus. On the other hand, the ἄλρων τὴν ἄμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου through the divine Lamb with Jesus’ spiritual baptism.¹⁶⁶ This brings us to certain key texts from the OT, particularly Ezekiel.¹⁶⁷

This mystery of purification is revealed when the FE writes about the «baptizer in the Holy Spirit» (1:33).¹⁶⁸ To baptize is «to wash», «to clean» and «to purify». The mission, then, of Jesus–Messiah, the Servant of God, will be to purify, to baptize in that Spirit, with that Spirit, through that Spirit, with the donation and effusion of that Divine Spirit. Accordingly,

164. After Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, the FE looks at the κόσμος with more affection: «For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life» (3:16). In the First Johannine Epistle, there is a similar phrase: «God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him» (1 Jn. 4:9). The theme of κόσμος is almost obsessive in 1 John. The love of the world is incomparable with the love for God (1 Jn. 2:15–17). Moreover, the world does not know the Father or the believers, it hates them (1 Jn. 3:13; 4:1–5). Everyone who is born of God overcomes the κόσμος, by faith that «Jesus is ὁ υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ» (1 Jn. 5:4–5).

165. S.B. MARROW, «κόσμος in John», 97; see also J. FREY, «Johannine Dualism», 140–141.

166. R. METZNER, *Das Verständnis der Sünde*, 137.

167. «I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you and make you keep my laws, and respect and practise my judgements» (36:26–27; see also Isa. 32:15–19; 44:3–5).

168. R. BIERINGER, «Lamm Gottes», 218.

when Jesus takes sin away, it relates to the fact that he takes individuals into the realm of the Spirit, and thus, into a new relationship with God. The FE sees the essential connection which is essential for his Pneumatology. Jesus, through the taking away of sin, allows them free access to God and God's Spirit can now permanently dwell in them.¹⁶⁹

Per the Johannine theology, the receiving of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' Resurrection is linked with the forgiveness of sins. In fact, through the Spirit, the Glorified Jesus empowers his disciples to ἀφίημι, «forgive» men from their sins (20:22–23).¹⁷⁰ Thus, between bearing the sin of the world and baptizing with the Holy Spirit, God the Father gives all men, through Jesus, the new life lived in eternal communion with him «through the power of the Spirit».¹⁷¹ Substantially, the meaning of the expression ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἄρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου for the FE is clarified for a comparison with the parallel text of 1 Jn. 3:5–6 that is interpreted in the light of 1 Jn. 3:8–9.

To reveal the mystery of Jesus is the main purpose of the FG (20:31). Based on this objective, the FE formulates through JB's testimony a fundamental aspect of his Christological and Soteriological thought. Since the metaphor by JB is encountered, it can be examined as an example of a Christological predication.¹⁷² It is understood from the outset that the expression is a Christological title, a unique title, both in the Gospel and in the early Christian tradition. At the same time, the Soteriological significance of the metaphor is obvious. It should be related to the Passion, and thereby, this statement has a Soteriological cadre. Herein, we are also invited to recall the prophecy of Caiaphas the High Priest, «It is better for you to have one man die for the people» (11:50), thus linking it to JB's testimony to confirm the Soteriological content of Jesus' death. From this point of view, the title «Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world» is the gateway to understand Christ in the Johannine theology.¹⁷³

In consequence, «the Lamb of God» introduces «the scarlet thread which will now run throughout the Gospel to culminate in the Cross it-

169. D. RUSAM, «Das „Lamm Gottes“ (Joh 1,29.36)», 72, 75.

170. J.T. FORESTELL, *The Word of the Cross*, 160–161.

171. W. LOADER, *Jesus in John's Gospel*, 155.

172. R. ZIMMERMANN, *Christologie der Bilder*, 107; see also P.J. DU PLESSIS, «The Lamb of God», 136–148.

173. T. KNÖPPLER, *Die theologia crucis*, 67.

self». ¹⁷⁴ This idea is supported by a geographical indication, especially that JB's proclamation of Jesus as «the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world» takes place in «Bethany beyond the Jordan» and will find its fulfilment through Jesus' Cross and Resurrection in Jerusalem. ¹⁷⁵ Thus, JB's testimony in Jn. 1:29 is a perfect synthesis of the two—great means of salvation provided by Jesus: *The Word and the Cross*.

2.2. Jesus' Pre-Existence (1:30)

– οὗτός ἐστιν ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον

This formula intends to remind the Johannine reader about what JB said in Jn. 1:15 οὗτος ἦν, «it was him» has in fact been achieved. This means that the perfect form relates to the essence of the Logos, the eternal order which he belongs to by nature, while the present form indicates his «becoming in flesh». He has already expressed himself repeatedly to the Coming One. Once again, the temporal priority is underlined, through the formula ὀπίσω μου, in a literal recording of Jn. 1:15.

– ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἄνθρωπος

In this verse, however, there is a small variation that we did not see in the previous two verses; here, JB mentions «a man», while in Jn. 1:15.27 the reference is more indirect. This new word has the apparent purpose of reminding us that Jesus was also a «human being», ¹⁷⁶ precisely in the same place where an important statement about his divinity is made: Jesus is eternal, that is, he existed before him.

The use of the present ἔρχεται with the noun ἄνθρωπος emphasizes the present of Jesus in the world as «a man». From this Johannine point of view, the reader can understand his seeing of Jesus «coming» toward JB in Jn. 1:29. In such a conception, it is most reasonable to read this concept of «coming» (1:30) in the sense of Jesus' precedence over him. This is obvious from the standpoint of the FE himself. The choice of the verb ἔρχομαι

174. G.L. CAREY, «Lamb of God», 118.

175. R. RIESNER, «Bethany beyond the Jordan», 63.

176. J. ZUMSTEIN, *Saint Jean*, 1:80.

in this verse corresponds, therefore, to the use of the same verb in Jn. 1:15.29. Thus, JB's testimony about Jesus' physical coming: ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ (1:30b) has its connection with Jn. 1:15.29.

In Jn. 1:15, he declared the Pre-Existence of the One who is to come; in Jn. 1:30, the FE adds the term ἀνὴρ to prove that the Pre-Existent One, whom he previously spoke of, appears in a physical way: ἀνὴρ, namely, Jesus of the history. In this way, the term ἀνὴρ pays a close attention to the dimension of the Incarnation. This verse underlines once more that the Lamb provided by God is not other than the Pre-Existent Logos, who «entered history as a man, Jesus of Nazareth».¹⁷⁷ The One who comes after JB is called ἀνὴρ, that is, a male, a Bridegroom,¹⁷⁸ who will fertilize the bride by giving her his life, a new hope. Here is an indication to Jesus that will be found in Jn. 3:27–30: he is the one who prepares this wedding, through baptism in water (1:31). From this perspective, the term ἀνὴρ is applied to Jesus by JB in the sense of νυμφίος, «bridegroom», especially that he will be presented later on in the FG as the one who calls Jesus «the Bridegroom», while calls himself «the friend of the bridegroom» (3:29).¹⁷⁹

– ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν

On the other hand, this is the third time that the FE repeats a previous statement, ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν (1:15.27) in this first chapter of his Gospel, that Jesus was «before» JB, which is really a statement about Jesus' Pre-Existence. This chronological clarification must have been a fundamental point not only for JB, but also for the FE himself so that it has been given such an emphasis. This becomes emphatically clear that the FE aims to prove by JB's testimony, the dignity of the Incarnate Logos attributed to Jesus. On the messianic activity, Jesus appeared on the scene after him. Nevertheless, he was there before him. The perfect γέγονεν places us in the field of history and therefore does not mean «existed», but «was there» (in fact), because Jesus belongs to an order of things superior to that time.

177. J.E. MORGAN-WYNNE, «References to Baptism», 118.

178. «The introduction of ἀνὴρ may allude to the meaning “husband” and may prepare the way for (iii. 29) “the bridegroom”». (E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 427).

179. E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 277. It is a theme that will be developed in 3:29.

Therefore, the use of *πρῶτός* and *ἔμπροσθέν* with *ὀπίσω* + the personal pronoun *μου* indicates JB's subordination to Jesus, and therefore, Jesus' theological status; in other words, his Pre-Existence. It is then a clear allusion about the Pre-Existence and divinity of Jesus, almost as he would be trying to say: «Although I am older than Jesus in age, he is eternal. I am a man; a Prophet sent from God; he is the Son of God». The purpose of these affirmations is to contrast the marked nature between the both mentioned characters. He is only a man, but Jesus is not just «a man»: Jesus is first and foremost God. This language and understanding of JB is obvious because he speaks as *a Johannine Christian*.¹⁸⁰ In this line of thought, he appears here to be a witness of the Pre-Existent, which is identical to the earthly Jesus.¹⁸¹

2.3. Confession of an Ignorance (1:31)

This verse unfolds the testimony function of JB in two aspects: the first one highlights the ignorance-motif *καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἤδελν αὐτόν* that qualifies him as a revelation bearer, while the second one is based on the *passivum divinum* *ἵνα φανερωθῆ* that determines God as the subject of the event, and therefore, the water baptism has «only» a persistent character: JB.

2.3.1. The Ignorance-Motif (1:31a)

– *καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἤδελν αὐτόν*

This verse commences with JB's negative statement: *καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἤδελν αὐτόν*. The same formula will be repeated once more in Jn. 1:33. The verb *οἶδα* (here *ἤδελν*, pluperfect with imperfect meaning) indicates a mental process. It refers to a knowledge by intuition or reflection, as opposed to *γινώσκω*, which refers to a knowledge by observation and experience. However, it is clearly seen in the context (1:33) that herein reference is made to a deeper concept beyond mere physical knowledge: he confesses that the true knowledge should be revealed to him *from above* that this Jesus is the Christ.

180. R.E. BROWN, *The Community*, 28.

181. M. THEOBALD, «Geist- und Inkarnationschristologie», 142.

This is not to say that, for JB, Jesus was an unknown character.¹⁸² But he has not yet seen in him «the Son of God» (1:34). His lack of knowledge is concerned and the Johannine reader is somewhat perplexed. He, who was «sent by God» (1:6), proves this. He replies to the messengers from Jerusalem, who asked him about his identity and the importance of his baptism: «I baptize with water. In the midst of you μέσος ὑμῶν stands [someone] whom you do not know οἶδατε» (1:26). Even if Jesus was known to some Jews, the knowledge to which the verb οἶδα refers, does not mean a geographical or genealogical, but it draws the attention to Jesus' identity.¹⁸³ This is revealed by JB the following day (1:29), even though he himself did not know him ἤδειν (1:31.33).

2.3.2. The Revelation–Moif (1:31b)

– ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῆ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ

Φανερόω, «To reveal» is one of the most important verbs in this pericope. It appears 9x in the FG. The verb generally means «to come out of the darkness into light». It carries a theological significance of revelation¹⁸⁴ that allows men to know the salvific work of the Father. Jesus reveals the works of God (3:21; 9:3) and the name of God (17:6). At the same time, the verb indicates also the revelation of Jesus' person (1:31; 7:4; 21:1.14).

The ἀλλ' ἵνα in this statement is significant. There is a particular connection between Jn. 1:31 and Jn. 1:8 based on this purpose clause. In both cases the antithesis is introduced by this Johannine formula, which, in the Johannine style, expresses normally the divine will or the divine purpose.¹⁸⁵ This formula then indicates the special mission entrusted to JB, which has two aspects: on the one hand, to give testimony to the true light and, on the other hand, to reveal the person, the mission and the nature of the Pre-Existent to Israel.

The ἵνα φανερωθῆ is a common expression in the Johannine corpus

182. «At first Jesus was an unknown character in comparison with John's fame, but the time has now come for him to step forward and take the place which his pre-existence calls for — he must increase, John must decrease (3:30)». (C.K. BARRETT, *St. John*, 176).

183. P. VAN DEN HEEDÉ, *Der Exeget Gottes*, 110.

184. P.G. MÜLLER, «φανερόω», 413.

185. E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 115.

(cf. 1:31; 3:21; 9:3; 1 Jn. 2:28), but rarely appears in the Synoptics (only in Mk. 4:22).¹⁸⁶ This Johannine phraseology clearly demonstrates a revelatory function in the Jordan's scene. By using this verb, the FE prepares his readers for Jesus' visible manifestation in Jordan. In this sense, the presence of the verb φανερώω indicates that it is not simply a «manifestation» but a true «revelation».¹⁸⁷ From this perspective, φανερωθήναι is remarkable on the Christological level as it means: to make the unknown known in its true nature. Then JB can speak so of Jesus because he was revealed from «above» and not from a direct knowledge.¹⁸⁸ This concept is based on the «passivum divinum» φανερωθήναι, per which God himself proclaims Jesus to his people through the direct and unambiguous testimony of JB.¹⁸⁹

It is interesting to note that the use of this verb in Jn. 21 of the FG is very similar to the use of it in Jn. 1 as referring to the revelation of Jesus' person. The occurrences of the verb are directly related to «reveal» the person of Jesus that form a great inclusion of the whole Gospel. Herein, he declares that his baptism is related to «reveal» Jesus as the Christ to Israel. In Jn. 21, that «revealing» is taking place, but in a completely new way, at least with regard to the progressive revelation of Jesus in the Gospel narrative of his earthly history, because it reveals the Glorious Jesus to the Church, represented by the BD.

From this perspective, the mention of Israel is significant. This is the first of four occurrences of the term Ἰσραήλ in the FG (1:31.49; 3:10; 12:13). In our text, JB's ministry as the revelation to Israel is relevant. «Israel» in the Johannine theology means the people of Israel whose history and identity are rooted in the Scriptures.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the FE presents JB's testimony as a revelation to Israel since he is the divine instrument to reveal the true identity of Jesus and thereby, being a member of the Johannine community, those who believe in Jesus as the One who fulfils the Scriptures. Thus, «Israel» here is those who accept the testimony given by JB.

186. «Even when John's baptism is mentioned, it is no longer a tool of either of remission of sins or of repentance. Instead, John's baptism has become a tool of revelation, of Christological manifestation». (J.P. MEIER, «John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel», 385).

187. Bennema supports this concept by stating that «For the Evangelist the primary purpose of the Baptist's baptism is revelation». (C. BENNEMA, «Spirit-Baptism», 39).

188. V. PASQUETTO, *Incarnazione e comunione con Dio*, 128.

189. A. OBERMANN, *Die Christologische*, 100–101.

190. C.M. BLUMHOFER, *The Future of Israel*, 133.

2.3.3. The Authority of John's Baptism (1:31c)

– διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων

The manifestation, then, must arise despite JB's ignorance; contradiction that finds its solution in this verse. The διὰ τοῦτο is, in fact, intended to be the beginning of a new proposition, tending to illustrate the way in which Jesus' manifestation is made possible despite the ignorance. As for the formula κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν recalls that of Jn. 1:26 about the ignorance of the Jews, however, the κἀγὼ introduces, as in Jn. 1:33 and 34, an important nuance, which indicates a trusting obedience to the revealing action of God.

Once again, he associates himself with the Coming One. He presents his baptismal activity as directed towards him. In this, he also finds his own path. He does not seem to be questioned about the identity of the Messiah; he simply obeys the divine sending (1:6), which is testimony (1:7) that concretizes in the action of a Baptist (1:26).¹⁹¹ In such a conception, διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων, should be considered as a direct answer from him to the Pharisees' question concerning his baptismal authority in Jn. 1:25. If he baptizes, it is not because he is the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet, but because he received from God the mission of «manifesting» the Christ.

In this context, JB's baptism is not the occasion for a messianic experience of Jesus, as it is in the Synoptics (Mt. 3:13–17; Mk. 1:9–11; Lk. 3:21–22), but the occasion for a prophetic experience of John. Accordingly, his water-baptism should serve as a starting point for Jesus' revelation.¹⁹² From this perspective, we can deduce that the Johannine water imagery serves the Christological aspect of the Gospel, thus points to the identity–

191. See I.H. MARSHALL, «The meaning of the Verb 'to baptize'», 130–140.

192. Gruenwald argues that «John's [JB] words "I myself did not know him" clearly say that an intentionally directed baptism of Jesus was not in John's [FE] mind. The act of baptism was intended to find out the "one," obviously Jesus, out of the "many" [...] John the Baptist did not know Jesus. He believed that the messianic identity of the person would be revealed in the course of, or as a result of, the baptismal act». (I. Gruenwald, «The Baptism of Jesus», 317–318). At the same time, Koester also argues this point by stating that «John was not a revealer, but the water he used for baptism did provide the context in which divine revelation took place». (C.R. KOESTER, *Symbolism*, 177).

motif of the Gospel, which is Jesus' identity.¹⁹³

The question at issue is: could the Christ be known before his manifestation to Israel?

In fact, Jn. 1:26 and Jn. 1:31 complement each other to express a common messianic theme in the Judaism of the first century:¹⁹⁴ before starting his mission, the Messiah offered no characteristic features, since his character, which is designated by God, will remain unknown to the crowds until he is «manifested» by a person specially commissioned by God for this purpose.¹⁹⁵ In the point of «manifesting» Jesus to Israel, JB emphasizes that he responds well to this popular expectation, in the sense that Jesus has hitherto remained unknown to all.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, when he rejects to be neither the Christ nor any of the messianic titles, the interest lies elsewhere, where the main purpose of his baptism is to make Jesus as the Christ known to Israel.

Consequently, the absence of Jesus' baptism in the FG suggests that the baptismal rite has a secondary role for the FE and that the activity of JB as baptizer has no other purpose than revealing Jesus to Israel, that is, God specifically sends him to baptize in order to reveal the One, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, to Israel.¹⁹⁷ His baptism, then, is to prepare the bride for the encounter with the only True Bridegroom. Consequently, this serves as a preparation for the arrival of the eschatological time, since his baptism is not right baptism of the Eschatological form, but an indication of it, and, on the other hand, draws attention to the witness' character.

2.4. *Theophany of the Spirit (1:32)*

The story of the descending and remaining of the Spirit on Jesus differs from that of the Synoptics. In Mt. 3:16–17 and Mk. 1:10, in fact, the man-

193. R.G. CRUTCHER, *Water Imagery*, 164.

194. M. DE JONGE, «Jewish Expectations», 251.

195. Zevini comments on this idea and says that «the Christ had to remain unknown, even according to the Rabbinical tradition, until an extraordinary event of God revealed him (cf. Mt. 24,23–27). This extraordinary event is the work of the Baptist». (G. ZEVINI, *John*, 78).

196. M.-É. BOISMARD, *St John's Prologue*, 8.

197. Charles underscores this idea, saying, «If indeed this portrait of Jewish expectation is accurate, the testimony of the Baptist is significant and accords with the description in the Fourth Gospel of his mission: to make known the Messiah to Israel (1:31)». (J.D. CHARLES, «John 1:29–34», 81).

ifestation of the Spirit is contemplated by Jesus himself.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, in Lk. 3:21–22, it is the people who attend Jesus' baptism can see how the Spirit remains on Jesus. These verses have a fundamental theme: the revelation of Jesus the Messiah. However, in the FG, «the witness» himself sees the manifestation of the Spirit, underlines the characteristics of this extraordinary event and reveals it to the people, manifesting the seal of God on Jesus as the Messiah.¹⁹⁹ The Johannine scene is, therefore, different as it highlights JB's vision, the sign to grasp Jesus identity and the foundation of his testimony.²⁰⁰

2.4.1. The Eye–Witness (1:32a)

– Καὶ ἐμαρτύρησεν Ἰωάννης λέγων ὅτι τεθέαμαι τὸ πνεῦμα

In our text, the key verb is θεάομαι, in the perfect form τεθέαμαι. With this verb, we take a further step: we can translate it «with contemplation» or «deeper perception».²⁰¹ It occurs 6x in the FG. When it is applied to Jesus, it clearly indicates that the disciples saw with the eyes of the body and recognized «the glory of the only begotten of the Father» (1:14).²⁰² It is, therefore, «well suited to designate a whole range of vision, physical and spiritual».²⁰³ This indicates a contemplative vision of what has been seen. This means, the Johannine verb integrates the physical and spiritual vision by the eye–witness through a perfect faith. In our case, the verb shows that John's testimony is the fruit of his prolonged contemplation. Nobody has seen the descent of the Spirit from heaven as a dove except JB.

198. D.A. CARSON, *John*, 150.

199. G. ZEVINI, *John*, 77–78.

200. G.E. LADD, *A Theology*, 323–324.

201. «The verb John uses to describe what he “saw”(θεάομαι) is used in the NT to denote seeing with the physical eye, though it can carry along with physical sight a sense of perception that is above and beyond what is merely seen with the eye». (E.W. KLINK, *John*, 135). However, McHugh argues that JB has seen the Spirit with his physical eyes although this verb has a supernatural significance. (J.F. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 136).

202. JB's testimony is now embedded within the «we» statements of the present community (1:14–15; see also 1:16; 21:24), and thus, it continues to be of enduring significance, even though he is a character that belongs to the past. In other words, the FE now adds JB's testimony to his own testimony and that of the Johannine community.

203. J. MCCAFFREY, *The House with Many Rooms*, 223.

The idea is that the πνεῦμα²⁰⁴ of God descended from heaven and remained, indefinitely, in Christ. From this point, the «other» is thus to be understood as «the bearer of the Spirit». It was a past but also a continuous action, a vivid scene that seems to remain clearly in JB's memory. Continuing to witness, he now testified «the seeing of the Spirit» (1:32). The perfect τεθέαμαι reflects an established conviction.²⁰⁵ He does not testify to something that he saw *once* and that soon will disappear, but something that has continuous effects. He, therefore, is the first literal and spiritual eye-witness in a Gospel²⁰⁶ that values the eye-witness testimony (compare with 19:35; 20:8.20.24–29). With this axiom set in mind, seeing the glory of the Logos and seeing the Spirit of God are prophetic marks especially that God himself sent (πέμψας) JB to proclaim that the One who receives the Spirit is the One who performs the Spirit-Baptism. Consequently, he is «the witness» because he is «a Prophet», based on the assumption that the OT gives a prophetic testimony of Jesus as Israel's Messiah,²⁰⁷ exactly the same as JB.

2.4.2. The Johannine Pneumatology (1:32b)

– καταβαλῖνον ὡς περιστερὰν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ

The FE here does not report anything about Jesus' baptism. He is concerned solely with the event of the dove whereas, for JB, this event is a divine revelation. The explanation of the text, therefore, continues with giving attention to the dove's image and with the insistence on the manifestation's idea. The reason that the Spirit appears as a «dove» seems to be significant. Of course, the Spirit itself is intangible and cannot be seen by physical eyes, that is, the same as the «wind» that cannot be seen (3:8), and therefore, cannot appear in its immaterial nature as much as it appears in its sensible feature, which however not hypostatically assumed by the

204. The first two mentions of the term πνεῦμα in the FG are announced by JB, Jesus' witness. (1:32–33).

205. D.A. CARSON, *John*, 151.

206. «It is significant that the Fourth Gospel, in contrast to Synoptics, records the Baptist as the one who “sees” (θεάομαι in v. 32, ὀράω in v. 33) the Spirit descending». (J.D. CHARLES, «John 1:29–34», 80).

207. P.E. CAPETZ, «The Old Testament», 475.

Holy Spirit, having only the function of manifesting.²⁰⁸

The most important thing is not the metaphor of the dove itself as much as the Paraclete–Spirit (a primary subject).²⁰⁹ In this regard, the dove–metaphor used by the FE definitely has theological implications for the Johannine Pneumatology. Hence, the descent from heaven indicates the divine origin of the Spirit. The image of the dove, which makes the divine presence concrete and almost experiential in reality alludes to the dove of Noah, as a sign of the new creation (Gen. 8:9), which in Christ is inaugurated; introducing the new messianic people formed around Christ and are moved by the Spirit of God.

It is worth mentioning also that the phrase ἐξ οὐρανοῦ has a special significance in the FG. It emphatically asserts the divine origin of the Spirit and its nature. Thus, ἐξ οὐρανοῦ is a doctrinal term (not a cosmographical term)²¹⁰ and it also has an identical meaning to the place of Jesus' origin (3:31).

2.4.3 As a Prophet–like–Samuel (1:32c)

- καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν

On the lexical level, the verb μένω meets 40x in the FG. The term appears mostly in the compound expression «to remain in». Three forms of the verb used in the FG are to be considered:

- Biographical–Spatial use, connected to the description of Jesus' movements in his public ministry.
- The expressions that occur in the narrative of the Gospel encounters, such as those with JB's disciples (1:38–39) and with the Samaritans (4:40–42).
- The formulas that are contained in the discourse of Jesus deal with an invitation to the disciples to remain in him, remaining in his word and in his love (15:4(3x).5.6.7(2x).9.10(2x)).

208. G. FERRARO, *Lo Spirito e L'«Ora» di Cristo*, 15.

209. J. JOUBERT, «Johannine Metaphors/Symbols», 88.

210. J.F. MCHUGH, *John 1–4*, 139.

In our text, the Johannine presentation of the Spirit will develop as the Gospel unfolds. The Spirit of God has entered human history by descending and remaining on Jesus. The formula ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν points out that the event of the consecration of Jesus in the Spirit is neither explicitly reported in relation to JB's baptism, nor directly narrated, but it is a form of vision as a divine revelation to prepare him for acknowledgment. In addition, the aorist ἔμεινεν indicates that the remaining of the Spirit on Jesus is a divinely appointed sign, and therefore, it is permanent.²¹¹ The Johannine μένω emphasizes the abiding and essential unity between Jesus and the Spirit,²¹² thus indicating not a punctual but an enduring gift that will find its culmination at the Cross (19:30).²¹³

According to the FG's first penumatological text, the Spirit is attributed to the verb μένω in relation to Jesus. In this regard, the Johannine μένω indicates that Jesus is the place and source of the Spirit (7:39; 15:26; 16:7; 19:30). Where he is present, so is the Spirit.²¹⁴ This is the visibilization of the extraordinary event of the incarnation, «And the Word became flesh». In other words, Jesus is the Christ because he was anointed by the Spirit according to the expectations of Isaiah (11:1–2,²¹⁵ 42:1; 61:1).²¹⁶ For the FG's theology, the permanent possession of the Spirit is a distinctive characteristic of the Christ as an act of consecration. Speaking of JB as a «place of revelation of God», we refer explicitly to his relation with God, who has sent him in order that, through him, Jesus will be revealed as the Christ and the baptizer in the Holy Spirit to Israel.

At the baptism scene, the FG depicts JB as a Prophet-like-Samuel, who is the Prophet that is commissioned by God to be the mediator be-

211. «The verb, “remained” (ε;meinen), is best understood as a consummative (or perfective) aorist, which implies the result is permanent». (E.W. KLING, *John*, 135; see also D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 559).

212. J.D. CHARLES, «John 1 :29–34», 79.

213. J. ZUMSTEIN, *Saint Jean*, 1:81.

214. C.A. GIESCHEN, «Baptism», 27.

215. The allusion to Isa. 11:1–2 is significant. It refers to the confession of JB, who sees through the me,nw of the Spirit on Jesus a divine sign of Jesus' Davidic Messiahship. This will be obvious in his messianic confession that Jesus is the Son of God (1:34). (cf. W.J. BITTNER, *Jesu Zeichen*, 245–246.

216. S.S. SMALLEY, «Salvation Proclaimed», 327; see also J.D. CHARLES, «John 1 :29–34», 79.

tween God and his people regarding the theme of the Kingship.²¹⁷ At the same line, he appears to be a mediator between Jesus and his first disciples (1:35–37) in the set of Jn. 1:47–51, including the statement of Nathanael about Jesus' Kingship: «Rabbi, you are the king of Israel» (1:49).

Yahweh has given Samuel a revelation the day before Saul came, saying, [...] you are to anoint him as a ruler of my people Israel [...]. When Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh told him, “That is the man, «ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος» of whom I said to you, he is to govern my people (1 Sam. 9:15–17).

At the same time, JB proclaims in this way that, with Jesus, the eschatological times, the NT and the outpouring of the Spirit have come. In line with this outpouring, he will discover in Jesus the New David. This can be seen in one of his testimonies:

I myself knew him not but the one who sent me to baptize in water that one said to me, the one on whom you see the Spirit descends and remains on him, this is the one who baptizes in [the] Holy Spirit.

This Johannine text recalls the moment in which Samuel anoints David,²¹⁸ whom he did not know, and on whom the Spirit came and remained on him:

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him [David] in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward (1 Sam 16:13).

Like Samuel, JB himself does not know who the appointed king is. He is enabled by means of a divine revelation to recognize Jesus as the anointed king. Both experience an inspired moment of recognition involving a manifestation of the Spirit (1:32–33; see 1 Sam. 16:6–13).²¹⁹ Therefore, in the testimony of JB, the descent of the Spirit onto Jesus is clearly messianic. It depicts Jesus as the promised Messiah — the Receiving Spirit — , in whose person all prophetic announcements are fulfilled.

217. J. MATEOS – J. BARRETO, *Giovanni*, 102.

218. E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 364.

219. M.M. DALY–DENTON, «David in the Gospels», 425.

In conclusion, John's testimony is understood as a testimony ἐμαρτύρησεν that is legitimized by «seeing». The FE himself invites us to understand that, in the man Jesus, there is a mystery that is manifested; it is unfathomably hidden but has manifested symbolically. It is the mystery of the «Father's only son», who «lived among us» (1:14). Thus, he becomes the dwelling place of the Father (14:10), the new temple of the presence of God (2:21; 4:20–24).

2.5. *The Divine Purpose* (1:33)

2.5.1. The Ignorance–Motif (1:33a)

– κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν

Hence, JB's vision does not solve the decisive process of knowledge. As in the beginning of Jn. 1:31, we read again: κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν (1:33a), which still deserves a further consideration. As we have already seen, JB did not know Jesus before seeing him ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτόν (1:29b). However, the FE mentions herein for the second time the fact of passing from lack of human knowledge to the divine knowledge that reveals Jesus to Israel.

The FE wants to reveal Jesus to his readers only through JB's baptismal activity by which they come to recognize Jesus' real identity. From this point of view, this revelatory clause indicates that he has given the ability to have the τεθέαμαι of faith as a sign of God's revelation.²²⁰ Only the divine revelation makes JB's recognition possible. The wisdom of God always comes as an occasion of revelation: as a divine gift.

2.5.2. The Sent One (1:33b)

– ἀλλ' ὁ πέμψας με βαπτίζειν ἐν ὕδατι

John sees himself as one who is sent to baptize «in water». This is reminiscent of ὁ πέμψας με in the Prologue: ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ (1:6).²²¹

220. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Cristologia*, 313.

221. C.G. KRUSE, *John*, 82.

On the linguistic level, the verb πέμπω occurs 32x and it is characteristic of the FG. In the participle aorist ὁ πέμψας, the verb becomes a *qualification*, almost a proper name, of God the Father.²²² This means, his words declare that he sealed an attestation to the truth of God. This is consistent with the Johannine presentation of him. He is the only character within the FG declaring that God has spoken to him, and he as a Prophet will testify this message from God (1:34). Hence, the formula qualifies God in relation to him; a singular use which shows his great dignity and together delimits his role in the assigned mission: baptize in water. The idea of mission, indicated by God with ὁ πέμψας is also indicated by him with ἦλθον (1:31). This expression, therefore, which is in the FG, is also used by Jesus for himself, confirms that his mission takes place in the circle of that of Jesus.

Consequently, this Johannine formula presents the idea that he, in his character as a messenger, is in a situation of total dependence on the One who sent him, that is God the Father, with an active sense: John gives testimony not on his own initiative but inasmuch God sends him.²²³ On the theological level, he did not have his knowledge of Jesus from himself; it was given to him from God himself (cf. 3:27). Without the revelation of God, no one in Israel would recognize the one whom God has sent.²²⁴ He repeats that, previously, he had no knowledge of Jesus in his role as Christ. Thus, his testimony is even more valuable, because it is given to him from above, and rested on a supernatural revelation. Here God speaks to the Johannine John as he had done with other Prophets of the OT. But there is an obvious difference. This Johannine Prophet is more than the Prophets of Israel, for he is the witness of the ἀρχή of the OT's fulfilment.

However, the infinitive verb βαπτίζειν is significant. It indicates an infinitive of purpose. It answers the question «Why?»; why did God the Father send JB? He sent him in order to baptize.²²⁵ He was to recognize the Christ through these specific events that happened during his baptism. JB's baptism assumes a religious authority. The official delegation from Jerusalem (1:19–28) wanted to know the source of this authority. He, in

222. Abbott argues this point by stating that the usage of the aorist participle in the FG refers to a definite person. (cf. E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 365).

223. «God's testimony to Jesus comes through several channels, of which the first mentioned is John the Baptist (v 33–35)». (R.E. BROWN, *John*, 1:66).

224. M. DE JONGE, «Jewish Expectations», 254–257.

225. D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 591–592.

turn, attributes this authority to Jesus. The baptism in the Spirit through Jesus is a higher level than the baptism in water through JB. Jesus' own baptism in water would be a sign of baptism in Spirit, the dawn of the NT.

2.5.3. A Direct Revelation (1:33c)

– ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν

The use of the pronoun ἐκεῖνός, «that one» always refers grammatically to a person who is mentioned earlier in the narrative.²²⁶ In this context, ἐκεῖνός refers to the «one who sent me to baptize», that is to say «God». This interpretation is based on the use of the pronoun ἐκεῖνός in the FG. It is referred to Jesus (1:18; 2:21; 3:28); it refers to God (1:33; 6:29; 8:42) and points to JB as well (1:8; 5:35). Herein, God is designated as the One who reveals Jesus' identity to JB through an interior word: ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν (1:33b). In fact, the verb λέγω in the FG is also a verb of revelation together with λαλέω and other verbs. Therefore, ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν indicates a kind of divine revelation,²²⁷ i.e., God the πέμψας of JB is given particularly to him in order to reveal the identity of who is expected to come. He is the only human character of the FG who receives a word directly from God.²²⁸ In other words, this formula reveals God's own testimony to his Son.²²⁹

– ἐφ' ὃν ἂν ἴδῃς τὸ πνεῦμα

The verb ὁράω — that is occurred here in the subjunctive aorist form ἴδῃς — occurs 67x in the FG. This Johannine verb constitutes a condition of access to the mystery of Jesus, as follows:

- It occurs when the relationship between the Son and the Father is underlined (cf. 1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 14:9), which implies the involvement of the whole person in a relationship of profound mutual knowledge.

226. D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 325.

227. C.K. BARRETT, *St. John*, 178.

228. R. VIGNOLO, *Personaggi*, 170.

229. L. SCHENKE, *Johannes*, 37.

- We find it again to describe the experience of the encounter with the Risen (Mary Magdalene in Jn. 20:18; the disciples in Jn. 20:25 and Thomas in 20:29).
- It also occurs in contexts closely associated with the concept of testimony. In Jesus' discourse to people, he testifies to what he has seen (3:11.32; 8:38), whereas JB (1:34) and the BD (19:35) testify to what they have seen regarding Jesus.

In our text, JB, through the act of «seeing», reveals the real identity of Jesus as «the baptizer in the Holy Spirit» (1:33d) and «the Son of God» (1:34b).²³⁰ Thus, his whole experience is summarized in the verb ὀράω, his vision expresses the fullness of the testimony of faith, especially with the perfect verb ἑώρακα. With the verb ὀράω, the whole human experience is at stake, in a dynamism that implies the receiving or rejecting the person of Jesus.

- καταβαῖνον καὶ μένον ἐπ' αὐτόν

The use of the syntagma καταβαῖνον καὶ μένον ἐπ' αὐτόν from the part of the FE seems to assume that the reader already knows the Synoptics, for in these, the occasion when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove is clearly related to Jesus' baptism (cf. Mt. 3:13–17; Mk. 1:9–10; Lk. 3:21–22) and not simply understood as in Jn. 1:33. Therefore, the FE fails to inform his reader clearly that this event took place when Jesus was baptized.

The Spirit's dwelling on Jesus has its own precise meaning and value: The Spirit «dwells» in Jesus, a similar image to the glory of God which was present in the Tent during the Exodus (cf. LXX Num. 14:10; Isa. 11:2).²³¹ Thus, Jesus becomes the new dwelling of God, the Temple of the Spirit, a reality linked to the Spirit, different from every man, and for this perennial source of salvation for all. The permanent function of the Spirit in Jesus is the sign that he is the Son of God and is the motive that drives him in his filial life and love.

230. «It appears as a faith experience of the Baptist: he has “seen” with the eyes of faith that Jesus is the Son of God and can bear witness to this». (J. BEUTLER, *John*, 60–61).

231. Here, a particular attention to Jn. 1:14–16 is significant. The Johannine use of the word ἐσκήνωσεν, «dwell» or «spread a tent» in Jn. 1:14 echoes the Tent of meeting, where YHWH met with Moses. According to the Johannine theology, the presence of God is no longer found in the Tent/Temple, but in the Incarnate Logos, Jesus, who manifests his glory (2:11), the glory of God, his Father. (cf. A.R. KERR, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 103).

This relationship between the Spirit and Jesus is manifested in the theophany in which the Spirit has visibly descended on Christ. Accordingly, the knowledge of the Messiah is related to the remaining of the Spirit on him (Isa. 42:1; 59:21; 61:1). This does not mean that Jesus did not have the Spirit beforehand (see for example 3:34). It was a symbol of God's special election and equipment; it was not meant primarily for Jesus, but for JB himself. In this regard, Jesus is described as God's anointed one upon whom the promised eschatological Spirit remains in permanence, and it is precisely this point of eschatological realization that sets the stage for the FG's pneumatology.²³²

2.5.4. The Baptizer in the Holy Spirit (1:33d)

– οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ

The «descending» and «remaining» of the «Spirit» on someone point out to that person as a charismatic one: Jesus is the authentic «Prophet», «the Prophet of the Prophets»,²³³ a possessor of the Spirit and his baptism is «with the Spirit». Accordingly, the Spirit-bearer will also be a «Baptist».²³⁴ But his baptism is different. Although the FE draws a parallel between water and Spirit, it is not to underestimate the element of water,²³⁵ but to confer its charismatic sense, which is operated only by the Christ; the Son of God.

232. T.R. HATINA, «John 20,22» in its Eschatological Context», 207.

233. T.R. HATINA, «John 20,22» in its Eschatological Context», 206.

234. It is still important to note the nexus between «water» (1:33b) and «the Spirit» (1:33c) in the current text. God who sent JB to «baptize with water», gave him the sign of the Coming One who will «baptize in the Holy Spirit». Both baptisms are important because they find their roots in the divine origin, but, at the same time, they are not synonymous. The baptism that is performed by Jesus is higher. It is with the Holy Spirit. The FE focuses on the gift of the Spirit rather than the baptismal rite itself; this does not mean that the gift of the Spirit is not part of the baptism, broadly conceived (R.A. SMITH, *The Baptism of Jesus the Christ*, 18) and, at the same time, it prepares the way to the new messianic baptism with the Holy Spirit. (F.B. MEYER, *John the Baptist*, 82–86). When the Messiah baptizes others with the Holy Spirit, the messianic age will be distinguished from the present one (1:32–33; 3:34) (W. RUSSELL, «The Holy Spirit's Ministry», 229) and this aims to reveal the Johannine Jesus to Israel.

235. The FE gives, in another place of his Gospel, the water its spiritual sense (cf. NICODEMUS, the Samaritan woman, the blind man from birth and Golgotha.

JB's depiction of Jesus as «The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world» (1:29) defines his mission that is also related to the baptism in the Holy Spirit that defines the whole activity of Jesus and his mission, in which the great Eschatological bestowal of the Spirit announced by the Prophets will be realized (Isa. 32:15–18; 44:3–5; Joel 2:28–29; Zach. 12:10).²³⁶

The phrase ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ²³⁷ is *hapax legomenon* in the Johannine corpus.²³⁸ According to the Johannine theology, Jesus is anointed/consecrated, equivalent to ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, «The Holy One of God» (6:69), the same as David in his investiture, but without a human mediation (1 Sam. 16:13). Precisely for this reason, Jesus has the power to give the Spirit without measure (3:34), through his words, which are Spirit and life (6:63). The moment of the gift, or of baptism in the Holy Spirit will be related to the Hour, the Hour of Jesus' Glorification (7:39). In our text, the theophany of the Spirit is for JB the decisive sign that makes him discover Jesus' identity.

It is notable here that the FE uses the present participle preceded by the definite article: ὁ βαπτίζων.²³⁹ The participle does not only indicate a punctual and momentary function, but an ongoing ministry that characterizes Jesus' identity.²⁴⁰ Just as the Spirit descends on him in a situation of permanent dwelling, consequently, Jesus is constituted in his person, permanently, the baptizer in the Holy Spirit. Baptizing in the Holy Spirit defines Jesus' salvific activity and his effectiveness taken in totality. The fulfilment, the perfection of Jesus' mission will be essentially, for the men who receive him, a baptism in the Holy Spirit, that is, a commu-

236. D.A. CARSON, John, 152. In this line of thought, Ladd argues that «The Old Testament looks forward to the messianic salvation when a new dimension of the Spirit will be given God's people (Joel 2:28; Ezek. 36:26–27)». (G.E. LADD, *A Theology*, 326).

237. Some manuscripts (P^{75c} vid C* sa) insert καὶ πῦρ, «and fire» at the end of the verse after ἁγίῳ. The insertion is undoubtedly a harmonization to the Synoptic «double tradition» (cf. Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16).

238. C. BENNEMA, «Spirit–Baptism», 35.

239. Abbott argues that the present participle, with the article, is regularly used by the FG in stating a general law so as to include future as well as present, and sometimes referring mainly to the future. In our text, this participle indicates the prophetic present participle. Abbott continues stating that, «if the Holy Spirit must be described as “not yet” being (vii. 39) till Jesus was “glorified”, then i. 33 is prophetic present». (E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 2509).

240. C.F.F. PORSCH, *Pneuma und Wort*, 49.

nication of that Spirit that has descended from God on Jesus and lives forever in him.

In conclusion, from this pneumatological theophany that is testified by JB, the FG considers all the testimonial strength points out to Jesus as the giver of the Spirit. The powerful inclusion of Jn. 1:29–34 with Jn. 19:28–37 will be kept in mind, when Jesus gives the Spirit from the Cross, and the BD, after JB, gives the same testimony.²⁴¹

2.6. A Second Confessional Statement: «Son of God» (1:34)

2.6.1. A Permanent Prophetic Vision and Witness (1:34a)

– κάγω ἑώρακα καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα

A witness is one who testifies to what he has seen, heard, or experienced.²⁴²

We can see that every time the FE uses the verb ὀράω, in the perfect form ἑώρακα, Jesus is recognized as the holy place where God manifests himself, the temple of the divine presence, the house or the dwelling in which God himself lives. Accordingly, the meaning of Jn. 14:9 becomes clear: «Whoever has seen me has seen the Father». Having seen Jesus and keeping the inner vision in memory means recognizing Jesus as the place where the Father dwells in his Son as in a dwelling (2:19–21). Thus, applied to Jesus, it describes what the attentive and astonished look he has discovered in him, and whose discovery is kept in his memory. The FE attaches great importance to JB's testimony in this section, for he has participated in the event of seeing the Spirit, and, therefore, can give testimony. This is obvious from the Johannine use of the extensive (or consummative) perfect:²⁴³ ἑώρακα and μεμαρτύρηκα, which both have the force of present and permanent result of the vision.²⁴⁴ Thus, both verbs speak of him as a

241. R. VIGNOLO, «Rabbi, dove dimori?», 217.

242. D. CRONSHAW, «Early Evangelism», 51.

243. «The perfect may be used to emphasize the completed action of a past action or process from which the present state emerges». Wallace continues to say that «the portrayal of John's testimony seems to place an emphasis more on the completed event in the past than on the present results. In other words, there is stress on his seeing enough of Jesus [completed action] to make a reliable report». (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 577).

244. L. MORRIS, *John*, 134. In this line of thought, Abbott states that, «This is the usual meaning

permanent witness to the Johannine Jesus.

It is worth noting that the presentation of JB in the FG evokes the image of a Prophet. He announces the fulfilment of Isaiah's vision, and the character at the heart of Isaiah's proclamation is God himself.²⁴⁵ The similarity to Isaiah (12:41) is expressed in quoting his prophecy in order to link the content of his testimony with that of Isaiah's prophecy (1:23) and using Isaiah's vocabulary in expressing his testimony (1:29.32.34). Thus, his thought and words are quarried from OT prophecy,²⁴⁶ and therefore make him as a representative of the Scriptures.

Accordingly, the FE portrays JB's prophetic experience. He repeatedly uses the word «saw», which indicates his personal experience that qualifies him for his special role to «witness» about Jesus. Furthermore, both passages, that is Jn. 1:19–28 and Jn. 1:29–34, are closely linked by the concept of μαρτυρία, «testimony» in Jn. 1:19a and μαρτυρέω, «to testify» in Jn. 1:34a. This notion of testimony has been already introduced in the Prologue (1:6–8.15). The perfect verb μεμαρτύρηκα recalls the ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν of Jn. 1:7, which is of a particular importance: JB's mission has been fulfilled.

God himself made him a witness by opening his eyes so that he may see and may convey what he saw. He holds his knowledge of Jesus Christ through the revelation that God has given him during the baptism of Jesus: «I myself saw and testified that this is the Son of God». Thus, the Johannine John at Jordan sees an external fact: The Spirit descends and remains on Jesus (1:32c.33c); and he, therefore, testifies Jesus' Messiahship (1:34). As a result, in the end, JB himself, and no longer the voice of heaven, can testify, for God has shown him that Jesus is «the Son of God». In coherence with this conception, his testimony is substantially identical with the voice from heaven in the Synoptic theophany (cf. Mt. 3:17; 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35).²⁴⁷

of the Johannine perfect-permanence [...] it more probably denotes the present and permanent result of the vision». (E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 344).

245. C.M. BLUMHOFER, *The Future of Israel*, 131–132.

246. R.A. FALCONER, «The Testimony», 441.

247. J.T. FORESTELL, *The Word of the Cross*, 163. In this line of thought, Keener states, «The Baptist's acclamation of Jesus based on the Spirit's descent probably represent's the testimony of the heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism in the Synoptics». (C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:463).

2.6.2. The Son of God (1:34b)

– ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ²⁴⁸

The content of John's testimony is: (that) «this is the Son of God» that forms «the thesis of the FG».²⁴⁹ When placing the title at the end of the sentence, there is a surprising climax, in beautiful harmony with the decisive purpose of the FG, as it appears in Jn. 20:30–31. This title refers to the Son in the highest sense in which this term can be used. It expresses the special relationship that exists eternally between the Father and the Son according to the Johannine theology (1:1.18; 3:16–18; 5:25; 17:5; 19:7; 20:31).

«This title is, in an important sense, messianic».²⁵⁰ It was applied to the Davidic king and the messianic king who's coming was expected eagerly. The father–son relationship constitutes the ideal relationship between God and the king. This is revealed in Nathan's prophecy: «I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I shall be a father to him and he shall be a son to me» (2 Sam. 7:13–14; see also 1 Chr. 17:13.²⁵¹ The recognition

248. * ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. Nestle–Aland²⁸ reads, with the majority of the Bibles and commentaries, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, «the Son of God». * ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ. There is, however, a variant in some ancient manuscripts that reads ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ, «the Chosen One of God» (P^{106vid} S* b e ff^{s.c.}). * Electus Filius. Other manuscripts present a mixed text «electus filius» ((a) ff^{2c} sa) that means «Chosen Son».

Even though the other readings fit with the Johannine theology, I shall choose the reading of Nestle–Aland²⁸: «The Son of God». The question here is whether this passage reflects the messianic character, as in Ps. 2:7 or in Isa. 42:1. (P.R. RODGERS, «The Text of John 1:34», 302). In the face of suffering or the motive of the Passover Lamb (1:29), it can be argued with certainty that the «Chosen One of God» fits in with the immediate context, where the FE appears to be drawing from Deutero–Isaiah, through JB's testimony that seem to have its background in the Isaianic Servant passages. (T.M. QUEK, «A Text–Critical Study of John 1:34», 30). On the other hand, and in the mind of the FE, the title of «Son of God» is identical with his decisive purpose expressed in Jn. 20:31. If the Spirit of God remains on Jesus, we can draw the conclusion that this must be «the Son of God». The title also derives from JB's experience of faith: he «has seen» with believing eyes that Jesus is «the Son of God» and can testify to this truth. This is the first hint emphasizing that the FE creates JB's character to be an ideal Prophet, the same like Deutero–Isaiah. He, then, adopts the Isaianic theology in witnessing to Jesus, (W. WINK, *John the Baptist*, 106) becoming the voice of the Scriptures that will continue resonating in the testimony of the BD (Chapters 13–21).

249. V. McNABB, «The Doctrinal Witness», 465.

250. C.R. KOESTER, *Symbolism*, 179.

251. M.M. DALY–DENTON, «David in the Gospels», 422.

of the divine filiation of the king is the act that gives legitimacy to the sovereign and his acts of government.

Ps. 89 (88) develops the theology of 2 Sam. 7.²⁵² In full agony of the monarchy, the Psalmist remembers the anointing of David (89:21) as a guarantee of the survival of royalty.²⁵³ The promises of the past open perspectives of hope in the future. The kings of the Davidic dynasty will invoke God in this way: «You are my father, my God, the rock of my salvation» (89:27). In the same line, Ps. 2 is located, it formulates the ritual of enthronement of the Jewish king. «The decree of Yahweh» is expressly mentioned: «You are my son; I have begotten you today» (2:7). It was the document that was given to the king at the time of the enthronement. That day he was granted the title «Son of God». Both texts are cited in the writing to the Hebrews (1:5) to demonstrate the divine filiation of Jesus. Acts of the Apostles (13:33) cites Ps. 2:7 to indicate that the promise of God is fulfilled by raising Jesus from the dead.

This title occurs 5x in the FG by JB (1:34), Nathanael (1:49), Martha of Bethany (11:27), the Jews (19:7) and the FE himself (20:31). In these cases, the FG's intention is to consider this designation as a confessional formula of faith announced by these individuals,²⁵⁴ thus aiming, on the one hand, to introduce Jesus in his eternal relationship with the Father, and on the other hand, to serve the final purpose of the Gospel as it is mentioned in Jn. 20:31. Furthermore, the title occurs also thrice by Jesus himself (5:25; 10:36; 11:4). In this perspective, the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is one of the most important Christological titles for the Johannine Jesus.²⁵⁵

In our text, with the conclusion of the passage, we find JB's second confession regarding Jesus, as in Jn. 1:29 of the opening, but with a different title, the most proper: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, «the Son of God». In the FG, the use of this title is frequent and has a special relevance. There is an intimate union between the Father and the Son at all levels: in words and in deeds (5:19). The relationship between the two is based on love (5:20). The Son receives from the Father the power to give life (5:21.25) and to give judgement (5:22.27). The glory of God is manifested through the

252. G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 25.

253. J. BRIGHT, *The Authority*, 223.

254. E.P. GROENEWALD, «The Christological Meaning», 136.

255. C.W. SKINNER, «“Son of God” or “God’s Chosen One”», 356.

Son (14:13). The knowledge of God is inseparable from the knowledge of the Son and vice versa (8:19). In addition to the fact that this title refers to Jesus' Divine Sonship²⁵⁶, at the same time, it refers to Jesus' Messianic Kingship²⁵⁷ as it is declared by Nathanael at the end of the first chapter of the Gospel (1:49). From this Johannine perspective, Jesus' identification as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, is central to the entire Johannine story of Jesus.²⁵⁸

The dignity and function of Jesus, «the Baptist in the Holy Spirit», contain the revelation of his Sonship identity. Then, this title follows the experience of JB's faith²⁵⁹: he saw with eyes of believers that «Jesus is the Son of God» and, therefore, can testify to it. This means that his faith is a messianic faith, though in the reading and interpretation of the FE, it is a Christological faith. This is the title that becomes the supreme Christological designation. No doubt, John's testimony is completely consistent with the decisive purpose of the FG: «These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God» (20:31). We can say that his testimony is concentrated entirely in the act of indicating in Jesus the Christ and the Son of God.

3. Concluding Observations

In this second scene (1:29–34), JB's testimony has its Christological character in its full Messianic–Soteriological depth. The FE even lent him the words of the Christian faith, thus making him the spokesman of the Christian community.²⁶⁰ JB is also a representative of the Holy Trinity. In this context, three verbs are to be considered in this passage: see, sent and hear. From the very beginning of the Gospel, he is described as the one

256. Mattill argues this point by stating that «Jesus is the pre-existent Son of God who has come down from heaven [...] He who believes on Jesus' heavenly origin and divine sonship has salvation». (A.J. MATTILL, «Johannine Communities», 301). Koester also confirms the fact that «the title "Son of God" conveys a sense of divinity as well as messiahship». (C.R. KOESTER, *Symbolism*, 180).

257. J.W. PRYOR, *John*, 189.

258. C.W. SKINNER, «"Son of God" or "God's Chosen One"», 347.

259. «For its [JB's declaration] force in the narrative this presupposes John having had a special experience in connection with Jesus, but the actual reference of the seeing and testifying language in this statement is not to an observable fact but to a belief about Jesus' identity». (A.T. LINCOLN, «The Beloved Disciple», 9).

260. L. DEVILLERS, « Les trois témoins », 62.

who is sent by God (1:6 with the verb ἀποστέλλω; see also 1:33 with the verb πέμπω). This fact is underlined by the FE, who emphasizes that his John sees two of the divine persons, Jesus and the Spirit, and hears the Father, who has sent him (1:32–34). Accordingly, his testimony is Theological, Christological and Pneumatological, i.e., Trinitarian. He is, therefore, a *Trinitarian witness par excellence*.

Scene III

The Concluding Voice of the Old Testament

(Jn. 1:35–37)

We have seen, already from the Prologue, that in his coming to the world, the Light meets a double response: «He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him» (1:11); «But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God» (1:12). The FG opens with the double testimony of JB, who will meet with a double reaction. His first testimony before the Jewish authorities from Jerusalem has met with rejection (1:19–28); his second testimony will meet with the reception of the first two disciples (1:35–37).

Together with the previous passage (1:29–34) centered on JB's testimony, the FE presents this original sequence that narrates the encounter between Jesus and his first disciples. Unlike the Synoptic narrative, the FG does not start from Jesus' gaze, but from JB's intense observation (ἐμβλέψας, 1:36) culminating in an identification that sounds like a revelation. The testimonial mediation that the FE massively introduces in the narratives of the discipleship call for which no one — with the exception of Philip (1:43) — receives a direct call from Jesus, but always mediated by a testimony²⁶¹ (herein the testimony of JB²⁶²).

Consequently, Jn. 1:35–37 may be called «bridge-verses», since they serve both as a conclusion to Jn. 1:29–34 and a beginning of the new messianic community (narrative development of 1:7).

261. R. VIGNOLO, «Rabbi, dove dimori», 218.

262. «It is with John [the Baptist] that discipleship of Jesus begins — Jesus' first disciples will come from John (1:35–39) —». (T.L. BRODIE, *John*, 149).

1. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation
³⁵ Τῇ ἐπαύριον πάλιν εἰστήκει ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο	³⁵ The next day John stood again and with two of his disciples,
³⁶ καὶ ἐμβλέψας τῷ Ἰησοῦ περιπατοῦντι λέγει· Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ	³⁶ and having looked at Jesus passing by, says, «Behold the Lamb of God»,
³⁷ καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ δύο μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος καὶ ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ.	³⁷ and his two disciples heard him saying [this] and they followed Jesus.

2. Exegesis

2.1. *John and His Disciples (1:35)*

– Τῇ ἐπαύριον πάλιν

New dating; the scenery is repeated on the next day. It is the third day of JB's interrogation (1:19–28). It is again in the same place of the previous day (1:28). He remains there to continue his mission, which will not end until Jesus begins his own. Once Jesus passes before him, he will no longer appear in this place, symbolizing the Promised Land and that this place will be Jesus' future place (10:40.42).

– εἰστήκει ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο

This scene deals with JB's testimony about Jesus to a third group on the third day: two of his disciples. Thus, the natural continuation of his testimony becomes a fresh start. His testimony proceeds from Jn. 1:34 and continues to open the door to the disciples to follow Jesus. He was put by God himself in possession of evidence that leads those who listen to Jesus. Quite evidently, the FE wants to present him surrounded by a circle of disciples to underline his significance and to indicate his effectiveness.²⁶³ This circle is presented as an established religious community, which the reader of the FG does not know anything about its size and composition.

The first character that appears in the passage is JB. By introducing

263. C.G. MÜLLER, «Der Zeuge und das Licht», 497.

his character, the FE intends to show us how important is the personal testimony of faith to awaken in others the desire to know Jesus and to follow him. JB here is described by using the pluperfect with a simple past force²⁶⁴ εἰστήκει — this pluperfect occurs 14x in the FG — that is, by a stative verb ἵστημι that expresses a state rather than an action: he stood with two of his disciples. This standing is significant. This status of standing implies a waiting for someone. In our text, this «someone» will be Jesus, the Lamb of God (1:36a), *as if the OT that is represented in JB stood waiting for its fulfilment in order to inaugurate the NT that is represented in both disciples.*

Another striking feature characterizes the beginning of the next day, another group of characters is presented: two disciples of JB, who is again in his place [Bethany, beyond the Jordan] in the company of those disciples, who will be the new witnesses to Jesus (15:27):²⁶⁵

καὶ ὑμεῖς δὲ μαρτυρεῖτε, ὅτι ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἐστε

«You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning».

2.2. John’s Prophetic Vision (1:36a)

Two aspects characterize JB’s testimony, and thus, make it authentically Scriptural: his «looking» and «speaking».

– καὶ ἐμβλέψας τῷ Ἰησοῦ περιπατοῦντι λέγει

Three verbs are to be considered here.

The first verb is ἐμβλέπω, in the participle aorist form ἐμβλέψας. It occurs twice in the FG (1:36.42) and indicates an intense and penetrating look, as when someone wants to identify the truth of a person; a look that tries to penetrate the mystery of being.²⁶⁶ In our text, he was «looking at Jesus», from a distance with a fixed and penetrating gaze — see the same verb used in Jn. 1:42 to describe Jesus’ looking at Simon Peter. While in

264. D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 586.

265. «The ones brought on the scene here act not only as models of the latter church’s faith but also as witnesses of the revelation in Jesus Christ». (H. RIDDERBOS, *John*, 79).

266. L. COENEN – E. BEYREUTHER – H. BIETENHARD, «Vedere, visione», in DCBNT, 1928–1934.

the previous passage, which we have just analyzed, Jesus is present almost in the background, in our text, Jesus appears on the scene in a definitive way. Herein we have a real passage of witness, from JB to Jesus, through two of his disciples.

For his fixed testimony, he gazes on Jesus, an action that is expressed with a very strong verb ἐμβλέπω, literally «look inside», capable of going beyond the simple «see». This is a physical look, as the verb βλέπω suggests, but in a penetrating way, a reality and an event in its historical appearance, which indicate a scrutinizing look, pretty much like when someone wants to identify the truth of a person. Thus, the used verb here is the participle aorist ἐμβλέψας, which means in our text, «To fix the eyes on Jesus».

It is the proper look of the Prophet, who seeks and investigates the actions of God in the historical events, and then indicates them to the people:

«That day, a man will look to his Creator and his eyes will turn to the Holy One of Israel» (Isa. 17:7).

The second verb is περιπατέω, in participle present form περιπατοῦντι. It appears 17x in the FG. It is present with a theological significance, referring to Jesus passing from Bethany (1:28) to Cana in Galilee (2:1) to reveal his glory and his disciples believe in him (2:11). While he is presented to us on the banks of the river: «stood there», Jesus is presented to us on the road: «passed by».²⁶⁷ By now, the OT has concluded its long journey of preparation, has reached its destination by stopping and has led the man to the threshold of the meeting face to face with God. JB, therefore, after carefully examining that movement of Jesus, addresses Jesus to his two disciples, says: Ἴδε ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ.

On this occasion, Jesus no longer walked towards JB as he had the day before,²⁶⁸ but this time, we read that he simply «walked by» to an indeterminate place²⁶⁹ because this verse does not directly say the immediate destiny of Jesus. However, the context of this passage seems to indicate almost certainly that Jesus was going to the place where he would spend the night (1:39). Neither do we know certainly why he was in that region,

267. F.J. MOLONEY, *John*, 54.

268. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 144.

269. G. ZEVINI, *John*, 82.

where he was baptizing, but the passage also clearly indicates that Jesus was ready to receive his first followers.

The third verb is λέγω, in indicative present form λέγει. There is a contrast of times in the two used verbs: «having looked» (ἐμβλέψας — past participle) is opposed to the «says» (λέγει — present indicative). It is a sign that the voice of JB, even though he came from the past of the Prophets and the Scriptures, still retained his testimonial value in the life of the Johannine community and the reader of the Gospel until today.

This verb is the transitive word of the verse: he «says», or perhaps even better, using a more «legal» term, he «declares». It is interesting to note that in the original Greek, the verb was actually written in the present tense λέγει, he «declares», as the FE, at the time of writing this part of his Gospel, had in his mind these words of JB in such a clear way that it was as if in those moments the words would still resonate in his mind.

2.3. *The Lamb of God* (1:36b)

– ἴδε

The whole movement of the narrative begins with the declaration of JB, who indicates Jesus with the adverb ἴδε, which is formulated in Greek through the imperative aorist. The emphatic ἴδε also translates as «look»; an expression that is evidently used to draw attention to observing, perceiving, or paying attention to the transcendental statement that followed,²⁷⁰ a legal statement about the identity, in the form of a descriptive analogy, about the One who is there simply walking in an almost unnoticed way. It invites the disciples to see, through the outward image of Jesus walking, the profound reality that it manifests: the presence of the «Lamb of God».²⁷¹ Then ἴδε is the imperative of Jesus' hour, the verb of the gaze of faith, which invites us to grasp the truth of Jesus, as the Lamb that belongs to God and comes from God.

270. E.W. KLING, *John*, 133.

271. Some manuscripts like P⁶⁶ C* Ws 892*. 1241 a aur ff add ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου to the title ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ θεοῦ. This insertion seems to be an attempt to preserve consistency with what is stated in Jn. 1:29. In addition, W^s adds τὰς ἁμαρτίας, «the sins» in plural instead of τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, «the sin» in singular. To my mind, the singular reading is preferred since the FG talks about an original sin, namely, the unbelief of Jesus.

Here we have a «scheme of revelation» in which a person invested with revealing authority «looks» towards another person, whose true spiritual identity is to be revealed and says this profound identity by introducing his own declaration with the expression «behold». This «scheme of revelation» is also repeated in Jn. 1:47 with Nathanael,²⁷² and at the moment of Jesus' death on the Cross with Jesus' mother and his BD in Jn. 19:26.27.²⁷³ The presence of this «scheme of revelation» underlines the correspondences between the narratives of the call of the first disciples and the death of Jesus.

– ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

These words are very important and, in a certain sense, they are *exclusive* for JB. In the FG, the expression «Lamb» appears only twice, here and in the previous passage (1:29), and always by JB. In this context, even this Christological title refers from this moment at the presentation that the FE will make of Jesus' passion and death on the Cross. Accordingly, his statement is not simply a mere repetition of what he had said earlier. Here, however, the recipients are his two disciples, already initiated into eschatological events. Therefore, the intention of the FE is to help the community to read the character of Jesus and to enter into his mystery.²⁷⁴ Looking carefully at Jesus, the eye of the believer is necessary to grasp and experience directly the new realities inaugurated with the coming of Jesus.

Therefore, this statement of Jn. 1:36b would have all the reminder impact of the important messianic function that he pointed out earlier in Jn. 1:29, that is, that «the Lamb of God» in effect «takes away the sin of the world». Again, as in Jn. 1:29, JB characterizes Jesus as «the Lamb of God» but its complement varies: the subordinate clause in his quotation, ὁ ἀίρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, is replaced by a co-ordinated clause in the narrative, and the two disciples ἤκουσαν καὶ ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ (1:37). He pronounces his previous statement in the presence of his disciples. Repeating the *incipit* of the previous statement of JB (1:29), the FE shows that JB conveys its entire content to his disciples. They know,

272. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St. John*, 1:297.

273. M. DE GOEDT, « Un Schème de révélation », 145.

274. S. BROWN, «John the Baptist», 159.

therefore, the essence of the Messiah; they know that he must inaugurate the new Passover and Covenant and achieve the ultimate liberation.²⁷⁵

The renewal of Jn. 1:36 of the saying about «the Lamb of God» brings the Johannine reader to the stage of the development of the events. In this perspective, one cannot be surprised that he limits presenting Jesus to his disciples as «the Lamb of God», inviting them to follow him, if they do not have in turn the full revelation of the messianity and the divinity of Jesus, in a crescendo (1:41.45.49) that culminates in the statement of Jesus himself on the Son of Man who, like the ladder of Jacob, unites heaven and earth (1:51).

JB's testimony reiterated in Jn. 1:36 no longer has a revelation value in itself. The FE's intention is to initiate a chain reaction, whose final result will be that his two disciples come to Jesus and become disciples of him. As promised in Jn. 1:7, men begin to believe thanks to his testimony.

2.4. *The Fruit of John's Testimony (1:37)*

– καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ δύο μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος

The process of faith is based on a testimony, in this case the testimony of JB, who came to be a witness. Therefore, the historical testimony of JB is not an end in itself; its purpose is to make the disciple's faith flow into the person of Jesus, «The Lamb of God». In this context, we find again the process by which faith was transmitted in Israel through «hearing», through the Patriarchal tradition:

שמע ישראל יהוה אחד

ἄκουε Ἰσραηλ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν

Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh (Deut. 6:4).

– καὶ ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ

All starts from JB, who sees/indicates/speaks, producing a testimony that brings out the object in all its power of attraction. His words to his two disciples do not sound like a directly cognitive imperative («Follow him»),

275. J. MATEOS – J. BARRETO, *Giovanni*, 109.

but as an ostensive and revealing act, consistent with the design of the FG.²⁷⁶

Although the verb ἀκολουθέω in the Johannine narrative usually means following discipleship (1:43; 8:12; 12:26; 21:19.20.22),²⁷⁷ it can also have a neutral meaning (11:31; 20:6). The «following» here does not necessarily mean that JB's two disciples became permanent disciples now (see the reaction of many of his disciples in 6:66). It might be that they followed Jesus to know him more closely. With this event, the beginning was made: his disciples became Jesus' followers (1:40). The «listening» here precedes the «following», and the disciples begin to follow Jesus now. It is a paradox: they listen to JB, but they follow Jesus, without saying anything.

The technical and theological sense of the verb ἀκολουθέω, «to follow» in the FG is well known: «to become a disciple», «to go after a teacher» (1:40.43; 10:4.27; 13:36–38; 21:19.21).²⁷⁸ His two disciples, who are about to become disciples of Jesus, walk behind him (1:37–38). They leave the previous teacher not because they are disappointed, but because they have found «one more». Their previous search is not denied, but overcome.

Unlike the fishermen whom Jesus called on the lake's shore (cf. Mk. 1:16–20),²⁷⁹ the two disciples, of whom the FG speaks, were already *men in search*. In the eyes of the FE, the beginning of the disciples' journey is a result of the initiative of Jesus first turns («You did not choose me but I chose you», 15:16), and notes an attitude of following («and saw them following») and speaks («What are you looking for? », 1:38). In fact, through the image of the following of Jesus by the two disciples, the Johannine reader is invited to recall the discipleship and the fact that in the FG it means «to follow Jesus». We can deal with the link that can be found between hearing JB and hearing the Scriptures: both have a decisive purpose: to follow Jesus. The initial response of the disciples is encouraging. They respond to their *Rabbi's* testimony by leaving their static position (1:35) to become «followers» of Jesus. There is a movement that moves away from JB and goes towards Jesus.

276. R. VIGNOLO, «Rabbi, dove dimori», 221.

277. D.A. CARSON, *John*, 154.

278. «'Ακολουθεῖν is used metaphorically in John for the dedication of faith (cf. 8:12 with 12:36; also 10:4f.27)». (R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St. John*, 1:308).

279. L. MORRIS, *John*, 136; see also R.E. BROWN, *John*, 1:77.

Thus, Jn. 1:37 demonstrates that he is vanishing with his appearance scene. It means that «an active character of the previous scene is instrumental in introducing the next scene and practically disappears or vanishes from the stage».²⁸⁰ he diminishes in narrative import and presence. His witness fades away, although there are several retrospective references to him, most of which affirm his entirely successful role in pointing to the Johannine Jesus, and, consequently, becomes a witness to the truth (5:33; 10:40).²⁸¹ This type of «witness» means a deliberate withdrawal (3:30). His authority is not to compete with that of Jesus; his disciples shall not be guided by him but by «the Lamb of God». This mediating function could entitle him the first Christian as it is a common pattern of the Gospel that one leads another to the faith in Jesus — for example: Philip with Nathanael, the Samaritan woman with the Samaritan villagers.

The role that JB assumes in this scene is fundamental: in fact, the encounter with Jesus by the first two disciples is mediated by him, who clearly appears in his capacity as a representative witness of the Scriptures. He acts as a bridge between the two Covenants²⁸² and makes sure that he passes from prophecy to seeing its fulfilment with his own eyes: he is the true representative of the Scriptures of Israel, for the content of the Scriptures is the promised Messiah, Jesus, and both are witnesses on behalf of him, so the reader can understand the close analogy of the revelation value of the Scriptures with that of JB's testimony.²⁸³ Scriptures are, therefore, used by the FG to testify to the identity of Jesus, finding in him its eschatological fulfilment: Jesus is legitimized as an envoy of God, precisely because of this continuity of revelation in the history of Israel's salvation, of which he is the apex.²⁸⁴ Now, the Scriptures, the same as JB, has the function of supporting this fundamental motive of the Gospel.

In sum, both disciples that are mentioned in Jn. 1:35 would then become the first two members of the Christ's church. We have before us, in

280. M. GEORGE, *The Christocentric*, 116.

281. D.A. LEE, «Witness», 13.

282. G. ZEVINI, *John*, 83.

283. M.J.J. MENKEN, «Observations», 133.

284. A. CAVICCHIA, *Le sorti e le vesti*, 21.

these verses, the beginning of the church which the BD (one of the two disciples of JB²⁸⁵) will be its key-witness (chapter 13 onward).

3. Concluding Observations

They are acting upon his [JB] testimony, following Jesus and becoming his disciples. These verses bear a transitional meaning. The first disciples move from being disciples of JB to being disciples of Jesus: they constitute the salvation-historical transition from JB to Jesus as the Coming One.²⁸⁶ It is a significant step in the salvation history. Up to this stage, they have not yet attained faith in Jesus. The goal of this movement towards Jesus is reached at Jn. 2:11 when the glory of Jesus is revealed and the disciples believe in him. Therefore, *he is the type of Jew who understands the Scriptures in its deep messianic sense*. Because of his understanding of the Scriptures, he allowed his disciples to follow Jesus. Thus, he remains the example of a Witness and a Prophet.

285. «The traditional identification of the unnamed disciple as the Evangelist, the 'beloved disciple', is plausible enough». (D.A. CARSON, *John*, 154).

286. H. RIDDERBOS, *John*, 80.

The Friend–Witness: A Prophetic Imagery (Jn. 3:22–30)

Jn. 3:22–30, which contains the last testimony of JB about Jesus, is of particular significance. The character that he chooses to refer to Jesus is the most beautiful one: ὁ νυμφίος, «the Bridegroom». Undoubtedly, the marriage is one of the fundamental representatives of the messianic salvation time;¹ it is that salvation, the kingdom of heaven is constantly compared to a Wedding Banquet (cf. Mt. 22:2; 25:1), because there is no more important ceremony in the life of a family than the wedding of the beloved son.

JB is telling us that the expected ceremony, this wedding to which we are all invited, is next and the Bridegroom, whom are all expected is Jesus, the Son of God. In Cana, we were told about a wedding which will be developed throughout the FG; from this point, we are drawn to the Bridegroom; Jn. 20 will talk about the bride. The whole story of the Risen Jesus' meeting Mary Magdalene in the garden, cannot be read in another key than the bridal one; she represents the bride of the Song of Songs (cf. 3:1–4), and with her, the definitive Marriage–Covenant between Jesus–Bridegroom and Mary Magdalene–Bride, the character of the messianic community, comes to its apex.²

For then, salvation is an ἀγάπη, a great feast. God, who is love (cf. 1 Jn. 4:8.16), wants, through the Prophets and Jesus himself in the Gospels, to assist us internalize this beautiful representation of his love. It is the wedding, preceded by the Father, to which he Himself has wished to invite us personally, in which Jesus is the Bridegroom and we, gathered together in his church, are the bride, νύμφη. This is the superlative loving union that

1. Cf. Hos. 2; Isa. 49:18; 54:4; 62:4–5; Jer. 2:1–2; 31:31–32; Rev. 19:7; 21:2.

2. J. MATEOS – J. BARRETO, *Dizionario teologico*, 136.

God the Father establishes with his people. Here, we will see that JB as «the friend of the Bridegroom» will be the *shosh'bin* of the New Messianic Marriage, who brings all the expectations of the Scriptures to Jesus, the Bridegroom of the NT.

I. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation
<p>²² Μετὰ ταῦτα ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν καὶ ἐκεῖ διέτριβεν μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἐβάπτιζεν.</p>	<p>²² After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the Judean countryside and there was remaining with them and was baptizing.</p>
<p>²³ Ἦν δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων ἐν Αἰνῶν ἐγγὺς τοῦ Σαλείμ, ὅτι ὕδατα πολλὰ ἦν ἐκεῖ, καὶ παρεγίνοντο καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο.</p>	<p>²³ But also John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, for there was much water, and were coming and were baptized.</p>
<p>²⁴ οὐπῶ γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης.</p>	<p>²⁴ For John was not yet put in prison.</p>
<p>²⁵ Ἐγένετο οὖν ζήτησις ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν Ἰωάννου μετὰ Ἰουδαίου περὶ καθαρισμοῦ.</p>	<p>²⁵ Then a debate happened by the disciples of John with a Jew concerning purification.</p>
<p>²⁶ καὶ ἦλθον πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· ῥαββί, ὃς ἦν μετὰ σοῦ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ᾧ σὺ μαρτυρήκας, ἴδε οὗτος βαπτίζει καὶ πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν.</p>	<p>²⁶ and came to John and said to him, Rabbi! Who was with you beyond the Jordan, who you have been testified about, behold! This baptizes and all come to him.</p>
<p>²⁷ ἀπεκρίθη Ἰωάννης καὶ εἶπεν· οὐ δύναται ἄνθρωπος λαμβάνειν οὐδὲ ἓν ἐὰν μὴ ᾖ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.</p>	<p>²⁷ Answered John and said, «no person able to receive, not even anyone if it is not given to him from the heaven.</p>
<p>²⁸ αὐτοὶ ὑμεῖς μοι μαρτυρεῖτε ὅτι εἶπον [ὅτι] οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἀπεσταλμένος εἰμὶ ἔμπροσθεν ἐκείνου.</p>	<p>²⁸ You yourselves testify to me that I said [that] I am not the Christ but that I have been sent before him.</p>
<p>²⁹ ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου ὁ ἑστηκὼς καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ χαρᾶ χαίρει διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου. αὕτη οὖν ἡ χαρὰ ἣ ἐμὴ πεπλήρωται.</p>	<p>²⁹ the one who has the bride bridegroom is. But the friend of the bridegroom, the one who has been stood and heard him rejoices with joy through the voice of the bridegroom; this then the joy of mine fulfilled.</p>
<p>³⁰ ἐκείνου δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι.</p>	<p>³⁰ He must increase, and I decrease».</p>

2. Exegesis

2.1. Jesus' Baptismal Activity (3:22)

– Μετὰ ταῦτα

Previously, Jesus and his disciples had been in the city of Jerusalem, where he cleansed the Temple (2:13–22), performed several miracles (2:23) and spoke with Nicodemus (3:1–21). Now, they are leaving Jerusalem and heading out into the countryside, where Jesus spent time with his disciples.³

The formula μετὰ ταῦτα is distinctive to the FG and it is, therefore, «a Johannine *Eigentümlichkeit*»⁴ (Characteristic). This formula occurs 8x in the FG (3:22; 5:1.14; 6:1; 7:1; 13:7; 19:38; 21:1) and marks a temporal sequence (see also 2:12).⁵ It indicates that the current scene closes and a new one begins, and therefore, introduces a new character and setting.⁶ It connects the previous section, the dialogue of Jesus with Nicodemus (3:1–21), who disappears from the scene and marks a new beginning. Μετά that dialogue, Jesus leaves Jerusalem and goes to the land of Judea, without providing precise details.

– ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ

It is significant to notice that the aorist ἦλθεν is also to be referred to Jesus' disciples, who [Jesus] is not presented as alone — as in the previous conversation with Nicodemus — but surrounded by disciples. It is the first time since the Prologue that Jesus is the subject of the verb ἔρχομαι: εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον, «He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him» (1:11).

3. E.W. KLING, *John*, 215.

4. J.W. PRYOR, «John and Jesus», 20.

5. J.E. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 244; see also C.K. BARRETT, *St. John*, 194.

6. M. RESE, «Johannes 3,22–36», 89.

7. The verb ἔρχομαι is a verb of movement; it describes the triple movement within our text: (1) That of Jesus and his disciples from Jerusalem to the Judean countryside. (2) That of JB's disciples towards their ῥαββί. (3) That of the πάντες towards Jesus. Here the verb reaches its climax because it designates Jesus' salvific truth: πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν.

– εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν

Jesus and his disciples move from Jerusalem (2:23) to the wider geographic space of «the land of Judea» that was under the direct inspection and jurisdiction of Jerusalem. The chronological data is vague and the FE does not trace a precise itinerary.⁸ Difficulties are also caused by the location. The fact that Jesus goes εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν, at the same time, makes a reference to the statements about the stay of Jesus in Jerusalem (2:13.23). The problem is, of course that Jerusalem, as a capital, is part of Judea and the journey of Jesus would be, so to speak, from Judea to Judea. The tendency to take the turn εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν may be due to this obvious contradiction.

– καὶ ἐκεῖ διέτριβεν μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἐβάπτιζεν

Two verbs point out to the idea of *remaining* in the FG and complement each other. The first verb we have mentioned earlier in this study is μένω. It was mentioned during the baptism of Jesus to describe the *remaining* of the Spirit on Jesus where JB declared Jesus' baptism in the Spirit (1:32–33). The second verb, that occurs only here is διατρίβω, and it comes in tandem with the verb βαπτίζω⁹ that describes the baptismal activity of Jesus himself.

The mention of the baptismal activity of Jesus comes under the imperfect form ἐβάπτιζεν and indicates that this activity of Jesus is not an occasional but a sustainable practice over a long period. It is an action that had already been foretold in Jn. 1:33 as a «baptism in the Holy Spirit», which, at the same time, was contrasted with the «baptism in water» (1:26.31.33). This is not the only link to what has been said so far. Also Jn. 3:5 speaks of «born of water and Spirit».

Now, the question that rises: is this to be meant as an intrinsic Christian form of baptism or not?¹⁰

8. J.R. MICHAELS, *John*, 212.

9. This verb describes three kinds of baptism in the FG: (1) John's baptism in water (1:25–26). (2) Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit (1:33). (3) The eschatological Johannine community in water and Spirit (3:5.22–23).

10. T. NICKLAS, «Literarkritik und Leserrezption», 183.

Jesus stands with his disciples and there — a special feature of the representation of Jesus in the FG — «he was baptizing». This baptism is not determined in details (as the baptism of repentance; the baptism of forgiving the sins [...]), just as the baptism of John.¹¹ This indicates that Jesus' baptism may have a preparatory character, which means only following him and being able to hear his call.¹² Others understand that this statement here regarding Jesus' baptism clearly implies water and not Spirit baptism just as JB had done earlier (1:26.31).¹³ In Jn. 3:22, a competitive situation is described that is simply unthinkable from the model of the first chapter. This refers to the Christian baptism and not to the baptism performed by Jesus. But the question at issue is: why does the FE mention the baptism performed by Jesus in this passage?

The remark of JB's disciples in Jn. 3:26 offers him the opportunity to distinguish himself from Jesus and, once again, to explain the qualitative difference between both baptisms. The FE evidently wants to bring both ministries (Jesus and JB) into contrast by this juxtaposition (3:22–23), for the reader is not to forget that Jesus is the one who baptizes ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (1:33). Just as JB is called «the Baptist» or «the baptizer» because it was characteristic of his ministry to baptize with water, so is Jesus, who is called «the Baptist» or «the baptizer» because it is characteristic of his ministry to baptize with Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Jesus' baptism, therefore, should be read in conjunction with JB's answer to the Pharisees questioning why he baptizes: «I baptize with water» (1:26), he says, using the emphatic «I», *but another comes after me* [...]. His indirect answer establishes a contrast that becomes clear after mentioning Jesus' baptism with Holy Spirit.¹⁵ In Jn. 3:3–5, Jesus speaks about the necessity of the new birth symbolized by the Christian baptism. In addition to that, Jesus himself does not baptize with water and Spirit in the sense of a concrete rite but probably the Johannine community does.

The contradiction in Jn. 4:2 καίτοι γε Ἰησοῦς αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐβάπτισεν ἀλλ' οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, «Although it was not Jesus himself but his disci-

11. C.G. MÜLLER «Der Zeuge und das Licht», 500.

12. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St John*, I:411.

13. J.R. MICHAELS, *John*, 213.

14. J.R.W. STOTT, *The Baptism*, 13.

15. T.G. BROWN, *Spirit*, 90.

ples who baptized» is a pseudo contradiction. It is even quite consistent and necessary to have the correction written in Jn. 4:2. This parenthetical note asserts that Jesus performed baptism for a while.¹⁶ The imperfect ἐβάπτισεν indicates that Jesus resumed a habitual practice.¹⁷ This idea can also be based on Jn. 4:1 where the FE confirmed that Jesus βάπτισεν (present tense). The hesitation, regarding whether Jesus baptizes others or that his disciples themselves baptize, can be interpreted in temporal terms as well. The FE persists that, by every remarkable incident of Jesus' life, Jesus is still present in his church to this day.

It has already been emphasized that the Spirit–Baptism — as a metaphorical baptism — cannot be limited to a concrete baptism and that this baptism has a different meaning from JB's water–baptism. Thus, the correction of Jn. 4:2¹⁸ is necessary because Jn. 3:22–23 refers to the Christian baptism and not to the baptism performed by Jesus.¹⁹ Therefore, Spirit–Baptism is an exceptional feature which is set out only to Jesus. This prerogative designates him as the One on whom the Spirit remains, and as the Son of God. In this sense, Jesus' Spirit–Baptism cannot be equated with neither JB's baptism nor the Johannine community's baptism which is described in Jn. 3. This statement that refers to the Spirit–Baptism is not addressed in the FG.²⁰

16. «John 3:22; 3:26; and 4:1–3 seem to contradict what is reported in John 1:33, where it is also said that Jesus was a baptizer but, in a way, different from John. Whereas the latter baptized with water, Jesus baptized “with (en) the Holy Spirit.” It may be noted, first of all, that this distinction between the baptism of John and that of Jesus is paralleled in the Synoptic Gospels (the very same terminology being employed) and is thus probably traditional (Mk. 1:7–8; Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16; cf. Acts 1:5; 11:16). Second, the point of this distinction may simply be that whereas John's baptizing action did not involve the instrumentality of the spirit (cf. Acts 19:3–6), the baptizing action of Jesus, or of Johannine missionaries, did. Such a conclusion finds support in John 3:5, a text that occurs between the two groups of texts already considered». (M.C. DE BOER, «Jesus the Baptizer», 95).

17. F.J. MOLONEY, *John*, 105.

18. «The similarity between those who are doing the baptizing, John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus, is founded upon Jesus, who is authorizing true baptism on both accounts». (E.W. KLINK, *John*, 215).

19. J.F. McHUGH, *John*, 262–263; see also J. BEUTLER, *John*, 113.

20. For further reading, see G.R. BEASLEY–MURRAY, *Baptism*, 67–72.

2.2. *John’s Baptismal Activity* (3:23)

– Ἦν δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων

The conjunction καὶ with the participle βαπτίζων bind JB’s character with that of Jesus’s character and place them in comparison with each other. Hence, Jn. 3:23 contrasts with Jn. 3:22: the persons (Jesus and his disciples, and JB) as well as the baptismal places (Judea, and Aenon near Salim) are juxtaposed, and the actions are described in both cases. This means, the testimony is framed by the baptismal activity of the two (3:22–23), which, in some way, recalls the passage of Jn. 1:25–33, to which, this second part, is also linked to the reference of Jn. 1:28. But, while in the latter, the comparison took place around the meaning and the method of both baptisms, here, in this second part of Jn. 3, the comparison takes place directly between the historical meaning and the ontological point of view in reference to both, JB and Jesus, and the relationship between them.

– ἐν Αἰνῶν ἐγγύς τοῦ Σαλείμ ὅτι ὕδατα πολλὰ ἦν ἐκεῖ

The FG places the baptismal activity of JB in two different loci: first at «Bethany, beyond the Jordan» (1:28), then at «Aenon near Salim» (3:23).²¹ The location, therefore, points to the fact that there is another baptism that is now active and he, therefore, freed his place (1:28). Comparing Jn. 3:22 and 23, one can observe that Jesus’ activity sphere extends to the whole region (the Judean countryside), while he stops at a certain place. Jn. 3 assures that Jesus, while in the company of the disciples, baptizes people, but there is no mention of water–baptism in relation to him, on the contrary to JB.

Besides, this latter verse, which gives rich geographical information, seems to be based on an old tradition.²² The localization of «Aenon, near Salim»,²³ which is in the heart of Samaria, is not only honorable in the Samaritan toponym but also, and most pertinent, holds a theological value in the Johannine

21. B.C. DENNERT, *John the Baptist*, 75.

22. J. ZUMSTEIN, *Saint Jean*, 1:129.

23. We do not know with certainty where Aenon was located, but the fact that it is described as a place where there was abundant water has led some authors to suggest an area of Samaria. (cf. R.E. BROWN, *John*, 1:151; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St. John*, 1:412–413; J.F. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 247).

narratives: JB's baptismal activity at Aenon serves perfectly as an introduction to the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (4:4–26) in Gen. 24:5 perspective.²⁴ Before leaving in order to fulfil the mission entrusted to him, Abraham's servant asked his master: «Perhaps the woman will not follow me in this land?» (Gen. 24:5). But Abraham reassures him by saying: «YHWH will send his angel before you, so that you may take a woman from there for my son» (Gen. 24:7).²⁵ Similarly, in Jn. 3:28, where he asserts to his disciples that he is not the Christ but has been sent before him.

Yet, his baptismal activity is directly ordained to prepare the marriage of Christ with his wife, the *ekklesia*. This wedding imagery, already introduced at Cana, is continued in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman,²⁶ where Jesus appears to be the (True) Bridegroom in the discussion about her πέντε ἄνδρας, «five husbands» and how she and the Samaritans come to believe in Jesus as the Saviour of the world (4:39–42). Instead of a Jewish «bride», Jn. 4 presents a Samaritan one: the marriage between Jesus and his people is based not on an ethnic birth but on a spiritual birth. The Spirit-born disciples of Jesus are the real bride.²⁷ Another remarkable nuptial aspect is the use of the verb χαίρω (4:36) that also characterized the rejoicing of the bridegroom's friend.

– καὶ παρεγίνοντο καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο

JB still baptizes, and his mission to make Jesus known to Israel (1:31) has not been completed yet. At the same time, his mission will be ended soon, as the reader learns in Jn. 3:24 by the FE and in Jn. 3:30 by JB himself.²⁸

2.3. *John's Testament* (3:24)

– οὐπω γάρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης

Indicated by the adverb οὐπω, we are looking at things which have not been mentioned so far, nor will they play a role in the following. The

24. M.-É. BOISMARD, « Aenon, près de Salem », 223.

25. L. PEDROLI, « Il trittico sponsale di Giovanni », 171.

26. M. MULLINS, *John*, 149; see also R. VIGNOLO, *Personaggi*, 129–130.

27. C. BENNEMA, *Encountering Jesus*, 171.

28. L. SCHENKE, *Johannes*, 67.

wording suggests the FE's knowledge of JB's future destiny that refers to the divine plan — this will be seen in using the divine necessity $\delta\epsilon\hat{\iota}$ in Jn. 3:30 — exactly as it is mentioned in the Cana context (2:4), where Jesus' Hour depends on the Father's will.²⁹

At first sight, it is as if this verse aims to take the Johannine reader behind the scenes, after some mentions of deeds and words, to tell him what really the result is, or what is the motive or words' meaning.³⁰ The use of the conjunction $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$, which relates the verse to the previous one, supports this idea. In this connection, the FE wants to tell his reader that JB is still active «for he was not yet put into prison» (see also 7:30; 8:20).

Unlike the Synoptics (Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; 6:17–29; Lk. 3:20), the arrest of JB is never described in details in the FG. The fact that he was arrested and later executed is evidently presupposed by the readers. Moreover, in the Synoptic version of this episode, Jesus' public ministry begins after his arrest (cf. Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14–15). At this time, Jesus continues where JB left off and literally proclaims the same message (cf. Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:15).³¹ Therefore, the commentary of Jn. 3:24 summarizes the last phase of his life story, which is presumed to be known by the reader especially that he is on his way to prison $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \tau\eta\nu\ \phi\upsilon\lambda\alpha\kappa\eta\nu$. The question at issue is: why should the FE consider this statement necessary? This Johannine verse recalls a text from Jeremiah's book, that increases JB's *prophetic identity* and the reliability of his testimony:³² «Now Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people, *for he had not yet been put in prison*» (Jer. 37:4).

This self-commentary from the side of the FE does not aim to give any historical information as a background for Jn. 3:30 («He must increase, and I decrease»; cf. also 3:26; 4:1).³³ Indeed, after this scene, JB himself does not appear again but is referred to only in the past tense by Jesus (5:33–36) or the FE (10:40–41).³⁴ This indicates that the FG is not so far from the story of his imprisonment, but he directs his reader's attention to his free exit from the scene,³⁵ unlike the Synoptic narratives, where he

29. J. VARGHESE, *Love*, 80.

30. E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 349.

31. G. ZEVINI, *John*, 130.

32. C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:577.

33. C.K. BARRETT, *St. John*, 221.

34. W. HOWARD-BROOK, *Becoming Children of God*, 96.

35. Grammatically, the participle pluperfect passive that is used in this verse $\beta\epsilon\beta\lambda\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ often

forcibly left the scene by Herod's forces, who arrested him and put him in prison (cf. Mt. 14:3; Mk. 6:17; Lk. 3:20). From this point, precisely, one can understand JB's farewell testimony in Jn. 3:27–30. What he is going now to testify is his final testimony about Jesus, «his testament»: the FG is about to reciprocate the eulogy, by making him, in his last words on earth, a wholehearted witness to the superior status of Jesus (3:25–30).³⁶

2.4. *Baptism as Marriage to the Bridegroom* (3:25–26)

Jn. 3:25–26 provides different details. These verses that introduce JB's final testimony, contain two key verbs: the first is the perfect *μεμαρτύρηκας* and the second is the present *βαπτίζει*. Both underline the central theme of the passage concerning the internal and purifying power of Jesus' baptism and that of JB. They form two cadres. The first concerns JB, while the second concerns Jesus. There is a discussion about the purification; since this term at Cana's wedding (2:6) signifies the Jewish rites,³⁷ and as our passage talks about the baptismal activity of Jesus and JB, the argument may state the comparison between Jewish rites and JB's baptism, or rather, the comparison between the Jewish rites, on the one side, and the baptism of JB and Jesus, on the other side, considered together. The second shifts the attention from JB to Jesus, in the success of his activity: *πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν* (3:26e).³⁸

2.4.1. A Debate (3:25)

- Ἐγένετο οὖν ζήτησις ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν Ἰωάννου μετὰ Ἰουδαίου περὶ καθαρισμοῦ

Two significant characters are practicing baptism (3:22–23) and a debate arises between «a Jew»³⁹ and the disciples of the Baptist. We are told about

expresses a parenthesis, or a statement out of its chronological place, of the nature of an afterthought, which corrects a misapprehension likely to arise in readers of the Synoptic Gospels. (cf. E.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Grammar*, 348–349). This means that the continuous mentioning of the baptismal activity of JB is explained in Jn. 3:24, «For John was not yet put in prison».

36. J.F. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 247.

37. J. BEUTLER, *John*, 104.

38. All of this is telling. JB's water baptism (1:26) prepares the people for the coming of the Bridegroom. Jesus' baptism in the Holy Spirit (1:33) brings the church, the bride (Eph. 5:32) into view.

39. It is noted that some manuscripts (P66 Ξ* Q fi.13 565 al latt syc samss bo) read the plural

the debate «about purification» in quite generic terms. This verse is strangely disconnected from the surrounding context: previously mentioned is Jesus' baptismal activity (3:22), which happened in parallel with JB's baptism in Aenon near Salim (3:23). This is dated in Jn. 3:24 before the arrest of JB. Moreover, the theme of «purification», which is mentioned here, acts like a kind of foreign body in the course of the text and is not taken up again in the rest of the passage. A leeway in the text is the reference to the ζήτησις, «dispute» — a Johannine *hapax legomenon*⁴⁰ — between the disciples of JB and a Jew about purification καθαρισμός, «purification» (3:25), which plays no role in the immediate context. Nothing has been reported about the outcome of this dispute. But the Johannine reader is to learn the developmental process of this term in the FG's context.

In order to understand the standpoint of the FG, in the context of Jn. 3:25, the meaning of the term καθαρισμός, which marks the object of the ζήτησις, should be asked firstly. In the FG, there are some scattered notes, with which the FE expressly points out to his readers the purity and its importance in Judaism. For example, Jn. 2:6 mentions stone jars for the preservation of liquids, and this custom is justified by the FE with the καθαρισμός of the Jews. So, this keyword is also encountered here.⁴¹

In the immediate text, the term probably refers to JB's baptism also by water. This dispute is, then, concentrated on the spiritual value of his baptismal ministry. But the question remains open, and the reader is to expect the answer which the text will give in Jn. 13:10 and Jn. 15:3.⁴² Jn. 13:10 is part of the footwashing story (13:1–20). The FE dates this story just before the Passover, where cultic purity was imperative for the community sacrifice in the Temple, as it is evidenced in Jn. 11:55 and Jn. 18:28. In the context of these cultic requirements due to the feast, Jesus now emphasizes that Peter is already «completely pure». In this context, these Johannine verses mention the primacy of ethical purity over all ritual cleansing. The

form Ἰουδαίων instead of the immediate text that reads the singular. In my opinion, the plural form is the dominant form in the FG. But in the context of Jn. 3:22 where Jesus and his disciples came to the Judean countryside, the preferred reading will be the singular, since it refers to a Judean.

40. J.F. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 247.

41. N. FÖRSTER, «Jesus der Täufer», 458.

42. L. SCHENKE, *Johannes*, 63.

FG thus engages with an ongoing debate within Jewish Christianity about the obligatory nature of ritual washing.⁴³

2.4.2. John's Disciples (3:26)

– καὶ ἦλθον πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ

The introduction by the conjunction καί in Jn. 3:26 is really directed to Jn. 3:25; again, it is the reader who, to see a meaning behind Jn. 3:26 creating a causal connection between the two statements. The disciples come back to JB and are frustrated and outraged, not about the Jew, but about Jesus himself. They are irritated that Jesus and his disciples are more successful than themselves. In fact, they even seem to be upset about JB himself, about the fact that he did not do anything to remedy this situation. The words of JB's disciples in Jn. 3:26 are treacherous.

It is interesting to observe the way the disciples speak to Jesus. They do not call him by the name (Jesus). They call Jesus (in an impersonal way) «Who was with you [...] who you have been testified about». Perhaps, at this point, we should notice an observation which is obtained by a successive reading of the FG. After JB's reference to «the Lamb of God» (1:36), which led two of his disciples to follow Jesus (1:37), other disciples of JB apparently remained in communion with him. JB's disciples request consists of two statements: in the first statement (3:26b), they make memory of the past and especially of the testimony given by JB to Jesus. While in the second one (3:26c), they evoke the irresistible immediate success of Jesus, they report the rivalry that now exists between the two groups.

– ῥάββι, ὃς ἦν μετὰ σοῦ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου

It is worth noting that this is the only place in the NT where the honorific *Rabbi* is applied to someone other than Jesus: the FG thus represents JB not as a solitary preacher living rough in the desert (as always in the Synoptics), but as the respected teacher of a well-defined religious group⁴⁴ that demonstrate their own loyalty to their master. These disciples ad-

43. N. FÖRSTER, «Jesus der Täufer», 455.

44. J.F. McHUGH, *John 1–4*, 248.

dress JB with *Rabbi* and bring with it the authority that he has over them (1:38).⁴⁵ On the other hand, they recall the testimony made earlier by JB that seems to cause anxiety to them. The central point in JB's teaching is that it is entirely directed towards Jesus as do the Scriptures. From this point of view, the teaching of the Scriptures is analogous to that of JB. Both of them testify not to themselves but to Jesus and reach their most perfect form in Christ (3:29–30; 17:12; 19:28); both have God as the source of their revelation (cf. Exod. 32:16; Jn. 1:33).

There is some connection with JB's first testimony (1:19–34) that must be considered for the significance of the text.⁴⁶ Thus, the designation of Jesus as ὃς ἦν μετὰ σοῦ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου refers, of course, to the position in 1:28; while the relative theorem ᾧ σὺ μεμαρτύρηκας, which also designates Jesus, refers to the entire unity of Jn. 1:19–34. As per their own statement, his disciples appear to have witnessed his earlier testimony (1:20–23). In this hint, the question of his disciples is, «What do you mean?», «What does that mean?». Jesus was first presented by his disciples as a former disciple, who was with him «beyond the Jordan». Then, however, a cue falls, which has repeatedly expressed the role of him in his orientation to Jesus: ᾧ σὺ μεμαρτύρηκας.

Herein, it is remarkable that the verb μαρτυρέω in Jn. 3:26.28, which is followed by dative of interest or advantage (ᾧ and μοι) means «in favour of», «to defend», «to highlight Jesus». This means, the testimonial function of JB through the verb μαρτυρέω and the action of the baptism, both indicate the importance of JB's preaching and his preparatory action. Thus, the object of this testimony is the faith in Jesus, since Jn. 3:36: «The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who disbelieves in the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him» responds to Jn. 3:26. The theme of the testimony is then applied to JB's disciples. They recognize that their *Rabbi* never claimed to be the Christ, but a sent messenger (1:6; 3:28).

However, the decisive consequence of this — as opposed to the two disciples mentioned in Jn. 1:35.37b — does not appear to be drawn: they appear to

45. McHugh notes that this is the only place in the NT where the term «Rabbi» is applied to someone other than Jesus, saying, «The writer thus represents the Baptist not as a solitary preacher living rough in the desert (as always in the Synoptics), but as the respected teacher of a well-defined religious group». (J.F. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 248).

46. B.C. DENNERT, *John the Baptist*, 77.

be stubborn. It is significant to notice that the disciples mention his testimony through the key verb μαρτυρέω in the perfect tense μεμαρτύρηκας, which clearly shows that JB's early testimony (1:19–28; 29–34) is always applied and has continuing effects.⁴⁷ Thus, we can find ourselves again in the world of chapter I, for many expressions have already been encountered in JB's testimony, as we shall see in the following table:

I am not the Christ (1:20).	I am not the Christ...I have been sent before him (3:28).
I [am] a voice crying in the wilderness (1:23).	The friend of the bridegroom the one who has stood and heard him (3:29).
A man comes after me (1:30).	The one coming from above (3:31).
I have seen the Spirit descended [...] and remained on him (1:32).	God gives the Spirit without measure (3:34).
This is the Son of God (1:34).	The Father loves the Son (3:35). ⁷

– ἴδε

Using the same particle ἴδε, the Johannine John used to proclaim «the Lamb of God», his disciples let him know that Jesus — simply indicated by the demonstrative οὗτος, without specifying the name and the title — baptizes (there is no mention neither water nor Spirit) with the consequence that πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν. Similar to the First Call narrative, where the verb is used to describe the contact with Jesus is ἔρχομαι (1:39.46.47).

Through the attention call ἴδε, not only JB, but also the Johannine reader, are drawn to the special perception of JB's disciples: «This baptizes, and all come to him» (3:26c). The deictic use of the personal and demonstrative pronouns coupled with the interjection ἴδε, emphasizes the contrasting subjects of JB and Jesus, while illustrating the disciples' anxiety over the situation.⁴⁸ Consequently, this ἴδε bears, implicitly and explicitly, the disturbing of JB's disciples regarding Jesus' success.⁴⁹ The breadth of Jesus' influence and his popularity which are connected with his baptismal activity, surpass that of JB (3:23). It is obviously a question of Jesus' superiority over JB, even in his very own area.

47. L. MORRIS, *John*, 211.

48. C.W. SKINNER, *Characters and Characterization*, 161.

49. J.E. MCHUGH, *John* 1–4, 249.

– πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν

A movement that is expressed by the verb ἔρχομαι followed by the preposition πρὸς, which tells «the going towards», indicating the direction. JB's disciples establish the success of Jesus through «the historical exaggeration»: πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν. This Johannine portrayal puts this group of disciples in tandem with the Pharisees, who also warn against Jesus' status within the Jewish society: «If we let him go on thus, πάντες will believe in him» (11:48; see also 4:1). After Lazarus was brought to life, the Chief Priests declare that «πολλοί of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus» (12:11; see also 3:19). As we have already mentioned, it is to be observed that πάντες «is an indignant exaggeration, very natural in the circumstances».⁵⁰ On the other hand, the Johannine reader knew from the very beginning of the Gospel about this πάντες that comes in accord with JB's testimony: ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ (1:7c). In this context, this term πάντες is to be taken qualitatively, not quantitatively. It designates variety and degree, not number.

The assignment of JB's ministry is to introduce the Christ. The discontent of his disciples comes from the provocative contrast between his activity and that of Jesus done by the Jew and, on the other hand, from the idea of a competitor;⁵¹ they see Jesus as a competitor rather than the culmination of their service mission. Herein, we might understand that the subject of the ζήτησις comes from the idea of rivalry in the mind of JB's disciples between JB and Jesus. None of these men seems to consider the possibility of leaving him and joining Jesus, just as JB's first two disciples did. As a corollary, these disciples have no future in the FG.⁵²

However, JB can only rejoice over it: his explicit goal is to testify to the One who is superior to him and to lead people to Jesus. Therefore, there is no sufficient reason to see any competition between him and Jesus. When people go to him, this happens because of a divine plan: heaven (or God) gave them to him and Jesus receives them as divine gifts (3:27). Now when the πάντες come to Jesus, his joy is perfect, because it means that his mis-

50. L. MORRIS, *John*, 212.

51. M.L. LOANE, *Witness and Martyr*, 67.

52. G.T. MANNING, «The Disciples», 130.

sion is fulfilled, especially because the decisive purpose of his testimony was «to testify to the light ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν through him» (1:7).⁵³

2.5. *The Gift of Heaven* (3:27)

- ἀπεκρίθη Ἰωάννης καὶ εἶπεν· οὐ δύναται ἄνθρωπος λαμβάνειν οὐδὲ ἔν ἐάν μὴ ᾗ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

JB recognizes through the success of Jesus the purpose of God.⁵⁴ Accordingly, the new disciples are given to Jesus ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

The first sentence (the *apodosis*⁵⁵) of the solemnly introduced response of JB appears to be directed to his disciples, refusing to listen to their complaint about Jesus' success. He reminds his disciples of what his ministry is essentially about. His ministry is an assignment he received from God (1:6). «Faith or coming to Jesus is God's gift to the believer».⁵⁶ This divine gift can be seen in the eyes of the Prologue, where the FE spoke of *the Divine Sonship* (1:12). The *protasis* of the conditional clause placed by Jesus is almost the same as that of JB. He only changed the word οὐρανός, and replaced it by πατήρ. Similar to Jn. 3:27, one cannot reach the effect of the *apodosis*, if in reality the condition of the *protasis* is not fulfilled.

JB's answer has formally a universal character, but it is primarily applicable to Jesus. To be a disciple does not depend solely on the disciple. The call to follow Jesus is a gift from heaven. In the discourse on the bread of life in Capernaum, in a moment of acute crisis of his ministry, Jesus expresses the same thought in a sentence composed in a parallel way with that of JB's (6:65).

53. C.S. KEENER, *John*, 1:578.

54. C.K. BARRETT, *St. John*, 222.

55. Herein we have a conditional sentence that consists of a subordinate or dependent clause stating the condition or supposition (the if-clause) and a main or independent clause giving the inference or conclusion.

οὐ δύναται ἄνθρωπος λαμβάνειν οὐδὲ ἔν	<i>apodosis</i>
ἐάν μὴ ᾗ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ	<i>protasis</i>

The *protasis* begins with the conjunction ἐάν, «if» that underlines the difference of meaning, and therefore, emphasizes through the periphrastic construction ᾗ δεδομένον, the reason for which people go to Jesus. It is a gift from God himself (6:37.44.65; 17:6).

56. R.E. BROWN, *John*, 1:155.

Considering these Johannine verses, one can observe the similarity between JB's words and those of Jesus concerning the heavenly origin of what they had to receive (as we have seen: «From heaven», «from the Father», and «from above»⁵⁷). This means, he and Jesus receive their authority ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Of more importance to us, the intention of his words is to show the reason of Jesus' greater success⁵⁸ as a gift from heaven; it is a divine design. It is clear that the term ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ of Jn. 3:27 comes in relation to the descent of the Spirit of Jn. 1:32.⁵⁹ The idea is that JB attributes Jesus' spousal mission to the descent of the Spirit; it points out Jesus' messianic investiture, through which JB recognized him as the Son of God (1:34). Only the one who possesses the Spirit can attribute that title. The ἄνθρωπος who has not received the gift ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ cannot receive the Spirit (3:34).⁶⁰ The fact that many hasten to Jesus, as indicated Jn. 3:26, is an expression of God's will, but not a result of competitive dynamics.

Therefore, JB does not answer the question that his disciples ask him about baptism, but rather move the discussion to the sphere of revelation. Both JB and Jesus receive their authority from God (1:1–2; 3:13–14.16–17 [Jesus]; 1:6.33 [JB]). What determines the respective roles of JB and Jesus is not the rite of baptism, but what is given to him from heaven. In the immediately preceding encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, Jesus tells him about the heavenly origin of what he got to offer as well as what he has seen and heard (3:3.5.7–8.11–12). Jn. 3:27, then, serves as an introduction to JB's testimony. It is his answer to the disciples' anxiety of his.

2.6. *The Prophetic Messenger* (3:28)

– αὐτοὶ ὑμεῖς μοι μαρτυρεῖτε

The main clause of Jn. 3:28 is αὐτοὶ ὑμεῖς μοι μαρτυρεῖτε. The subject of the clause is the disciples of JB with the predicate of μαρτυρεῖτε, which refers to the content of the statements of Jn. 3:26. Herein, JB refers to what his disciples should have learned from him, from which they can also

57. C.G. KRUSE, *John*, 131.

58. L. MORRIS, *John*, 212.

59. J. MATEOS – J. BARRETO, *Giovanni*, 199.

60. J. MATEOS – J. BARRETO, *Giovanni*, 199.

testify (μαρτυρεῖτε). Accordingly, the discourse of his disciples about him can be understood as a «testimony».

– ὅτι εἶπον [ὅτι] οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός

The direct object is the clause ὅτι εἶπον [ὅτι]. This second ὅτι emphasizes the direct speech made by JB, which in turn contains two independent clauses: the nominal phrase οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός (3:28b) which recalls the phrase of Jn. 1:20⁶¹ and ἀπεσταλμένος εἰμὶ ἔμπροσθεν ἐκείνου (3:28c) which refers to the phrase ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος (1:15.27.30) united by the adversary conjunction ἀλλά.

It is important to bear in mind that the repetition of the decisive statements of JB's first testimony makes the relationship between himself and Jesus clear and unmistakable, especially that he established his role as the sent one before the Coming One: although he is not the anointed of God, JB has been «sent from God» (1:6) and his testimony about Jesus is in correspondence with the will of God. Although he is not the Christ, his testimony possesses an unquestionable authority.⁶²

– ἀλλ' ὅτι ἀπεσταλμένος εἰμὶ ἔμπροσθεν ἐκείνου

This second part of Jn. 3:28 seems to be an echo of Mal. 3:1.

ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου
καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου
καὶ ἐξαίφνης ἦξει εἰς τὸν ναὸν ἑαυτοῦ κύριος ὃν ὑμεῖς ζητεῖτε
καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς διαθήκης ὃν ὑμεῖς θέλετε ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται
λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ.

Look, I shall send my angel

to look upon the way before me.

And suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his Temple;

yes, the angel of the covenant whom you desire. Behold! He is coming,

says YHWH Sabaoth.

61. G. ZEVINI, *John*, 131.

62. F.L. MOLONEY, *John*, 106.

Two relevant verbs that are used in Malachi, were used by the FG to describe JB: ἐξαποστέλλω (1:6; 3:28) and ἐπιβλέπω (1:36).

The first verb is composed of the genitive preposition ἐκ, «out from» and ἀποστέλλω, «sent». The identity of the messenger of Malachi is completely consistent with the identity of the messenger of the FG, namely JB, since he has a divine provenance. This is proven by the usage of the passive voice ἀπεσταλμένος (like 1:6) that clearly describes «the divine initiative of his mission».⁶³

The second is ἐπιβλέπω, in the form of the indicative future middle ἐπιβλέψεται,⁶⁴ was used by the FE to describe JB's looking at Jesus as a fulfilment of the Promises in Jn. 1:36. In this way, he is the one who was sent from God to fulfil a commission that found its apex in preparing the way of the New Covenant's messenger, «the Son of God». This messenger, who shall prepare the way of the Lord, is evidently the same of the Deutero–Isaiah's messenger (1:23).

Once again, the use of ἀπεσταλμένος stresses the fact that JB is a Prophet, and therefore, represents the Scriptures. He comes before Jesus and points out to him. It is clarified that JB, in his proclamation of the word, is directed to the One who comes after him, who was before him. The temporal priority ἔμπροσθεν that characterizes Jn. 3:28 is, however, conceived in a special way: JB understands himself sent from God before the other. JB is again defined as ἀπεσταλμένος, who announces the coming of the Bridegroom. The preposition ἔμπροσθεν is, therefore, re–interpreted as provisional.⁶⁵ The demonstrative pronoun, ἐκεῖνος, is characteristic of the Johannine style and here, unambiguously, refers to Christ.

2.7. *John's Role: The Friend of the Bridegroom* (3:29)

2.7.1. The Marriage–Covenant

After fixing his role as sent from God, JB describes his relationship with the Christ in the terms of the marriage image. In this context, it is necessary to verify how the character of Jesus–the–Bridegroom is connected to

63. S.M. AHN, *The Christological Witness*, 119.

64. «The middle emphasizes the actor [subject] of the verb». (D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 415).

65. C.G. MÜLLER, «Der Zeuge und das Licht», 503.

the Marriage Covenant that is made by YHWH with the people of Israel. Above all, the Prophets⁶⁶ make abundant use of the marriage symbolism and analogy, which become one of the privileged images to represent the different situations of the Covenant, and it is also used to express the special relationship between YHWH-bridegroom and Israel-Bride.⁶⁷

The beginnings of this Marriage Covenant are to be traced back to the time of the desert, when God brought Israel out of the slavery of Egypt:

Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by their hand to bring them out from the land of Egypt; My covenant which they broke, although I was their husband, declares YHWH (Jer. 31:32).

This Covenant find its fulfilment in the days of the messianic restoration (cf. Hos. 2:16–21; 11:7–9; 14:2–9; Isa. 62:1–12), when, after the Babylonian exile, the expectation of a new marriage and an eschatological union, that will forever establish a Covenant between God and his people, makes its way.⁶⁸ In accordance with that, the marriage metaphor in the OT is connected to the relationship and of the covenant between YHWH and his people. As a result, this kind of symbolism is introduced by the Prophets as a principle image inherent to the Covenant.⁶⁹ In consequence, the theology of the Covenant between YHWH and his people would have been inspired by the Marriage Covenant.

However, it is in the *Song of Songs* where the theme finds its most significant poetic exaltation much so that the Jewish commentators from the first century A.D. onwards interpreted it in an allegorical key.⁷⁰ The Song reveals to the people the mystery of love in all its potential: the fruitful love between the bridegroom and the bride (cf. 8:6).⁷¹ The attribution of the title «Bridegroom» to the Messiah is almost unknown in contemporary Judaism to the writings of the NT. It always refers to JHWH.

Such a vision, then, will naturally find its full expression in the writings

66. See the works of G. RAVASI, *Il rapporto uomo-donna simbolo dell'alleanza nei profeti*, 41–56; L. ALONSO-SCHÖKEL, «Simboli matrimoniali nell'Antico Testamento», 365–387.

67. P. MAGLIOLI, *Il matrimonio*, 11.

68. J. HREBIK, «Dio come soggetto della gioia», 464–465.

69. L. PEDROLI, «La luce sponsale», 91.

70. For further reading, see K. HARDING, «I sought him but I did not find him», 43–59.

71. P. MELONI, «Cristologia nel Cantico dei Cantici», 138.

of the NT. These writings rely on the OT prophetic perspective in order to highlight the union of Christ with the Church (cf. 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:24–32). At the same time, however, the new vision also appears, as an invitation to participate in the wedding feast, which shows the inauguration of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt. 22:1–3; 25:1–13). In the FG, the theme of «the Bridegroom» is emphasized in two precise texts (2:1–11; 3:29).

2.7.2. The Bridegroom and the Bride

– ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν

The bridegroom is called the *ba'al* (לַבַּיִת = owner) of his woman as he is the *ba'al* of the house. It is not coincidence that the verb «to marry» in Hebrew has the same root as «becoming owner, ruling over». The verb ἔχω, then, has the meaning of «possessing», in the sense of «having ownership». The bride, in fact, was considered to be owned by the bridegroom in the same way as his other properties (significant in this sense Deut. 20:17). In fact, the wife was purchased through the *mohar*, a sum of money that the husband was required to pay to the father of the bride (cf. Gen. 34:11–12; Exod. 22:16; 1 Sam. 18:25). And it is around the theme of the bride's property that the marriage theology of the relationship between YHWH–Bridegroom and Israel–Bride is formed. Accordingly, the marriage metaphor describes the love of God–Bridegroom for the Covenant community. However, the allegory of the OT never identifies the eschatological bridegroom with the Messiah, but always refers to YHWH.

In the NT, the verb ἔχω may have the meaning of possessing sexually, having a carnal relationship (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2) but not in this context. In fact, the participle ὁ ἔχων is a static conclusion of the dynamic action indicated by the verb λαμβάνειν in 3:27: «No person is able to λαμβάνειν, not even anyone if it is not given to him from the heaven» (see also 14:21; 1 Jn. 3:3; 5:12).⁷² Hence, the Johannine phraseology ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην indicates in the present context «a metaphorical commentary on Jesus' making disciples»⁷³ (3:26; 4:1).

The symbolic use in the OT to describe Israel (the community of the

72. R. INFANTE, «La voce dello sposo», 305.

73. J. FREY, «Love–Relations», 180.

Covenant⁷⁴) as the bride of YHWH (cf. Isa. 61:10; 62:5; Jer. 2:2, 32; Hos. 2:16–21) was to be known by the FG. According to the Johannine theology, the bride is Israel (1:31), that is, those who come to Jesus as true Israelites (1:47). Those are, as the reader has long known, by no means all who follow him, but only those who believe in him and who are born from ἄνωθεν (3:3). In our text, the bride is everyone that believes in Jesus; his followers, the community of believers,⁷⁵ thus using an image for describing the spiritual marriage between God and his people through baptism (3:26).

The bride of the FG cannot be identified with a specific character. This is obvious if we look back at Cana's wedding. There, the bride does not even appear. At the same time, many Johannine female characters might fulfil this bride's role. The marriage metaphor crosses the whole Gospel, from the wedding at Cana (2:1–11), passing through JB announcement of Jesus as the Bridegroom of the bride (3:29), to the Samaritan woman (4:4–42)⁷⁶ to the various female characters such as: Jesus' mother (2:1–11; 19:25–27), Mary of Bethany (12:1–3) and Mary Magdalene⁷⁷ (20:1–2.11–16). These women play the role of the bride, as characters of the community of the Covenant and have a personal experience of faith with the Bridegroom.

The theme of the Covenant, between YHWH and his people, is read in terms of marriage relationship, therefore, Israel is considered to be the exclusive property of YHWH, consecrated to him. Similarly, in Jn. 1:11, it is attested that the Logos «came to his own, and his own people did not accept him». This is a significant verse because it constitutes the bridge of passage from YHWH to the Logos; the moment when Jesus, in his relations with Israel, takes YHWH's place. In this context, Jesus is the Bridegroom of the church, the messianic community (2:1–11).⁷⁸ Herein, the image of Christ–Bridegroom replaces that of YHWH–bridegroom: a new people, composed of Jews and Gentiles, a bride that Christ redeemed at

74. G. FERRARO, *La Gioia di Cristo*, 24.

75. S.M. SCHNEIDERS, «Women», 35.

76. L. PEDROLI, «Il trittico sponsale di Giovanni», 170–173; see also M.W. MARTIN, «Betrothal Journey Narratives», 520.

77. A. ROTONDO, *Dialogo d'amore*, 293.

78. A. SERRA, *Contribuiti dell'antica letteratura giudaica*, 355.

the price of his own blood.⁷⁹ Therefore, when JB presents the Messiah as a Bridegroom, this implies that he is more than a mediator, raising him to the level of the one to whom the people belong.⁸⁰ It is the FG that puts in a clearer way the dual membership of the believers both to God and to the Christ (17:6.9–10).

2.7.3. The Friend of the Bridegroom

– ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου

Having recalled the principle that Jesus is the Bridegroom and that the messianic community is the bride, now JB goes on to define his relationship to the Bridegroom: He is a special friend of the Bridegroom, who has the task of leading the bride to her Bridegroom, but he cannot possess her.⁸¹

According to the Johannine theology, in fact, there is a correspondence between hearing the voice of Jesus and being his friend. Identified by Jesus as Λάζαρος ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν (11:11), the brother of Mary and Marta is introduced in the narrative with these words by her sisters: κύριε, ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ (11:3). And the FE specifies that ἡγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον, «Though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus» (11:5). We can notice the use of both verbs ἀγαπάω and φιλέω, belonging to a common semantic purpose, related to the noun φίλος. What has been announced with eschatological tension after the healing of the paralytic (5:24–30), occurs here in the form of a sign: Lazarus hears from the tomb the voice of Jesus and thus passes from death to life. As a result of being a friend of Jesus, that is, a believer, he has heard his word (5:24) and can hear it again after the corporal death (5:28).

Moreover, the term φίλος is used in the FG in the meaning of discipleship⁸² (10:27; see also 10:3–5.16): «Through the character of Jesus, the

79. R. INFANTE, «L'amico dello sposo», 15.

80. Haste argues that JB uses the marriage language to reveal Jesus' identity. In this line of thought, he uses «the divine marriage metaphor to make clear that Jesus is the Messiah that God's people have anticipated». (M. HASTE, «The Divine Marriage Metaphor», 23).

81. S.R. SMOLARZ, *Covenant*, 174.

82. J.A. DU RAND, «Johannine Discipleship», 317–318.

Fourth Gospel equates discipleship with friendship». ⁸³ One can establish equivalence between: being friends of Jesus and hearing his voice. Lazarus is called a friend (11:11), and all those who fulfil the mission of Jesus are also his friends ὑμεῖς φίλοι μου ἐστε, «You are my friends» (15:14), for whom he will lay down his life (15:13).

In our text, the focus is on JB's subordinate role in relation to Jesus that is expressed by the expression of his role as «the friend of the Bridegroom». JB's role and the community of disciples around him begins to gradually decrease, while Jesus—the-Bridegroom's character begins to occupy the central place. It is also interesting to note that John's disciples, who are the recipients of statements made by JB in Jn. 3:29, should recognize that their teacher is not the bridegroom and can not claim the rights of the bride understood as the people of Israel believing in the Messiah.

In this context, the character of «the friend of the Bridegroom» assumes an institutional function of the *shosh^ebin*, «a close friend» of the Jewish marriage rites, who plays an important role in the preparation of the wedding, but not more than this. ⁸⁴ Among other things, he also has the task of standing at the door of the bridal chamber and joyfully listening to the voice of the bridegroom, confirming the consummation of the conjugal act. ⁸⁵ The metaphorical allusion, therefore, is derived from the custom of the Jewish marriage per which the most intimate friend of the bridegroom assumes the function of ensuring the success of the marriage. JB, who depicts his mission with this metaphor has now reached its peak: The Bridegroom has come, he is present, and has the bride. The friend's function is over; the joy of the Bridegroom in having the bride is now fulfilled.

As per the immediate context and to the development of the theme of Jesus-bridegroom, it is undoubtedly the *berit Nisu'im*, «marriage covenant», that is, the solemn introduction of the bride into the house of the bridegroom. Therefore, the reference to «the voice of the Bridegroom» in 3:29b, which the friend listens to, becomes comprehensible. In this sense, the testimony, which JB makes of Jesus as a Bridegroom, is decisively the culminating affirmation of the thematic development that the

83. D. KACZMAREK, *Language*, 47.

84. V.H. MATTHEWS, *Manners and Customs*, 225; see also R. INFANTE, «La voce dello sposo», 306.

85. C.H. TALBERT, *Reading John*, 106.

FE has begun at Cana (2:9): «Jesus is Israel’s awaited king and Messiah».⁸⁶ Therefore, JB affirms the superiority of Jesus and justifies the novelty in the doctrine and in the practice, convinced that the time of the messianic wedding has arrived.

– ὁ ἕστηκώς καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ

The use of the verb ἵστημι in the participle perfect ὁ ἕστηκώς, in an attributive function is related to ὁ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου. Often, in the FG, the verb ἵστημι is not used redundantly and, therefore, should not always be regarded as a typical Semitic narrative formula. It contains seeds of immobility and voluntary manner and may indicate the phrase that presents Jesus’ voluntary among his own (1:26), or the permanence and the perseverance in a place where the indicated character had already been (1:35; 6:22; 18:25; 20:11). The same verb, as noted, referred to John in Jn. 1:35 (εἰστήκει), indicates a position more than simply being still in the same place. He remains faithful to his place and to his function as a representative of the faithful Israel (1:31.47.49).

Herein, the FE uses the Jewish tradition on messianic times, which speaks of the eschatological marriage accomplished by voices of exultation and great joy.⁸⁷ This text presents a new element, «the voice of the Bridegroom». This element has a background in the *Song of Songs*, in which the bride exults in hearing the voice of the lover (cf. 2:8; 5:2). In our text, the usage of ὁ ἕστηκώς followed by the verb ἀκούω, indicates a relationship with a person, who is being presented as a friend.⁸⁸ In this case, «the friend of the Bridegroom» is waiting for an expected voice, the same as the OT Prophets who waited for the voice that will fulfil the prophecies; indeed, it is nothing but the voice of the Bridegroom.

More importantly, the pronoun αὐτοῦ which appears in the genitive refers to Jesus as the speaking person who is heard. From the grammatical point of view, it is not possible for the pronoun αὐτοῦ in the genitive to describe the person about which one can be heard (it should then appear

86. G.K. BEALE – D.A. CARSON, *Commentary*, 437.

87. R. INFANTE, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 123.

88. R. INFANTE, «La voce dello sposo», 306.

in the accusative).⁸⁹ JB, hearing Jesus, rejoices at the voice of Jesus. The fact that he does not hear this voice directly, makes us interpret his entire statement as a metaphor.

This part of Jn. 3:29 should be understood in the light of the above interpretations. It defines who the bridegroom is (the one who has the bride). However, the second part defines «the friend of the Bridegroom» (he is the voice of the Bridegroom). This interpretation is the fact of a functional identity shown above between the voices of the Father, the voice of the Son and the human voice JB. In fact, the voice of the Bridegroom is the voice of the Father, and JB, being a voice (1:23), is nothing but the personification of the voice of the Father, and therefore, the voice of the Bridegroom.

He hears the declaration about the Bridegroom; about his success (3:26), rejoices that he can participate in this success, because he is the voice of the Bridegroom himself. The person who hears is heard in the accusative, while the person who speaks is in the genitive.⁹⁰ This means, the pronoun αὐτοῦ in the genitive defines the person who speaks and not the one who hears. He, therefore, acts as the voice of the Bridegroom. The last two subordinate clauses, ὁ ἑστηκώς καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ and χαρᾶ χαίρει describe and define him as the spokesman of Jesus who says what the Bridegroom wants. On the other hand, we find these terms in Gen. 45:16 (LXX), where φωνή describes the message about the arrival of Joseph's brothers reaching the home of the Pharaoh. The context of Jn. 3:29 corresponds to these semantics because JB receives a message, φωνή, from his disciples about Jesus' activity (3:26). The FE states that the friend rejoiced when he received the message about the bridegroom.

– χαρᾶ χαίρει διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου

The term χαρᾶ functions here as a metaphor of hinge, in which JB identifies his joy with the joy of the Bridegroom's friend. The formulation χαρᾶ χαίρει is rightly recognized as a Semitic phrase, recalling the formulation, which appears in the context of the same pictorial metaphor «I will greatly rejoice in the Lord» in Isa. 61:10. This Isaianic verse is interpreted in the

89. P. DANOVE, «A Comparison of the Usage of ἀκούω», 77–78.

90. F. BLASS – A. DEBRUNNER, *A Greek Grammar*, 173 / 1; see also M. ZERWICK, *Biblical Greek*, 69.

Jewish tradition in a messianic way, and refers to marital symbolism. The joy of JB is compared here to the joy of the bride.⁹¹

Joy⁹² is complete not only because JB sees the rush of the crowds behind Jesus, but especially because he realizes the only desire of his life, that is, the definitive fulfilment of God's salvation and the realization of the covenant between God–bridegroom and humanity–bride. JB does not seek his own glory; on the contrary, he rejoices in seeing that the voice of Christ takes the place of his own. The context, therefore, speaks of a messianic wedding, whose banquet was already celebrated at the wedding of Cana (2:1–11). John's exultation and joy, therefore, fit into the context of the messianic times, which he sees fulfilled in Jesus.

Joy is the immediate cause of listening to the φωνή, «voice»⁹³ of the bridegroom: διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου. This metaphorical phrase is a stereotypical phrase known from the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, where it is used as an imprinted image of the human joy and which has a metaphorical deep dimension in the context of the promised salvation (cf. Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11). In Jer. 25:10, the metaphor is related to the light–metaphor (φῶς λύχνου — light of lamp), which is also used in the FG to describe the relationship between JB and Jesus (5:33).

In the messianic–eschatological sense, the prophetic section of Jer. 30–33 speaks of a restoration of the Covenant between God and his people, Israel, in the city of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem through the bridegroom's voice that will be heard again, providing an unchallenged joy. In this Jeremaic text, the voice of the bridegroom shows that the preparation achieves its peak; the time of the Prophets, announcers of the future, is ended with the coming of the expected Messiah. The parallelism, then, between Jer. 33:10–11 and Jn. 3:29 suggests that listening to the

91. M. ZIMMERMANN – R. ZIMMERMANN, «Der Freund des Bräutigams», 128.

92. The joy in Jesus' presence characterizes the Synoptic bridegroom (cf. Mt. 9:14–17; Mk. 2:18–22; Lk. 5:33–39), who inaugurates the messianic times, meaning, the definite salvation.

93. In the FG the «voice» belongs to God the Father who glorifies his name and will glorify again (12:28.30); belongs to the wind, a symbol of the Holy Spirit (3:8); belongs to Jesus. By hearing the voice of the Son of God and the Son of Man the dead will live, those who are in the tombs will come out for the Resurrection (5:25.28); the same as in the case of Lazarus in the tomb, to which Jesus «cried in a aloud voice: Lazarus, come out» (11:43); the sheep hear the voice of the True Shepherd Jesus, who calls them (10:3.4.16); before Pilate, Jesus declares: «Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice» (18:37).

voice of the Bridegroom is the fulfilment of the salvation promise. In this theological context, «the voice of the Bridegroom» is a synonym to the message of salvation.⁹⁴ The bridegroom's voice was the sign and the statement of the bride's virginity. It was also interpreted as the recitation by the bridegroom of the blessing prayer at the end of the marriage ceremony. These explanations reflect the Jewish marriage customs of the time.

On the other hand, it is worth paying more attention to the occurrences of the term φωνή in the FG itself. This noun describes the voice of Jesus as the shepherd of the sheep (10:16.27), the King (18:37), the Son of God (5:25) and the Son of Man (5:27–28). However, this term does not relate to Jesus only (3:29; 5:25.28; 10:3.4.16.27; 11:43; 18:37), but also to the wind (symbolizing the Spirit in 3:8); it also defines the voice of the Father (5:37; 12:28.30) and finally defines the person of JB (1:23). The Father's voice should in fact be understood as a testimony for the sake of the Son, indicating Jesus' true identity as the Son of God sent by the Father. In the case of JB, the voice should be understood as the definition of JB's mission (and therefore, his identity), which is the transmission of the voice (message) of the Father (1:33).

The very fact that he describes himself as a voice (1:23) indicates the proper semantics of this term, which should be understood as an information coming from the Father about the salvific mission of the Son. In any case, whether it is the heavenly voice of the Father and the Son or a human voice like the one of JB, the term defines the salvific information, the Father's testimony of salvation in the Son, for «the very voice of the Bridegroom–Messiah is the voice of God himself».⁹⁵

Accordingly, Jesus' announcement about hearing his voice in Jn. 8:37, πᾶς ὁ ὄν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς, «Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice» is fulfilled in the messianic marriage between Jesus and the disciples' community;⁹⁶ the voice is that of Jesus.⁹⁷

94. J. ZUMSTEIN, *Saint Jean*, I:133.

95. F.D. BRUNER, *John*, 220.

96. J. LÓPEZ, «Todo es que es de la verdad escucha mi voz», 80.

97. Herein, it is opportune to remember the meeting of Mary Magdalene with Jesus after the Resurrection (20:11–18). She is the one who hears the voice of the Bridegroom, and therefore this gives her to have a representative role as the bride of the Song of the Songs. The tomb of Jesus is placed in a garden (19:41). This element is very important, because the garden in the OT tradition and above all in the Song of Songs is the meeting place, where the bride goes to look for her lover,

The bride is the community of disciples who, the same as Nathanael, bear the title of *True Israelites*, and who, having heard the message of JB, they become his disciples, and thereby become his own. This is because they belong to him, as per another metaphor that of the shepherd, also matched to the term $\phi\omega\nu\etá$ (10:3.4.16.27).

In fact, the listening to the voice of Jesus defines the disciple: to be a disciple means to listen to Jesus' voice. The syntagma $\phi\omega\nu\etá + \acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\upsilon\omega$ describes the listening to the voice of Jesus by disciples, and precisely by those who are defined as sheep and those who are of truth (18:37). Remarkably, the same syntagma also describes JB as listening to the voice of the Bridegroom (3:29). In conclusion, JB, «the friend of the Bridegroom», is presented as a disciple by listening to the voice of the Bridegroom: he belongs to the True Israelites.⁹⁸ Thus, the theme of the voice in our text is Christological. Accordingly, the formulations used in Jn. 3:29 «hear the voice» and «pursue perfect joy» ultimately have the same theological intention: they aim to prove Jesus' messianity. The dependence of JB's own joy on the voice of the Bridegroom represents, on the image level, an unmistakable approach and subordination to the Messiah, and this is proven by JB's negative self-identification (3:28).

Looking at another meaning of the $\phi\omega\nu\etá$, which may be present in Jn. 3:29, is the solemn declaration; JB would, therefore, say that the Bridegroom's friend rejoices because of the declaration or proclamation of the bridegroom.⁹⁹ It would be a declaration made by the Bridegroom (the subjective genitive construction $\tau\eta\nu \phi\omega\nu\etá\nu \tau\omicron\upsilon \nu\upsilon\mu\phi\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$) and he would rejoice in Jesus' proclaiming the truth about his own identity (Jesus' self-revelation).¹⁰⁰ According to the FG, the author of the declaration about Jesus is JB himself, who testifies from the very beginning of the Gospel to Jesus' true identity as $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (1:29.36) and $\acute{\omicron} \upsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (1:34). In Jn. 3:28, he says, «I am not the Christ» in order to confess in Jn. 3:29 the Bridegroom, or the Messiah, Jesus.¹⁰¹ As a result, he would rejoice

her bridegroom.

98. S.A. PANIMOLLE, *Lettura pastorale*, 339.

99. M. TAIT, «The Voice of the Bridegroom», 50.

100. Jesus proclaims his identity with his words to the disciples (1:51), to the Jews (2:19) and to Nicodemus (3:13–18).

101. M. TAIT, «The Voice of the Bridegroom», 50.

that he proclaims Jesus' true identity. He, as a conclusion, is the proclaimer of Scriptures.

– ἡ χαρὰ ἣ ἐμὴ πεπλήρωται

This verse ends with this observation of JB. The use of the present *χαίρει* indicates a continuity of action culminating in the following phrase, in which the perfect *πεπλήρωται* appears to indicate that the joy of the Bridegroom's friend is complete and remains so. Only in relation to JB and this occurrence, the FG states that the joy is complete, that is, it arrived at its maximum intensity. This verbal form, therefore, links John's joy to the event of Jesus, which fulfils the expectations of the Prophets and implements the promises that YHWH had made to the Fathers. The completeness of this joy says that the time of waiting is finished and Jesus is the fullness.

It is worthy of attention that the verb *πληρόω* occurs 15x in the FG, having as subject the joy (3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13) and sadness (16:6), the *καιρός*, «the time» of Jesus (7:8), the words of the Prophet Isaiah (12:38), the Scripture (13:18; 17:12) and its words (15:25; 18:9.32; 19:24.36). From this Johannine general view, one can deduce that there is a homology between the role of JB and that of the Scriptures; his role is to say the words of the Scriptures in the context of its salvific fulfilling.

In fact, this is the only place in the FG stating that the joy is in its fullness, because in other places where *χαρά* + *πληρόω* (15:11; 16:24 and 17:13)¹⁰² is always expressed by a purposeful sentence introduced by the conjunction *ὥνα* that voices the concept of becoming full.¹⁰³ It is a joy that fills all desires.¹⁰⁴ In our case, in addition to JB, the one who expresses the

102. The fulfilment of joy has, apparently, already begun (*οὖν* [...] *πεπλήρωται* — Perfect), while the motif appears later as an eschatological perspective and in the context of futuristic times forms (16:24; 17:13). Herein, the Johannine eschatology is evident: on the one hand, joy is given by remaining in love or prayer and is to be experienced in the world at present (17:13). On the other hand, the Glorified Jesus becomes the cause of the permanent joy (16:22; 20:20). The joy of the disciples is fulfilled by the joy of Jesus (15:11). Therefore, the community is a community of friends (cf. 3 Jn. 1:15). Just as the joy of the Bridegroom's friend is completed by the Bridegroom himself. The perfect joy or the fulfilment of joy, then, is a standing motive for the FE.

103. R. INFANTI «L'amico dello sposo», 15; see also J. VARGHESE, *Love*, 102.

104. J.F. McHUGH, *John* 1–4, 251.

joy of Jesus' presence is also Abraham. Hence the joy of JB can be compared to the joy of Abraham, who rejoiced (ἠγαλλιόσατο) and was glad (ἐχάρη) seeing the day of Jesus (8:56).¹⁰⁵ From the examination of farewell discourse texts, the Johannine χαρά has an eschatological dimension of Christian existence, for it is linked to the coming of the messianic era and pre-charactered that of the disciples in the farewell discourses.¹⁰⁶ The only exception to this rule, the non-final use of the verb πληρόω in Jn. 3:29, which brings about the thought that the eschatological joy already represents the pinnacle of this way to express itself.

The key-role of JB is to accompany the Bridegroom and to be his witness. This Johannine character has only a serving function. As the bridegroom finds the bride, it is, for him, the greatest joy and fulfillment. Thereby, when he says that his joy is πεπλήρωται, this suggests that his testimony is now coming to its goal. Consequently, he is the witness of the fulfilment of the eschatological salvation brought by YHWH–the–Bridegroom, «Say to the daughter of Zion, “Look, your salvation is coming” » (Isa. 62:11), «And as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so will your God rejoice in you» (Isa. 62:5).¹⁰⁷

According to Jn. 3:29, therefore, the joy of JB is also eschatological in a dual sense. On the one hand, it can be understood as the joy of the OT eschatology; the First Covenant is now fulfilled. Whereas, on the other hand, the joy of JB is also an eschatological joy that has been realized, that is, the same joy that Jesus' disciples will experience.¹⁰⁸ With Christ, the time of joy has come. This joy is not delayed to the end of time, but it is the gift of the Risen Jesus to those who belong to him. As the Johannine concept of the wedding is not delayed to a distant future, so the Johannine concept of joy about it becomes real in present, actualized eschatology.

Certainly, «the friend of the Bridegroom» is charged with preparing the eschatological marriage of the NT between Christ and the new people of God represented by the mother of Jesus and the BD at the foot of the Cross (19:25–27):

105. J. McWHIRTER, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 58.

106. J. ZUMSTEIN, *Saint Jean*, I:132.

107. M. KEMPTER, « La signification eschatologique », 47.

108. M. KEMPTER, « La signification eschatologique », 42–59.

Jn. 3:29	Jn. 19:25–27
ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου ὁ ἑστηκώς «But the friend of the bridegroom, the one who has been stood».	Εἰστήκεισαν δὲ παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ «Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus». ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ «his mother». [...] καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν παρεστῶτα ὃν ἠγάπα, [...] «and the disciple whom he loved standing».
καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ «and heard him».	λέγει τῇ μητρί· γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου «he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son” ». εἶτα λέγει τῷ μαθητῇ· ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου, «Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother” ».

JB represents the people of God, the ancient Israel, where the mother of Jesus and the BD represent the messianic community. The standing of JB and hearing the voice of the bridegroom in Jn. 3:29 is identical with the standing of the mother of Jesus and the BD near the Cross and hearing the voice of the bridegroom, Jesus the Crucified, «the Bridegroom of the Church» — as the Byzantine Liturgy prefers to call Jesus, especially in the Holy Thursday. Herein, we have a connection with the scene of Cana’s wedding, τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου, «Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come» (2:4) as if he says to his mother: «What does this have to do with me and you, woman? Am I perhaps the Bridegroom? My wedding has not yet come»¹⁰⁹ in reference to his hour, the hour of the Crucifixion, which is the hour of his wedding. This, therefore, gives the Johannine reader an impression of seeing the mother of Jesus as a representative with the BD. She is the mother of the new messianic people and the BD is the ideal disciple.

Consequently, as a «friend of the Bridegroom», JB sees his joy has been fulfilled. This is the point of similarity in the metaphor. He does not claim anything else. He explains to his disciples that Jesus comes to fulfill the messianic marriage of God with his people, the community of believers. In conclusion, JB is portrayed in the FG as the initiator, the master of ceremonies who inaugurates the messianic age.¹¹⁰ God, in the prophetic oracles, had promised an ideal wedding with his people (cf. Hos. 2:19). The time of this wedding has come. Jesus is, above all, the tenderness and love of God. He is the Bridegroom. JB’s words serve as an invitation to the

109. A. FEHRIBACH, *The Women*, 31.110. W. PAROSCHI, *Incarnation and Covenant*, 67.

Johannine readers to consider themselves «friends of the bridegroom» and to live as per an encounter.

2.8. John's «Ultima Verba» (3:30)

– ἐκεῖνον δεῖ ἀξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι

The demonstrative pronoun ἐκεῖνον, «that» definitely refers to the Bridegroom Jesus, since it is said by JB, who is still speaking of his role in the context of the marriage metaphor. Another striking point in this verse is the use of the indicative present verb δεῖ, «must/it is necessary» that indicates an eschatological necessity so that he shall bring the bride to her Bridegroom (see also 1:7).¹¹¹

It is interesting to notice here that the Johannine verb ἀξάνω draws the light upon the marriage motif in the Scriptures, thus finding it in Gen. 1:28 (LXX) in the words of God directed to the first pair:

καὶ ἠυλόγησεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς λέγων
ἀξάνεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε καὶ πληρώσατε τὴν γῆν
God blessed them, saying to them:
Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth.

Additionally, in the same divine order directed to Noah (Gen. 9:1) and to Abraham (Gen. 17:6), this statement would express the conviction of JB that the offspring of Jesus as the eschatological–divine–Bridegroom is to multiply, while his offspring is to decrease. This process began when JB's disciples joined Jesus (1:35–39). In this regard, JB extends the metaphor of marriage and consummation to have the begetting of children when he adds, «he must increase, and I decrease».¹¹² Accordingly, Jesus' marriage of his bride, namely the messianic community, will be fruitful and this is obvious in the emphasis of the FG that Jesus is making disciples more than JB (4:1).

In relation to the light–motif (1:7–8), the verbs ἀξάνω and ἐλαττώω

111. H. THYEN, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 229.

112. M.W. MARTIN, «Betrothal Journey Narratives», 522; see also C.M. CARMICHAEL, «Marriage and the Samaritan Woman», 340.

were used in the ancient times to describe the sunrise and sunset. Hence, many Johannine scholars build their commentary on Jn. 3:30 upon the astronomical context, where the sun is identified with the True Light, namely Jesus (1:4–5.7–9; 8:12; 12:35–36), and JB, by contrast, is described as not being the true light (1:8) as much as a lamp that shines only for hour (5:35).¹¹³

In our text, John's *ultima verba*, «last words» form one of the main keys to a right understanding of his character and his ministry: «He must increase, but I decrease». In the parallelism of Jn. 3:30, a different image is used to associate the two protagonists: the decreasing and the increasing. This verse, therefore, consists of two parallel parts and each part contains an infinitive verb: ἀυξάνειν and ἐλαττοῦσθαι — both verbs are *hapax legomenon* in the FG — which fulfils the meaning of the main impersonal verb δεῖ.

Herein, the ὑπεροχή, «superiority», which is targeted in a synchrisis, is quite explicit. Thus, the usage of δεῖ from the FE suggests a theological motive,¹¹⁴ thus signaling that this situation should not be considered as a defeat, but as the expression of the divine necessity.¹¹⁵ As a point of departure, the *former* is the greater and will prove himself as such, through the usage of the divine δεῖ, indicating that this is in accordance with God's will that Jesus had to increase,¹¹⁶ just as *it is necessary* for the Son of Man to be lifted up (3:14). Then JB's *low becoming* underscores the greatness of the *other* and gives a signal to those who so far have seen in JB the decisive salvation.

Thus, δεῖ reveals how the growth of Jesus and the diminution of JB obey the salvific plan, which comes from God himself. A plan that transpires even from the verb ἐλαττώω, «to diminish», in the passive form ἐλαττοῦσθαι. This verb is called the theological or divine passive, and therefore, suggests how the action of diminishing comes from God himself; since the first description of JB at the very beginning of the Gospel is that he is ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, «sent by God» (1:6) as a Prophet and witness, to reveal Jesus—the-Bridegroom to Israel—the-bride. In this sense, the relationship between

113. L. ALONSO-SCHÖKEL, «Simboli matrimoniali», 553–554; see also for the same author, *I nomi dell'amore*, 41–42.

114. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 302.

115. C.G. KRUSE, *John*, 132.

116. J. VARGHESE, *Love*, 111.

JB and the Scriptures that is relied on the person of Jesus is stressed. In the salvific presence of Jesus, the role of JB and that of the Scriptures is complete. Only in this context can we understand this verse.

3. Concluding Observations

Describing the role of JB with «the friend of the Bridegroom», on the one hand, indicates his subordinate and temporary role in relation to Jesus–the–Bridegroom (JB is not rival of Jesus), on the other hand, underlines the extraordinary position of JB, the trusted person of the Bridegroom, who is delegated to prepare and conduct wedding ceremonies. The FE adapted the prophetic usage of this metaphor to announce, through his John, as the true representative of the Scriptures, the New Marriage Covenant, the arrival of Jesus the «Eschatological Bridegroom». Hence, he fulfils a very positive role. He is the best friend of the bridegroom, leads the bride to the bridegroom, πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν (1:35–39; 3:26), points to the heavenly origin of Jesus (3:27) and becomes his witness (3:28), «the loyal witness who joyfully acknowledges Jesus’ growing success».¹¹⁷ He will be, therefore, a witness to the messianic wedding. The Bridegroom, whose friend is the Messiah.

From this point, as he has revealed Jesus as «the Lamb of God» and «the Son of God» to Israel, his twofold role, as a witness and a friend of the bridegroom, aims to reveal Jesus as «the incarnation of God’s nuptial love of Israel, a love that desires espousal and fecundity».¹¹⁸ Thus, the symbol of γάμος becomes an epiphany of other weddings, the manifestation of the marriage nature of the messianic mission of Jesus.¹¹⁹ Hence, he has accepted his role with joy as «the friend of the Bridegroom», which the author of Revelation links with the Lamb’s marriage: «Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride made herself ready» (19:7). The metaphor of marriage has passed through the Jewish social life and consequently gained a biblical

117. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist)», 56.

118. M.L. COLOE, *Dwelling*, 37.

119. J. VARGHESE, *Love*, 86.

and theological aspect to a Christological stage.¹²⁰

JB is the last messenger of God, who already speaks of the present, and his voice is about to become silent, and with it the voices of all the Prophets. His testimony is no longer promised, but factual, and it comes from his joy, which is now complete, because he perceives with joy the voice that takes his place: Jesus is the source of joy (15:11; 17:13). Thus, the voice of the bridegroom means the messianic times, the times of joy par excellence. In light of these considerations, JB's role as «the friend of the Bridegroom» is completely identical with that of the Scriptures of Israel. His role surpasses this, for he will be the direct preparer of the new nuptial relationship between Jesus–Bridegroom and community–bride. Herein, John–the–friend appears as the representative of the prophetic voice that prophesied about this wedding, and, therefore, he appears as the true representative of the Scriptures.

As per his [JB] word, we can also recognize ourselves as his friends. It is to his disciples that Jesus grants this beautiful title, because of this condition: «You are my friends if you do what I command you» (15:14). But his command — «the voice of the bridegroom» that fills his friends with joy — is summed up in these words: «Love one another as I have loved you» (15:12).

120. J. MARSH, *St John*, 196.

Scriptural Interpretation of John's Testimony

It has been noted that the passages related to JB in the FG are becoming shorter and shorter as we will see in Jn. 5:33–36a and Jn. 10:40–42. Perhaps they are a reverberation of his own confession: «He must increase, and I decrease» (3:30). The current chapter can be divided into two scenes as follows:

- Scene I: The witness of the truth (5:33–36a).
- Scene II: His testimony was true (10:40–42).

The noun ἀλήθεια occurs 25x in the FG; 20x in the Epistles; the adjectives ἀληθής and ἀληθινός occur 40x: 23x in the Gospel; 7x in the Epistles and 10x in the Revelation; the adverb ἀληθῶς appears 8x (7x in the Gospel and once in 1 John).¹ From this statistic point of view, the truth–motif plays a significant role in the Johannine corpus, especially in the FG's theology. The FE's usage of the term ἀλήθεια presents Jesus Christ (1:17; 18:37), JB (5:33; 10:41), the Spirit of truth (16:13) and the word of God (17:17).

In the Johannine writings, the term ἀλήθεια and its derivatives, in addition to the function which discriminates the speech, acquire an outstanding theological relevance. For the Johannine understanding of the ἀλήθεια is first to note that *verba dicendi* is a saying as ἀληθής, «true» is marked (4:17–18; 10:41; 19:35) also with γινώσκω, «To have knowledge» (7:26; 17:8). Also ἀλήθεια is an object of «knowledge» (cf. 8:32; 1 Jn. 2:21;

1. D.R. LINDSAY, «What is Truth? », 129.

2 Jn. 1:1)² and of «saying» (through the verb λαλέω in 8:40 and λέγω in 8:45–46). For the FG's Christology, it is crucial that Jesus speaks the truth, whereas the unbelief of his adversaries is prominent (8:45–46),³ and his disciples are prepared for Jesus' departure and the coming of the παράκλητος (16:7). The «true» or «untrue» testimony is mentioned several times in the FG and the third Johannine letter (cf. 8:13–14.17; 19:35; 21:24; 3 Jn. 1:12).

These references suggest that in the Johannine corpus a significant material understanding of ἀλήθεια is to be perceived. The Christological and theological dimensions are fundamental to which the pneumatological, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, «The Spirit of truth» (cf. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Jn. 4:6) and ecclesiological (through the BDs' testimony in 19:35; 21:24) aspects should always be referred. Simultaneously, the soteriological metaphors in connection with the motif of ἀλήθεια emphasize this fact: Jesus is «the true light» (1:9); he is «the true bread» (6:32.55), «the true vine» (15:1) and in fact, «he is ἀληθῶς, «truly» the Saviour of the world» (4:42) and he is especially the truth itself (14:6).⁴

Scene I The Witness to the Truth (Jn. 5:33-36a)

Jn. 5:33-36a reminds the Johannine reader that in Jn. 1:4.5.9 Christ is revealed as the True Light; herein, JB is the reflector. The latter is light in a derived sense,⁵ that is, he is a light in a secondary sense. That is why he can only be called a «lamp», burning and shining. Speaking of JB's testimony, Jesus will link this one to that of the Scriptures, as if it forms the same reality (5:36.39.40). This simple collation of texts shows how JB's character is typified. Jn. 5:31-40 contains two other testimonies about Jesus' works and about the Scriptures. In this context, we will see that JB's testimony is in concordance with that of the Scriptures and, therefore, he represents them through Jesus' description that he «gave testimony of the truth».

2. G. TIETZE, «Knowledge of God», 17–18.

3. C.K. BARRETT, *St. John*, 349.

4. For further details about the terms of «truth» and their use in the NT, cf. R. BULTMANN, «ἀλήθεια», 649–674; see also C.H. DODD, *Interpretation*, 170–178.

5. D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 471–475.

1. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation
³³ ὑμεῖς ἀπεστάλακατε πρὸς Ἰωάννην, καὶ μεμαρτύρηκεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ·	³³ You have sent to John, and he gave testimony of the truth.
³⁴ ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου τὴν μαρτυρίαν λαμβάνω, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λέγω ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῆτε.	³⁴ But I do not receive the testimony from a human, but these I say in order that you be saved.
³⁵ ἐκεῖνος ἦν ὁ λύχνος ὁ καϊόμενος καὶ φαίνων, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠθελήσατε ἀγαλλιασθῆναι πρὸς ὥραν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ αὐτοῦ.	³⁵ That was a lamp, burning and shining, but you desired to rejoice with an hour in his light.
³⁶ Ἐγὼ δὲ ἔχω τὴν μαρτυρίαν μείζω τοῦ Ἰωάννου·	³⁶ But I have the testimony greater than that of John.

2. Exegesis

2.1. *The Witness to the Truth* (5:33)

– ὑμεῖς ἀπεστάλακατε πρὸς Ἰωάννην, καὶ μεμαρτύρηκεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ

Presenting JB as a «witness», Jesus recalls what has been told at the beginning of the Gospel: Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου (1:19).⁶ JB's testimony lies in his answer, which concerns first himself (1:20–21), then Jesus (1:26–27). The Jews did not want to know about JB's testimony about Jesus but were only interested in the person of the witness (1:19–28). Jesus remembers this scene and interprets it authentically.

6. One of the important themes of the FG is the μαρτυρία about Jesus. If Jesus only testifies to himself, then this testimony would not be ἀληθής (5:31), but as another, JB testifies to Jesus, he can claim that his testimony is ἀληθής (5:32).

It is worth observing that the effect of the perfect tenses ἀπεστάλακατε and μεμαρτύρηκεν is to present his testimony as *an established datum*.⁷ His presentation in this passage is in line with what was given in Jn. 1 and 3. Ἀπεστάλακατε indicates the continuing result more than the act of sending. «Not only did they send to John, but the result of their embassy remained permanently with them».⁸ John the witness played an eminent role and, beyond his death, his testimony retains a permanent value, which implies the perfect μεμαρτύρηκεν.⁹ His testimony is a permanent and continuing testimony. His message was not a fly-by-night testimony that appeared on the scene and suddenly disappeared. His testimony continued and still continuous and will always continue.

Thus, the prominent idea is not the historic fact (like 1:32 with the aorist tense), but the permanent and final value of the testimony (1:34; 3:26; 5:37; 19:35) that *remains* as evidence.¹⁰ From this perspective, one can deduce that JB's testimony has the permanence value just as the Scriptures have. It is also interesting to observe the contrast between God who sent JB in the Prologue (1:6)¹¹ and the Jews who sent a delegation in the Prologue (1:19) with the same verb ἀποστέλλω. John is sent from God and the delegation sent by human. This is what makes the testimony of JB prophetic and therefore, Christocentric.

JB's words are qualified by Jesus as a testimony to the ἀλήθεια. The formula μαρτυρέω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, «testify to the truth» is, therefore, used in the FG to characterize both the mission of JB and that of Jesus. Jesus praises the people who deserve it; just remember the passage of Nathanael: Ἴδε ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλίτης, «Here is truly an Israelite» (1:47). In our case, the praise is in favour of JB, who is best described by Jesus; a witness of truth.

To understand the significance of the Johannine expression ἀλήθεια, comparing the present text with two others, one already occurred concerning JB himself, to whom his disciples say: ῥαββί, ὃς ἦν μετὰ σοῦ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ᾧ σὺ μεμαρτύρηκας. Whereas, the other occurs in the description of the passion in which Jesus himself testifies to the truth

7. C.K. BARRETT, *St. John*, 264.

8. L. MORRIS, *John*, 288.

9. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 411.

10. G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 78.

11. A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *A Theology*, 209.

in front of Pilate: «For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth» (18:37). On the one hand, it is interesting to notice the parallelism between JB and Jesus in giving testimony to the truth. On the other hand, we observe the parallelism between the truth and the person of Jesus to whom JB gives testimony.¹² As per the FG's theology, the truth indicates revelation. JB and Jesus give testimony to the truth, that is, to the revelation.

The way JB and Jesus give testimony to the truth is different; Jesus is the only One who can reveal the Father, not only with his words or deeds but also in his person, and therefore, he is the only One who can say: ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια, «I am the truth» (14:6). He gives testimony to the truth as he is the witness to Jesus, since he is the one with whom the revelation of Jesus to Israel began (1:31). Testifying to the truth, he testified to the person of Jesus considered as the fullness of the revelation. JB did not testify in his own favour; he did not attribute messianic functions that did not correspond to him, but testified in favour of the truth.

In this context, the ἀλήθεια confirms what the reader has known since the Prologue (1:19–34) concerning Jesus who is the Lamb of God, the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit and the Son of God. Thus, as far as God endorses his testimony, and he was faithful to his God-given mission in delivering God's message about Jesus (1:31–34), his witness, too, is a witness for the truth, namely Jesus' identity, mission and relationship with God the Father.

Therefore, through his testimony to the truth, JB appears to be the true representative of the Scriptures, especially that the truth-motif is a Scriptural one. Jesus' testimony that John testified (perfect tense) to the truth is consistent with the concept of the book of Proverbs: «The lip of truth shall be established forever» (12:19). In another place, the Lord said in the book of Jeremiah: «Let the one who has my word speak it faithfully» (23:28). Accordingly, JB also appears as the one who represents the Scriptures in a faithful way.

2.2. A Subordinate Testimony (5:34)

- ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου τὴν μαρτυρίαν λαμβάνω

12. J. BEUTLER, *Martyria*, 220–223.

Herein, Jesus' ἐγώ is emphatic and it places Jesus in contrast to ὑμεῖς¹³, i.e., to «the Jews». Jesus testifies to JB as a witness to the truth; whereas «the Jews» did not even accept his testimony. They were excited about elements of his work but did not understand nor accept its inherent value.¹⁴ It is important to note the use of the particles δὲ + οὐ, to describe the contrast between Jesus as a divine witness and JB as a human witness.

Therefore, Jesus takes a distance from JB by saying: «But I do not receive the testimony from a human» (5:34a). This does not mean that Jesus refuses his testimony but it seems that the FE attempts to show the superiority of Jesus over and independency of all humans.¹⁵ The human origin of JB's testimony remains, not in the sense that he spoke for himself, but in the sense that he ultimately belongs to the earth (3:31), while Jesus can appeal directly to the testimony of the One who sent him. The previous testimony of JB in Jn. 1:19–34 is still human indications only, while now, in the words and deeds of Jesus, the testimony vividly reflects the truth of God's love that manifests.¹⁶

Moreover, when Jesus tells about the human testimony, he did not mean JB's testimony, because the Johannine reader knew from the very beginning of the Gospel that he was ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ (1:6). Accordingly, to understand the intended human testimony refused by Jesus, the Johannine reader should return back to Jn. 2, where the FE declares that Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone ἵνα τις μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; for he himself knew what was in the heart of everyone (2:24–25).¹⁷

Thus, the expression μαρτυρίαν λαμβάνω, in Jn. 3:11.32–33 indicates, from the side of men, the adherence to the faith in Jesus; whereas here it indicates, from the side of Jesus, the relativization of the testimony of a man compared to that of God.¹⁸ Indeed, the testimony of a man is not sufficient to prove the dignity, the function and the transcendent mission of Jesus. Jesus does not rely on it as an argument on which faith in him

13. F. MANNS, «Jean-Baptiste », 114.

14. B.C. DENNERT, *John the Baptist*, 79–80.

15. B.C. DENNERT, *John the Baptist*, 79.

16. G. GAETA, «Battesimo come testimonianza», 308.

17. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 292.

18. J. BEUTLER, *Martyria*, 228–229; 257–258.

depends. Notwithstanding, his testimony is still worthy and Jesus recalls it in the salvific interest of his listeners.

– ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λέγω ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῆτε

Jesus recalls the Jewish delegation to JB and his answer with the intent of providing their salvation: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λέγω ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῆτε (5:34b).

The verb σώζω that occurs 107x in the NT writings is presented only 6x in the FG, of which only two appear in an active form. The first (12:27) has the Father as a subject and the second (12:47) has Jesus as a subject. In the passive form, the subject is the world and the agent who saves is Jesus (3:17); only those who enter through him will be saved (10:9). In sum, JB's testimony is useful to those who received it as a direction to the faith in Jesus in order that they might have his salvation.

2.3. A Temporal Messenger (5:35)

– ἐκεῖνος ἦν ὁ λύχνος

Ἐκεῖνος refers to JB. It is important to bear in mind the imperfect tense ἦν used to describe his identity. Two choices are to be considered depending on this past tense: he was now dead, or he was in prison as it is mentioned in Jn. 3:24. His role ended and is part of the past, but still resounds.

This fact is stressed by the imperfect verb ἦν that indicates an event that has its origin in the past, but whose effects last: he was a «lamp» and continues to be so. He is further presented by Jesus as a «lamp» that shines for one hour. This image is rarely used in the NT to refer to a man. On the other hand, 2 Pt. 1:19¹⁹ is interesting for us, because it clearly refers to the Prophets of the OT:

So, we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

19. B.F. WESTCOTT, *St. John*, 89.

What is substantial for our study is the text of Ps. 131:17²⁰ (LXX) that is consistent with JB's role as an ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ. Jesus' description of JB cast him as a character who illumines God's Anointed One:²¹

There [in the Temple] I will cause a horn to rise up for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed one.

There is also an allusion to the Prophet Elijah in the book of Sirach:

Then the prophet Elijah arose like a fire and his word burned like a lamp (48:1).

The usefulness of his light is recognized. This confirms the interpretation of Jn. 1:6–8 and 15. Jn. 1:6–8 surround Jn. 1:14, moment of the incarnation, [because] by his life, JB is a Prophet of the OT (1:6–8) and by his word, he testifies to the NT (1:15).

In the Sapiential language, the lamp alludes to the divine light that shines and enlightens man through his word (cf. Ps. 17:29; 118:105; Prov. 6:23). This is why he is defined as the man sent by God (1:6). Thus, the symbol of the lamp here indicates that JB appears as a fundamental representative of the Scriptures.

With this qualification given to him, while Jesus is careful to point out that he does not accept testimony from men and that he has a testimony superior to that of JB, he proclaims in praise of him the fulfilment of the testimony to the light.²² Rather than seeking a designation of JB as a new Elijah, it is simply seen the echo of Jesus' esteem for JB.

– ὁ καίόμενος καὶ φαίνων

Two other verbs that occur in our verse are: καίω and φαίνω. The first verb καίω, «burn» occurs twice in the FG (here and in 15:6). It comes in relation to the theme of «judgment».²³ The usage of the participle passive voice καίόμενος is completely consistent with the participle passive voice

20. J.R. MICHAELS, *John*, 327.

21. C.M. BLUMHOFER, *The Future of Israel*, 206.

22. W. MICHAELS, «λύχνος, λυχνία», 881.

23. J.R. MICHAELS, *John*, 327.

of ἀπεσταλμένος in Jn. 1:6, indicating that JB's mission does not stem from himself but from another; from God himself, παρὰ θεοῦ. The second verb φαίνω, «shine» occurs twice in the FG (here and in 1:5). It comes in relation to the theme of light and its effectiveness. Both verbs mark that JB's testimony appear as an established datum and with a permanence identical to the abiding validity of Scripture.²⁴ The persistent efficacy of JB's mission is underlined by these two verbs in the present participle, which indicates not only the nature and sense of the mission of that lamp, but also shows how it continues in the present to burn and enlighten the Jews, even after his death.

This is why JB becomes luminous: think of the face of Moses radiated with light, after having been in dialogue with YHWH on the summit of Sinai (cf. Exod. 34:33–35). In this context, JB represents God's lamp that was not extinguished (cf. 1 Sam. 3:3); «YHWH, you yourself are my lamp» (cf. 2 Sam. 22:29). From this inter-textual point of view, JB appears as a representative of the Scriptures and the Prophets.

– ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠθελήσατε ἀγαλλιαθῆναι

The first part of Jn. 5:35 prepares for the accusation that will be moved in its second part. In this context, Jesus uses the imagery of the «lamp» to rebuke the Jews²⁵ represented by the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς for their inability to see and perceive the True Light, at the time when they preferred to rejoice in JB's temporal light for an hour: ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠθελήσατε ἀγαλλιαθῆναι πρὸς ὥραν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ αὐτοῦ. In this context, Jn. 5:35b begins with ὑμεῖς, which has an adversative sense. Jesus raises the question of JB's testimony as an *argumentum ad hominem* («argument directed to the person») against the Jewish authorities.²⁶ Jesus utilizes JB's testimony to counter the argument of «the Jews» refusal to believe in him.

The verb θέλω, in the form of indicative aorist ἠθελήσατε, indicates an event punctual in time and circumscribed in the past, while the light of JB still shines and possesses in itself. It is still alive, and this is the strength of his testimony. Significant, then, is the verb ruled by ἠθελήσατε: it is the

24. J.M. BOICE, *Witness and Revelation*, 87–88.

25. R. BULTMANN, *John*, 265.

26. D.S. DAPAΛH, *The Relationship*, 133.

infinitive aorist passive ἀγαλλιαθῆναι. A verb that is placed in the passive that indicates the attitude of the spectator who goes to enjoy a show, wishing to be rejoiced. This is an extremely superficial behaviour that the FE has already denounced and stigmatized in Jn. 2:23–25, in which πολλοί believed in seeing the signs performed by Jesus, who, however, far from rejoicing, did not trust them, because he knew well the heart of man. Also, there is a similar concept that is occurred in Jn. 5:41, «I do not receive glory from men». Accordingly, Jesus reproaches the Jews for their refusal to come to him to have life (5:40).

Hence, are the words that pay homage to JB; they constitute the centre of this passage on JB's testimony and express the theme of exultation; they sound like praise of him and as a reproach to the Jews. This statement, which is at the centre of the passage, places JB's testimony with that of God (5:36–39). This position gives a great significance to his character and his role in relation to Jesus.

In the Prologue (1:1–18) JB has already been described in relation to the light, but in a negative way (1:7–8). The Light is the Logos of God. The theme of light resounds many times in the FG to designate Jesus in his reality and mission as a revelator.²⁷ His greatness lies in his relativity to Jesus. In our passage, the theme of light touches JB himself, but always in such a way as to make it clear that he is not the source of light: he is a lighted and shining lamp.

Of the lit lamp, we read in the first Gospel: «No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house» (Mt. 5:15) and in the third Gospel: «Have your lamps lit» (Lk. 12:35) as an exhortation to readiness for the coming of the Lord. Peter's second letter speaks of the lamp that shines, comparing the voice of God in favour of Jesus with the word of the Prophets, which is called «a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns» (2 Pt. 1:19). This description is similar to that given by our text for JB; he is the lamp that shines in relation to the light of day, Jesus. This presentation recalls that of the OT for God's promises to Jerusalem:

I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her holy ones shall rejoice with great rejoicing — ἀγαλλιάσει ἀγαλλιάσονται (Ps. 131:16).

27. H. CONZELMANN, «φῶς, φωτίζω, φωτισμός», 471.

– πρὸς ὥραν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ αὐτοῦ

After the episode of Jn. 3, the function of JB was closed. The hour of JB has now ended and the FE feels the need to clearly define the relationship between the two (Jesus and JB) and of these with the Jews, of whom it is said that they rejoiced for an hour in the Johannine preaching, but were unable to grasp the essential element, his testimony in favour of Jesus.²⁸ These words, therefore, are an observation and sound like a reproach. In presenting JB in this way, the FE is reproaching Orthodox Judaism for never having really understood the meaning of that great character.²⁹

The adverbial expression πρὸς ὥραν that marks a very short period of time, indicates that JB's testimony was fleeting; his testimony was not really taken seriously. If so, the Jews would have believed in the one of whom he came to testify. The reason for this inability to accept the lamp that testifies to the Light is because men have preferred darkness to the light (3:19).³⁰

JB's testimony, even with its limitations, was legitimate and valid, because he was ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ for this role; his testimony was, therefore, useful for salvation; according to his value, he would necessarily lead men to Jesus ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ. The exultation for JB's presence and ministry was provisional. Thus, the FE emphasizes the temporal dimension of JB's testimony, which is to prepare the people for the acceptance of the witness revealed through the words and deeds of Jesus (5:36).

2.4. *The Greater Testimony (5:36a)*

– Ἐγὼ δὲ ἔχω τὴν μαρτυρίαν μείζω τοῦ Ἰωάννου

In Jn. 5:36a, Jesus seems to reject JB's testimony. To understand the FG's logic, it is necessary to put this discussion in the context of Jn. 5. In Jn. 5:18, the Jews reproach Jesus for calling God his Father and making him-

28. G. GAETA, «Battesimo come testimonianza», 307.

29. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St John*, I:122.

30. For further details about the opposition between «light and darkness», see C.R. KOESTER, *Symbolism*, 141–168.

self equal to God. Since Jesus has divine claims, human witnesses are no longer valid. Jesus calls his works, the Father and the Scriptures as witnesses. While Jn. 1:8 refused the title of light to him,³¹ Jn. 5:35 puts this confession by Jesus himself: he was the lamp that burns and shines.

Consequently, after the reproach of Jesus to the Jews and his declaration of not accepting any human testimony, he proclaims that he has a testimony μείζω than that of JB, which was the cause for the rejoicing of the Jews «for a while». Herein, Jesus wants to tell the crowd that the testimony would make them permanently rejoice is the testimony ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, that is from the Father.³² The human witness is being derivative and dependent in contrast to the authoritative autonomy of the divine.

The combination of the comparative μείζω and the verb τελειόω in this contest (5:36) is highly significant. It seems to imply that Jesus' testimony was «greater» than JB's because he came «to finish/perfect» what had been initiated by his witness. Both had been sent by God (1:6; 5:36), but he «was not the light» (1:8a). He was just «a burning and shining lamp» (5:35), who «came to testify to the light» (1:8b). Jesus' testimony was greater because, since he was the true light (1:9), his works testified on his own behalf and, by doing ποιέω his works, he would bring JB's testimony to completion. What had been partially done by the servants of God is finally accomplished by his Son.³³

From this perspective, JB is the first to testify to the truth, but his «burning lamp» has a limited time. He appears as an earthly (temporal) witness who leads to Jesus, the infinite Light. In this context, his earthly testimony appears to be strictly subordinate to the divine testimony of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit revealed in Jesus' words and deeds.

3. Concluding Observations

In this scene, Jesus describes JB's character as a witness to the truth, depicting him as a shining lamp, which indicates a Scriptural image from the OT and the New, as we have already seen. The FE puts JB in parallel with

31. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 411.

32. D.A. CARSON, *John*, 261.

33. W. PAROSCHI, *Incarnation and Covenant*, 67.

the Scriptures in their common denominator, that is, both testify in favour of Jesus Christ: καὶ ἐκεῖναί εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ, «And it is they [the Scriptures] that testify on my behalf» (5:39). The Jews, therefore, preferred the external testimony to the person testified to.³⁴ In a way of contrast, JB appears as a true representative of the Scriptures in contrast to the Jews, who scrutinize them but they did not find Jesus «about whom Moses in the law and also the Prophets wrote» (1:45) as JB did, because of their spiritual blindness.

Scene II

His Testimony was True

(Jn. 10:40–42)

Although the New Exodus will only take place after Jesus' Resurrection (20:19–23), the process of re-creation ends the history of Israel, carried out by Jesus throughout his public life, just as JB testified. Jesus goes to the other side of the Jordan, to the place where John had been baptizing in the beginning (1:28). This is a passage of a great editorial burden, where we return to the beginning, and place him in his true sense: the one who announces Christ.

In Jn. 10, two great testimonies that confirm the testimony of JB in the first section of the Gospel, that of Jesus' works (10:25) and that of the Scriptures (10:35), are therefore, only indirect testimonies of the Father in favour of Jesus. JB's testimony also comes from the Father. From the very beginning of the Gospel, his status as God's messenger is manifested (1:6), and the one who has a direct connection with God (1:31.33). These three testimonies come together at the end of Jn. 10, which closes the first narrative section of the Gospel: «And many believed in him».³⁵ In this context, we will see that JB's testimony is in concordance with that of the Scriptures, and, therefore, he represents them through the crowd's description that «all that JB said about him was true».

34. C.K. BARRETT, «The Old Testament», 158.

35. L.S. NAVARRO, «Estructura testimonial», 521.

1. Text and Literal Translation

Greek Text	English Translation
40 Καὶ ἀπῆλθεν πάλιν πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου εἰς τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἦν Ἰωάννης τὸ πρῶτον βαπτίζων καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ.	40 And went back beyond the Jordan in the place, where John was at first baptizing and stayed there.
41 καὶ πολλοὶ ἦλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι Ἰωάννης μὲν σημεῖον ἐποίησεν οὐδέν, πάντα δὲ ὅσα εἶπεν Ἰωάννης περὶ τοῦτου ἀληθῆ ἦν.	41 And many came towards him and they began to say that John indeed did no sign but all that John said about him was true.
42 καὶ πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ.	42 and many believed in him there.

2. Exegesis

2.1. A Geographical Indication (10:40)

– Καὶ ἀπῆλθεν πάλιν

The verb ἀπέρχομαι, in the aorist form ἀπῆλθεν, comes as a result of Jn. 10:39, and, therefore, expresses the threat of Jerusalem — the Jewish authorities³⁶ and the Jews — for Jesus (11:8), who definitively leaves the Temple, and He will return to Jerusalem only to show his glory through the sign of the raising of his friend Lazarus, and for his hour.³⁷

A theological purpose of the FE could be considered here; the death of Jesus is not in the hands of the Religious Authorities or the Jews, but in the hand of God himself. In the parable of the Good Shepherd, Jesus declares: «No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my accord» (10:18). In this context, Jesus only has the decision of returning to Jerusalem «with the certain knowledge that he was going up to die».³⁸

– πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου εἰς τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἦν Ἰωάννης τὸ πρῶτον βαπτίζων

36. D.A. CARSON, *John*, 400.

37. B.C. DENNERT, *John the Baptist*, 80.

38. R.E. BROWN, *John*, 1:414–415.

This part of Jn. 10:40 announces a geographical change, which in narrative language tells how a phase is about to close to give space to another: from Jerusalem to Bethany, beyond the Jordan.³⁹ It is said that Jesus goes again «beyond the Jordan» to recall that he had gone there at the beginning of his ministry, when he first showed himself to JB, where he had first baptized (it is reprise of 1:28). The inclusion is clear. By pointing out that Jesus is going to this place, the FE shows him performing a pilgrimage to the sources. But, at the same time, he manifests his intention to complete the circle of JB, the privileged witness of Jesus.

In this respect, «Beyond the Jordan», far from the pressure exerted by the authority of the Jews, people believe in Jesus. This is how the new flock already announced in the previous speech formed by those who have heard and believed, and, therefore, are able to recognize the voice of the True Shepherd. In this place, JB's testimony still resounds, he who has testified to the True Light. From that land, Jesus will return to Jerusalem to bring back to life his friend Lazarus and finally gets closer to the hour of glory, giving his life and then taking it up again (10:17.18).

– καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ

By using the adverb ἐκεῖ, the FE sets up again the place of Bethany in contrast to Jerusalem and the Temple, where the Jews wanted to stone (10:31) and arrest (10:39) Jesus.⁴⁰ The same sentence ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ was used by the FE in the episode of the Samaritan Woman, when the Samaritans asked Jesus to stay with them (4:39–42). The result of the staying of Jesus with them was «the faith in him», as we shall see in 10:42, where his stay outside the space of the official Judaism, is a fruitful stay. This is an annotation that creates a narrative cut with what will follow later, before the beginning of the story that will lead Jesus to the Cross.

39. E.W. KLINK, *John*, 482.

40. J. MATEOS – J. BARRETO, *Giovanni*, 457.

2.2. *Many Came to Him (10:41a)*

– καὶ πολλοὶ ἦλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν

This verse resumes the times of JB's mission and brings back to the early context in which he gave his testimony regarding Jesus (1:19–34). At the same time, it recalls again what was said by the disciples of JB in Jn. 3:26, πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν. This statement was under the influence of Jesus' baptism on the crowds; herein, it is said by πολλοί under the influence of JB's words about Jesus.

In this way, the FE depicts his John as ὁ θυρωρός, «the Doorkeeper» of the NT.⁴¹ At this point, one can notice the similarity between the wedding metaphor and that of the shepherd. In the first scene, we have already seen how the metaphor has transmitted from YHWH in the OT to Jesus in the NT and how JB was the *shosh^{el}bin* of this transition. According to the shepherd theme, YHWH is described as the True Shepherd of Israel.⁴² In the FG, Jesus is described as the Good Shepherd, who «lays down his life for the sheep» (10:11). JB appears here as ὁ θυρωρός, «Doorkeeper» who opens the door to the sheep to follow the True Shepherd.

2.3. *The Ideal Prophet (10:41b)*

This is the last mention of JB in the FG, which assigned him a remarkable place starting from the Prologue. Once again, his situation is defined in relation to Jesus, under the twofold aspect of his inferiority (He did not perform signs) and of his role as an unparalleled witness.

– Ἰωάννης μὲν σημεῖον ἐποίησεν οὐδέν

It is a remarkable sentence. In the mind of the contemporary Judaism, a sign was considered as a decisive characterization of recognizing a prophet. In the FG, the signs characterize the personal mission of Jesus (11:47;

41. R. ZIMMERMANN, «John the Baptist», 113.

42. Cf. Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Ps. 23:1; 28:9; 77:20; 78:52; 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:9–10; Ezek. 34:11–

20:30): it is rightly called Jesus' unique role «as a worker of signs».⁴³ Indeed, «the praise of a man of God who did *not* perform miracles was completely unknown in Jewish sources».⁴⁴ An implied contrast between Jesus and JB lies behind this sentence. The Johannine reader knows that Jesus performed many «signs», but the subsequent affirmation of these πολλοί «all that John said about him was true» explains that JB's testimony serves to emphasize the signs of Jesus.⁴⁵

– πάντα δὲ ὅσα εἶπεν Ἰωάννης περὶ τούτου ἀληθὴ ἦν

By using the term ἀληθής, the FE intends to recall Jesus' testimony that is mentioned in Jn. 5; Jesus presented JB as the one who testified to «the truth» (5:33). This testimony is now confirmed by the voice of πολλοί which confirms the testimony of JB to Jesus.⁴⁶ It is what the people who came to Jesus do in turn; their decision can be approached to that of the first disciples (1:35–37).⁴⁷ Those «many» note and testify, after the long period of Jesus' public life, the veracity of JB's testimony, confirming his role as a truthful witness that indicates him as an ideal Prophet.

2.4. Many Believed in Him (10:42)

– καὶ πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ

The summary πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ is to be understood as a contrast to the growing opposition shown in the previous chapters (5–9) and also here in Jn. 10. Πολλοί, which were scandalized, and only a few showed themselves against this assessment (10:20–21). This verse is a transitional verse. It recalls what was said about JB by the FE at the very beginning of the Gospel (the God-sent witness, 1:6–7)⁴⁸ and prepares the Johannine reader for the subsequent sign of Jesus that is «the raising of

43. C.H. GIBLIN, «The Tripartite Narrative Structure», 460.

44. E. BAMMEL, «John Did No Miracles», 190–191.

45. A.T. LINCOLN, *St John*, 312–313.

46. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *St John*, 2:315.

47. X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Giovanni*, 679.

48. H. RIDDERBOS, *John*, 379.

Lazarus»: «Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him» (11:45).

In this context, a connection between JB's testimony and the Samaritan Woman's testimony is palpable (4:39–42). The connection is that the woman brought people to Jesus, but they believed, not as a result of her words but because they heard him themselves. In consequence, JB's testimony led these people to seek out Jesus, but faith invaded because of their contact with the Lord.⁴⁹ On the one hand, unlike Jesus, JB cannot claim to have performed miracles. But, on the other hand, the testimony he gave to Jesus was verified and made to believe.

Jn. 10:42 closes chapter 10 and with this, both the broad section 7–10 and the first part of the Gospel (1:19–10:42) marked by inclusion of Jn. 1:28 and Jn. 10:41 with a note of a full success of Jesus: «And many believed in him there». The verb «to believe» here is followed by the particle of motion towards place εἰς, which gives to this faith a dynamism that makes it resemble an existential cammino of spiritual growth towards Jesus. However, this is not a complete success, since the adhesion of faith to Jesus is limited by the adverb of place ἐκεῖ. It is, therefore, a partial success.

Far more disappointing and bitter will be the judgment that the FE will reserve about the entire public mission of Jesus: «Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him, οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν» (12:37). The use of the indicative imperfect ἐπίστευον, denounces the persistent unbelief of the Jews in Jesus.

3. Concluding Observations

As we have already seen, this was the last mention of JB in the FG. His main role remains in his valiant testimony about Jesus: though a character of the past, his testimony remains alive because many believe in Jesus based on JB's testimony.⁵⁰ In this perspective, «The purpose of John's ministry has been fulfilled: Jesus has been revealed to Israel».⁵¹ He is, therefore,

49. L. MORRIS, *John*, 472.

50. C.H. WILLIAMS, «John (the Baptist)», 58.

51. A.J. KÖSTENBERGER, *A Theology*, 228.

a representative character of the Scriptures, striving towards the One who fulfils the promise and led by God to meet him. Such courageous testimony will be taken up in the Book of Glory and brought to its peak by the disciple *ὁ ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς*, «who Jesus loved». Accordingly, our text shows JB as a closure character and, therefore, prepares for the appearance of the new witness, that is, the BD (13:23–26; 19:35; 20:8; 21:7.24).

Conclusion

From the very beginning of his Gospel, the FE's first depiction of JB is consistent with his prophetic role, he is the same as the Prophets in the ancient Israel ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ (1:6).¹ So, he is a Prophet, and thus he is the voice of the OT.

The words of the Scriptures constitute the promise of a truth that still does not exist; and because the Scriptures are used in the FG to testify to the identity of Jesus, the FE puts forth JB's role as the one who represents the Scriptures in his Christocentric testimony. Since JB, in all the stages of his testimony, finds the fulfilment of the Scriptures in Jesus Christ, and he is the actual contributor to the revival of this truth in the lives of his disciples, who became the first disciples of Jesus.

Therefore, the interpretation of John's representative role offers the essential background of Jesus' image that the Scriptures proposes: Jesus is the one of whom «Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote» (1:45). In this prophetic context, JB appears to do what Moses and the prophets did: to reveal the true identity of the Messiah.

In reference to the Johannine language, Scriptures is the crucial category for the understanding and exposition of the salvific economy of God in Jesus, the Pre-Existent Logos that is present in the Scriptures of Israel, in which he spoke and manifested himself.² Thus, the FG makes JB the representative of the Scriptures to understand, integrate and complete his Christology, at the basis of which is the conception of the Pre-Existence

1. J. ERNST, *Johannes der Täufer*, 192.

2. A. CAVICCHIA, *La Scrittura*, 176.

of the Logos and of his action in the history of salvation: this is the typical character of the Johannine John's testimony. From this theological point of view, thence, the Scriptures contain testimonies on behalf of Jesus, waiting to be filled with the reality of the Jesus event.³ Accordingly, JB has exercised his activity of testimony in favour of the truth or according to the truth in concordance with the Scriptures, since they testify also to Jesus (5:39).⁴ Accordingly, *faith in the Scriptures leads to faith in Jesus* (5:46; see also 1:45).

It is notable that this testimony of the Scriptures is collected at the end of Jn. 10, since the affirmation of Jesus' Divine Sonship is based on it (10:34–35). Obviously, at this notion, there is also a connection with JB's testimony. Mentioning him at the end of Jn. 10 serves to conclude his testimony literarily, which is confirmed by the geographical and theological factors. The geographical factor is the reference from Jn. 10:40 to Jn. 1:28, a verse with which it forms an inclusion. Whereas the theological data are the content of JB's testimony. Since the pivotal theme of Jn. 10:34–39 is Jesus' Divine Sonship, one might relate JB's truthful testimony to that of Jn. 1:34, «I [JB] myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God». In this way, JB's testimony has a Christocentric character, for it always has its main theme, namely, the person of Jesus: it is, therefore, a Christological one.⁵ Consequently, the FE converts such an important character as JB into the character of the Scriptures, in such a way that through his witness, it is the Scriptures of Israel that recognize and designate in Jesus the Christ.

Now, JB as a character from the NT, is, according to the Johannine narrative, *the first seer of God* who ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, «Was revealed in flesh» (1 Tim. 3:16) in the Incarnate Logos (1:14), Jesus Christ. In other words, the physical perception of God is made possible in the incarnate Logos (1:14.18; 14:1–14) the only Son, who is himself God:⁶ The earthly Jesus, according to the Johannine theology, is the one and true image of God the Father.⁷ In his dialogue with Philip, Jesus declares that ὁ ἑωρακώς

3. M.J.J. MENKEN, «Observations», 132.

4. M.J.J. MENKEN, «Observations», 133.

5. Brown argues that the authority of JB's ministry as a Christological witness amounts to that of the Scriptures as JB reveals Jesus to Israel. (R.E. BROWN, *An Introduction*, 156).

6. R. HIRSCH-LUIPOLD, *Gott Wahrnehmen*, 42, 346.

7. J. FREY, «The Fusion», 98.

ἐμὲ ἐώρακεν τὸν πατέρα, «Whoever has seen me has seen the Father» (14:9).

As a final point, we cannot, in fact, ignore the message that the FE intends to transmit to the readers of his work, both his contemporaries and those in the future. JB's representational role holds remarkable implications for the believing community. He appears as a model for the contemporary church. I can say, in this context, that the FE has completely Christianized⁸ JB and elevated him to a dimension of preparer, and of apostle. He can be a model of those who, in the church, have the ministry of apostles, of proclaimers and preparers of the kingdom. In this regard, the FE sublimates the character of JB. He is not interested in his asceticism or his own message, but he presents him essentially as the witness, or rather, the one who still testifies today in order to emphasize that witnessing is every Christian's mission.⁹

Accordingly, reading the FG in this light allows us to better understand the condition of the believer. The Johannine reader is invited in turn to bear witness to Jesus, to become a witness of Jesus in the world and before the world. This testimony is sometimes difficult to give, as it can even be expensive. Going to the extreme: martyrdom, its supreme form; this is the fate of Christians. Such an attitude is possible only if the disciple has already perceived the love of Christ for him. According to the Johannine theology, JB's testimony is a firm foundation for the faith of believers of all times. He is a role model of what a Christian witness should be.¹⁰

8. Ricoeur supports this idea by explaining that JB's testimony «is not other than the essential and total Christic confession». (P. RICOEUR, *Essays*, 137).

9. D.J. MACLEOD, «John 1:6–9», 305; see also M. BOICE, «Witnessing: The Progress of Revival», 29–44.

10. B. MILNE, *The Message of John*, 42.

Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABR	Australian Biblical Review
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BBS	Bulletin of Biblical Studies
BD	The Beloved Disciple
Bib	Biblica
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BibSac	Bibliotheca Sacra
BibT	Bible Today
BibZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
BW	The Biblical World
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
cf.	Confer (see)
CredOg	CredereOggi
CTM	Concordia Theological Monthly
CTQ	Concordia Theological Quarterly
DCBNT	Dizionario dei concetti biblici del Nuovo Testamento
ed.	Edition
EDB	Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna
EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
ET	Expository Times
EvQ	The Evangelical Quarterly

ExpTim	Expository Times
FE	Fourth Evangelist
FG	Fourth Gospel
FNeot	Filologia Neotestamentaria
FV	Foi et Vie
GLNT	Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento
GTJ	Grace Theological Journal
HTS	Hervormde Teologiese Studies
IBS	Irish Biblical Studies
ICC	International Critical Commentary
i.e.	id. Est (Latin) = That is
JB	John the Baptist
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBR	Journal of Bible and Religion
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JR	The Journal of Religion
JSNT	Journal for the Studies of the New Testament
JSOT	Journal Study of the Old Testament
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MJT	Melanesian Journal of Theology
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
Neot	Neotestamentica
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	Novum Testamentum
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NT	New Testament
NTS	New Testament Studies
NZSTR	Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie
OT	Old Testament
PRJ	Puritan Reformed Journal
PSV	Parola spirito e vita
RB	Revue Biblique
Rev.Ed.	Revised Edition

RHPR	Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses
RivBib	Rivista Biblica
RivBibIt	Rivista Biblica Italiana
RSPT	Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques
RTP	Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie
RTR	The Reformed Theological Review
SBFA	Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SCM	Society of Christian Missions
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Kittel)
TheoS	Theological Studies
TKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TynB	Tyndale Bulletin
vol.	Volume
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	The Westminster Theological Journal
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZKT	Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie
ZNT	Zeitschrift für Neues Testament
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

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