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The Patristic Reception of the Speakers in John 3

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

THE PATRISTIC RECEPTION OF THE SPEAKERS IN JOHN 3

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Jeremy S. Paulovkin

2015

To: Dean John Stack
School of International and Public Affairs

This thesis, written by Jeremy S. Paulovkin, and entitled The Patristic Reception of the Speakers in John 3, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
THE PATRISTIC RECEPTION OF THE SPEAKERS IN JOHN 3

by

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Florida International University, 2015

Miami, Florida

Professor Erik Larson, Major Professor

The identification of the speakers in John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 has remained a longstanding question in biblical studies, confirmed by the difference of opinion in commentaries and the lack of agreement over the placement of quotation marks in contemporary versions of the Bible. The scholarly debate has centered on whether these passages ought to be interpreted as continuations of the words of Jesus and the Baptist, or as authorial commentary appended to their respective discourses. The purpose of this study was to remedy this interpretive difficulty by approaching the question from a wholly different angle: that of tracing the reception history of John 3 in the patristic period (up to A.D. 450). By critically surveying how these earliest readers of John's Gospel interpreted the speakers, this thesis provides a fresh basis for evaluating the divergent theories of modern commentators and for reconsidering the placement of quotation marks in Bible versions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Literary Context of John 3	6
Current Scholarly Debate	13
Reception History	41
Survey Outline	44
II. JOHN 3 IN THE PATRISTIC AGE	46
Second Century	46
Third Century	62
Fourth Century	96
Fifth Century	201
III. CONCLUSION	335
Summary of Findings	336
Significance of the Study	367
Avenues for Further Research	371
IV. APPENDICES	374
Bibliography	382

I. INTRODUCTION

The one who will read Scripture accurately must pay attention everywhere, to observe, when necessary, who is speaking and when it is spoken, that we may discover that words are appropriately matched with characters throughout the holy books.¹

In this brief aside to his thirty-two volume commentary on John's Gospel, the Christian scholar Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-254) remarks that the serious reader of Scripture is one who takes careful note of both the context of a passage and the identity of the speaker therein. Whether or not we deem Origen a consistent follower of his own advice, his statement highlights the fact that determining the speaker in a biblical passage was not always a straightforward task, even for the ancient reader. It may be argued that few portions of the New Testament appear to fit such a description quite as well as two enigmatic passages from John's Gospel. At present, no true consensus exists amongst biblical translators and commentators concerning who is actually speaking in John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36. The context in which both of these passages are found is well-known. The first passage follows upon the nocturnal conversation between Jesus and the Pharisee Nicodemus in the city of Jerusalem. Similarly, the second passage follows upon the conversation between John the Baptist and his disciples at Aenon near Salim. With the rise of biblical criticism in modern times, scholars have questioned whether these passages ought to be interpreted as *continuations* of these conversations, or as *authorial commentary* appended to them. That is, to whom shall the words be attributed: to the characters within the Gospel narrative, or to the Gospel-writer standing outside the text?

¹ Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 6.53. Translated by Heine (1989).

The unresolved state of this interpretive question is reflected in the presentation of John 3 within English versions of the Bible. Readers of the New King James Version (NKJV), for example, find both John 3:16-21 and 3:31-36 inside quotation marks, while readers of the New English Translation (NET) find these two passages outside quotation marks.² Readers of other modern versions find a similar lack of agreement concerning whether or not these words belong to Jesus and John the Baptist.³ Even within editions of particular versions, such as the popularly read New International Version (NIV), the placement of quotation marks can vary. Prior to the latest revision of the NIV in 2011, readers found these passages inside quotation marks, along with accompanying footnotes to inform them that ‘some interpreters’ believed the conversations ended at 3:15 and 3:30, respectively. In sharp contrast, readers of the revised NIV now find just the opposite: John 3:16-21 and 3:31-36 are no longer presented in quotation marks, and their accompanying footnotes inform readers that ‘some interpreters’ believe the conversations extend further to 3:21 and 3:36. Given this complex and rather contradictory picture, the question that naturally emerges is one of rationale: Why aren’t all Bible versions in agreement over the identification of the speakers in John 3?

The answer stems in part from the fact that quotation marks (“ ”), in the form that we know them, did not exist in antiquity and only gradually gained currency after the advent of the printing press.⁴ In the absence of this punctuation device, ancient readers of

² Note: Nearly all English versions place John 3:13-15 within quotation marks, yet a number of biblical commentators continue to dispute the attribution of these verses to Jesus (see further discussion below).

³ For an outline on the presentation of John 3 in modern English versions, refer to Appendix 2.

⁴ See C. J. Mitchell, ‘Quotation Marks, National Compositorial Habits and False Imprints’. *The Library* 6/5 (1983): 360-376; M. B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 58-61; Colette Moore, *Quoting Speech in Early English*

the Bible were themselves responsible for distinguishing between the words of the author and the characters within the text. In the case of John's Gospel, written in Greek in the late-first century A.D., readers had to contend with the literary conventions that were commonplace in the wider Greco-Roman world. The most prominent of these was the scribal practice of writing in continuous capital letters, without spacing between words and sentences (known as *scriptio continua*).⁵ To offer a glimpse into how this literary convention appeared to readers in antiquity, we here provide an excerpt of John 1:19-23 modeled on the text and punctuation present in P⁷⁵, one of the earliest extant papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament.⁶

THISISTHETESTIMONYOFJOHNWHEN
THEJEWSEFROMJERUSALEMSENTPRI
ESTSANDLEVITESINORDERTOASK
HIMWHOAREYOUANDHECONFESSED
ANDDIDNOTDENYITBUTCONFESSEDT
ATIAMNOTTHECHRISTANDTHEYASKE
DHIMWHATTHENAREYOUELIJAHAND
ESAIDIAMNOTAREYOUTHEPROPHET
ANSWEREDNOTHENTHEYSAIDTOHIM
WHOAREYOU THATWEMAYGIVEANANS
WERTOTHOSEWHOSENTUSWHATDOYO
USAYABOUTYOURSELFHESAIDIAMTH
EVOICEOFTHEONECRYINGOUTINTHEW
ILDERNESSMAKESTRAIGHTTHEWAYO
FTHELORDASTHEPROPHETISAIAHSAID

(Studies in English Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 69-79; Ruth Finnegan, *Why Do We Quote? The Culture and History of Quotation* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2011), 79-95.

⁵ See Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 31-32; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 203-205; Rex Winsbury, *The Roman Book: Books, Publishing and Performance in Classical Rome* (London: Duckworth, 2009), 35-44.

⁶ On P⁷⁵ (written in Greek c. 225), see e.g., Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 501-507; Juan Chapa, 'The Early Text of John', in Hill and Kruger (eds.), *The Early Text of the New Testament*, 147-150.

With such a format, reading entailed considerable effort (as Origen of Alexandria pointed out). One had to be attentive at the grammatical level—stringing together letters in the formation of words, phrases and sentences—in order to avoid misinterpreting the message of the author and the characters cited within the narrative. Proper understanding was typically aided by vocalizing the text (reading aloud to hear the words) and by noting any marks of rudimentary punctuation.⁷ Most relevant for our purposes, ancient readers were able to distinguish between speakers by recognizing the author’s verbal cues (e.g., ‘he said’, ‘they asked’, ‘he answered’) and the characters’ use of the first/second-person (e.g., ‘who are you’, ‘I am’, ‘those who sent us’).⁸

Returning to our initial inquiry about the lack of agreement between modern Bible versions, the passages in John 3 do indeed present a special case for translators. First of all, both John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 contain no first/second-person references. This, along with the absence of any mention of Nicodemus and the disciples of John the Baptist, contrasts with the preceding verses, which are thoroughly conversational in tone. While the shift from dialogue to monologue is relatively smooth, in that no change of speaker between the verses can be detected,⁹ both passages are marked by an elevation in the use of theological expressions and terminology reminiscent of the Gospel prologue (e.g.,

⁷ Among the marks of punctuation present in this excerpt, we find the *diaeresis* (double dots above initial letters), the *stigmē* (elevated dot to signal pause) and *nomina sacra* (overlining to abbreviate sacred words).

⁸ Note: In the excerpt above, the dialogue between John the Baptist and his interlocutors is fast-paced, and in line 8 no verbal cue is provided between ‘I am not’ and ‘Are you the prophet’. Properly distinguishing the speakers here is mediated by the pronomial references and the dialogical context. Cf. Iver Larsen, ‘Quotations and Speech Introducers in Narrative Texts’. *Notes on Translation* 5 (1991), 56-57; Margaret G. Sim, *Marking Thought and Talk in New Testament Greek: New Light from Linguistics on the Particles ‘hina’ and ‘hoti’* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 153-156.

⁹ The last verbal cues from the Gospel-writer occur at 3:10 (‘Jesus answered and said’) and 3:27 (‘John answered and said’); the last first/second-person references made by the characters are found at 3:12 (‘if I tell you’) and 3:30 (‘I must decrease’). It is not until 3:22 and 4:1 that the narrative proper resumes.

‘only-begotten Son of God’, ‘light/darkness’, ‘the Father loves the Son’). The presence of such developed vocabulary and language, often characterized as stylistically ‘Johannine’, has proved to be one of the most influential factors in the decision-making processes of biblical translators.¹⁰ Tasked with producing meaningful English translations that remain faithful to the original Greek, translators must balance the interpretive ambiguities present in John 3 with the expectation that quotation marks (now in universal use) be applied correctly.¹¹ As scholars of the Bible themselves, translators also engage in their own research and consult with major commentaries and studies on John’s Gospel for insight on these passages. As previously alluded to, however, none of the proposals advanced by modern commentators on the issue of the speakers has won widespread acceptance. Consequently, editorial judgments on the placement of quotation marks in John 3 remain rather speculative.¹² The present thesis seeks to remedy this interpretive difficulty by approaching the question of the speakers from a wholly different angle: that of the historical reception of John 3 in pre-modernity.

¹⁰ See e.g., Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), 75, 84-86, 100-101; Harold Greenlee, ‘The End of the Quotation in John 3’. *Notes on Translation* 108 (1985): 15-16; Mary Steele, ‘Where Does the Speech Quotation End in John 3:1-21?’ *Notes on Translation* 2 (1988): 51-58.

¹¹ John F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4* (Edited by Graham N. Stanton. The International Critical Commentary. New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 252: ‘[T]he introduction of quotation marks into editions of the Bible has made studied neutrality [on this issue] no longer practicable’. Cf. Robert L. Thomas, *How to Choose a Bible Version: An Introductory Guide to English Translations* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 136-138.

¹² Some versions acknowledge this uncertainty by providing alternatives within accompanying footnotes. On the whole, though, these footnotes are too brief and/or vague to be of much help to readers interested in weighing the internal and external evidence: e.g., Good News Translation (GNT) after John 3:13: ‘The quotation may continue through verse 21’; International Standard Version (ISV) after 3:15: ‘The quotation possibly concludes with this verse instead of with verse 21’; Eastern/Greek Orthodox Bible (EOB) after 3:30: ‘Verses 31-36 are either a discourse by John the Baptist or more probably a reflection by the evangelist’. Several versions (including the NET and NIV, mentioned above) refer to the differing views of ‘some interpreters’, yet it remains unclear who these scholars are and why their views (presumably in the minority) were not adopted in the presentation of the biblical text.

As will be shown below, major commentators addressing the question of the speakers in John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 have for the most part overlooked in their analyses the interpretations of readers from antiquity.¹³ This thesis marks the first in-depth study to gather and analyze how the earliest readers of John’s Gospel—from the second century up through the fifth—understood these passages. Such an extensive survey allows for a more historically informed assessment of the identification of the speakers in John 3, by bringing to light heretofore unexamined documentary evidence from the earliest centuries of interpretive history. John’s Gospel figured prominently in patristic interpretation, giving rise to a rich and varied literary tradition. Critically surveying the reception of John 3 in these pre-modern sources can provide a fresh basis for evaluating the divergent theories of modern commentators, as well as for reconsidering the placement of quotation marks in modern Bible versions.

Literary Context of John 3

Before reviewing the secondary literature and outlining our own approach via the text’s historical reception, a closer look at the surrounding context of these two passages is necessary. So as to avoid misrepresentation, the text of John 2:23-4:3 is here presented in verse-by-verse format, with quotation marks omitted.¹⁴

2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in his name, seeing the signs that he did.

2:24 But Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all,

¹³ A handful of commentators make passing reference to Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1469-1551), credited as the first to question the so-called ‘traditional’ identification of the speakers in John 3. The majority of commentators, however, refer only to other modern exegetes (i.e., from the nineteenth century onwards).

¹⁴ Translation based on the NKJV, with a number of my own modifications in consultation with Nestle-Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA²⁷).

2:25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for he himself knew what was in man.

3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

3:2 He came to him by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

3:4 Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

3:5 Jesus answered, Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born again.

3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

3:9 Nicodemus answered and said to him, How can these things be?

3:10 Jesus answered and said to him, You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?

3:11 Amen, amen, I say to you that we speak what we know and testify to what we have seen, and you do not receive our testimony.

3:12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

3:13 And no one has ascended into heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man.

3:14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

3:15 so that whoever believes in him should have eternal life.

3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

- 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not judged, but whoever does not believe is judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.
- 3:19 And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil.
- 3:20 For everyone practicing wickedness hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.
- 3:21 But whoever does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be seen that they have been done in God.
- 3:22 After these things Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea, and there he remained with them and was baptizing.
- 3:23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.
- 3:24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison.
- 3:25 Then there arose a dispute between John's disciples and a Jew about purification.
- 3:26 And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, the one who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have been testifying, look, he is baptizing and all are coming to him!
- 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.
- 3:28 You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I have been sent before him.
- 3:29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.
- 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.
- 3:31 The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.
- 3:32 And what he has seen and heard, that he testifies, and no one receives his testimony.
- 3:33 The one who has received his testimony has certified that God is true.

- 3:34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he does not give the Spirit by measure.
- 3:35 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.
- 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.
- 4:1 Therefore, when the Lord learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,
- 4:2 though Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples,
- 4:3 he left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

We begin our analysis of context with John 2:23-25, a summary statement long recognized as being linked to the conversation with Nicodemus that follows.¹⁵ The Gospel-writer¹⁶ portrays the many in Jerusalem who ‘believed’ (Greek, *episteusan*) in Jesus as disingenuous, in that their belief was based on a misunderstanding of him as a miracle-worker alone. Since Jesus already ‘knew’ (Greek, *ginōskein*) this, he chose not to ‘trust himself’ (Greek, *episteuen auton*) to such believers.¹⁷ Nicodemus appears to belong to this very group, evidenced by the double appearance of the term ‘man’ (Greek, *anthrōpos*) in 2:25, followed by Nicodemus’ introduction in 3:1: ‘There was a man’ (Greek, *ēn de anthrōpos*). As the nocturnal conversation commences, Nicodemus refers

¹⁵ See e.g., Frederick D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John: A Series of Discourses* (Cambridge: Macmillan & Co., 1857), 85-87; Frédéric L. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: With an Historical and Critical Introduction* (Volume 1. Translated by Timothy Dwight. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 371-373; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971 [1964]), 130-131; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 126, 137.

¹⁶ Space prevents us from entering into the debate concerning the authorship and supposed redaction (editing) of John’s Gospel. Throughout the thesis I refer to the implied author (narrator) as the ‘Gospel-writer’, traditionally identified as one of Jesus’ disciples and associated with the ‘Johannine school’ that also circulated the letters of 1-3 John. Modern commentators employ various other titles (e.g., ‘evangelist’, ‘author’, ‘redactor’), or simply refer to him as ‘John’. See further in Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 74-108.

¹⁷ Here the Gospel-writer uses the same verb *pisteuein* in 2:23 and 2:24, which sets the stage for the extensive treatment of what it means to ‘believe’ (as well as to ‘know’) in the Nicodemus pericope. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 512-514.

back to the miracles that Jesus had performed during the Passover feast, asserting that he must be a ‘teacher come from God’ (Greek, *apo theou elēluthas didaskalos*). Nicodemus’ use of the first-person plural ‘we know’ (Greek, *oidamen*) indicates that he represents other Jewish leaders, and it provides Jesus the opportunity to challenge their assertions of ‘knowledge’ and ‘belief’ in his first extended discourse.¹⁸

By John 3:9, Nicodemus has repeatedly misunderstood Jesus’ cryptic language about new birth via the Spirit.¹⁹ Jesus marvels that Nicodemus does not ‘know’ (Greek, *ginōskeis*) these things, being ‘the teacher of Israel’ (Greek, *ho didaskalos tou Israel*). Nicodemus is addressed for the third time with the solemn declaration ‘Amen, amen, I say to you’ in 3:11,²⁰ and it is here that Jesus himself employs the first-person plural ‘we know’ (Greek, *oidamen*) to criticize the inability of Nicodemus and his group to ‘receive’ and ‘believe’ (Greek, *lambanete; pisteusete*) their message. The dialogue then moves from a discussion of ‘earthly things’ to a monologue on ‘heavenly things’ after 3:12, the last verse indisputably attributed to Jesus.

¹⁸ In the first two chapters of John’s Gospel, Jesus speaks only one or two sentences at a given time. In John 3:3-12, however, his reported speech is noticeably lengthened. An interesting pattern emerges when 3:13-21 is interpreted as Jesus’ words: as the length of Nicodemus’ speech gets progressively shorter (24 words, 18 words, 4 words), the length of Jesus’ speech increases (16 words, 70 words, 231 words). This kind of progressive lengthening of discourse, favored by Greek orators, is indicative of authorial intention. See Johannes P. Louw, ‘On Johannine Style’. *Neotestamentica* 20 (1986), 10-11; James L. Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design and Point of View in John* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 12-14.

¹⁹ Nicodemus initially acknowledged that Jesus was ‘from God’, yet he failed to grasp the full implications of the heavenly origin (i.e., Jesus’ divinity). See R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 135.

²⁰ The use of this distinctive phrase in 3:3, 3:5 and 3:11 is intended to grab the attention of Nicodemus (and by extension, readers). The double ‘amen’ sayings (unique to John’s Gospel) create cohesion within the discourse, develop and expand upon the preceding topic, and function as important literary indications of unity. See Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina Series 4. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 98; Robert Kysar, *Voyages with John: Charting the Fourth Gospel* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), 194; Beth M. Stovell, *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John’s Eternal King* (Linguistic Biblical Studies 5. Leiden: Brill, 2012), 185-186.

Thus far we have briefly explored the antecedent context of the first passage under consideration. A full-scale exegesis of John 3:13-21 would prove unnecessary at this point, since we will soon be reviewing the positions of leading modern commentators on these verses (and on 3:31-36). As mentioned previously, there is no structural indication that a change of speaker within 3:13-21 has taken place.²¹ The narrative proper is resumed at 3:22 with the temporal marker ‘after these things’ (Greek, *meta tauta*), employed by the Gospel-writer as a resumptive device.²² While it remains unclear as to how much time has passed between Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus and his departure to the Judean countryside, 3:22-24 provides an important segue to the ongoing baptismal activity of John the Baptist.²³ The Gospel-writer signals to readers that the Baptist had at this time not yet been imprisoned,²⁴ and in 3:25-26 relates that his disciples

²¹ Although some commentators point to the conjunction ‘for’ (Greek, *gar*) in 3:16 to argue that authorial commentary has begun, *gar* occurs on Jesus’ lips throughout the Gospels and can simply signal a shift (or even continuation) in thought. From the first six chapters of each Gospel, see e.g., John 4:18, 4:23, 4:37, 5:19-22, 5:26, 5:36, 5:46, 6:27, 6:33, 6:55; Matthew 3:15, 4:10, 4:17, 5:12, 5:18, 5:20, 5:29-30, 5:46, 6:7-8, 6:14, 6:16, 6:21, 6:24, 6:32, 6:34; Mark 1:38, 3:35, 4:22, 4:25, 4:28; Luke 5:39, 6:23 (twice), 6:26, 6:32-34, 6:43, 6:44 (twice), 6:48. This conjunction also occurs in John 3:17 and 3:19-20. Cf. Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 102; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 668; Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Second Edition. Dallas: SIL International, 2000 [1992]), 91; Margaret G. Sim, *Marking Thought and Talk in New Testament Greek: New Light from Linguistics on the Particles ‘hina’ and ‘hoti’* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 37-38.

²² See J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Volume I. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), cviii; Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 151. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 181; Douglas Estes, *The Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel: A Theory of Hermeneutical Relativity in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 153-155.

²³ This is the first indication that the ministries of Jesus and the Baptist were contemporaneous (people continue to come to the Baptist at the springs of Aenon). The last mention of the Baptist was at Bethany, where he directed Andrew and another disciple to follow Jesus, ‘the lamb of God’ (cf. John 1:35-37).

²⁴ According to Mark 1:14, Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee *after* the Baptist’s imprisonment. Richard Bauckham proposes that the parenthetical comment in John 3:24 functions not as a chronological corrective, but to clarify for readers familiar with the Markan account that these events occurred earlier on. Internal context confirms this, since in John 4:45 the Galileans are only aware of Jesus’ miracles in Jerusalem, having been present during the Passover feast. See Richard Bauckham, ‘John For Readers of Mark’, in Bauckham (ed.), *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, 152-155.

took note of Jesus' rising popularity.²⁵ Just as Nicodemus earlier addressed Jesus as 'Rabbi' (Aramaic for 'teacher'), so here do the disciples address the Baptist, expecting as it were some teaching to follow. Their comments allow the Baptist to once again reassert in 3:27-30 that he is neither the Christ nor one who is greater than Jesus.²⁶ On the contrary, in styling himself as 'the friend of the bridegroom', he declares that he is fully content with decreasing in importance, as he 'must' (Greek, *dei*).²⁷

The second passage under consideration begins at this point. John 3:31-36 does not include structural clues to indicate that a change of speaker has occurred.²⁸ In 4:1-3 the Gospel-writer returns to the narrative proper with the transitional particle 'therefore' (Greek, *oun*), explaining why Jesus departed to Galilee.²⁹ The Pharisees, who had earlier interrogated John the Baptist regarding his identity, now hear that Jesus' disciples were outnumbering the Baptist's own. As a corrective against readers thinking that Jesus

²⁵ The present-tense declaration 'look...all are coming to him' (Greek, *ide pantes erchontai pros auton*) conveys some level of surprise on their part. While the use of the term *pantes* ('all' or 'everyone') is hyperbolic (cf. John 4:29, 10:41, 11:48), it highlights the rapid overshadowing of the Baptist by Jesus.

²⁶ The Baptist's initial response that 'a man' (Greek, *anthrōpos*) receives only what is given 'from heaven' (Greek, *ek tou ouranou*) is most probably a self-reference, i.e., he accepts the supportive role he plays. The citation 'I am not the Christ' and allusion to being 'sent before him' harken back to John 1:20, 1:30-32.

²⁷ The marriage metaphor situates the Baptist as 'the best man', who gladly oversees the success of the wedding and leads the bride (Israel/church) to the bridegroom (Jesus). The Baptist's use of 'must' implies divine purpose (frequently employed by Jesus as well, e.g., John 3:7, 4:24, 12:34; Matthew 26:54; Mark 8:31; Luke 2:49). See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Second Edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978 [1955]), 222-223; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 211-212.

²⁸ Craig S. Keener describes this passage's content as 'consummate Johannine Christology', yet comments: 'At the same time, the Baptist's testimony does not clearly break here; if these are not his words, the writer takes them as the logical implications to which the Baptist's testimony must point'. Cf. his *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Volume 1. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 581.

²⁹ John 3:22 and 4:1 constitute a 'resumptive repetition', a common discourse feature in which an event is interrupted by new material (digression) and is then resumed at a later point. The storyline of Jesus baptizing in 3:22 is picked up again in 4:1. See further in Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Second Edition. Dallas: SIL International, 2000 [1992]), 85-86; Philip A. Quick, 'Resumptive Repetition: A Two-Edged Sword'. *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 6 (1993): 297-304.

personally baptized people, the Gospel-writer insists in 4:2 that it was only his disciples who did so.³⁰ These verses set the stage for Jesus' journey to Galilee via Samaria, which features his next extended discourse with the woman at the well.

Current Scholarly Debate

Having explored the surrounding context of John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36, we now turn to the current scholarly debate on the identification of the speakers. The conventional nature of the commentary-writing process—that of looking at a biblical book's contents chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse—has enabled modern commentators to address this issue directly. While their theories contain some degree of overlap as well as nuance, they fall into three general categories on the interpretive spectrum. At one end is the view that Jesus and the Baptist speak these words, while at the other end is the view that the Gospel-writer inserts his own commentary upon the preceding conversations. Between these two is a so-called mediating view, which finds in these passages the *merging* of the words of Jesus and the Baptist with the authorial voice of the Gospel-writer, rendering them indistinguishable. A fourth school of thought, not treated in the present study, includes those commentators which argue for the *rearrangement* of the text of John 3; according to this view, the 'earliest edition' of the Gospel did not contain these two passages in their present order, and attempts are thus made to reconstruct a hypothetical original.³¹ Redaction theories of this kind, while inventive in their own right, have no

³⁰ John F. McHugh contends that the purpose of 4:2 was to ensure that readers did not confuse this baptism with the sacrament of Christian baptism (post-resurrection). Following Dodd and Brown, Gail R. O'Day views 4:2 as a later editor's attempt to suppress the notion that Jesus was an imitator of the Baptist. Cf. John F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4* (Edited by Graham N. Stanton. The International Critical Commentary. New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 262-263; Gail R. O'Day, 'The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections', in Keck (ed.), *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 560.

³¹ Bultmann and Schnackenburg, for instance, propose rearrangements that place 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 alongside each other, with the appearance of being Jesus' words (though deriving from earlier 'revelation-

manuscript support and prove to be quite unnecessary when the task of exegesis is to interpret the text as it has come down to us (i.e., the current form of John's Gospel is the only Gospel).³²

As will be observed in what follows, both strengths and weaknesses are to be found within the argumentation of each of these views. The utilization of different critical methodologies (historical, literary, reader-response, etc.) has naturally led commentators to different conclusions; both the types of questions asked and the assumptions inherent in them have resulted in commentators settling on whatever interpretation seems 'most convincing'.³³ It is striking, however, to discover that virtually every commentator has failed to bring into discussion the evidence of pre-modern interpreters on the identification of the speakers.³⁴ Following this overview of modern scholarship, we will

discourses' or 'kerymatic expositions' by the Gospel-writer or later editor). The English translation of James Moffatt (1913) transposes 3:22-30 between 2:12 and 2:13, thereby presenting 3:13-21 and 3:31-26 together and within quotation marks. See Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971 [1964]), 130-133, 153, 160; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John* (Volume 1. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968 [1965]), 360-363, 380-381. Cf. also the excursus 'The Interpretation of John 3 in the Twentieth Century' in John F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4* (Edited by Graham N. Stanton. The International Critical Commentary. New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 257-258.

³² The interpretive principle of C. H. Dodd is worth citing here: 'Meanwhile the work [John's Gospel] lies before us in an order which (apart from insignificant details) does not vary in the textual tradition, traceable to an early period. I conceive it to be the duty of an interpreter at least to see what can be done with the document as it has come down to us before attempting to improve upon it...I shall assume as a provisional working hypothesis that the present order is not fortuitous, but deliberately devised by somebody—even if he were only a scribe doing his best—and that the person in question (whether the author or another) had some design in mind, and was not necessarily irresponsible or unintelligent'. Cf. his *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 [1953]), 290; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Second Edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978 [1955]), 21-26.

³³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 228: 'All are agreed that from time to time in this Gospel we have the meditations of the evangelist. But it is difficult to know where these begin and end. In the first century there were no devices such as inverted commas to show the precise limits of quoted speech. The result is that *we are always left to the probabilities*, and we must work out for ourselves where a speech or a quotation ends' (emphasis added).

³⁴ This failure to examine (let alone mention!) patristic views on the speakers seems unlikely to have arisen from mere oversight—it is perhaps reflective of a broader issue within historical-critical scholarship:

discuss how tracing the reception history of John 3 bridges this major lacuna in the study of the Gospel and can offer genuine exegetical and hermeneutical insights.

With respect to the first passage under consideration, it is best to divide the text into two units for discussion: John 3:13-15 and 3:16-21. Many commentators that argue against attributing 3:16-21 to Jesus still hold to the view that 3:13-15 are most probably his words, despite their third-person formulation and less obvious relationship to the Nicodemus dialogue.³⁵ Both 3:13 and 3:14, it is often noted, begin with the connective conjunction ‘and’ (Greek, *kai*). Interpreted in their most natural sense, these conjunctions indicate a continuation of what precedes.³⁶ The distinctive title ‘the Son of Man’ (Greek, *ho huios tou anthrōpou*) is also found in these two verses. Within the four Gospels this title occurs only on Jesus’ lips,³⁷ and it is widely accepted that this was one of his

namely, the *devaluation* of what these earliest readers of John’s Gospel can contribute to the current interpretive debate (see further discussion below). It may also be noted that some commentators, diffident about identifying the speakers in these passages, recommend that the question ‘who speaks’ forever remain an open one. However, it must be remembered that no serious attempts have been made to consider input from pre-modern interpreters, so it remains to be seen whether modern arguments are supported or undermined by such evidence.

³⁵ All but two modern Bible versions include John 3:13-15 within quotation marks. These are the Good News Translation (GNT) and the Scholars Version (SV), which present 3:14-15 outside quotation marks and forming a new paragraph. Their accompanying footnotes inform readers of the possibility that Jesus’ words extend through 3:21. As such, these translators regard 3:13 and 3:21 as the two most probable ending points for Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, as opposed to 3:12 or 3:15.

³⁶ See e.g., B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: John Murray, 1896), 53; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 199-201; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 196-197. See also Gerard S. Sloyan, *John* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 45-46, though Sloyan argues that 3:13-21 continues from a ‘kerygmatic discourse’ that a final redactor never smoothed out (thus favoring textual rearrangement). Rudolf Schnackenburg asserts that this earlier ‘kerygmatic discourse’ was none other than 3:31-36, which the *kai* ‘originally’ linked back to. Cf. his *The Gospel According to St John* (Volume 1. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968 [1965]), 360-363, 380-381.

³⁷ The only exceptions are John 12:34 and Luke 24:6-7, yet their context reveals that Jesus’ own words are being cited/questioned. John 12:34 reads: ‘The crowd answered him, ‘We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up?’ Who is this Son of Man?’ Luke 24:6-7 reads: ‘He is not here, but is risen! Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and

preferred self-designations. The references to heaven and exaltation in 3:13-14 also seem to follow upon Jesus' mention of 'heavenly things' in 3:12,³⁸ and a number of commentators treat these verses as a fitting response to Nicodemus' expression of perplexity and doubt in 3:9: 'How can these things be?'³⁹ Like *kai* in 3:13-14, the particle 'so that' (Greek, *hina*) at the beginning of 3:15 signals a causal or consecutive relationship. Grammatically, 3:15 cannot stand on its own; it is a subordinate clause dependent on the preceding clause in 3:14, and thus completes the sentence.⁴⁰ As a result, all commentators accepting 3:13-14 as Jesus' words also regard 3:15 in like manner.

the third day rise again?" The title appears in John's Gospel thirteen times, in the Synoptics nearly seventy times, and in a number of non-canonical sources (e.g., *Gospel according to Mary*, *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, *Apocryphon of James*).

³⁸ Daniel B. Wallace suggests that the third class condition in 3:12 can also be rendered: 'If I should tell you of heavenly things—and it is likely that I will—how is it possible for you to believe?' When such a construction is adopted, Jesus' deliberative question carries the dialogue further. Cf. his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 696-698. See also Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina Series 4. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 94-95; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Black's New Testament Commentaries. New York: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 147; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 194; Benjamin E. Reynolds, 'The Use of the Son of Man Idiom in the Gospel of John', in Hurtado and Owen (eds.), *Who Is This Son of Man?: The Latest Scholarship on a Puzzling Expression of the Historical Jesus*, 107; Philipp F. Bartholomä, *The Johannine Discourses and the Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics: A Contribution to the Discussion Concerning the Authenticity of Jesus' Words in the Fourth Gospel* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 57. Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2012), 108; contra Noah K. Davis, 'Jesus and Nicodemus—Note on John III'. *The Homiletic Review* 45 (1903): 449.

³⁹ See e.g., Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief: An Analytic Study of the Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986 [1948]), 89; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 145-146; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 88-89; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11* (The New American Commentary: Volume 25A. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 180-182; Paul Julian, *Jesus and Nicodemus: A Literary and Narrative Exegesis of Jn. 2,23-3,36* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 190; Jey J. Kanagaraj and Ian S. Kemp, *The Gospel According to John* (Asia Bible Commentary Series. Singapore: Asia Theological Association, 2002), 155; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 127-128.

⁴⁰ Most English Bible versions do not present 3:15 as beginning a new sentence (i.e., with a capitalized initial letter), but view the words as the final clause of 3:14. Cf. Mary Steele, 'Where Does the Speech Quotation End in John 3:1-21?' *Notes on Translation* 2 (1988): 53.

Some commentators assert that the conversation with Nicodemus comes to an official close at John 3:12, and that 3:13-15 should not be interpreted as Jesus' words. One argument commonly made is that the verses look back on the completed work of Jesus, that is, from the post-resurrection perspective of the Gospel-writer and his 'Johannine school'.⁴¹ To be sure, the use of the perfect tense in 3:13 does indeed lend support to such a position (e.g., interpreting 'no one has ascended' as if Jesus' ascension into heaven has already occurred).⁴² However, many commentators point out that 3:14 appears to portray the exaltation/crucifixion of Jesus as future: the present-indicative verb *dei* (translated 'must' or 'it is necessary') suggests that Jesus has yet to be 'lifted up' (Greek, *hupsōthēnai*).⁴³ In fact, we find this figurative language further developed in John 12:32-34, where Jesus refers to being 'lifted up' and the Gospel-writer immediately adds:

⁴¹ See e.g., Noah K. Davis, 'Jesus and Nicodemus—Note on John III'. *The Homiletic Review* 45 (1903): 448-450; Kiyoshi Tsuchido, 'The Composition of the Nicodemus-Episode, John ii 23-iii 21'. *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* 1 (1975): 91-96; Godfrey C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 63. Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 91-103; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Second Edition. Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 36. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999 [1987]), 46; Gerard S. Sloyan, *John* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 45; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (Reading the New Testament Series. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 100-101; Herman C. Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: A Work in Two Editions* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 152. According to Rudolf Schnackenburg, the commentators Calmes, Belser and Tillmann also view 3:13 as the beginning of authorial commentary. Cf. his *The Gospel According to St John* (Volume 1. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968 [1965]), 360.

⁴² See however the recently published article by Madison N. Pierce and Benjamin E. Reynolds, 'The Perfect Tense-Form and the Son of Man in John 3.13: Developments in Greek Grammar as a Viable Solution to the Timing of the Ascent and Descent'. *New Testament Studies* 60 (2014): 149-155.

⁴³ See Charles C. Tittmann, *Sacred Meditations; Or, An Exegetical, Critical, and Doctrinal Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Volume 1. Translated from the Latin by James Young. Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1844 [1816]), 122-123; Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of John* (Translated by William Urwick; revised and edited by Frederick Crombie. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 131; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 149; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997 [1987]), 136; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 200.

‘This he said signifying by what death he would die’. The crowd then questions why Jesus earlier claimed, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’. This near-identical phraseology, as presented below, has prompted a majority of commentators to treat 3:14 as part of Jesus’ speech.⁴⁴

3:14b - ...so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

houtōs hupsōthēnai dei ton huion tou anthrōpou

12:34b - How can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up?’

pōs legeis su hoti dei hupsōthēnai ton huion tou anthrōpou

As previously mentioned, the content of John 3:15 is fully dependent on what precedes in 3:14. Eternal life is made possible through the actions of the Son of Man, who grants it to ‘whoever believes in him’ (Greek, *pas ho pisteuōn en autō*).⁴⁵ The use of the present-active participle also seems to point forward to the salvific actions of Jesus to come, and 3:14-15 is thus often interpreted as Jesus’ prediction of his passion and resurrection.⁴⁶

This brings us to one of the most commonly quoted verses from the Bible, which commences the next unit of the first passage under consideration. John 3:16 has been frequently described as ‘the Gospel in a nutshell’ and a classic summary of God’s universal love for the whole world. The verse describes the giving of the Son *par*

⁴⁴ George R. Beasley-Murray acknowledges the possibility that the Gospel-writer wished for readers to interpret the typology of John 3:14 as Jesus’ own words. Nevertheless, he insists on the basis of content that 3:13-15 and 3:16-21 are ‘most certainly self-conscious reproductions of kerymatic declarations’ by the Gospel-writer. See his *John* (Second Edition. Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 36. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999 [1987]), 46. Cf. also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John* (Volume 1. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968 [1965]), 363, 394-397.

⁴⁵ The phrase ‘eternal life’ in Johannine usage signifies not only the unlimited duration of life, but also its qualitative distinction (in relationship to divine attributes). Cf. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Second Edition. Volume 1. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 642.

⁴⁶ See e.g., Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Volume 1. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1865), 181; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Volume I. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 113-116; Grant Osborne, *The Gospel of John* (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Vol. 13. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 56.

excellence on behalf of all, in order that none should perish who believe in him (Greek, *pas ho pisteuōn eis auton mē apolētai*). This theme is developed and elaborated upon in sharply dualistic terms in 3:17-18 (salvation vs. judgment) and 3:19-21 (light/truth vs. darkness/evil).⁴⁷ Some modern commentators argue that the overall style of expression in these verses, as well as the presence of certain key terms and phrases, is better suited to the Gospel-writer than to the historical Jesus (thus marking 3:15 as the end of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus). Other commentators, holding to what has sometimes been labeled the 'traditional' view, assert that Jesus is still speaking throughout, even if in a more developed theological manner. Still others contend that the identification of the speaker is not really possible, inasmuch as the 'voices' of Jesus and the Gospel-writer have merged into a single, unified 'voice'. As will be observed, the current debate over how to best regard John 3:16-21 (and 3:31-36) is at a crossroads of sorts; with no consensus emerging, it is reasonable to consider a new avenue of approach. The present study seeks just this by surveying the early reception history of the Johanne text.

The largest representative group of modern commentators comprise those that treat John 3:16-21 as the Gospel-writer's own words.⁴⁸ The most oft-cited reasons for regarding 3:16-21 as authorial commentary are the linguistic features of the passage (e.g., diction, style, tone, point of view, repetition, symbolism) and aspects of its historicity (the likelihood that Jesus actually uttered these words). These commentators assert that the

⁴⁷ On one hand, the consequences of belief and righteousness are eternal life and being saved (experiencing no judgment). On the other hand, the consequences of disbelief and wickedness are eternal judgment and being lost (perishing). Johannes P. Louw notes that the thematic arrangement of these verses is 'stylistically very refined' and 'intricately connected'. See his 'On Johannine Style'. *Neotestamentica* 20 (1986): 10-12. Cf. also C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 [1953]), 303-308; James L. Bailey and Lyle Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 172-177.

⁴⁸ Commentators describe this passage in different ways (e.g., 'commentary', 'narrative aside', 'footnote', 'theological discussion', 'reflection', 'meditation', 'exposition', 'expansion', 'supplementary paragraph').

‘Johannine’ character of 3:16-21 is evident when the verses are compared with other narrative material in the Gospel, as well as with the language of 1-3 John.⁴⁹ For instance, many point to 1 John 4:9-11 as evidence of how Johannine theology permeates the Gospel, and by extension the portrayal of Jesus:

In this the love of God was revealed toward us, that God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Given that the writer of 1 John is here speaking in his own ‘voice’, the theological, lexical and stylistic similarities with the content of John 3:16-17 are manifest.⁵⁰ As in 3:16-17, God is described as sending his Son into the world on account of his love. The result for believers is life ‘through him’ (Greek, *di autou*), which later in 1 John is associated with having boldness on the ‘day of judgment’. The distinctive title ‘the only-begotten Son’ (Greek, *ton huion ton monogenē*) is also present, appearing elsewhere only in the Gospel prologue and John 3:18. Despite such similarities, several commentators have cautioned against establishing a direct literary relationship, either from John’s

⁴⁹ See e.g., B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: John Murray, 1896), 54; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Volume I. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 117; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John* (Volume 1. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968 [1965]), 361; Henri Van den Bussche, *Jean: Commentaire de l’Évangile Spirituel* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 171-172; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 228; J. Bryan Born, ‘Literary Features in the Gospel of John (An Analysis of John 3:1-21)’. *Direction* 17 (1988): 11-13; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 203; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 94; John F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4* (Edited by Graham N. Stanton. The International Critical Commentary. New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 238-239, 252-253.

⁵⁰ John 3:16-17: ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him’.

Gospel to 1 John or vice versa.⁵¹ The apostle Paul, for example, used similar language in Romans 5:8 and 8:3 to describe how God demonstrated the extent of his love by sending his own Son.⁵² At the very least a shared tradition is probable, yet this calls into question whether such language could in fact derive from the teaching of Jesus himself.

Although commentators point to other expressions within John 3:16-21 that indicate Johannine influence (e.g., ‘believe in the name’, ‘this is the judgment’, ‘whoever does the truth’),⁵³ much of the language in these verses is comparable to the words of Jesus found elsewhere in John’s Gospel. We may note the following examples:

- 3:16a - ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son...’
houtōs ēgapēsen ho theos ton kosmon hōste ton huion monogenē edōken
- 17:23b - ‘...that the world may know that you have sent me and loved them’.
hina ginōskē ho kosmos hoti su me apesteilas kai ēgapēsas autous
- 3:16b - ‘...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life’.
hina pas ho pisteuōn eis auton mē apolētai all echē zōēn aiōnion
- 6:40b - ‘...that whoever sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life’.
hina pas ho theōrōn ton huion kai pisteuōn eis auton echē zōēn aiōnion
- 3:17 - ‘For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him’.

⁵¹ Significant differences are outlined in Raimo Hakola, ‘The Reception and Development of the Johannine Tradition in 1, 2 and 3 John’, in Rasimus (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel*, 29-35.

⁵² Romans 5:8: ‘But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’; 8:3a: ‘For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh’. Cf. also 1 Timothy 1:14-16; Titus 3:4-7.

⁵³ Grant Osborne claims these three expressions are found elsewhere only in ‘editorial sections’ of the Gospel, and that the shift from ‘the Son of Man’ to ‘the Son of God’ is indicative of the change of speaker. He exaggerates, however, when he asserts that ‘[v]irtually all scholars’ interpret 3:16-21 as authorial commentary. Similarly, Tom Thatcher claims that commentators ‘almost unanimously agree that the narrator is addressing the reader directly by v. 21’. See Grant Osborne, *The Gospel of John* (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Vol. 13. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 57; Tom Thatcher, ‘John’s Memory Theatre: A Study of Composition in Performance’, in Le Donne and Thatcher (eds.), *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, 89. Cf. also Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 228; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 113-114;

- ou gar apesteilen ho theos ton huion eis ton kosmon hina krinē ton kosmon all hina sōthē ho kosmos di autou*
- 12:47b - ‘...for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world’.
ou gar ēlthon hina krinō ton kosmon all hina sōsō ton kosmon
- 3:18a - ‘Whoever believes in him is not judged...’
ho pisteuōn eis auton ou krinetai
- 5:22 - ‘For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son’.
oude gar ho patēr krinei oudena alla tēn krisin pasan dedōken tō huiō
- 3:18b - ‘...whoever does not believe is judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God’.
ho mē pisteuōn ēdē kekritai hoti mē pepisteuken eis to onoma tou monogenous huiou tou theou
- 12:48 - ‘Whoever rejects me and does not receive my words has his judge: the word that I have spoken will judge him’.
ho athetōn eme kai mē lambanōn ta rēmata mou echei ton krinonta auton ho logos hon elalēsa ekeinos krinei auton
- 3:19a - ‘And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world’.
hautē de estin hē krisis hoti to phōs elēluthen eis ton kosmon
- 17:3a - ‘And this is eternal life, that they may know...’
hautē de estin hē aiōnios zōē hina ginōskōsin
- 3:19b - ‘...rather than the light, for their deeds were evil’.
mallon ē to phōs ēn gar autōn ponēra ta erga
- 7:7b - ‘...it hates me because I testify of it that its deeds are evil’.
eme misei hoti egō marturō peri autou hoti ta erga autou ponēra estin
- 3:20a - ‘...everyone practicing wickedness hates the light’.
pas ho phaula prassōn misei to phōs
- 5:29b - ‘...those who have practiced wickedness to a resurrection of judgment’.
hoi ta phaula praxantes eis anastasin kriseōs
- 3:21a - ‘Whoever does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be seen’.
ho poiōn tēn alētheian erchetai pros to phōs hina phanerōthē autou ta erga
- 12:46 - ‘I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness’.
egō phōs eis ton kosmon elēlutha hina pas ho pisteuōn eis eme en tē

To this list one could add other examples as well as some Synoptic parallels,⁵⁴ but the purpose is to emphasize that resemblance in vocabulary or language is not as definitive a criterion for determining the speaker as it is sometimes claimed.⁵⁵ Particularly in the context of declarations about the Son of Man, commentators note that a shift to the third-person is not unusual in Jesus' speech elsewhere in John's Gospel.⁵⁶ While other difficulties with 3:16-21 may indeed betray the influence of the Gospel-writer's *Sitz im Leben* (i.e., his Christian milieu and perspective in the late-first century),⁵⁷ commentators

⁵⁴ See further in Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 132-136, 144-149, 490-491; Philipp F. Bartholomä, *The Johannine Discourses and the Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics: A Contribution to the Discussion Concerning the Authenticity of Jesus' Words in the Fourth Gospel* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 57. Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2012), 124-133.

⁵⁵ A case in point is D. A. Carson's claim (following Mary Steele) that the repeated use of the name 'God' (Greek, *theos*) in John 3:16-21 suggests that the Gospel-writer is speaking, since Jesus' preference is to refer to God as 'Father' (Greek, *patēr*). Such a claim is misleading, for Jesus refers to 'God' as subject on a number of other occasions: e.g., John 4:24, 6:27, 8:42, 11:22, 13:31, 13:32 (twice), 17:3; Matthew 6:30, 15:4, 19:6, 22:32, 27:46 (twice); Mark 10:6, 10:9, 15:34 (twice); Luke 8:39, 12:24, 12:28, 16:15, 18:7. Moreover, at this early point in his ministry Jesus has only once indirectly used the title 'Father' (John 2:16), while he has indirectly used the name 'God' three times (1:51, 3:3, 3:5). Philipp F. Bartholomä, also pointing to the use of 'God' in 3:16-21, remains skeptical whether this is strong enough of an indication to 'decisively settle the issue'. See his *The Johannine Discourses and the Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics: A Contribution to the Discussion Concerning the Authenticity of Jesus' Words in the Fourth Gospel* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 57. Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2012), 108-109; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 203; Mary Steele, 'Where Does the Speech Quotation End in John 3:1-21?' *Notes on Translation 2* (1988): 54.

⁵⁶ See e.g., John 5:19-23, 5:26-29, 6:27, 7:18, 10:1-5, 12:35-36, 13:31-32, 16:21. Cf. also Matthew 12:32-35, 16:25-28, 24:27-31; Mark 13:24-27, 14:21; Luke 11:29-32, 12:10, 22:22.

⁵⁷ Noting the presence of certain past-tense verbs (e.g., 'God gave', 'God sent', 'judged already', 'light has come', 'men loved', 'deeds were evil'), some assert that this retrospective point of view demonstrates that the actions of the crucifixion and resurrection are completed, and better fit a context long removed from the original conversation with Nicodemus. It is possible, however, to interpret the 'giving' and 'sending' of the Son, as well as light 'coming into the world', as references to the incarnation rather than to the crucifixion/resurrection (thus appropriately referring back to Jesus' descent from heaven in a historical sense). See J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Volume I. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 117; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Volume 5. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932); Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 133, 149; PHEME PERKINS, 'The Gospel According to John', in Brown et al (eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 956; Paul Julian, *Jesus and Nicodemus: A Literary and Narrative Exegesis of Jn. 2,23-3,36*

generally acknowledge that the characterization of Jesus in this Gospel is quite distinctive—ergo the designation ‘Johannine Jesus’.⁵⁸ Because the words in 3:16-21 conceivably fit Jesus’ own idiom and nowhere indicate that a change of speaker has occurred, a number of commentators still interpret these words in the context of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus.⁵⁹

Having outlined two of the major interpretive possibilities surrounding the identity of the speaker in John 3:16-21, we now turn to the third group of commentators: those that consider such attempts to differentiate Jesus’ words from those of the Gospel-writer as essentially futile. These commentators assert that no substantive differences can be detected between the thought and language of Jesus and the Gospel-writer—the

(New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 243; Gary M. Burge, ‘Gospel of John’, in Evans (ed.), *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: John’s Gospel, Hebrews-Revelation*, 54.

⁵⁸ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 149: ‘Of course the evangelist has been at work in this discourse [3:13-21], but his work is not of the type that begins at a particular verse. All Jesus’ words come to us through the channels of the evangelist’s understanding and rethinking, but the Gospel presents Jesus as speaking and not the evangelist’. See also C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 [1953]), 308; Ben Witherington, III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 99-101; Gail R. O’Day, ‘The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections’, in Keck (ed.), *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 548; Gilbert Van Belle, ‘The Return of John to Jesus Research’. *Louvain Studies* 32 (2007): 23-48.

⁵⁹ See e.g., John P. Lange, *The Gospel According to John: An Exegetical and Doctrinal Commentary* (Translated and edited by Philip Schaff. New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), 133-134; Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of John* (Translated by William Urwick; revised and edited by Frederick Crombie. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 132; Frédéric L. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: With an Historical and Critical Introduction* (Volume I. Translated by Timothy Dwight. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 395-396; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966), 149; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997 [1987]), 16, 149; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina Series 4. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 96-97, 100; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Black’s New Testament Commentaries. New York: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 147-148; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 40, 200-201; Frederick D. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 200-209. Cf. also the discourse analysis of John 3:1-21 and overview of its lexical cohesion in Beth M. Stovell, *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John’s Eternal King* (Linguistic Biblical Studies 5. Leiden: Brill, 2012), 187-198.

homogeneity of their vocabulary, style and point-of-view indicate that in 3:16-21, and in other passages, their ‘voices’ have merged together.⁶⁰ Consequently, it is argued that pinpointing *the* speaker in 3:16-21 is not possible, inasmuch as Jesus and the Gospel-writer can be understood as *concurrently* addressing their listening/reading audiences: Nicodemus (along with the Jewish leadership he represents) and the intended readers of the Gospel (comprising fellow Christians or perhaps ‘the world’).⁶¹

While adopting this view might at first seem an ingenious way to circumvent the problem of the speaker altogether (‘both/and’ instead of ‘either/or’), its cogency is dependent on a number of factors and is not without its problems. Since our purpose here in the introduction is to be more descriptive than evaluative, we can only touch on two of the main issues; yet because this view on the merging of voices directly challenges the justification of the present study (tracing the historical reception of the speakers in John 3), it is necessary to treat the topic here in more than just a few words. The first issue with this view relates to how one understands the literary genre of John’s Gospel and the

⁶⁰ See e.g., R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 41-43; Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 151. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 155-156; Paul Julian, *Jesus and Nicodemus: A Literary and Narrative Exegesis of Jn. 2,23-3,36* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 190, 245; James L. Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design and Point of View in John* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 122; Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Preaching the Gospel of John: Proclaiming the Living Word* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 35, 304-305; John Painter, ‘Memory Holds the Key: The Transformation of Memory in the Interface of History and Theology in John’, in Anderson, Just and Thatcher (eds.), *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, 235-237. Eugene E. Lemcio views 3:16-21—where Jesus’ words become indistinguishable from the Gospel-writer’s own—as the exception rather than the rule in John’s Gospel, for ‘[n]othing like it happens again, notwithstanding the constant assertions of most critics’. Cf. his *The Past of Jesus in the Gospels* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 68. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 103

⁶¹ Some of these commentators reject that the speaker can be identified and make no explicit assertions regarding how 3:16-21 should be interpreted; others posit that the ambiguity over who speaks may well have been intentional (cf. e.g., the footnote in the Scholars Version). The logical implication of referring to the ‘merging’ of voices, however, is not that there is no speaker in the passage at all, but that one can equally interpret Jesus and the Gospel-writer as speaking together.

precise role of the Gospel-writer; the second pertains to the existence (or non-existence) of ancient literary precedents for this type of merging between character and author.

We may approach the first issue through the following question: Should this Gospel be regarded as more of a *theological interpretation* of Jesus' words and deeds, or as a *record* of Jesus' life along the lines of Jewish historiography or Greco-Roman biography? The fact that whole monographs have been devoted to tackling the question of genre indicates that scholars continue to debate precisely where John's Gospel falls on the generic spectrum.⁶² Analyses of the internal and external features of the Gospel have led most to the conclusion that it fits within the broad category of Greco-Roman biography (i.e., the 'life' of a famous person—Greek, *bios*; Latin, *vita*).⁶³ The Gospel's indebtedness to the historical narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures is also commonly acknowledged, accounting for many of the characteristics that find little parallel in 'secular' biographies (e.g., themes of covenant, kingdom, divine will, supernatural action, prophecy, redemption/salvation).⁶⁴

⁶² See e.g., Charles H. Talbert, *What is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Peter Stuhlmacher (ed.), *The Gospel and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991); Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner (eds.), *The Written Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just and Tom Thatcher (eds.), *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009). Cf. also the chapter 'The Fourth Gospel as a Display Text' in Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 151. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

⁶³ Andreas J. Köstenberger explores the following internal and external features in comparison with ancient biographies: range of topics (ancestry, great deeds and words, death and consequences, vindication scene); emphasis and content (promotion of a particular hero, type of material, early use of subject's name); style (narrative style, language, atmosphere, characterization); structure (formal preface, postscript and dual conclusion, format, careful arrangement, length); similarities in historiography (general purpose, use of sources, variation in detail, reliability of eyewitness testimony). See his 'The Genre of the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Literary Conventions', in Porter and Pitts (eds.), *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, 444-462.

⁶⁴ See Loveday Alexander, 'What is a Gospel?', in Barton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels*, 27-29; Philipp F. Bartholomä, *The Johannine Discourses and the Teaching of Jesus in the*

The Gospel-writer's adoption of this narrative mode,⁶⁵ then, implies a direct choice; he seems to have been convinced that the ideal way to communicate the 'good news' (*euangelion*) about Jesus was to compose a connected and persuasive narrative of his words and deeds in book format.⁶⁶ This conscious generic decision to write a 'Gospel'—rather than a sayings collection, apologetic treatise or theological sermon—provided the means for fusing history ('what happened') with interpretation ('what it means') in encountering the person of Jesus.⁶⁷

That the Gospel-writer wrote from his own perspective of belief in Jesus as the Son of God is evident from his purpose statement in John 20:30-31.⁶⁸ Moreover, it is

Synoptics: A Contribution to the Discussion Concerning the Authenticity of Jesus' Words in the Fourth Gospel (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 57. Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2012), 76-80; Andreas J. Köstenberger, 'The Genre of the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Literary Conventions', in Porter and Pitts (eds.), *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, 440-444.

⁶⁵ Seymour Chatman defines *narrative* in terms of story and discourse: story is 'the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting)', whereas discourse is 'the expression, the means by which the content is communicated'. Cf. his *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 19.

⁶⁶ Commentators are divided over the literary relationship of John's Gospel to the Synoptics, ranging from complete independence to actual awareness/utilization as direct sources. John 20:30 and 21:25 seem to presuppose that other accounts exist, although these are not as explicit as Luke 1:1. Early church tradition viewed John's Gospel as the last to be written, ergo its placement in Bibles as the 'Fourth Gospel'. See James D. Dvorak, 'The Relationship Between John and the Synoptic Gospels'. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 201-213; Richard Bauckham (ed.), *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

⁶⁷ Sean Freyne, 'Early Christian Imagination and the Gospels', in Horton (ed.), *The Earliest Gospels: The Origins and Transmission of the Earliest Christian Gospels—The Contribution of the Chester Beatty Gospel Codex P⁴⁵*, 12: 'Underlying the whole enterprise of early Christian gospel-production is the historical dimension of the new movement based on the memory of a real human being who walked among them. Jesus of Nazareth was no mythical figure or demi-god, but one of them. Biography as a narrative form...in the Greek and Roman periods dealt with historical characters, those who were deemed to have influenced history in important ways. That was the daring aspect of the early Christian self-expression, namely that Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew from an outlying region who had died a criminal's death at the hands of the Romans, had in fact changed history—and changed it irrevocably. It was that understanding that impelled those who did not represent the literate and political elites to co-opt a genre which had previously been employed in the celebration of 'great ones', and adapt it to their particular needs, historical as well as kerymatic'.

⁶⁸ John 20:30-31: 'Jesus truly did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that

clear that he was concerned with the signification of certain events and speech acts; interspersed throughout the Gospel are explanatory asides that guide readers both directly and indirectly.⁶⁹ Such asides shed light on the Gospel-writer's understanding of himself as an authoritative voice,⁷⁰ and also indicate what supplemental material he deemed necessary to include so that readers would interpret the true meaning of all the things 'written in this book' (Greek, *gegrammena en tō bibliō toutō*).⁷¹ Thus we find that John's Gospel is engaged in a communicative process, one that goes beyond the informational

believing you may have life in his name'. Note that these words immediately follow Jesus' beatitude: 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'. This arrangement indicates that the Gospel-writer identified his readers with those who had never seen Jesus in the flesh, but still believed in him. Cf. Christopher Tuckett, 'Seeing and Believing in John 20', in Krans et al (eds.), *Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. de Boer*, 172-174.

⁶⁹ Narrative asides in John's Gospel are classified in various ways, but may be placed into the following four subcategories: explanation, fulfillment, inside views, and self-conscious narration. See e.g., those that translate: 1:38, 41, 42; 4:25; 5:2; 9:7b; 19:13b, 17b; 20:16b; those providing details of custom: 2:6b; 4:9b; 11:55; 18:2, 28; 19:31, 40b; those commenting on the speech/action of character(s): 4:8, 9b; 5:13, 16; 6:6a, 71; 7:1, 5, 30, 39; 8:6a, 20, 27; 9:22; 11:13, 31, 51-52; 12:6, 33, 42-43; 13:1, 11b; 18:13b, 28; 19:38a; 20:19b; 21:7, 8, 19a; those that summarize: 2:11; 4:54; 21:14; those that clarify: 4:2; 6:1; 14:22a; those that fulfill Scripture: 2:17; 12:15, 38, 39-40, 41; 19:24b, 28b, 36, 37; those that fulfill the word(s) of Jesus: 18:9, 32; those that reveal inside views of Jesus' knowledge: 2:24-25; 6:6b, 15a, 61, 64b; 7:1; 11:13; 13:1, 3, 11a; 16:19a; 18:4a; 19:28a; those that reveal inside views of misunderstanding: 2:21; 8:27; 10:6; 11:13; 12:16; 13:28, 29; 20:9, 14b, 15a; 21:4; those that are retrospective: 6:23; 7:50; 10:40; 12:1; 18:14, 16; 19:39a; 20:8a; 21:20; those that foreshadow: 2:22; 3:24; 6:71; 7:39; 11:2, 51-52; 12:4, 16, 33; 13:1, 3, 11a; 18:4a, 32b; 21:19a, 23; those that refer to 'unnarrated' material: 3:24; 4:44, 45; 9:22; 18:2; 20:30; those presented in the first-person: 1:14, 16; 21:24, 25; those that promote a relationship to readers: 19:35; 20:31.

⁷⁰ See e.g., Merrill C. Tenney, 'The Footnotes of John's Gospel'. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 117 (1960): 350-364; Birger Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text-Linguistic Analysis of John 2:1-11 and 4:1-42* (Translated by Jean Gray. Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1974), 262-266; John J. O'Rourke, 'Asides in the Gospel of John'. *Novum Testamentum* 21 (1979): 210-219; Ernst R. Wendland, 'Digressions in Genesis and John: How to Recognize and Translate Them'. *Notes on Translation* 94 (1983): 22-53; Gilbert Van Belle, *Les Parenthèses dans l'Évangile de Jean: Aperçu Historique et Classification Texte Grec de Jean* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985); Charles W. Hedrick, 'Authorial Presence and Narrator in John: Commentary and Story', in Goehring et al, *Gospel Origins and Christian Beginnings*, 74-93; Tom Thatcher, 'A New Look at Asides in the Fourth Gospel'. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (1994): 428-439.

⁷¹ Numerous scholars have noted the significance of the superscription 'Gospel according to John' (Greek, *euangelion kata Iōannēn*), for it is not the Gospel 'by John' or even 'of John', but 'according to' him (i.e., the one 'gospel' of Jesus recorded by John). It is not known with certainty how soon this title was attached to the Gospel. Some consider the mid-second century as a probable date (to distinguish it from Matthew, Mark and Luke), but Martin Hengel argues persuasively that it was earlier and could have been original to its publication/circulation, following the death of John. See his *The Johannine Question* (Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 74-76; idem, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels* (Translated by John Bowden. Harrisburg: Trinity International Press, 2000), 48-56.

(i.e., the recording of details about Jesus' life) to the relational: it intends interaction with potential readers to either inspire faith in Jesus or to strengthen such belief.⁷² This being said, we must ask to what extent the Gospel-writer was willing to shape his account of Jesus' life for such evangelistic purposes. Would he, for instance, consciously interweave his own words with the speech of Jesus, as intimated by some modern commentators? Answering this question definitively is of course not possible, inasmuch as we only have access to the 'mind' of the Gospel-writer via the text itself (i.e., the 'implied' author). However, numerous verses in John's Gospel point to the authority and power that Jesus' words were understood to possess.⁷³ The following selection of verses suggests that the Gospel-writer was neither careless nor fanciful in his presentation of Jesus' words, but was governed by an understanding of their sacredness, heavenly origin and prophetic fulfillment.

[Jesus' words]

- 5:24 'Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life'.
- 6:63 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life'.

⁷² This communicative aspect was recognized in antiquity. E.g., Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 1.27-28: 'The gospel, therefore, is a discourse containing the report of things which, with good reason, make the hearer glad whenever he accepts what is reported, because they are beneficial. Such a discourse is no less gospel should it also be examined with reference to the hearer's attitude. The gospel is either a discourse which contains the presence of a good for the believer, or a discourse which announces that an awaited good is present... Each is a composition of declarations which are beneficial to the one who believes them'. Translated by Heine (1989). Cf. also Clement of Alexandria, *Hypotyposes* 6 (quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea); *Muratorian Canon* 9-33; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.24; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina Dogmatica* 1.12; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* preface; Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 9.

⁷³ Jaime Clark-Soles, *Scripture Cannot Be Broken: The Social Function of the Use of Scripture in the Fourth Gospel* (PhD dissertation. Yale University, 2000), 376: 'If John stands alone among the Gospels in presenting Jesus as 'equal to God', no less so does he elevate the words of Jesus so that, by the end of the Gospel, functionally they carry more authority than Scripture itself. Jesus' word is God's word and Scripture is only useful insofar as it witnesses to Jesus'.

- 8:31b 'If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed'.
- 14:24 'Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me'.
- 14:26 'But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you'.
- 15:3 'You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you'.
- 15:15b '...for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known to you'.
- 16:4a 'But these things I have told you, that when their time comes, you may remember that I told you of them'.
- 17:8 'For I have given to them the words which you have given me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from you; and they have believed that you sent me'.
- 17:13 'But now I come to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves'.
- [Other characters' words]*
- 4:42 Then they said to the woman, 'Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard him and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world'.
- 6:68 But Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'.
- 7:31 And many of the people believed in him and said, 'When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than these which this man has done?'
- [The Gospel-writer's asides]*
- 2:22 Therefore, when he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.
- 4:53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives'. And he himself believed and his whole household.
- 12:16a His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him.
- 18:9 ...so that the saying might be fulfilled which he spoke, 'Of those whom you gave me I have lost none'.

18:32 ...so that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which he spoke, signifying by what death he would die.

That the Gospel-writer revered the words of Jesus is plain to see: they contain life itself, they cannot be forgotten by the disciples, they are purifying and healing, they are prophetic and completely true, they come directly from God the Father. The Gospel-writer no doubt saw himself as a faithful witness to the person of Jesus (empowered by the promised Paraclete/Holy Spirit), but can we reasonably presume from this that he felt free to interweave his words with Jesus' own (i.e., to speak *with* him)?⁷⁴ While many scholars have drawn attention to the Gospel-writer's distinctive portrayal of Jesus (e.g., as compared with the Synoptics or the *Gospel of Thomas*), few entertain the notion that he was still more influenced by Jesus than the other way around. Jesus was his Savior, and he was writing to encourage/persuade others that this Jesus ought be believed in as the Christ, the Son of God. This is illustrated in another of his self-conscious asides to readers, prominently inserted at the scene of the cross. The text of John 19:32-35, excerpted below, emphasizes the Gospel-writer's role as a trustworthy eyewitness:

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with him. But having come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has

⁷⁴ Tom Thatcher treats both John 3:16-21 and 3:31-36 as 'logical accidents' resulting from the Gospel-writer taking his 'mind's eye' off the immediate context of the conversations between the characters. In his view, the Gospel-writer's shift from memory to commentary more directly addresses his real-world audience, resulting in the blurring of past and present and the blending of speakers (termed 'dual vocalization/visualization'). It is questionable, however, that this could occur in both passages without the Gospel-writer being *deliberate* about it, for elsewhere we find the words of Jesus and the Baptist marked off in a relatively clear manner. In addition to 3:16-21 and 3:31-36 being in close proximity and containing comparable content, the verses we have excerpted above indicate that the Gospel-writer treated Jesus' words with special regard. See Tom Thatcher, 'John's Memory Theatre: A Study of Composition in Performance', in Le Donne and Thatcher (eds.), *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, 88-90.

testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he says the truth, so that you may also believe.

Here the Gospel-writer communicates his desire that readers trust in what he has observed with his own eyes: not only did Jesus become flesh and dwell among us, but he truly died; it is through this death that the resurrection of all the dead and the granting of eternal life become possible.⁷⁵ It is worth noting that the final phrase ‘so that you may also believe’ (Greek, *hina kai humeis pisteusēte*) is made emphatic with the additions of *humeis* (‘you yourselves’) and *kai* (‘also’).⁷⁶ The Gospel-writer could hardly have been more direct: You, yes, *you*, can believe as I do! The relationship with readers is thus built on the truth of all that is written in the Gospel,⁷⁷ which is in turn based on what has been witnessed by the author: namely, the person and work of Jesus.⁷⁸

In light of such findings, it seems reasonable to conclude that the degree of care and reverence shown for Jesus’ words and deeds would also have been applied to Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, comprising his very first extended discourse in the Gospel. The Gospel-writer presented his narrative as a true account of what happened

⁷⁵ See F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 376-377.

⁷⁶ Cf. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Second Edition. Volume 1. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 790, 814.

⁷⁷ If the usage of the present-tense (‘his testimony is true’, ‘he knows’, ‘he says the truth’) is interpreted as deriving from the ‘Johannine school’ that published the Gospel (i.e., not in a self-referential way), it at least indicates that the figure is still living to corroborate his testimony. Note: The verb *oiden* (‘he knows’) is technically perfect-tense, but has a present-tense force. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 579-580.

⁷⁸ If the ‘Beloved Disciple’ is in fact the Gospel-writer, this would lend further support to the notion that he can faithfully recall Jesus’ words and deeds from first-hand experience. As Jesus’ dear friend, he was with Jesus when he faced betrayal, arrest and death, and was also present to witness his resurrection appearances (cf. John 13:23, 18:15, 19:26-27, 20:4, 21:7, 21:20-24). See Ronald F. Hock, ‘Jesus, the Beloved Disciple, and Greco-Roman Friendship Conventions’, in Porter and Pitts (eds.), *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, 195-212.

(at points via eyewitness testimony),⁷⁹ and it is this general emphasis on historicity that calls into question the view that in 3:16-21 Jesus and the Gospel-writer should be understood as speaking ‘together’.

The second main issue with this view involves the existence of any ancient literary precedents that contain this merging phenomenon between character and author. Among those scholars that believe Jesus’ voice merges with the Gospel-writer’s in John 3:16-21, only one goes into any real depth to determine whether such a literary feature even existed in antiquity. In *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, Derek Tovey proposes a few instances within narrative texts in which this merging phenomenon may occur; each of these appears in the Greek romantic novel *Callirhoe*, written by Chariton of Aphrodisias.⁸⁰ Roughly contemporaneous with John’s Gospel (composed c. first century A.D. or earlier), this fictional work describes how two handsome youth fall in love and marry, only to become separated by misfortune after misfortune (e.g., false death, abduction by pirates, shipwrecks). In the end, the two are happily reunited with the aid of the goddess Aphrodite. Tovey outlines the generic affinities between *Callirhoe* and the Gospel that allow for such a comparison,⁸¹ and points to three passages that present difficulties for the reader to decide either who is speaking, or whose perspective is really being represented.⁸² Of these, only the first passage displays an abrupt transition from

⁷⁹ Whether or not one believes this is the ‘truth’ is irrelevant; we only observe that the Gospel-writer makes certain truth claims and intends that his writing be interpreted thusly. See Richard Bauckham, ‘Historiographical Characteristics of the Gospel of John’. *New Testament Studies* 53 (2007): 17-36.

⁸⁰ Otherwise unknown, he identifies himself in the opening sentence as ‘a clerk of the lawyer Athenagoras’.

⁸¹ See Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 151. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 213-220.

⁸² Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 151. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 183-184.

narration to direct speech. In the following excerpt, Chariton narrates the coming of pirates to rob Callirhoe's tomb. Readers, of course, are already informed that Callirhoe is not actually dead, but still alive and in need of rescuing from the tomb before it is too late (the proverbial damsel in distress). As Theron and his fellow pirates break into the tomb under cover of darkness, Chariton provides his readers with a vivid picture of the scene from the viewpoint of Callirhoe inside the tomb. The text is presented below, with quotation marks omitted.

Theron and four men proceeded to the tomb. The rest, for there were sixteen in all, he told to stay on board, keeping the oars poised so that in an emergency they could quickly pick up those on shore and put to sea. When the crowbars were applied, and the pounding grew louder as they broke into the tomb, Callirhoe was seized with every emotion at once: fear, joy, misery, amazement, hope, disbelief. Where is the noise coming from? Is it some divinity, as happens to those dying, coming upon me, the wretched? Or is it not a noise but a voice of those under the earth calling me to them? More likely it's tomb robbers. For this, too, has been added to my tribulations! Wealth is useless to a corpse. While she was still considering these things, the robber thrust his head through and came a little inside.⁸³

Because Chariton does not identify where Callirhoe's thought/speech begins (i.e., by writing 'Callirhoe thought/said'), readers get to experience this moment in a 'live' manner. Her internal dialogue adds dramatic vibrancy to the account, but as Tovey points out there are questions that arise regarding the speaker. It seems clear that Callirhoe's words begin in line 6 with the initial question: 'Where is the noise coming from?' She is also clearly speaking wherever first-person references occur ('me', 'my'), and Chariton can be seen to resume the narrative proper in line 9 when he refers to Callirhoe with the

⁸³ *Callirhoe* 1.9. Translation based on Reardon (1989) and Goold (1995), with a number of my own modifications in consultation with the Greek text in Loeb Classical Library 481.

third-person pronoun ‘she’ (Greek, *autēs*). However, some phrases aren’t as easily attributed: ‘as happens to those dying’, ‘the wretched’, and ‘wealth is useless to a corpse’ could conceivably belong to Chariton. For example, the phrase ‘the wretched’ (Greek, *tēn athlian*)—rendered ‘poor soul’ by Goold and ‘poor creature’ by Reardon—could be interpreted as an evaluative comment (i.e., Chariton’s feeling sorry for her),⁸⁴ rather than as Callirhoe’s self-designation. Tovey believes this type of ambiguity could indicate that Chariton has assumed the ‘voice’ of Callirhoe for stylistic effect, and that it is somewhat comparable to the narrative situation in John 3.

Drawing on modern literary theory in his approach to the Johannine text, Tovey asserts that as the Gospel-writer relates Jesus’ words to Nicodemus, he gradually assumes the role of a ‘teller-character’.⁸⁵ In this process—termed ‘reflectorization’ by F. K. Stanzel—the Gospel-writer moves from *telling* to *reflecting*. Because the boundary between first and third person becomes so indistinct, the Gospel-writer can be interpreted as speaking *as if he were* the character in the narrative, Jesus. While Tovey’s analysis certainly contributes to the debate concerning the speaker’s identity in John 3, one wonders whether such a literary device would have been recognized by readers in antiquity. Surveying how pre-modern interpreters regarded the speaker here can shed valuable light on this issue.

We now turn our attention to the second Johannine passage under consideration. Prior to the early-nineteenth century the identity of the speaker in John 3:31-36 was

⁸⁴ Reardon seems to take the phrase this way: ‘Is some divinity coming for me—poor creature!—as always happens when people are dying?’

⁸⁵ See further in Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 151. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 148-167.

already being debated,⁸⁶ and modern commentators remain sharply divided over how to best treat the passage.⁸⁷ Those arguing in support of the ‘traditional’ view—that John the Baptist is the speaker—point to a number of clues in the passage and its overall context in their argumentation, while those attributing the words to the Gospel-writer tend to focus on its theological content and the issue of historicity. As observed in our overview of 3:13-21, the lack of consensus between modern scholars (and Bible versions) is palpable. It is also remarkable that virtually none of them has taken into consideration the evidence from pre-modern interpretation.

The majority of modern commentators do not consider John 3:31-36 to be a suitable continuation of the Baptist’s words to his disciples, but instead interpret the passage as the Gospel-writer’s post-resurrection reflections upon the preceding verses.⁸⁸ These commentators point to both the elevated theological content of the passage and the

⁸⁶ Charles C. Tittmann noted that ‘the learned are not agreed’ (Latin, *dubitatur quidem inter viros doctos*) on whether the Gospel-writer or the Baptist is speaking in John 3:31-36. See his *Sacred Meditations; Or, An Exegetical, Critical, and Doctrinal Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Volume 1. Translated from the Latin by James Young. Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1844 [1816]), 137.

⁸⁷ Jerome H. Neyrey goes so far as to state that the passage ‘regularly gives interpreters heartburn, for they cannot decide who is speaking’. Cf. his *The Gospel of John* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 86.

⁸⁸ See e.g., B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: John Murray, 1896), 60; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Volume I. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), xxiii; R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel: A Commentary* (Edited by C. F. Evans. London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 120; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 242-243; J. Ramsey Michaels, *John* (New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 66; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Second Edition. Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 36. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999 [1987]), 53; Gerard S. Sloyan, *John* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 48; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997 [1987]), 148-149; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 185; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11* (The New American Commentary: Volume 25A. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 192-193; John F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4* (Edited by Graham N. Stanton. The International Critical Commentary. New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 252-253.

historical improbability that the Baptist actually uttered the words. Two verses commonly cited as evidence of the Trinitarian understanding of the Gospel-writer are John 3:34 and 3:35: ‘For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand’.⁸⁹ They question how the historical Baptist could have spoken of the Father, Son and Spirit in such a direct manner, especially since this theological language goes beyond the initial question of the Baptist’s disciples concerning the sudden spread of Jesus’ ministry. Commentators also point to the apparent inconsistency between the claims made in 3:26 and 3:32—while the disciples complain that ‘all are coming to him’, we read in 3:32 that ‘no one receives his testimony’.⁹⁰ Numerous parallels with 1 John are also cited, such as the use of the distinctive phrase ‘eternal life’ (Greek, *zōēn aiōnion*).⁹¹

As mentioned previously, although there is a switch to the third-person from John 3:31 onwards, a number of commentators insist that this does not *necessitate* that a change of speaker has occurred.⁹² Immediately before this passage the Baptist spoke in

⁸⁹ See Grant Osborne, *The Gospel of John* (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Vol. 13. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 62-63; contra Frédéric L. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: With an Historical and Critical Introduction* (Volume 1. Translated by Timothy Dwight. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 413.

⁹⁰ Cf. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Volume I. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 124; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 243.

⁹¹ Cf. 1 John 1:2, 2:25, 3:15, 5:11, 5:13, 5:20.

⁹² See e.g., John P. Lange, *The Gospel According to John: An Exegetical and Doctrinal Commentary* (Translated and edited by Philip Schaff. New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), 144; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Second Edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978 [1955]), 224; Jeffrey Wilson, ‘The Integrity of John 3:22-36’. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 10 (1981): 36-40; David K. Rensberger, *Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John* (London: SPCK, 1989), 60-61; Gail R. O’Day, ‘The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections’, in Keck (ed.), *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 558; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Black’s New Testament Commentaries. New York: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 158-159; Catrin H. Williams, ‘John (the

the third-person (John 3:27, 3:29a), and some evidence of third-person phrasing appears in the ‘Q-tradition’ of the Synoptic Gospels.⁹³ Commentators further argue that some of the terminology in 3:31-36 is really not ‘Johannine’ at all. For example, ‘disobey’ (Greek, *apeithōn*) and ‘wrath’ (Greek, *orgē*) appear only here in John’s Gospel, and never in 1-3 John. Notably, the noun ‘wrath’ occurs four other times in the Gospels, and two of these comprise a parallel saying of the Baptist’s in Matthew 3:7/Luke 3:7: ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’ The use of the phrase ‘of the earth’ is also cited as being at variance with the rest of the Gospel and Johannine letters, where we instead find the phrase ‘of the world’ being contrasted with what is ‘of heaven’.⁹⁴ While the verb ‘believe’ (Greek, *pisteuō*) is a key term for the Gospel-writer (as well as for Jesus), Acts 19:4 suggests that the Baptist also employed the term, and its usage appears only in John 3:36.⁹⁵ Moreover, this verse contains the expression ‘remains upon him’ (Greek, *meni ep auton*), which is very similar to the Baptist’s eyewitness confession in John 1:32 that the Holy Spirit ‘remained upon him [Jesus]’ (Greek, *emeinen ep auton*).⁹⁶

Baptist): The Witness on the Threshold’, in Hunt et al (eds.), *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, 46-60.

⁹³ See Matthew 3:10, 3:12; Luke 3:9, 3:17. It may be noted that Luke 3:18 reads: ‘And with many other exhortations he preached to the people’, which highlights that this was part of the Baptist’s preaching style.

⁹⁴ Observed by Herman C. Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: A Work in Two Editions* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 110. Note: Waetjen argues that 3:31-36 is a scribal interpolation. Cf. also Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Born From Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 78; Gail R. O’Day, ‘The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections’, in Keck (ed.), *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 559-560.

⁹⁵ Acts 19:4: ‘Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in him who would come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus’; John 3:36: ‘Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him’.

⁹⁶ Cf. Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of John* (Translated by William Urwick; revised and edited by Frederick Crombie. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 144; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997 [1987]), 148.

These commentators also assert that the participial phrase ‘the coming one’ (Greek, *ho erchomenos*) found in 3:31 could be reasonably placed on the Baptist’s lips,⁹⁷ since it served as a messianic title for Jesus during his ministry and was elsewhere employed by the Baptist himself.⁹⁸

Among those commentators that do not accept the attribution of John 3:31-36 to the historical Baptist, some nevertheless affirm that the passage is at least *presented* as the Baptist’s words. These commentators find in the Gospel a concerted effort to downplay the importance of the Baptist.⁹⁹ They aver that the Baptist’s followers were still active during the Gospel-writer’s own time, so in an effort to subvert this ‘rival movement’ these words were imputed to him. Other commentators hold that 3:31-36 fits in well with the Baptist’s ‘elevated’ role as an authoritative witness to Jesus’ true identity,¹⁰⁰ as explicitly mentioned by the Gospel-writer in the prologue: ‘This man [the Baptist] came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all through him might

⁹⁷ The frequent use of the present tense can also be seen to fit the context of the Baptist’s discussion of the rise of Jesus’ popularity (as noted by his disciples in 3:26): e.g., ‘is above all’, ‘speaks of the earth’, ‘he testifies, but no one receives’, ‘God is true’, ‘he speaks the words of God’, ‘the Father loves’, ‘wrath of God abides’. See Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Volume 1. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1865), 206.

⁹⁸ Cf. John 1:15, 1:27; Matthew 3:11, 11:3; Mark 1:7; Luke 7:19-20.

⁹⁹ See e.g., Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Society for New Testament Studies 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 98; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 [1953]), 308-311; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John* (Volume 1. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968 [1965]), 383; Ernst Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Vol. 1. Translated by Robert W. Funk. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 209-210.

¹⁰⁰ Gail R. O’Day, ‘The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections’, in Keck (ed.), *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 558: ‘Verses 31-36 may have originated as an independent piece of theological reflection, but they are positioned in the narrative to serve as John’s final witness...It is critical, therefore, to the portrait of John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel that 3:31-36 be read as his final witness. John’s purpose is to bear witness to the light (1:7), and before he disappears from the narrative completely, he is given one final witness to speak. This witness draws out the theological implications of all that John had said in 1:19-34 and 3:27-30, but it also offers theological reflection on the early events of Jesus’ ministry’.

believe' (John 1:7). Viewed from this perspective, the Baptist played a significant part in salvation history, inasmuch as many would come to faith because of his own testimony.

We have observed that the identification of the speakers in both John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 remains a contested issue in modern scholarship, resulting in what may be described as an interpretive stalemate. Remarkably, only a single commentator can be found to make any mention of a patristic author's position on some of these verses. Charles C. Tittmann, in his commentary on John's Gospel published in Latin in 1816, pointed out that John Chrysostom (c. 349-407) interpreted 3:31-36 as the words of John the Baptist.¹⁰¹ While a few of Tittmann's contemporaries disagreed with this attribution, he sided with the 'more generally approved of' position of Chrysostom, explaining that 'the passage is written continuously with the preceding [verses], without the interposition of any mark or particle to lead us to infer that what follows was added by the evangelist'. Tittmann thus approached the interpretive difficulty of the speaker by analyzing the literary structure of the passage as well as how the words were interpreted by an authoritative figure in the early church.¹⁰² Apart from this single reference, however, the interpretations of the Gospel's earliest readers on the speakers in John 3 have not been adequately investigated. Undertaking a comprehensive survey of the historical reception of these passages in the patristic age (up to A.D. 450) bridges this major lacuna in Johannine studies, and makes available for the very first time an important evaluative

¹⁰¹ See Charles C. Tittmann, *Sacred Meditations; Or, An Exegetical, Critical, and Doctrinal Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Volume 1. Translated from the Latin by James Young. Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1844 [1816]), 137.

¹⁰² Chrysostom was among the first patristic authors to preach homilies on the whole of John's Gospel, exploring the text systematically (verse-by-verse). His published homilies circulated widely in the Greek-speaking East and were translated into Latin following his death, resulting in an even wider readership through the centuries.

criterion: that of comparing these ancient positions with those of modern commentators and biblical translators.

Reception History

Recent decades have witnessed a growing interest in the study of the ‘reception history’ of the Bible, that is, in exploring how individuals and communities have interpreted and appropriated the biblical text down through the ages, in turn influencing successive readings to the present day.¹⁰³ Drawing on the philosophical notions of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (‘history of influence’) and *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (‘history of reception’) in the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss,¹⁰⁴ reception-historical studies explore how readers have interpreted the biblical text, what they have taken the text to mean, and the ways in which different cultures have been subsequently impacted. For several reasons, this shift in emphasis from the prehistory/background of the text to its many ‘afterlives’¹⁰⁵ has the potential to shed important light on how the speakers in John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 can better be interpreted.

First of all, surveying the patristic reception of John 3 provides hard evidence of what the text *has meant* in the centuries of nearest proximity to the Gospel’s date of composition and early circulation. Whereas the interpretive gap between modern readers and the first generation of Christians stretches across nearly two millennia, for patristic

¹⁰³ Major edited volumes and journals devoted to the reception history of the Bible include: *Blackwell Bible Commentaries* (2004-), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (2007-), *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (2011), *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture* (2012), *Biblical Reception* (2012), *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* (2014-).

¹⁰⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975 [1960]); Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Translated by Timothy Bahti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. John F. Sawyer, ‘The Place of Reception History in a Postmodern Commentary’, in Sawyer (ed.), *Sacred Texts and Sacred Meanings: Studies in Biblical Language and Literature*, 35.

interpreters this historical distance was much smaller. Consequently, an analysis of their identification of the speakers in John 3 helps to narrow the interpretive gap between the first century and the twenty-first, to a certain extent granting us the opportunity to read these Johannine passages *alongside* patristic interpreters. Acknowledging an awareness of our own historical distance and situatedness in the ongoing interpretive tradition cultivates what Gadamer terms *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* ('historically effected consciousness'), which has distinct advantages in tracing a text's meaning(s).¹⁰⁶

Because patristic interpreters read John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 in Greco-Roman antiquity, they possessed a familiarity with important literary and cultural norms shared by the Gospel-writer himself. With respect to language, these interpreters encountered the Gospel text either in its original Greek (their own native tongue) or in early translation, such as Latin or Syriac. Arguably, their identification of the speakers would reflect the most 'natural' reading of these passages, for things that might appear archaic or obscure to present-day readers may not have been so in antiquity. In addition to having linguistic competence, many patristic interpreters benefited from living within Christian communities that could trace their roots back to apostolic times. Their reading of the biblical text would then have been shaped by the interpretive traditions of previous generations ('living memory'),¹⁰⁷ potentially bringing us even closer in time to the

¹⁰⁶ Maarten Wisse, 'The Reception of John and the Modern Commentary Tradition'. *Journal of Early Christian History* 4 (2014): 185: '[A]n act of interpretation is always a fusion of horizons between the context of the reader and the text and context of the work under interpretation. Therefore, it is no longer merely useful to study texts from the distant past in terms of their original language and historical context through the means of historical critical exegesis, but it is intrinsically useful to study the receptions of historical texts through the centuries, because these receptions show us much about both the nature of the texts received as well as the contexts in which they were received and those who received them. Interpretation is rightly subjective, because there is no act of interpretation without an interpreter'.

¹⁰⁷ See Markus Bockmuehl, 'New Testament *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the Early Christian Appeal to Living Memory', in Barton et al (eds.), *Memory and the Bible in Antiquity*, 353-360.

Gospel's composition. It is therefore reasonable to grant these ancient readers at least some *interpretive priority* in their identification of the speakers. Yet as we have noted, thus far patristic interpreters have been given essentially none whatsoever.¹⁰⁸

The exclusion of patristic interpretation from the current debate on the speakers appears to stem not just from mere oversight, but from an apparent *devaluation* of pre-modern opinion within established historical-critical circles. Patristic interpreters have at times been characterized as 'pre-critical', an evaluative description intimating that their interpretation of the Bible is deficient, insofar as it (not surprisingly!) fails to make use of *modern* tools of criticism. Yet a growing number of scholars have questioned whether the term 'pre-critical' is appropriate, much less even accurate.¹⁰⁹ From what we have outlined above, learning how patristic authors understood the speakers is not simply an antiquarian concern; it provides a new way forward in the current interpretive debate on John 3. The data uncovered from this reception-historical survey gives voice to historically underrepresented individuals in the early history of the church, including certain figures deemed 'theologically suspect' or 'heretical'. It is therefore high time that this scholarly negligence is rectified and that these patristic voices are able to weigh in on the current interpretive debate. In this way, commentators, translators and non-specialists can be in a position to make more historically informed decisions regarding the identification of the speakers in John 3.

¹⁰⁸ Strangely, even Mark Edwards' reception-historical commentary on John's Gospel only goes as far back as Erasmus on the issue of the speaker in 3:16-21, and nothing is mentioned of 3:13-15 and 3:31-36. Cf. his *John Through the Centuries* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 49.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g., Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson, 'The Significance of Precritical Exegesis: Retrospect and Prospect', in Muller and Thompson (eds.), *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, 335-345; Mary Ford, 'A Brief Reconsideration of the Term 'Pre-Critical''. *St. Tikhon's Theological Journal* 3 (2005): 11-16.

Survey Outline

In the following chapter it is our task to investigate how the earliest interpreters of John's Gospel viewed the speakers in John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36. The survey as a whole is organized chronologically, tracing the lives and works of thirty-eight individual authors from the early centuries of Christianity up to the convening of the Council of Chalcedon in the middle of the fifth century. Each author and work is introduced in an initial section titled 'Background Material'. This section sets the stage for understanding each author's historical situation, and also serves as a platform for the discussion of individual writing styles and habits of scriptural citation. Excerpts from works that contain quotations from John 3 are then systematically analyzed in a second section, 'Text(s) and Analysis', in order to determine each author's identification of the speakers.

An important dimension of the survey is the attention devoted to the historical circumstances surrounding these citations of John 3. While some authors cited verses directly out of a physical copy of John's Gospel as they interpreted it, others quoted from memory in a more incidental manner as they preached before congregations, composed personal letters, wrote against opponents, etc.¹¹⁰ Far from living in their own interpretive 'bubbles', their involvement in Christian social networks at the local and macro levels shaped their understanding and application of the biblical text (i.e., driven by their purpose(s) in writing, intended readership and choice of literary genre). The survey, therefore, is not designed to simply compile long-lost readings in a monolithic sense; rather, we have sought to situate these authors within the dynamic interpretive framework

¹¹⁰ A number of patristic interpreters to be surveyed maintained close contact with one other, while others had adversarial relationships (e.g., Eustathius and Origen, Chrysostom and Severian, Cyril and Theodore of Mopsuestia).

of their time, as they interacted with contemporaries and drew upon the works of their Christian forebears. For this reason it has been necessary to quote extensively from the primary sources, giving readers a better sense of the many contexts in which John 3 was cited.¹¹¹ For convenience of analysis, all patristic citations of John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 have been presented in *italicized* typeface.

¹¹¹ Whenever an English translation of a patristic work already exists, it is used and credited in the first footnote. Oftentimes it has been necessary to slightly modify these translations to better understand the identification of the speakers (which is always be noted in the footnotes). Additionally, all excerpts are presented in modernized English with punctuation marks added when deemed appropriate.

II. JOHN 3 IN THE PATRISTIC AGE

Second Century

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 135-202).

1. Background Material

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor and spent some of his formative years as a student of Polycarp (c. 70-156), the aged bishop of Smyrna reputed to have had direct contact with a number of apostles and eyewitnesses of Jesus, including the disciple John.¹¹² Polycarp often imparted to Irenaeus what he remembered of the apostles' miracles and teaching, as well as what they had said concerning Jesus. Such early experiences left a lasting impression on Irenaeus, particularly in his commitment to apostolic tradition and the Scriptures revered by the church.¹¹³ Some time after Polycarp's martyrdom, Irenaeus left Asia Minor to study in Rome at the school of Justin Martyr. Around 178, he was appointed bishop of the church at Lyons (in what is today southern France), and shortly thereafter produced his famous treatise *On the Detection and Refutation of Knowledge Falsely So Called*, also known as *Against Heresies*.¹¹⁴ Originally

¹¹² In Irenaeus' mind this is the very John who published the Gospel (*exedōke to euangelion*), in addition to the book of Revelation and 1-2 John. While the historicity of Irenaeus' claim about Polycarp is still a matter of scholarly debate, R. Alan Culpepper argues that since Irenaeus appeals to Florinus' shared memory in his *Letter to Florinus*, it is 'most unlikely' that the material was fabricated. See his *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 126; Bernhard Mutschler, 'John and His Gospel in the Mirror of Irenaeus of Lyons: Perspectives of Recent Research', in Rasimus (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel*, 325-328.

¹¹³ See *Against Heresies* 2.27.2; 4.33.8. Cf. Norbert Brox, 'Irenaeus and the Bible', in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 484-488, 495-499; Maurice Jourjon, 'Irenaeus's Reading of the Bible', in Blowers (ed.), *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*, 106-110.

¹¹⁴ Copies of *Against Heresies* had been in wide circulation amongst churches even during Irenaeus' own lifetime, as confirmed by the discovery in Egypt of *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 3.405, a small Greek papyrus fragment of *Against Heresies* dated to the end of the second century.

written in his native Greek,¹¹⁵ this five-volume work provided readers with a comprehensive description and refutation of the various teachings and doctrines of so-called ‘knowledge’ (*gnōsis*) prevalent in the late second century. In the process of his attempted dismantling of the central tenets of Gnostic and Valentinian thought,¹¹⁶ Irenaeus simultaneously presented a systematic defense of the Christian faith as proclaimed by the mainline church, that is, the ‘true’ church founded upon the original apostles. Naturally, Irenaeus’ appeals to Scripture and traditional church doctrine were driven by his immediate anti-Gnostic and pro-orthodox concerns—these directly influenced the manner in which he invoked Scripture.

Overall, Irenaeus’ citation style in *Against Heresies* (in which is found our first quotation of a portion of John 3) may be described as meticulous, though somewhat variable. Scriptural quotations are usually introduced with some type of identification marker or narrative setting (e.g., ‘Moses thus speaks in Deuteronomy’, ‘the epistle to the Galatians declares’, ‘John his disciple said, when writing of him’, ‘Elizabeth testified...saying to Mary’). At other times, however, Irenaeus introduces a biblical verse or entire passage with the very general ‘as the Scriptures declare’ or without any context at all. It is also important to note that he is careful to distinguish between the voice of the

¹¹⁵ Though most of the Greek text is no longer extant, it is preserved in its entirety in a Latin translation prepared in the third or fourth century. This secondhand witness is regarded as mostly faithful to the original, and is supplemented by a partial Armenian translation from the sixth century. See Irenaeus M. Steenberg, ‘Tracing the Irenaean Legacy’, in Parvis and Foster (eds.), *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, 204; Tuukka Kauhanen, *The Proto-Lucianic Problem in 1 Samuel* (Bristol: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 62-66.

¹¹⁶ Irenaeus was particularly condemning of the Gnostic and Valentinian *method* of scriptural interpretation. According to him, it was common Gnostic practice to bring together ‘expressions and names scattered here and there [in Scripture]’ and to ‘twist them...from a natural to a non-natural sense’. Word order and context were altogether neglected in Gnostic exegesis, Irenaeus claimed, thus giving rise to their strange doctrines, blasphemies and, ultimately, to their own ruination. See e.g., *Against Heresies* 1.8.5-1.9.4; 1 preface 1-2; 3.11.7; Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 1997), 29.

biblical writer and that of the characters within the narrative. With respect to John's Gospel he introduces verse quotations using 'the Lord' (31 times), 'John' (16 times), 'his Gospel' (4 times), 'John in his Gospel' (3 times), and 'Scripture' (2 times).¹¹⁷ Because in Irenaeus' view the whole of Scripture is divinely inspired, books from both Testaments and the biblical characters within them all carry special authority. Throughout the treatise they are cited to validate Irenaeus' polemical and theological points.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following excerpt, taken from the fifth and final volume of *Against Heresies*, contains the earliest extant citation of John 3:18-21 in which the speaker may be readily identified.

It is not that the light has inflicted upon them the penalty of blindness, but it is that the blindness itself has brought calamity upon them. And this is why the Lord declared, *'Whoever believes in me is not condemned'*, that is, is not separated from God, for he is united to God through faith. *'But whoever does not believe'*, he says, *'is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God'*, that is, he separated himself from God of his own accord. *'For this is the condemnation, that light has come into this world, and men have loved darkness rather than light. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But whoever does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that he has wrought them in God'*. Inasmuch, then, as in this world some persons betake themselves to the light, and by faith unite themselves with God, but others shun the light, and separate themselves from God, the Word of God comes preparing a fit habitation for both...This is why he says that those upon the right hand are called into the kingdom of heaven, but that those on the

¹¹⁷ Bernhard Mutschler, 'John and His Gospel in the Mirror of Irenaeus of Lyons: Perspectives of Recent Research', in Rasimus (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel*, 332.

left he will send into eternal fire, for they have deprived themselves of all good.
And this is why the apostle says...¹¹⁸

Employing distinctly Johannine imagery, Irenaeus here reasons that people are responsible for their own spiritual blindness; their penalty (separation from God) is a direct result of their decision to reject God in the first place.¹¹⁹ To substantiate this assertion Irenaeus appeals to what ‘the Lord declared’ (Latin, *dominus dicebat*) and what ‘he says’ (Latin, *ait*), in effect referencing a good portion of John 3:18-21. The title ‘Lord’ (Greek, *kurios*; Latin, *dominus*) is used elsewhere in *Against Heresies* to represent either a short form of ‘Lord Jesus Christ’ or the translation of God’s holy name ‘YHWH’. References to Jesus as ‘Lord’ considerably outnumber the latter in occurrences, with ‘Lord’ as a reference to YHWH normally occurring in the context of doxologies and direct citations of the Hebrew Scriptures.¹²⁰ It is therefore likely that Irenaeus here has Jesus in mind. Additionally, as the champion of ‘proto-orthodox’ Christianity Irenaeus would only have attributed the words ‘whoever believes *in me* is not condemned’ to the Savior himself. It should be pointed out, however, that the wording in this first scriptural reference is in fact an adaptation from the actual text as it is found in the Gospel:

Irenaeus - ‘Whoever believes *in me* is not condemned’.

John 3:18a - ‘Whoever believes *in him* is not condemned’.

¹¹⁸ *Against Heresies* 5.27.2-5.28.2. Translated by Roberts and Rambaut (1885), with minor modifications.

¹¹⁹ Irenaeus may be drawing from Jesus’ words in John 9:39-41: ‘For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind...If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say, ‘We see’. Therefore your sin remains’. Cf. also John 15:22-25.

¹²⁰ At places where the surrounding context demands that ‘Lord’ stands for Jesus, see e.g., *Against Heresies* 1.8.2; 2.2.5; 2.22.6; 2.26.3; 3.5.2; 3.19.3; 4.33.9; 4.34.5; 4.37.5; 5.2.2; 5.25.4; 5.30.4; 5.31.1; 5.33.2; 5.35.2. For the use of ‘Lord’ for the name YHWH, see e.g., *Against Heresies* 2.1.1; 4.33.11; 4.34.4; 5.34.3; 5.35.1.

This substitution, otherwise unattested in the manuscript tradition of John’s Gospel,¹²¹ suggests that Irenaeus—like a number of other Christian writers after him¹²²—is here recalling John 3:18a from memory and has conflated it with other sayings of Jesus in which the prepositional phrase ‘in me’ occur.¹²³ Supporting this conclusion is Irenaeus’ later omission of the subordinate clause ‘because their deeds were evil’ in his quotation of 3:19 (likewise unattested in Gospel manuscripts). Even with the adaptation, both the identification of ‘Lord’ and the presence of ‘in me’ strongly suggest that in Irenaeus’ view it is not the Gospel-writer who speaks in John 3:18a, but Jesus himself. Following this quotation Irenaeus proceeds to introduce the remainder of 3:18 with the Latin verb *ait*, implying the same speaker,¹²⁴ and after some brief commentary carries on the quotation to 3:21 uninterrupted (lines 7-11). Towards the end of the excerpt, Irenaeus

¹²¹ The Greek and Latin manuscript tradition of John’s Gospel is almost invariable on the reading ‘in him’. The adaptation ‘in me’ never appears in extant biblical manuscripts, though a handful of late manuscripts contain the reading ‘in the Son’. A single tenth-century Byzantine manuscript (containing minuscule commentary) has the reading ‘in Jesus’. Though Irenaeus’ Greek text is not extant at this point, the Latin agrees with the sixth-century Armenian version, a literal translation that scholars are certain was made from the original Greek; it has the reading ‘in me’ (Armenian, *yi*s). The Sources Chrétiennes editors produced a Greek retroversion of *Against Heresies*, concluding that Irenaeus did originally write *eis eme* (‘in me’). See Adelin Rousseau, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier (eds.), *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies. Livre V* (Tome II. Sources Chrétiennes 153. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 345; Dominic J. Unger, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies* (Volume 1 Book 1. Edited by John J. Dillon. New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 9-15, 121.

¹²² E.g., Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 10.308; Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 24 (2); Hilary, *Homily on Psalm 1* 20-21; Zeno of Verona, *Sermon on Psalm 100* 1.

¹²³ E.g., John 6:35: ‘whoever believes *in me* will never thirst’; John 7:38: ‘whoever believes *in me*...out of his heart will flow’; John 11:25: ‘whoever believes *in me*, though he may die, yet he will live’; John 12:44: ‘whoever believes *in me*, believes not in me, but in him who sent me’; John 14:12: ‘whoever believes *in me*, the works that I do he will also do’; John 16:9: ‘...because they do not believe *in me*’; John 17:20: ‘those who will believe *in me* through their word’; Matthew 18:6: ‘whoever causes one of these little ones who believe *in me* to sin...’

¹²⁴ Coxe translates the third-person singular Latin verb *ait* ‘he says’, though *ait* can have a subject that is feminine (‘she says’) or neuter (‘it says’). Given the extent of the passage and in light of other parallels in Irenaeus (notably *Against Heresies* 5.33.2), I concur with Coxe’s masculine rendering as most plausible. It may also be noted that Irenaeus resumes his citation of 3:18 with the adversative conjunction *autem* (‘but’), indicating that the previous subject (‘the Lord’) is continuing to speak. This is also the case in his citation of 3:19-21, beginning with the conjunction *enim* (‘for’).

alludes to Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats found in Matthew 25, likewise without indicating that a change of speaker has occurred. With the final phrase 'and this is why the apostle says', Irenaeus goes on to quote several verses from 2 Thessalonians and continues with his discussion on the theme of judgment.

Based on our analysis of this excerpt it seems reasonable to conclude that, for Irenaeus, the speaker in John 3:18-21 is none other than Jesus.¹²⁵ Even if, as we have asserted above, Irenaeus is here quoting from memory, his decision to place these words on the lips of 'the Lord' indicates that this was his normal reading of this lengthy passage from John 3. It could even be argued that he purposely swapped 'in him' for 'in me' as a way to add even more authority/clarity to the words, or to better engage his reading audience. But what may be said of the verses immediately preceding this passage, namely, 3:13-17? Because Irenaeus never cites these verses we cannot say definitively whether or not he regarded them also as Jesus' words. However, a strong case can be made that Irenaeus did attribute 3:13-17 to him, since the alternative—that Jesus ceases speaking at 3:12 and, after the Gospel-writer's 'comments' from 3:13-17, then picks up again at 3:18—would be a rather forced interpretation, indeed.¹²⁶ Irenaeus' position on who speaks in 3:31-36 is wholly uncertain, as he quotes only one of these verses but does not provide context from which we may infer his view on the speaker's identity.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ One scholar takes this as a given: Kyle Keefer, *The Branches of the Gospel of John: The Reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Library of New Testament Studies 332. London: T&T Clark, 2006), 62: '[I]n one of his longest quotations from John, Irenaeus refers to Jesus' words to Nicodemus in 3:18-21'.

¹²⁶ Throughout our pre-modern survey, when a writer does not explicitly identify the speaker of preceding verses we have opted for the label 'highly likely' (cf. Appendix 1).

¹²⁷ Cf. John 3:36 in *Against Heresies* 4.37.5.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215).

1. Background Material

A quest for ultimate truth led Clement to embrace the Christian faith as a young man. At heart both a thinker and a searcher, Clement traveled extensively in pursuit of deeper knowledge of Christianity before settling in the city of Alexandria.¹²⁸ Here he studied under an eminent teacher of Christian thought named Pantaenus. Due to the intellectual and missionary focus of Pantaenus' catechetical school (*katēchēseōs didaskaleiou*) in the city, Clement had a platform to engage the local community of educated non-Christians, especially those he thought might be sympathetic to the notion that Christian truth was actually compatible with the beliefs of Greek philosophers. This concern for presenting an intellectually serious Christianity led Clement in his writings to supplement scriptural citations and allusions with the 'truths' of philosophy as found in the Greek classics.¹²⁹ Clement became head of the Alexandrian school following his teacher's death (c. 190). His teaching career there continued until 202, when he was forced to flee Egypt under the persecutions of the emperor Septimius Severus.

Like Irenaeus, Clement maintained a very high regard for Scripture. In his three-volume treatise *The Instructor*, composed around the year 197, Scripture served as the spiritual foundation of his overall objective: to portray Jesus as the 'Instructor'

¹²⁸ This quest had taken him (from his native Athens) to southern Italy, Syria, Palestine and ultimately Egypt, where he spent most of his career. Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 507.

¹²⁹ Among Clement's works that have survived he 'quotes no fewer than three hundred and sixty passages' from the classics. Comparatively, Clement 'alludes to the Old Testament in fifteen hundred passages and to the New in two thousand'. In *Stromateis* 7.20 he stresses that Greek philosophy 'provides for the soul the preliminary cleansing and training required for the reception of the faith, on which foundation the truth builds up the edifice of knowledge'. Translated by Chadwick (1954). Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 6.

(*paidagōgos*) who speaks all through Scripture as an example for right Christian living.¹³⁰ Very much concerned with the behavior and actions of Christians in the public and private sphere, Clement turned to the biblical writings for practical guidance. His citation style in *The Instructor* is comparable to what we found in Irenaeus: verses and passages are often prefaced with some introductory formulae or narrative context (e.g., ‘the Apocalypse says’, ‘the apostle in the epistle to the Corinthians says’, ‘Abraham said to Sarah’, ‘Jesus placed a little child in the midst, saying’). At other times, however, Clement also presents verses from both Testaments—even from the apocryphal *Book of Sirach*—as the words of the Instructor, understanding these to be the words of Jesus beyond the ‘literal sense’.¹³¹ As we will observe, this creates a distinct challenge in determining Clement’s exact meaning when he quotes from John 3 below.

One further work of Clement’s that includes a portion of John 3 is the *Stromateis*, completed a few years after *The Instructor*. Its title comes from a Greek term that may be rendered ‘miscellanies’ or ‘patchwork’.¹³² Clement tells us that he composed it in a deliberately unsystematic manner, so as to conceal deeper spiritual truths within a hodgepodge of extracts from biblical books, early Christian literature, the Greek classics, and even certain Jewish and ‘heretical’ writings.¹³³ Commenting on the complex structure

¹³⁰ *The Instructor* 1.7: ‘But our Instructor is the holy God Jesus, the Word, who is the guide of all humanity. The loving God himself is our Instructor’. Translated by Wilson (1885).

¹³¹ Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 189: ‘[T]he ‘literal sense’ represented for patristic interpreters the ‘ordinary’ meaning, or the ‘immediate’ content of biblical utterances, that is what everyone understood at first sight’. In contrast, the approach that Clement took in attributing to Jesus verses from diverse places in the Scriptures can be viewed as a precursor to ‘prosopological exegesis’.

¹³² Its full title is *Miscellanies of Notes of Knowledge in Accordance with True Philosophy*.

¹³³ Clement explains at *Stromateis* 1.18: ‘The *Stromateis* will present the truth mixed in with philosophical teachings, or more precisely, hidden and concealed in them, like the edible part of a fruit is hidden in its peel’. Translated by Ridings (1997). Clement also informs us of the work’s mnemonic utility: ‘Now this

of the *Stromateis*, the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea described it as a ‘tapestry’ (*katastrōsin*) full of useful learning.¹³⁴ John 3 is cited within the fourth volume, in which Clement concentrates on martyrdom and the attainment of Christian perfection via ‘knowledge’ (*gnōsis*). Clement’s manner of scriptural citation is highly variable in the work; from time to time verses include information on the speaker, but more often than not no such detail is provided.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Clement’s earliest Johannine citation is found in the first volume of *The Instructor*. In the following passage he addresses the concept of salvation via belief in God’s Son.

Now the Lord himself has most clearly revealed the equality of salvation, saying, ‘For this is the will of my Father, that everyone that sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day’. As far as possible in this world, which is what he means by the last day, and which is preserved till the time that it shall end, we believe that we are made perfect. On this account he says, ‘Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life’. If those who have believed have life, what remains beyond the possession of eternal life?¹³⁵

Clement here cites two verses from John’s Gospel within his discussion of salvation and perfection. The first, Jesus’ statement in John 6:40, is explicitly identified as that which was spoken by ‘the Lord himself’ (Greek, *autos ho kurios*). With few exceptions in the whole of the treatise, Jesus is implied when this title is used.¹³⁶ This

work is not a writing artfully composed for display, but notes (*hupomnēmata*) treasured for my old age, a medicine against forgetfulness’. Translated by Van den Hoek (1996).

¹³⁴ See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.13.

¹³⁵ *The Instructor* 1.6. Translated by Wilson (1885), with minor modifications.

¹³⁶ See e.g., *The Instructor* 1.3 (twice); 1.5 (twice); 1.6; 2.8; 2.11 (twice); 3.1.

presents a bit of a puzzle when we come to Clement's citation of John 3:36a in line 6: is the same speaker intended? Is Clement here really attributing 3:36a to Jesus, and not John the Baptist or the Gospel-writer (as we would expect given the verse's placement in the Gospel)? At least four interpretations are conceivable and deserving of consideration.

The first option is that Clement does not consider the quotation to belong on Jesus' lips, since the third person singular verb *phēsin* (translated above 'he says') by no means demands it. Like the Latin *ait*, *phēsin* does not carry with it the specific gender of the subject doing the saying—the subject could potentially be feminine ('she says') or neuter ('it says'). In this way Clement could have intended 'it says' as a short form of 'Scripture says'. That being said, the overall context of the excerpt (Clement is building upon prior statements) seems to favor the masculine rendering, and thus a second alternative is that Clement is instead attributing the quotation to God ('the Lord') in general terms. A third possibility, which fits well within Clement's rhetorical aim in *The Instructor*, is that Clement understands the speaker to be Jesus the Instructor, who is able to speak *through* a biblical verse such as this one. If this is the case, then what we have here is not reflective of Clement's opinion of who *really* spoke the verse in the historical context of John 3. One other interpretation is possible: Clement takes Jesus to be the speaker, but the quotation is not actually of John 3:36a. Although Clement's Greek matches the text as it is found in the Gospel, two points should be taken into account. The first is the brevity of the quotation—Clement here cites just eight of John 3:36's twenty-four Greek words:

Clement - 'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life'.
ho pisteuōn eis ton huion echei zōēn aiōnion

John 3:36 - ‘Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him’.
ho pisteuōn eis ton huion echei zōēn aiōnion. ho de apeithōn tō huiō ouk opstai zōēn all hē orgē tou theou menei ep auton

The next point has to do with the quotation’s content. Admittedly, these words are very reminiscent of other statements found in the Gospel and 1 John,¹³⁷ most especially Jesus’ declaration in John 6:47: ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life’. We recall that Clement just previously quoted a verse from this same chapter (John 6:40), so this next quotation would come only seven verses later. This appears to be consistent with Clement’s quotation style, for at a number of other places in *The Instructor* he cites verses from the same biblical book and chapter in succession.¹³⁸ I propose that in this excerpt Clement is not quoting John 3:36a, but has *adapted* John 6:47b (adding the phrase ‘in the Son’) to emphasize the primacy of the Son in attaining eternal life. As in English, the difference in Greek consists of only three small words:

Clement - *ho pisteuōn eis ton huion echei zōēn aiōnion*
John 6:47b - *ho pisteuōn echei zōēn aiōnion*

Of the four interpretative options outlined, I find the fourth to be most convincing, with the third option next in line—the result is that Clement’s position on the identity of the speaker in John 3:36a is decidedly unknown.

One further Johannine citation is found in Clement’s *Stromateis* (written c. 200). In this passage from the fourth volume, he draws on a series of biblical references to comment on the divine judgment of the willfully ignorant and hard-hearted.

¹³⁷ E.g., John 3:15; 3:16b; 5:24; 1 John 5:10-13.

¹³⁸ See e.g., *The Instructor* 1.7 (John); 2.9 (John); 2.11 (Luke); 2.13 (Hosea); 3.6 (Proverbs).

These are the ones concerning whom Micah the prophet says, ‘Hear, you peoples, the word of the Lord, those living with distress’. And Abraham said, ‘By no means, Lord, who judges the earth’. Since ‘*whoever disbelieves*’, according to the voice of salvation, ‘*is already judged*’, it is also written in Kings of the Lord’s judgment and declaration, which reads: ‘God hears the righteous but does not save the wicked, because they do not seek to know God’.¹³⁹

It is apparent from the loose nature of Clement’s four biblical quotations that he is here relying on his memory, perhaps even paraphrasing intentionally so as to clarify this topic for readers. In lines 1-3 he provides free renderings of Micah 1:2 and Genesis 18:25, attributing the words to Micah and Abraham, respectively. Clement then provides two more paraphrased quotations: a brief portion of what seems to be John 3:18 in lines 3-4, followed by what is ‘written in Kings’ (the content of which is only reminiscent of Job 36:7-12). It is of prime importance to first determine whether Clement specifically has John 3:18 in mind; if this can be established with relative confidence, we can then move to his identification of the speaker.

As we found in our analysis of *The Instructor*, Clement once again quotes very few words, just four in Greek. An adaptation is also present (from ‘does not believe’ to ‘disbelieves’), which has no real difference in meaning.

Clement - ‘Whoever disbelieves is already judged’.

ho apistēsas ēdē kekritai

John 3:18 - ‘Whoever believes in him is not judged, but whoever does not believe is already judged, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God’.

ho pisteuōn eis auton ou krinetai ho de mē pisteuōn ēdē kekritai hoti mē pepisteuken eis to onoma tou monogenous huiou tou theou

¹³⁹ *Stromateis* 4.26. My translation.

In comparing Clement’s quotation with the text of John 3:18, the strongest indication that he has this Johannine verse in mind is the distinctive phrase ‘is already judged’ (Greek, *ēdē kekritai*). It appears in this verbal tense (perfect passive indicative) just a single time in the whole of the New Testament, at John 3:18. Clement earlier cited this same portion of 3:18 at *Stromateis* 2.69—although there he did not identify the speaker because of its incorporation into his own explanatory sentence, Clement cited it precisely: ‘Whoever does not believe is already judged’ (Greek, *ho mē pisteuōn ēdē kekritai*). It is therefore quite probable that Clement was consciously recalling this particular verse, albeit in adapted form; thus we can now move to determining his identification of the speaker.

Clement interjects the following words within his partial quotation of John 3:18: *kata tēn sōtērion phōnēn*. Above, I have translated this phrase ‘according to the voice of salvation’, since it retains a double meaning that Clement may have intended, but which is not so obvious to observe in English. In Koine and Patristic Greek the neuter adjective *sōtērion* often functions as the noun ‘salvation’, and by metonymy can mean ‘Savior’ (i.e., ‘the one bringing salvation’).¹⁴⁰ Such a use of *sōtērion*, for instance, is found in Luke 2:29-32, where the aged Simeon holds the baby Jesus in his arms and prays:

Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation (*to sōtērion sou*) which you have prepared before the face of all peoples—a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

¹⁴⁰ See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary 3. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 120; Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 255-256; G. W. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1369; Timothy Friberg et al (eds.), *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 373; Bernard A. Taylor, *Analytical Lexicon to the Septuagint: Expanded Edition* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 529.

Simeon’s reference to seeing with his own eyes is significant—the evangelist Luke had earlier mentioned that God promised Simeon he would not see death until he saw the Messiah. In this excerpt Simeon clearly identifies Jesus as the *sōtērion* of God, and both Mary and Joseph understand this reference in the same way, for Luke records in the very next verse (2:33): ‘And his father and mother marveled at the things which were spoken concerning him’.

When we look at how Clement’s phrase *tēn sōtērion phōnēn* has been understood by scholars, we discover a consistent pattern of interpretation. Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca* (1857) included the following explanatory footnote below its edition of the Greek text: ‘That is, the voice of the Savior’ (*hoc est, tēn tou sōtēros phōnēn, salvatoris vocem*).¹⁴¹ No doubt working from this edition, Wilson (1885) rendered the phrase into English as ‘the utterance of the Savior’. More recently, translations into French and Spanish have taken this same approach: Mondésert (2001) chose to translate the phrase ‘la parole du Sauveur’, and Rodríguez (2003) rendered it ‘la sentencia del Salvador’. Taken together, it appears more and more likely that Clement did in fact treat John 3:18 as spoken by Jesus, the Savior himself.

Additional support for this determination is found in Clement’s usage of this phrase elsewhere in the *Stromateis* and his homily-treatise *Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?*, here excerpted:

[Solon of Athens writes]: ‘But each one of you walks in the steps of a fox, and in all of you is an empty mind’. This, I think, is signified by the utterance of the Savior (*hē sōtērios phōnē*): ‘The foxes have holes, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head’.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (8), 1377-1378.

For some, merely hearing, and that in an off-hand way, the utterance of the Savior (*tēs tou sōtēros phōnēs*), ‘that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven’, despair of themselves as not destined to live, surrender all to the world.¹⁴²

What is most important to note in both of these passages is Clement’s use of similar phrasing to quote the words of Jesus himself; for Clement, this ‘voice’ (*phōnē*) is understood in the particular sense of direct speech, i.e., words that can be audibly heard.¹⁴³ In the first passage he cites Matthew 8:20/Luke 9:58, and in the second Matthew 19:24. Comparable examples are also found in the Greek patristic tradition; the following three excerpts are taken from Eusebius of Caesarea, the anonymous *History of the Monks in Egypt*, and Cyril of Jerusalem:

For he [Origen] took the words, ‘There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’, in too literal and extreme a sense, thinking both to fulfill the words of the Savior (*sōtērion phōnēn*)...he hastened to carry out the Savior’s words (*tēn sōtērion phōnēn*) by action.

Now whoever shall do this shall receive the Savior always. For the voice of the Savior says (*hē sōtērios phōnē phēsin*), ‘Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him’.

And if you ever hear any of the heretics speaking evil of the law or the prophets, answer in the sound of the Savior’s voice (*tēn sōtērion phōnēn*), saying Jesus ‘did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it’.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Stromateis* 1.23; *Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?* 2. Translated by Wilson (1885). In the translation of Ferguson (1991), the phrase *hē sōtērios phōnē* is rendered ‘the Savior’s words’.

¹⁴³ Other translations of *phōnē* include ‘sound’, ‘message’ or ‘language’, and it is often paired with an act of hearing (*akouō*). See Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Volume IX. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 278-299; G. W. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1503-1504.

¹⁴⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.8. Translated by Deferrari (1955); *History of the Monks in Egypt* 8.56. Translated by Budge (1907), with minor modifications; Cyril, *Catechetical Lecture* 4.33. Translated by Gifford (1894), with minor modifications. Note: Russell (1981) in his translation of *History of the Monks in Egypt* renders the phrase *hē sōtērios phōnē* as ‘the saving voice’, while McCauley (1969) renders

In the first passage (lines 1-4) Eusebius discusses Origen's alleged act of self-mutilation. He explains that Origen took 'the words of the Savior' in Matthew 19:12 in an extremely literal sense, making himself a eunuch. In the second passage (lines 5-7), the anonymous author quotes the words of an Egyptian monk named Apollonius. His citation of John 6:56 is prefaced with the phrase 'the voice of the Savior says'. Rufinus of Aquileia made a Latin translation of this work in the early 400s, and he rendered this phrase 'the Savior himself says' (Latin, *ipse salvator dicit*). Lastly, in the third passage (lines 8-10) Cyril paraphrases Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17, informing his readers that an effective weapon against heretics is to repeat these words from 'the Savior's voice'.

Returning then to Clement's citation of John 3:18 in the *Stromateis*, as outlined above there is a fair amount of evidence suggesting that he identified the verse as the words of Jesus ('the Savior').¹⁴⁵ The immediate context of Clement's quotation also leans in this direction, for the phrase 'whoever disbelieves is already judged' can hardly be described as a message of 'salvation'. Rather, the words are condemning of unbelievers, and seem more appropriately interpreted as a judgment by the ultimate authority, the Savior himself. All things considered, although Clement's quotation of John 3:18 is both brief and slightly adapted we can conclude with relative confidence that he believed Jesus uttered the words. With respect to his position on 3:13-17, as we noted in the case of

Cyril's *tēn sōtērion phōnēn* as 'that saving word'. Only the former is possible, since (as I understand it) Greek grammar requires adjectives to agree with nouns not only in number and case, but also in gender (*sōtērion* is neuter, whereas *phōnēn* is feminine). Cf. Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms* 72.20, where a citation of Matthew 24:42 is prefaced by *tēn sōtērion phōnēn*.

¹⁴⁵ Clement is consistent in applying the title 'Savior' to Jesus alone. E.g., *Stromateis* 1.12: 'Again, the Savior is always engaged in saving (*ho sōtēr sōzei aiei*). He is always at work, as he sees his Father always at work'. Translated by Ferguson (1991).

Irenaeus it is reasonable to assume that these preceding verses were interpreted in the very same way.¹⁴⁶

Third Century

Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155-225).

1. Background Material

Our knowledge of Tertullian begins at his conversion to Christianity around the close of the second century. At the time he was about forty years of age, and having returned to his native Carthage from a visit to the city of Rome he started to produce treatises in defense of his newfound faith. Tertullian was a prolific writer, and his works betray his legal and rhetorical training, as well as a deep knowledge of classical literature, due perhaps to his Stoic background. We know that he was married, yet little is known about his family other than the fact that his wife was also a Christian.¹⁴⁷ Though Tertullian was fluent in Greek and even wrote in it on occasion, his preference for Latin connected him with Latin-speaking Christians in the western half of the Roman Empire, to which he would lay the foundations of Christology and Trinitarian orthodoxy.¹⁴⁸ Like Irenaeus, Tertullian considered all Gnostic interpretations of the Scriptures to be abhorrent. He was convinced that the Scriptures were solely for the church to use and

¹⁴⁶ Without any direct citations, however, the attribution of these verses to Jesus can at best remain a distinct likelihood. It may also be noted that Clement cites John 3:19 in *Exhortation to the Heathen* 10.2, but does so without identifying the speaker.

¹⁴⁷ Tertullian considered her his 'best beloved fellow-servant in the Lord'. See his *To His Wife* 1.

¹⁴⁸ Joel C. Elowsky, *John 1-10* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament IVA. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 386.

interpret, and frequently argued that those guilty of heresy were *not* Christians.¹⁴⁹ Apart from his polemical writings, Tertullian was also very eager to offer fellow believers practical advice on Christian living, and, not surprisingly, the Scriptures directed his reasoning on this as well. Throughout his works he quotes from nearly all canonical books, and his quotations constitute our earliest extant witness to the early Latin versions of the Bible at the time.¹⁵⁰

Among Tertullian's numerous writings, three contain citations of our passages from John 3 and will be analyzed below. His first treatise, *On Prayer*, was composed around 198-200 and outlines how Christians ought to pray: by following the example set by Jesus in the Gospels. The non-polemical nature of *On Prayer* reveals that Tertullian's concerns were on practical issues surrounding prayer (public and private) and the general edification of the church. Scriptural verses are usually paraphrased or alluded to, most of the time without explicit identification markers or much narrative context from which to identify his position on individual speakers. Tertullian's second work, *On Baptism*, defends the sacramental significance and utility of Christian baptism, which Gnostics had apparently rejected wholesale.¹⁵¹ In the treatise (written c. 198-203), the Scriptures play a significant role—beginning with the importance of water in the creation account of Genesis and the baptismal symbolism of water in the Exodus story, Tertullian builds a

¹⁴⁹ Tertullian believed that heretics had no right to the Scriptures at all. See Bart D. Ehrman (ed.), *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 211-212; Norbert Brox, 'Irenaeus and the Bible', in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 497.

¹⁵⁰ See Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 2004), 19-21.

¹⁵¹ This is the earliest extant treatise on the subject of Christian baptism. See further in Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 336; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 278-280.

case for baptism's continued validity.¹⁵² As in *On Prayer*, scriptural allusions abound, but typically these are not formally introduced with identifying information on the speakers.

Tertullian's final work referencing John 3 is *Against Praxeas*, one of his most significant treatises written after he joined the Montanist sect (c. 213). In it he sets out to refute a certain Praxeas' views on the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and then proceeds to present his own understanding of God as a triune being. Not surprisingly, John's Gospel figures prominently in Tertullian's explanation of the distinction between Father and Son. Both his logic and detailed manner of scriptural citation in support of his argumentation are quite impressive in this work,¹⁵³ with frequent usage of introductory formulae and contextual details provided (e.g., 'I advance the passage where the Father said to the Son', 'in the words of Isaiah', 'the apostle in his epistle prays', 'Jesus said unto her').

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following excerpt from the opening chapter of *On Prayer* includes our earliest extant reference to the initial verses of the second Johannine passage under consideration. Tertullian prefaces his exposition of the Lord's Prayer with a reminder to his audience that, like Jesus, John the Baptist also taught his disciples how to pray.

So the prayer composed by Christ has been composed of three parts. In speech, by which prayer is enunciated, in spirit, by which alone it prevails, even John had taught his disciples to pray, but all John's doings were laid as groundwork for Christ, until, when 'he had increased'—just as the same John used to fore-

¹⁵² At the outset of the work Tertullian gives his North African readers the label 'little fishes', explaining that they, like Jesus their 'fish' (Greek, *ichthus*), are born in water and through it are kept safe. The Greek letters of *ichthus* represented the confession of faith: 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior'.

¹⁵³ Bart D. Ehrman (ed.), *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 408.

announce that ‘it was needful’ that ‘he should increase and himself decrease’—the whole work of the forerunner passed over, together with his spirit itself, unto the Lord. Therefore, after what form of words John taught to pray is not extant, because earthly things have given place to heavenly: ‘*The one who is from the earth*’, he says, ‘*speaks earthly things, and the one who is here from the heavens speaks those things which he has seen*’.¹⁵⁴

In accordance with the Baptist’s supportive role as forerunner, Tertullian reasons that what he had taught regarding prayer was not recorded in Scripture, since Jesus’ own model prayer was sufficient. In lines 4-5 Tertullian brings up the Baptist’s own admission of his need to ‘decrease’ so that Jesus could ‘increase’ (John 3:30), and he then seems to attribute a paraphrased version of John 3:31b-32a to this ‘same John’ (Latin, *idem Ioannes*).¹⁵⁵ That Tertullian here understands the Baptist to be the speaker of these verses is supported by what is found in the next of Tertullian’s excerpted works, *On Baptism*, written around the same time as *On Prayer*. The discussion leading up to the following passage has revolved around yet another comparison between the Baptist and Jesus.

Whereas the very thing which was heavenly in John, the spirit of prophecy, so completely failed after the transfer of the whole Spirit to the Lord, that he presently sent men to inquire whether he whom he had himself preached, whom he had pointed out when coming to him, were he. And so the baptism of repentance was dealt with as if it were a candidate for the remission and sanctification shortly about to follow in Christ: for in that he used to preach baptism for the remission of sins, the declaration was made with reference to future remission; if it be true, that repentance is antecedent, remission subsequent. And this is preparing the way. But he who prepares does not himself complete, but procures for another to complete. He himself professes that the heavenly things are not his, but Christ’s, by saying, ‘*The one who is from the*

¹⁵⁴ *On Prayer* 1. Translated by Thelwall (1869), with minor modifications.

¹⁵⁵ Tertullian was in all likelihood recalling these verses from memory. His use of the perfect-tense *vidit* (‘he has seen’) matches the Gospel text, proving that John 3:32 was being recalled.

earth speaks concerning the earth; the one who comes from the realms above is above all'; and again, by saying that he 'baptized in repentance only, but that one would shortly come who would baptize in the Spirit and fire'.¹⁵⁶

In arguing that Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit is far superior to the Baptist's own, Tertullian appeals to two statements found in Scripture: John 3:31b and Matthew 3:11. Both of these paraphrases appear to be linked by a common speaker (no change can be detected), and there is no question that the Baptist is the speaker of the latter. Tertullian describes the speaker of the former as one who 'himself professes' (Latin, *ipse profitetur*) the heavenly nature of Jesus over against himself. Such characterization points directly to the Baptist. Ernest Evans, in his commentary on this treatise, concurs with this identification, stating plainly: 'This paragraph of the Gospel (3:31-36) naturally reads as a continuation of the Baptist's reply to his disciples' question (3:26), and so Tertullian understands it'.¹⁵⁷

We turn now to the last of Tertullian's works to be treated, the polemical *Against Praxeas*. The following passage is doubly significant because it contains the earliest patristic quotations of John 3:16-17 and 3:35-36 that clearly specify who the speakers are.

When he entered the temple, he called it 'his Father's house', speaking as the Son. In his address to Nicodemus he says, '*God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life*'; and again, '*For did not God send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Whoever believes in him is not condemned. Whoever does not believe in him is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God*'. Moreover, when John was asked what he happened to know of Jesus, he says,

¹⁵⁶ *On Baptism* 10. Translated by Thelwall (1869), with minor modifications.

¹⁵⁷ Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism: The Text edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 81-82.

*'The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not believe in the Son of God shall not see God, but the wrath of God remains on him'.*¹⁵⁸

That Tertullian here attributes the words of John 3:16-18 to Jesus is virtually certain from the immediate context. In the account of the temple cleansing recorded in John 2, it is Jesus who enters the temple in Jerusalem and calls it his 'Father's house'.¹⁵⁹ There is likewise no other candidate besides Jesus for one who gave such an address to Nicodemus. As Irenaeus had done some thirty years earlier, Tertullian also here cites John 3:18 in context with surrounding verses,¹⁶⁰ revealing their shared view that 3:18 consists of the continued speech of one speaker: Jesus. Regarding Tertullian's paraphrase of John 3:35-36 in lines 9-11,¹⁶¹ the speaker is identified only as 'John'. While this could be taken as referring to the Gospel-writer of the same name, the statement 'John was asked what he happened to know of Jesus' prevents such an interpretation. It makes sense only for John the Baptist, a character *within* the Gospel narrative who is himself recorded as being questioned about Jesus' identity (cf. 3:25-26).

To summarize our findings, Tertullian's citation style in each of these excerpts is straightforward enough for us to be confident in the following: [1] he regarded John 3:16-18 to be Jesus' words addressed to Nicodemus and [2] he accepted 3:31-32a and 3:35-36

¹⁵⁸ *Against Praxeas* 21. Translated by Holmes (1870), with minor modifications.

¹⁵⁹ Only a few lines after this excerpt Tertullian again refers to Jesus as 'the Son': 'And so he showed, of course, that he was not the Father, but the Son; and elsewhere he is expressly called 'the Christ, the Son of God', and not the Father'.

¹⁶⁰ John 3:18 is cited along with 3:16-17 in *Against Praxeas* and with 3:19-21 in Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*. Tertullian's use of the connective phrase 'and again' (Latin, *et rursus*) in line 4 is a common feature used by Tertullian to denote that a speaker says more on the subject. See e.g., *On Prayer* 3; *Against Marcion* 4.35; *On Idolatry* 4.

¹⁶¹ Tertullian is consistent in his quotation of John 3:35-36a, but 3:36b is quoted quite loosely. The Gospel text reads: '...whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him'.

as the words of John the Baptist. The question then remains as to what may be said of those verses not cited by Tertullian (3:13-15, 3:19-21 and 3:33-34). As we argued in the cases of Irenaeus and Clement, it is very likely that Tertullian considered 3:13-15 part of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, since he accepted 3:16-18 as part of this very dialogue. This same principle may also be applied to 3:33-34: Tertullian would in all likelihood have understood these two verses within the context of the Baptist's discussion with his disciples, initiated at 3:26. Because Tertullian never quotes 3:19-21, his position on the speaker of these verses is not determinable.

Hippolytus of Rome (c. 160-235).

1. Background Material

Of Hippolytus' early life almost nothing is known. Scholars are relatively certain, however, that he was neither a native Roman nor of Latin origin, given his extensive knowledge of Greek philosophy, his close acquaintance with Greek mystery religions, and his overall manner of expression throughout his writings.¹⁶² We know that Hippolytus was a prominent presbyter of the Roman church at the time of bishop Zephyrinus (199-217), and that he drew influence from Irenaeus in defending the teachings of the nascent church against various heretical doctrines. In the course of his campaign against these heresies, however, Hippolytus went too far and presented a theology that had subordinationistic tendencies.¹⁶³ Matters became further complicated around 217, when a

¹⁶² Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 163. Joel C. Elowsky asserts that recent scholarship places him 'in a Palestinian context, personally familiar with Origen'. See his *John 1-10* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament IVA. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 380-381.

¹⁶³ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 164.

schism erupted between him and bishop Callistus over a separate issue—as a consequence the followers of Hippolytus appointed him as a kind of rival pope.¹⁶⁴ These factors, compounded by the declining use of the Greek language in Rome after his lifetime, played a substantial role in the gradual disappearance of nearly all of the Greek text of Hippolytus’ literary corpus, which also included homilies and at least twelve scriptural commentaries.¹⁶⁵

Naturally, Hippolytus’ approach to Scripture had much to do with the impetus for his writing. For example, in his polemical treatise *Against the Heresy of Noetus*, written between 215-230, Scripture serves primarily as a proof-text in refuting the heretical doctrines proclaimed by Noetus and his disciples.¹⁶⁶ Even a cursory reading of this treatise reveals Hippolytus’ close acquaintance with the Bible and his preference for introducing scriptural quotations with identification markers or some form of narrative context (e.g., ‘Christ gave this testimony and said’, ‘the blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this...when he says’, ‘as Isaiah the prophet has said’). He also takes care to distinguish between the voice of Jesus as a character within the Gospel narratives and that of the Gospel-writers. With respect to John’s Gospel, one out of every four quotations derives from the prologue—which Hippolytus attributes to ‘the blessed John’ or simply ‘John’—while quotations of Jesus himself make up the vast

¹⁶⁴ Bart D. Ehrman (ed.), *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 328.

¹⁶⁵ Some of these works have been preserved in part through ancient translations and quotations from later Christian writers. See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 165-166; Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 528-529.

¹⁶⁶ According to Hippolytus, Noetus was a native of Smyrna who held that ‘Christ was the Father himself and the Father himself was born, suffered and died’. See further in W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 343-345.

majority of the remaining Johannine references.¹⁶⁷ Fortunately, this treatise is among the few still extant in the Greek original and contains one quotation from John 3.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following passage is taken from the fourth section of Hippolytus' *Against the Heresy of Noetus*. It contains our earliest extant quotation of John 3:13 in which the speaker can be readily identified.

When the Word was made incarnate and became man, the Father was in the Son, and the Son in the Father, while the Son was living among men. This, therefore, was signified, brethren, that in reality the mystery of the economy by the Holy Spirit and the virgin was this Word, constituting yet one Son to God. And it is not simply that I say this, but he himself attests it who came down from heaven, for in this way he says, '*No one has ascended up to heaven, except the one that came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*'. What then can he [Noetus] seek beside what is thus spoken?¹⁶⁸

Hippolytus, while affirming Noetus' belief in the oneness of God, here challenges the assertion that the Son is in *every* way the same as the Father, especially in physical space and in function. Hippolytus argues that the Father sent the eternal Son down from heaven, and through the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary the Son took on human flesh. This flesh did not exist in heaven, as Hippolytus argues just after this excerpt, but it is one of the distinguishing factors between God the Son and God the Father. He further insists that this is not merely his own view, but the view of '[the one] who came down from heaven' (Greek, *ho katabas ek tou ouranou*), that is, Jesus the heavenly Son of Man himself. Hippolytus then proceeds to cite John 3:13 with the quotative phrase 'for in this

¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, Hippolytus makes use of only two Gospels in this particular work: Matthew (5 times) and John (11 times). Perhaps their apostolic origin (and greater authority?) lies behind this preference.

¹⁶⁸ *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 4. Translated by MacMahon (1886), with minor modifications.

way he says' (Greek, *houtō gar legei*), and further describes the words as being 'thus spoken' (i.e., in an authoritative sense). In light of such contextual detail, Hippolytus' placement of 3:13 on Jesus' own lips seems relatively certain. With respect to the other Johannine verses in question (3:14-21, 3:31-36), however, nothing can be established with such certainty. In a separate work titled *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Hippolytus quotes 3:14 and paraphrases 3:17, but provides no context from which to determine his position on the speaker.

Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-254).

1. Background Material

Unlike Clement and Tertullian, Origen was raised in the church, and during his childhood was taught the Christian Scriptures by his own father.¹⁶⁹ His mastery of them and of Greek literature was exceptional—at age eighteen he left his occupation as a *grammateus* (teacher of Greek literature) to replace Clement as head of the catechetical school in his hometown of Alexandria. Origen's formal training played a significant role in his overall approach to the Bible, in which he applied a number of grammatical and allegorical techniques used by his pagan contemporaries in the study of Homer.¹⁷⁰ In addition to producing several large scientific commentaries (e.g., on Genesis, the Psalms, Romans, the Gospels of Matthew and John), Origen composed numerous homilies (e.g.,

¹⁶⁹ According to Eusebius, Origen's father was later beheaded in the same persecution that forced Clement to flee Alexandria at the beginning of the century. He was declared a martyr, along with thousands of other Egyptian Christians who lost their lives. Cf. *Ecclesiastical History* 6.1-2.

¹⁷⁰ See further in Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 1998), 5-7.

on the Pentateuch, Samuel, Luke's Gospel) and other analytical and critical works.¹⁷¹ He also devoted an enormous amount of attention to issues directly bearing on the textual reliability of the biblical books upon which his faith was based. For example, while in Alexandria he began compiling the *Hexapla*, a six-column edition of the Hebrew Scriptures that contained the Hebrew text, his own Greek transliteration of the Hebrew and four other Greek translations.¹⁷² Due to later conflicts with Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, in 234 Origen relocated to Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, where for the next twenty years of his life he was actively engaged in both writing and teaching.¹⁷³

Of Origen's works that are extant, several contain portions of the Johannine passages under consideration. The earliest of these is the tenth book of his *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, written while in Caesarea around the year 235.¹⁷⁴ Very regrettably, this magisterial commentary exists in fragmentary form—only eleven of his thirty-two books remain—and the two books that covered John 3 in depth are lost to us.¹⁷⁵ In the portions that survive Origen's scriptural citation style is considerably detailed and accurate (e.g., 'Adam says to Eve', 'Luke has recorded that when the Savior said', 'John

¹⁷¹ These works drew both opposition and admiration. See Hermann J. Vogt, 'Origen of Alexandria', in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 539-551.

¹⁷² Origen's *Hexapla* also contained a system that indicated textual variants, omissions and additions. See Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984), 78.

¹⁷³ Origen established a scholarly library in Caesarea, which by the late-third century contained nearly 30,000 volumes according to Isidore of Seville (d. 636). Cf. *Etymologies* 6.6.

¹⁷⁴ Origen composed the commentary over a large portion of his scholarly career (c. 230-248), written at the urging of a certain patron named Ambrose, whom Origen had converted from Gnosticism. To expedite the process, Ambrose also supplied Origen with numerous secretaries to whom he dictated. Cf. Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (Volume 1. The Fathers of the Church 80. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 4-5.

¹⁷⁵ As a result, in the entire Johannine commentary just a single quotation from John 3 contains an introductory formula that unambiguously identifies the speaker.

intensifies the difficulty in this passage also when he says’, ‘Balaam himself says’), yet on occasion he uses the generic ‘Scripture says’ or incorporates verses into his own sentences. Origen is also careful to distinguish between the words of biblical characters and authors—he often comments on the usefulness and value of the narrative techniques and authorial asides used by the Gospel-writers.¹⁷⁶

Origen’s second work referencing John 3, *Homily 11 on Ezekiel*, was composed about five years later (c. 240). Although the Greek text of this homily (along with Origen’s thirteen others on the book of Ezekiel) has not survived, Jerome produced a Latin translation nearly a century and a half after its composition.¹⁷⁷ In the homilies it is clear that Origen’s primary objective was to expound the text of Ezekiel for Christian instruction and the promotion of church unity. Quotations and allusions from other biblical books are normally not formally introduced, but incorporated into his sentences or attributed to what ‘is written’ or what is simply found ‘in Scripture’.

Origen’s third work containing a portion of John 3 is his *Treatise on the Passover*, likely written in the early or mid-240s.¹⁷⁸ Throughout the treatise Origen seeks to ‘expound the spiritual meaning’ of the laws of the Passover sacrifice for the edification

¹⁷⁶ E.g., *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 19.40: ‘If it were not to learn something useful from the fact that the previously mentioned words related by the Savior were spoken in the treasury, the evangelist would not have added to what Jesus has said the words, ‘He spoke these words in the treasury while teaching in the temple’’.

¹⁷⁷ There are good reasons to believe that this translation is faithful to the Greek original of the Ezekiel homilies. In his preface Jerome assures readers that he has been careful to preserve Origen’s ‘idiom and simplicity of language’, and that he has likewise ‘renounced every form of rhetorical and artistic splendor’ in order for the content (and not his own style) to be praised. Additionally, Jerome was one of Origen’s biggest admirers, considering him ‘the greatest teacher of the church after the apostles’. See Origen, *Homilies 1-14 on Ezekiel*, preface 1; Jerome, *Hebrew Names*, preface; Thomas P. Scheck, *Origen: Homilies 1-14 on Ezekiel* (Ancient Christian Writers 62. New York: The Newman Press, 2010), 2-3.

¹⁷⁸ His Johannine commentary on the subject of the Passover (Book 10) contains no reference to this treatise, as it was his custom to ‘refer to earlier treatments of the same topic whenever they were relevant or complementary to the topic at hand’. See Robert J. Daly, *Origen: Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue with Heraclides* (Ancient Christian Writers 54. New York: The Newman Press, 1992), 5-6.

and instruction of his fellow believers.¹⁷⁹ In the work allusions to scriptural verses are most commonly found without introductory formulae or a narrative setting provided, although at times Origen can be more detailed (e.g., ‘as we have read in Proverbs’, ‘and as the disciples, on hearing this, were somewhat grieved, he said’).

The last work in Origen’s literary corpus that references John 3 is his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Actually the oldest surviving commentary on this Pauline letter, Origen completed its fifteen volumes around the year 246. Because only fragments of the Greek archetype survive we are dependent on the Latin translation made by Rufinus of Aquileia (d. 411), a disciple of Didymus the Blind.¹⁸⁰ Rufinus was by no means an unskilled translator, but he confessed that he had significantly condensed this commentary at the request of his friend Heraclius.¹⁸¹ As a result of his editing, scholars estimate that approximately half of Origen’s original text remains (of course, in its Latin form). Despite this, the voice of Origen is distinctly sensed in the work, and for this reason his understanding of the speakers in John 3 is likely preserved. Origen’s citation style in the Pauline commentary is comparable to what we found in his commentary on John’s Gospel: frequently quotations are introduced (e.g., ‘in the Acts of the Apostles the Lord says to Peter’, ‘John the apostle plainly criticizes this kind of view in his letter when he says’, ‘the Lord himself says in the Gospels’), yet at other times the generic ‘Scripture says’ is employed.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *Treatise on the Passover* 40.30-37.

¹⁸⁰ See Thomas P. Scheck, *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Volume 1. The Fathers of the Church 103. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1, 12-14.

¹⁸¹ Cf. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, preface of Rufinus 2-3.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

This first passage is excerpted from Book 10 of the *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*. At this point Origen is commenting on the text of John 2:23-25 (presented in brackets).

[Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover on the feast day, many believed in his name, seeing the signs that he did. But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and because he had no need that someone give testimony concerning man, for he knew what was in man]

Someone may ask how it is that Jesus did not trust himself to those who were attested to believe. We must reply to this that it is not to those who believe in him that Jesus does not entrust himself, but to those who believe in his name, for believing in him differs from believing in his name. The one, at least then, who will not be judged because of his faith escapes judgment because he believes in him, not because he believes in his name, for the Lord says, *'Whoever believes in me is not judged'*. He does not say, *'Whoever believes in my name is not judged'*. And he no longer says, *'Whoever believes in me has already been judged'*, for perhaps the one who believes in his name believes, and for this reason does not deserve to have been judged already, but he is inferior to the one who believes in him. This is why Jesus does not trust himself to one who believes in his name.¹⁸²

Origen here elucidates why Jesus did not embrace those in Jerusalem who believed 'in his name'. He asserts that belief in Jesus' name is wholly different from belief in Jesus himself, in that those believing in Jesus have true faith and will escape the judgment to come. In validation of this point Origen refers to what 'the Lord says' (Greek, *phēsi ho kurios*) with an adapted quotation of John 3:18a. As we saw in Irenaeus, so here Origen may have conflated the verse with other numerous sayings of Jesus that

¹⁸² *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 10.307-309. Translated by Heine (1989), with minor modifications.

contain the words ‘in me’ (Greek, *eis eme*).¹⁸³ Origen then continues to juxtapose belief in Jesus’ name versus belief in him, and alludes to the next part of 3:18 with the statement ‘Whoever believes in me has already been judged’. As we noted in Clement’s partial citation of 3:18, the phrase ‘has already been judged’ (Greek, *ēdē kekritai*) occurs only once in the New Testament; since Origen’s allusion is an exact match with the text as it is found in the Gospel, we can be relatively confident that Origen had the specific text of John 3 in mind, even though he does not here cite it verbatim. Moreover, the very next section to be covered in his Johannine commentary is the discourse of Jesus and Nicodemus from which 3:18a naturally follows (the contents of Book 11 are not extant). Since ‘Lord’ is one of Origen’s standard titles for Jesus throughout the commentary,¹⁸⁴ it is reasonable to conclude that he is here attributing the words of 3:18a to Jesus. As we asserted in the case of Irenaeus, the words ‘in me’ likewise support such a conclusion.

A second verse from John 3 is found in *Homily 11 on Ezekiel*, preserved for us through Jerome’s Latin translation. Origen’s citation of John 3:14 below constitutes our earliest extant quotation of this verse that marks the speaker’s identity.

Therefore, just as one can be called a lion both for its good aspect and for its evil side, it is not unfitting for the eagle likewise to be understood in both respects. And, as I surmise, the just man is not an eagle but ‘like an eagle’; for he emulates the eagle. And just as ‘the airy serpent’ was a type of the Savior—for he was not truly a serpent, but he emulated the serpent, since the Lord said, ‘*As Moses lifted*

¹⁸³ Most likely Origen is also quoting from memory and is influenced by his argumentation in the excerpt.

¹⁸⁴ E.g., *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 1.14; 1.54; 1.127; 1.270; 2.70; 2.166; 10.112; 13.263; 13.286; 19.27. ‘Lord’ as a reference to YHWH is clearly distinguished in most places by its context (commonly in citations from the Hebrew Scriptures).

up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up—in the same manner also the just man is not an eagle so much as he is like an eagle.¹⁸⁵

Prior to this excerpt Origen has discussed how Scripture depicts animals in two kinds: evil and good. With respect to the lion, he cites Genesis 49:9 as reflective of the lion’s good side and both 1 Peter 5:8-9 and Psalm 10:9 as depicting its bad side. Origen reasons that this also applies to the Savior, who was like a serpent in its good sense (for salvation). Origen then introduces John 3:14 with the words ‘the Lord said’ (Latin, *dicente domino*). Since it is the overall text of Ezekiel that Origen is here interpreting, ‘Lord’ is most often used in reference to YHWH and in connection with citations from Ezekiel and the rest of the Hebrew Bible. However, Jesus is also given the title ‘Lord’ at several points in the homilies.¹⁸⁶ Because arguments can be made both ways, we are fortunate that this is not Origen’s sole citation of John 3:14. In his *Treatise on the Passover* he identifies the speaker more clearly.

[...] as we said above, the Passover is not a type of the passion but a type of Christ himself—for the Savior himself says, ‘*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up*’, in accord with the type of the serpent hung on the wood by Moses, indicating nothing less than the passion of the Savior hung on the wood—it is obviously in accord with the type of the serpent and not in accord with the type of the Passover that one will understand the passion. For if he had said, ‘Just as Moses performed the Passover in Egypt, so too must Christ suffer’, it would be incontestable that the passion took place as antitype of the Passover. But since he likened his passion to the serpent hung on the wood, his passion cannot be the antitype of anything but this [...]’¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ *Homily 11 on Ezekiel 3.2*. Translated by Scheck (2010).

¹⁸⁶ E.g., *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1.4.1-2; 1.4.4; 1.15.1; 2.2.3; 3.3.3; 3.8.4; 4.1.6; 6.6.1; 6.6.2; 6.8.6; 9.1.3; 9.3.2; 12.5.2; 13.4.2.

¹⁸⁷ *Treatise on the Passover* 14.22-15.12. Translated by Daly (1992), with minor modifications. Note: Lacunae exist in the text at the beginning and ending, represented by bracketed ellipses.

In this extended discussion on the typology of the suffering Christ, it is virtually certain that Origen takes Jesus to be the speaker of John 3:14. His use of the title ‘Savior’ (Greek, *sōtēr*) elsewhere in this treatise and in his commentaries invariably refers to Jesus.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, such contextual statements as ‘the Savior hung on the wood’ and ‘he likened his passion to the serpent hung on the wood’ point directly to Jesus’ own prediction of the wooden cross on which he was to be suspended.

Two other quotations that explicitly identify who speaks in portions of John 3 are found in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. In this first excerpt, Origen cites the full (albeit slightly adapted) version of John 3:18.

If this still seems doubtful to you, listen to what Peter declares in the Acts of the Apostles when he had entered the home of the Gentile Cornelius: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every place and among every nation anyone who does his will is acceptable to him’. Now it is possible to oppose us with what the Lord says in the Gospel: ‘*Everyone who believes in me is not condemned; but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God*’. But let us see in what sense we who believe in Christ are not condemned, in order that we might know how he who has not believed is already condemned. For are we to think that anyone who believes in Christ and afterwards commits murder or adultery or speaks false testimony or does anything of this sort, which we sometimes see even believers perpetrating, that even then he who has believed in Christ will not be condemned for these things? It is certain that all these things will come to judgment. Therefore the word of the Lord says, ‘*Whoever believes in me will not be condemned*’—[this] has to be understood in the following sense: anyone who has believed will not be condemned as an unbeliever and infidel; but he will undoubtedly be condemned for his own actions. So then, he

¹⁸⁸ E.g., *Treatise on the Passover* 1.10; 1.35; 7.5; 10.15-20; 12.25; 13.10-15; 14.1.

who has not believed has already been condemned because he has not believed.¹⁸⁹

Digressing from his comments on Romans, Origen here seeks to clarify in what sense believers who continue to sin are judged by God. He then compares a quotation from the book of Acts with an adapted form of John 3:18 (the prepositional phrase ‘in me’ is again present). Origen identifies this latter verse as a saying of the ‘Lord’ (Latin, *dominus*) and later as a ‘word of the Lord’ (Latin, *sermo domini*). Importantly, he notes that the words are found in one of the Gospels, which indicates that Jesus is the understood speaker (a conclusion consonant with our findings from his Johannine commentary). In the next excerpt from the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Origen looks to John 3 in defense of the doctrine that Jesus is by no means bound to a historical frame of time, but can coexist on earth and in heaven simultaneously.

What then is the apostle [Paul] teaching through this? Obviously, that we should not say in our heart and imagine that Christ is contained in a certain location and is not himself everywhere and diffused through all things. For when he was on earth he was saying to his own apostles, ‘*No one ascends to heaven except him who comes down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*’. He did not say ‘who was’, but ‘who is in heaven’.¹⁹⁰

In building support for his understanding of the omnipresent nature of Christ, Origen here chooses to cite the words of John 3:13. He prefaces the quotation with the words ‘when he was on earth he was saying to his own apostles’. The context of this statement points directly to Jesus—just referred to as the subject in line 2—who while on earth had ‘his own apostles’ (Latin, *apostolos suos*). Although the Gospel text does not

¹⁸⁹ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 2.7.7. Translated by Scheck (2001-2002), with minor modifications.

¹⁹⁰ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 8.2.4.

explicitly record that Jesus' followers were present during his nocturnal dialogue with Nicodemus, perhaps Origen understands it this way because he figured others *must* have been present in order to record the words for posterity. In any case, Origen's position on the identity of the speaker of 3:13 is plain.

Having completed our analysis of Origen's explicit references to John 3, we can be relatively confident that he understood 3:13-18 to be Jesus' own words. Though Origen did not cite 3:15-17, the placement of these verses between 3:14 and 3:18 strongly suggests that he would have taken them to be part of Jesus' dialogue. With respect to 3:19-21, in several works Origen quotes from these verses, but in each case it is not possible to determine with any degree of certainty his position on the speaker's identity.¹⁹¹ However, two passages found in the *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* may reflect his understanding of these verses. In the following passages Origen does a bit of summarization of the events recorded in John 2 and 3.

After Capernaum, then, where he remained not many days because the Passover of the Jews was near, he went up to Jerusalem, when he casts both the sheep and the oxen out of the temple, and pours out the coins of the money-changers. And Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees, seems likely to have come to him by night in Jerusalem, and to have heard these things which can be found in the Gospel. But 'after these things Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea, and there he remained with them and baptized'.

There 'he remained not many days. And the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem'. This was when 'he found in the temple those selling cattle, sheep, and doves', and the other things which have been recorded, and he 'made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the temple'. And when he had conversed with Nicodemus, 'after these things he and his disciples came into the land of Judea, and there he remained with them and baptized'. For how long a

¹⁹¹ Cf. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 20.348 (portion of 3:20); *Homilies on Leviticus* 7.2 (3:20); *Homilies on Judges* 1.5 (3:20 paraphrased); *First Homily on Psalm* 36 [37] (3:20-21).

time shall we assume he stayed in Judea baptizing after the Passover? For it has not been clearly recorded.¹⁹²

This basic chronology suggests that, in Origen's mind, Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus was his last recorded activity prior to departing Jerusalem. The double citation of John 3:22 (lines 6-7, 12-13) emphasizes the perceived transitional function of the verse, and the minor differences between the passages indicate that Origen was in both instances probably relying on his own recollection of the events from memory.¹⁹³ It must be admitted, however, that Origen's understanding of the speaker in John 3 is by no means explicitly stated, but only *hinted at*, and so it behooves us to proceed with interpretive caution. Perhaps the strongest indicator that Origen took Jesus to be the speaker of the whole discourse is his use of the demonstrative pronoun *tauta* ('these things'). In line 5 Origen refers to what Nicodemus heard as *tauta*, and subsequently cites 3:22, which significantly begins with *meta tauta* ('after these things'). Taken in its most logical sense, Jesus' words to Nicodemus (*tauta*) function as the antecedent of *meta tauta* in Origen's citation of 3:22, suggesting that Jesus' words extended through 3:21 (all verses preceding 3:22). We already established Origen's belief that Jesus spoke 3:13-18, so we may now question whether or not, in light of his use of *tauta* above, he believed the remaining three verses (3:19-21) also belonged on Jesus' lips. The balance seems to be tipped in favor of interpreting the words as Jesus' own, but this conclusion rests on argumentation from silence—these specific verses are *not* cited! As a consequence, it is

¹⁹² *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 10.11-12; 13.253-254. Translated by Heine (1989), with minor modifications.

¹⁹³ E.g., Origen's alternation between 'Jesus' and the pronoun 'he' in lines 2 and 9 (visiting Jerusalem) and lines 6 and 12 (entering the land of Judea); referring to Nicodemus as a 'ruler of the Pharisees' in line 4 (John 3:1: 'ruler of the Jews').

best to designate the attribution to Jesus as somewhat likely.¹⁹⁴ Concerning 3:31-36, all of Origen's references contain too little information to determine his view on the identity of the speaker, and so his position is not determinable.¹⁹⁵

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258).

1. Background Material

Prior to his conversion in the year 246, Cyprian was a wealthy and highly educated teacher of rhetoric in Carthage, North Africa. Over time he had become fed up with the immorality and corruption that riches, fame and power produced in both the public and private spheres.¹⁹⁶ Having turned to faith in Christ, Cyprian gave away much of his fortune to the poor and embarked on an ascetic lifestyle.¹⁹⁷ Within just two years he was elected bishop of his hometown, spending the remainder of his life engaged in the study of Scripture and the pastoral duties of the African bishopric. His ten years in church office were both demanding and dangerous, as empire-wide persecutions against Christians had broken out under the emperors Decius (c. 250) and Valerian (c. 257). Prior to this time, though, Cyprian produced one of the earliest forms of scholarly exegesis in

¹⁹⁴ Especially given Origen's antiquity and prominence at the beginning of our survey, the ambiguity of these summary passages prevents us from making mention of 3:19-21 in Appendix 1.

¹⁹⁵ See *Homily 7 on Isaiah 2* (3:31-32 cited); *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 19.127-128 (3:31-32 paraphrased); *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 4.1.16 (portion of 3:34). Note: A few quotations from both passages in John 3 are also found in the Greek catena fragments, but these are of dubious authenticity and probably do not preserve any of the lost portions of Origen's Johannine commentary. The author of Fragment 49 (whoever he or she was) apparently interpreted 3:31-34 as the Baptist's words: 'John had said concerning himself and the other prophets: 'The one who is of the earth speaks of the earth'; but concerning Christ and his apostles: 'For the one whom God sent speaks his words''. On the fragments see Ronald E. Heine, 'Can the Catena Fragments of Origen's Commentary on John Be Trusted?' *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 (1986): 118-134.

¹⁹⁶ See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 341.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 67.

the Latin West: his three-volume treatise *To Quirinus*.¹⁹⁸ Later subtitled *Three Books of Testimonies*, this compilation of scriptural quotations (supplemented by Cyprian's own brief comments) was conceived as a practical resource for preachers, and its topically arranged format was originally intended to facilitate the memorization of Scripture.¹⁹⁹

In the second volume of *To Quirinus* (in which John 3 is cited), Cyprian covers a large number of topics dealing with Christological belief. His general custom is to introduce scriptural verses and passages sequentially, including at least the title of the book in which the quotation is found, sometimes also with the chapter number (e.g., 'in the Gospel according to Matthew', 'in the epistle of Peter to them of Pontus', 'also in the 117th Psalm'). Occasionally, Cyprian also reveals the identity of the speaker (e.g., 'in Deuteronomy God said to Moses', 'also in Jeremiah the Lord says', 'in the Gospel, the Lord after his resurrection says'). In the whole of the treatise John's Gospel figures prominently, being referenced no less than fifty times; the majority of these are quotations of the words of Jesus and from the Gospel prologue.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

With respect to the Johannine passages under consideration, Cyprian explicitly identifies the speaker in only one place. The following is taken from the final portion of section 20, titled 'That the Jews Would Fasten Christ to the Cross'. It contains our earliest extant reference to John 3:15 specifying the speaker.

Also in Zechariah: 'And they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced'. Also in the 87th Psalm: 'I have called unto you, O Lord, the whole day; I have

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 625.

¹⁹⁹ See *To Quirinus* 3 preface. The work, referred to in generic terms as a *testimonium*, did in fact enjoy a favorable posterity among later Christian authors, notably with Augustine of Hippo. See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 363.

stretched out my hands unto you’. Also in Numbers: ‘Not as a man is God suspended, nor as the son of man does he suffer threats’. Whence in the Gospel the Lord says: ‘*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in the Son may have eternal life*’.²⁰⁰

All through this section, verses from the Hebrew Scriptures are presented sequentially to highlight that this would happen to the Messiah. In lines 5-6 Cyprian at last arrives at his first New Testament quotation, prefacing John 3:14-15 with the words ‘in the Gospel the Lord says’ (Latin, *in evangelio dominus dicit*).²⁰¹ Other examples of ‘the Lord’ (as subject) paired with ‘the Gospel’ in *To Quirinus* invariably present Jesus as the speaker, so Cyprian here almost certainly has Jesus in mind.²⁰² Although Cyprian never cites the preceding verse (3:13), given its narrative context we can be relatively confident that he understood Jesus to be the speaker there, too. With respect to the verses that follow (3:16-21), in two other places Cyprian quotes 3:18b-19b, yet in both he neglects to identify who speaks.²⁰³ His position on 3:31-36 is likewise unknown, since his sole adapted quotation of 3:36 is introduced with the vague phrase ‘in the same place’.²⁰⁴

Novatian of Rome (c. 200-258).

²⁰⁰ *To Quirinus* 2.20. Translated by Wallis (1885), with minor modifications.

²⁰¹ Note: Cyprian has the singular reading ‘in the Son’ (Latin, *in filium*), as opposed to the reading ‘in him’ (Greek, *en autō*; Latin, *in ipso*) in John 3:15. This may indicate that, like other authors we have seen, Cyprian is citing from memory, or that he is adapting the verse so as to clarify the subject’s identity (Jesus).

²⁰² See e.g., 1.4; 1.6; 1.15; 1.23; 2.1; 2.26; 3.80.

²⁰³ Cf. *To Quirinus* 1.7; 3.31.

²⁰⁴ Cf. *To Quirinus* 2.27.

1. Background Material

Little of Novatian's life is known prior to his emergence into the spotlight of the mid-third century. His extant writings strongly reflect the influence of Stoic philosophy,²⁰⁵ so it is probable that Novatian had given adherence to the Stoic creed before conversion. He became a prominent intellectual leader in the city of Rome, and at some point was ordained a priest. In the aftermath of the Decian persecution, Novatian took a rigorist position against the 'lapsed', those Christians who, under threat of persecution (i.e., torture, death), had sacrificed to pagan deities or bribed their way into falsifying that they had done so.²⁰⁶ He held that a long and rigorous course of repentance was necessary before the lapsed could be welcomed back into the Christian fold. Such a position stood in opposition to the more lenient views held by Cornelius, then bishop of Rome. Novatian was forced into exile after failing to become the new Roman bishop in 251. He then formed a schismatic church of the 'pure' (*katharoi*) that continued to grow well after his death.²⁰⁷ Most of his writings perished because of his excommunication as a heretic.

Of Novatian's treatises that have come down to us, one contains a reference to John 3, *On the Trinity*. In the work, it is not polemics that Novatian is interested in, but discussing the truths found in the 'heavenly Scriptures'.²⁰⁸ His citation style in the work varies: while many scriptural quotations have very descriptive introductory formulae

²⁰⁵ See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 216.

²⁰⁶ Bart D. Ehrman (ed.), *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 340, 430.

²⁰⁷ Novatian's actions prompted Cyprian to write *On Unity*. In it he rejected the schismatic movement formed by Novatian and defended Cornelius' episcopal authority. Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 634.

²⁰⁸ See his discussion in *On the Trinity* 21.

(e.g., ‘John, in his description of the nativity of Christ, says’, ‘the prophet Hosea says in the person of the Father’, ‘Moses introduces God saying’), others are simply assimilated into Novatian’s own sentences, giving his work a ‘biblical feel’. When he does employ introductory formulae or provide details of context, he is careful to differentiate the words of biblical writers from the characters.²⁰⁹ Along with the book of Genesis, John’s Gospel is afforded an important place in the treatise, as quotations from these two books are found in nearly every chapter.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following passage comes from the thirteenth chapter of *On the Trinity*, composed in Latin sometime before the year 250. In his attempt to explain the human and divine natures of Jesus, Novatian looks directly to the Scriptures for insight.

Moreover, this Word ‘was in the beginning with God, and God was the Word’. Who then can doubt, when in the last clause it is said, ‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us’, that Christ, whose is the nativity, and because he was made flesh, is man; and because he is the Word of God, who can shrink from declaring without hesitation that he is God, especially when he considers the evangelical Scripture, that it has associated both of these substantial natures into one concord of the nativity of Christ? For he it is who ‘as a bridegroom goes forth from his bride-chamber; he rejoiced as a giant to run his way. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his return unto the height thereof’. Since, even to the highest, ‘*No one has ascended into heaven except the one who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*’. Repeating this very same thing he says, ‘Father, glorify me with that glory which I had with you before the world was’. And if this Word came down from heaven as a bridegroom to the

²⁰⁹ E.g., *On the Trinity* 13: ‘Finally, the apostle Thomas, instructed in all the proofs and conditions of Christ’s divinity, says in reply to Christ, ‘My Lord and my God!’ And if, besides, the apostle Paul says, ‘Whose are the fathers, and of whom Christ came according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for evermore’, writing in his epistles’.

flesh, that by the assumption of flesh he might ascend thither as the Son of Man, whence the Son of God had descended as the Word...²¹⁰

At the beginning of this excerpt, Novatian identifies key verses in the prologue of John's Gospel to establish that Jesus is both man ('made flesh') and God ('in the beginning'). He asserts that these two natures, according to Scripture's own testimony, are in harmony. After citing two verses from Psalm 19, Novatian incorporates the text of John 3:13 into his next sentence without specifying the speaker or providing contextual details. However, in lines 11-12 Novatian introduces another quotation from John's Gospel with the important connective phrase 'repeating this very same thing he says' (Latin, *repetens hoc ipsum dicit*). At the grammatical level, this act of 'repeating' implies a common subject, one who expresses the content of both Johannine verses. Given that the words quoted in John 17:5 are from the first person point-of-view and unambiguously Jesus' own, in all likelihood Novatian took the speaker of both verses to be one and the same. Supporting this conclusion is Novatian's continued emphasis in lines 13-15 on Jesus' ascent and descent from heaven (first referenced in 3:13), as well as the appearance of the titles 'Word', 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God'. Because Novatian never cites the verses that follow after 3:13, we cannot say more regarding his position on the speaker in 3:14-21. Although two citations from the second Johannine passage appear in *On the Trinity*, both do not provide enough detail to determine Novatian's understanding of the speaker.²¹¹

²¹⁰ *On the Trinity* 13. Translated by Wallis (1886), with minor modifications.

²¹¹ Cf. *On the Trinity* 14; 20.

Victorinus of Poetovio (c. 230-304).

1. Background Material

Of Victorinus' life only a few scattered details are known. Before becoming bishop of the flourishing Roman city of Poetovio (modern Ptuj, Slovenia), Victorinus appears to have been educated through a church tradition quite independent of the conventional classical studies.²¹² According to Jerome, Victorinus' Latin was not as strong as his Greek;²¹³ yet it is intriguing that he still chose to write his numerous biblical commentaries in Latin.²¹⁴ Of these, only his commentary on the book of Revelation is extant. Though Victorinus worked with a Latin copy of the New Testament in producing this commentary, at many points it appears that he corrected his Latin translation when checking the Greek text.²¹⁵

Victorinus' commentary, dating from around 260, is not only the earliest extant biblical commentary in Latin, but also the first one to be written on the book of Revelation. Like so many authors his citation style is variable: most of the time Victorinus introduces scriptural quotations with some detail (e.g., 'Mark, therefore, as an evangelist thus beginning', 'the patriarch Jacob says', 'the Lord Christ himself speaks in the Gospel'), though he occasionally incorporates verses into his own sentences or just identifies the book in which a quotation is found. When citing from the Gospels,

²¹² Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 637.

²¹³ Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 74.

²¹⁴ Biblical books that he produced commentaries on include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Matthew's Gospel and Revelation.

²¹⁵ See Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 639.

Victorinus is especially careful to distinguish between the voices of the characters and the Gospel-writers.²¹⁶

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following excerpt includes the sole reference to John 3 in the whole of Victorinus' Latin commentary. It also contains our earliest quotation of John 3:34b that indicates the speaker's identity. Here Victorinus is commenting on the text of Revelation 1:16a: 'There are seven stars in his right hand'.

We have said that the Holy Spirit with its sevenfold agency was given into his power by the Father, as Peter exclaimed to the Jews, 'Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the Spirit from the Father, he poured out this by which you have seen and heard'. Also John the Baptist had anticipated this by saying to his disciples, '*For God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father*', he says, '*loves the Son and has given all things into his hand*'. These are the seven stars. He mentions the seven churches by the explicit use of their own names to which he has sent letters.²¹⁷

As Victorinus elucidates the meaning of this verse from Revelation, two particular portions of Scripture come to his mind: Acts 2:33 and John 3:34b-35. In both Victorinus explicitly identifies the speakers and even their original listeners: the apostle Peter to 'the Jews' and the Baptist to 'his disciples' (Latin, *discipulis suis*). Victorinus unambiguously understands John 3:34b-35 in the context of the discussion initiated at 3:26—as Tertullian had with 3:35-36 some fifty years earlier—and so the verses that precede (3:31-34a) most probably were also interpreted as the words of John the Baptist (Latin, *Iohannes*

²¹⁶ E.g., *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.19: 'For the temple of God is his Son, as he himself said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'. And when the Jews said, 'It was built in forty-six years', the evangelist said, 'He was speaking of the temple of his body''.

²¹⁷ *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 1.16. Translated by Weinrich (2011), with minor modifications.

Baptista). Victorinus' view of the speakers in 3:36 and 3:13-21 cannot be determined with any degree of certainty, however, since they are never referenced.

Anonymous Writer (c. mid-third century).

1. Background Material

All of what is known about the anonymous writer of *A Treatise on Re-Baptism* derives from the work itself. Both the writer's commanding style and repeated emphasis on church authority in the treatise suggest that he held an ecclesiastical position of some distinction. In his opening statement he reports to his readers that he has become aware of the question 'among the brethren' regarding those 'baptized in heresy'. In conjunction with other details in the Latin work, this statement has led scholars to situate the treatise in the context of the baptismal controversy that arose in the North African church during the second half of the third century. Johannes Quasten endorses a composition date as early as 256, i.e., some time prior to the martyrdom of bishop Cyprian.²¹⁸ Quasten's dating is convincing, given the immediacy with which the writer addresses the issue of re-baptism, and from the fact that he strongly opposes Cyprian's own position.

Scripture is given particular prominence in *A Treatise on Re-Baptism*. The writer discloses in his introduction the manner by which he will reach a decision for what 'all the brethren' should do: he will 'collect into one mass whatever passages of the Holy Scriptures are pertinent to this subject', and from these Scriptures discern 'the most wholesome form and peaceful custom [to] be adopted in the church'.²¹⁹ Overall, the

²¹⁸ Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume II (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1964 [1953]), 368.

²¹⁹ *A Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1.

writer quotes from Scripture often and usually introduces direct quotations and paraphrases with some narrative context or other details that indicate who he believed spoke the words (e.g., ‘it was said by the Lord to Moses’, ‘as Peter relates in the Acts of the Apostles’, ‘when they were passing through Galilee, Jesus said to them’). He also has a particular preference for citing verses from the book of Acts and the four Gospels.²²⁰

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following excerpt, in which John 3:16 is explicitly cited, comes from the thirteenth section of *A Treatise on Re-Baptism*.

Because by this deed he profits nothing who has not the love of that God and Christ who is announced by the law and the prophets, and in the Gospel in this manner, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your thought; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. For on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets’—even as John the evangelist said, ‘And every one that loves is born of God, and knows God; for God is love’; even as God also says, ‘*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that every one that believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life*’—as it manifestly appears that he who has not in him this love, of loving us and of being loved by us, profits nothing by an empty confession and passion [martyrdom], except that thereby it appears and is plain that he is a heretic who believes on another God, or receives another Christ than him whom the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament manifestly declare.²²¹

Prior to referencing Jesus’ words in Matthew 22:37, the anonymous writer explains that martyrdom (‘this deed’ in line 1) is by no means profitable without the love of both ‘God and Christ’. This direct quotation is then coupled with the words said by John the evangelist in 1 John 4:7b, 8b, followed next by what ‘God also says’ (Latin, *et*

²²⁰ The book of Acts takes first place, with ten direct quotations. John’s Gospel is tied with Matthew’s for second place at nine quotations, with Luke’s at six and Mark’s at four.

²²¹ *A Treatise on Re-Baptism* 13. Translated by Wallis (1886), with minor modifications.

Deus ait) in John 3:16. The repetition of the phrase ‘even as’ (and the adverb ‘also’) highlights that the writer’s intention is to build scriptural support for his assertions concerning the vanity of martyrdom unaccompanied by love. The very words of ‘God’ in John 3:16 thus serve to settle the particular subject for the writer. But what exactly is meant by this identification? Two options present themselves. The first, that God in general terms is speaking *through* the scriptural verse (regardless of the historical situation in John 3), is plausible, though not entirely convincing given the strict accuracy in which quotations elsewhere in the work are introduced (this would be an exception). The second option, that the writer here has the God-man Jesus in mind, is an interpretation that requires supportive evidence. When we look at other places in the treatise where Jesus is quoted in John 3, in each of these the speaker is identified as ‘the Lord’,²²² which only points to the writer’s Christian faith. In searching for other points in which ‘God’ is portrayed as speaking, the whole matter seems to find clarification in the next section, here excerpted:

And even to this point the whole of that heretical baptism may be amended, after the intervention of some space of time, if a man should survive and amend his faith, as our God, in the Gospel according to Luke, spoke to his disciples, saying, ‘But I have another baptism to be baptized with’. Also according to Mark he said, with the same purpose, to the sons of Zebedee, ‘Are you able to drink of the cup which I drink of, or to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?’ Because he knew that those men had to be baptized not only with water, but also in their own blood; so that, as well baptized in this baptism only, they might attain the sound faith and the simple love of the laver, and, baptized in both ways, they might in like manner to the same extent attain the baptism of salvation and glory. For what was said by the Lord, ‘I have another baptism to be baptized

²²² ‘The Lord said in the Gospel’ (quoting John 3:3, 5); ‘the Lord has taught us most plainly...saying’ (quoting John 3:5); ‘as the Lord says’ (quoting John 3:8). See *A Treatise on Re-Baptism* 3, 15, 18.

with', signifies in this place not a second baptism, as if there were two baptisms, but demonstrates that there is moreover a baptism of another kind given to us, concurring to the same salvation.²²³

The considerable amount of narrative material and verses in succession here provided seems to confirm the second option. Jesus is identified by the writer as 'our God' (Latin, *deus noster*),²²⁴ even in the narrative context of the Synoptic Gospels: God 'spoke to his disciples' (Luke 12:50a), to the 'sons of Zebedee' (Mark 10:38), and finally God is equated with 'the Lord' in the second citation of Luke 12:50a (lines 11-12). Since the anonymous writer's position on John 3:16 has now been in our view firmly established, what may be said regarding the writer's understanding of the surrounding verses (3:13-15, 3:17-21)? As we have contended previously, given that 3:13-15 precede 3:16 a strong argument can be made that he also understood these verses to belong to Jesus. The writer's position on the verses that follow 3:16 can be argued either way, and so its best not to even speculate. The same holds true for 3:31-36, as the verses are never referenced in the treatise.

Pseudo-Tertullian (c. late-third century).

1. Background Material

'Pseudo-Tertullian' is the name given by scholars to the anonymous author of a catalogue of twenty-five heresies titled *Against All Heresies*. This anti-heretical work,

²²³ *A Treatise on Re-Baptism* 14.

²²⁴ Note: Some editors of this treatise include the alternative readings *deum nostrum* and *dominus noster*. The preferred reading appears to be *deus noster*, which Wallis used for his English translation. Cf. Migne's *Patrologia Latina* and Routh's *Reliquiae Sacrae*.

likely written before the close of the third century,²²⁵ was falsely attributed to Tertullian and appended to certain manuscripts of his *Prescription Against Heretics*. Almost nothing more is known with certainty about the circumstances of the work, but it is probably based on Hippolytus' lost treatise *Syntagma*, and may therefore echo the content of that work. Some scholars believe that Victorinus of Poetovio translated *Against All Heresies* from the Greek original into Latin.²²⁶ This assumption, however, is based solely on Jerome's attribution of a work with the same title to him.²²⁷

Against All Heresies does not contain many direct quotations of Scripture, but allusions are found in nearly every chapter. When quoting directly Pseudo-Tertullian usually includes minor details of context or some form of identification marker (e.g., 'for this was why Christ said', 'condemned by the Apocalypse of the Lord...in saying', 'it is said of Christ'). Interestingly, several scriptural quotations are included in the work solely to explain how various heretics used and abused them.²²⁸

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following passage contains the only direct citation from John's Gospel in *Against All Heresies*; it is excerpted from the opening of the second chapter. Pseudo-

²²⁵ Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315-403) and Philaster of Brescia (c. 300-397) both show dependence on Pseudo-Tertullian (or his source) in the order in which they discuss various sects. Cf. Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism: Texts, Translations and Commentary* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 92. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 32.

²²⁶ See further discussion in William Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 78-79.

²²⁷ See Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 74. Further doubt is cast on this translator identification because Jerome also made the claim that Victorinus was 'not equally familiar with Latin and Greek'.

²²⁸ E.g., *Against All Heresies* 6.2: 'After him emerged a disciple of his, one Marcion by name, a native of Pontus...He, starting from the fact that it is said, 'Every good tree beareth good fruit, but an evil evil', attempted to approve the heresy of Cerdo'. The verse here referenced is Matthew 7:17.

Tertullian is here in mid-discussion about the Ophites, a second-to-fourth century Gnostic Christian sect deemed heretical by the church, and he reports some of their own words.

To these are added those heretics likewise who are called Ophites, for they magnify the serpent to such a degree that they prefer him even to Christ himself. 'For it was he', they say, 'who gave us the origin of the knowledge of good and of evil. His power and majesty', they say, 'Moses perceiving, set up the brazen serpent; and whoever gazed upon him obtained health'. They say further, 'Christ himself in his Gospel imitates the serpent's sacred power, in saying, *'And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up'*'. They introduce him to bless their Eucharist.²²⁹

Pseudo-Tertullian here describes the three places in Scripture that the Ophites draw upon in order to justify their veneration of the serpent (Greek, *ophis*; Latin, *serpens*). The first derives from the Genesis account in the Garden of Eden, where the crafty serpent provided the first humans with an opportunity to gain 'knowledge of good and of evil'. The second comes from the account of Moses' serpent of brass as described in the book of Numbers: those that had been previously snakebitten had only to gaze at Moses' bronze serpent, and they would miraculously live. Finally, Pseudo-Tertullian explains, the Ophites make use of what was spoken by 'Christ himself in his Gospel' (Latin, *ipse Christus in evangelio suo*). Though Pseudo-Tertullian does not at all agree with this Ophitic interpretation of John 3:14, what is clear is that both he and the Ophites believed the verse belonged on the lips of Jesus. Had Pseudo-Tertullian regarded 3:14 as the Gospel-writer's words, we might have expected him to use their erroneous attribution of the quotation to Jesus for his own polemical advantage. While he is undoubtedly biased against them, nothing indicates that he misrepresented them on this attribution.

²²⁹ *Against All Heresies* 2.1. Translated by Thewall (1870), with minor modifications.

Having established this, we may then ask how Pseudo-Tertullian and the Ophites regarded the speaker of John 3:13, 15-21. An important clue is found at the beginning of the quotation of 3:14: Pseudo-Tertullian includes the Latin conjunction *et* ('and'), which translates the Greek *kai* just as it is found in the Gospel text. In all likelihood, then, Pseudo-Tertullian and the Ophites understood this 'and' as a connective, and they would have considered 3:13 to belong on the lips of Jesus as well. As we have argued in the case of other writers quoting certain portions of John 3, the narrative context and flow of the Gospel passage supports such a conclusion.²³⁰ The same cannot be said for 3:15-21 (as well as 3:31-36), since the verses are never cited and no strong argument can be made to determine the speaker's identity. Nevertheless, the attribution of 3:13-14 to Jesus by this otherwise lost Gnostic group is significant, in that they actually made Jesus' testimony one of their cardinal beliefs.

Fourth Century

Eustathius of Antioch (d. 337).

1. Background Material

Little is known of Eustathius' early life and career. Later patristic sources say that he was born in Pamphylia and known as a 'confessor'—one who had bravely confessed faith in Jesus Christ during persecution, yet was not martyred as a result.²³¹ From Eustathius' own extant writings it is obvious that he received a first-class education and

²³⁰ The alternative—that Jesus stops speaking after 3:12 only to come in again unannounced at 3:14—sounds far less convincing.

²³¹ See Kelley M. Spoerl, 'Two Early Nicenes: Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra', in Udoh (ed.), *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of E. P. Sanders*, 122.

was quite familiar with rhetorical handbooks and the writings of Plato.²³² As a confessor, Eustathius would have been held in high esteem amongst fellow Christians. At some point he rose to the office of bishop of Beroea (modern-day Aleppo in Syria), during which the controversy over Arianism erupted. When the bishop of Antioch died, Eustathius was then translated to that provincial city. He was a major anti-Arian figure at the Council of Nicea in 325, but in the years that followed he was forced to live in exile by order of the emperor Constantine.

Most of Eustathius' writings are lost, but two of his polemical treatises contain citations of John 3. The earliest of these, *On the Medium Against Origen*, was composed in the decade following the end of the Great Persecution in 312, while Eustathius was still bishop of Beroea.²³³ He had been petitioned by a fellow preacher, Eutropius by name, to give his opinion of a controversial biblical story: King Saul's visit to the Witch of Endor.²³⁴ Eutropius was evidently not 'satisfied' with what Origen had published on this, and therefore Eustathius sought to counter his interpretations.²³⁵ Throughout the treatise he levels severe criticisms against the Alexandrian for not interpreting the biblical narrative in its proper context (i.e., doing bad exegesis) and preferring the allegorical meaning to the literal. Eustathius often quotes Scripture with introductory phrases and details of context (e.g., 'the psalmist says', 'in Leviticus Moses pronounced', 'our Lord

²³² Cf. Eustathius, *On the Medium Against Origen* 27.2; 28.1.

²³³ Joseph W. Trigg, 'Eustathius of Antioch's Attack on Origen: What Is at Issue in an Ancient Controversy?' *The Journal of Religion* 75 (1995), 219.

²³⁴ See 1 Samuel 28.

²³⁵ Of course, Eustathius was arguing with a posthumous Origen; by the time of his writing Origen had been dead for over half a century. See Rowan A. Greer and Margaret M. Mitchell, *The 'Belly-Myther' of Endor: Interpretations of 1 Kingdoms 28 in the Early Church* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 16. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), xciv.

Jesus Christ said quite explicitly'), yet he keeps the exposition of 1 Samuel 28 in sharp focus.

Eustathius next cited John 3 in a treatise known as *Against the Ariomaniacs*.²³⁶ It was composed following Eustathius' participation at Nicea, possibly during the time of his exile in the late-320s. The opponents in the work are (of course) the Ariomaniacs, a 'maniacal' group of Christians that promoted the teaching of Arius,²³⁷ who denied the eternality of the Son and rejected the notion that he possessed the same being (*ousia*) with God the Father. In challenging this subordinationist view, Eustathius looked to Scripture in support of his argumentation, at times providing information on the speakers (e.g., 'Moses says in Leviticus', 'Christ said to the thief', 'Paul indicates').

2. Text(s) and Analysis

In this first excerpt from *On the Medium Against Origen*, Eustathius discusses the belief that the soul of Jesus descended to ransom souls in Hades while simultaneously ascending to heaven with the repentant thief who had been crucified alongside him.

At the same time he was descending to the underground parts of chaos, and at the same time restoring again to the most ancient pasture of paradise one who slipped in by the power of an unconquerable kingdom. How fitting that before these things the child of God testified, saying in advance, '*And no one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*'. Therefore, if indeed he asserts that the one who originated from the human race, that he alone of all people ascended into heaven and from there descended here again, and a second time left to spring up in heaven, it has confirmed that by excellence of soul the man eminently accomplished these

²³⁶ Until recently this fragmentary work had been incorrectly ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-395).

²³⁷ Eustathius' use of the term 'Ariomaniac' may ante-date the standard designation 'Arian'; it appears to be a pun comparing their verbal warfare to Ares, the Greek god of war. See Sophie H. Cartwright, *The Theological Anthropology of Eustathius of Antioch* (PhD dissertation. University of Edinburgh, 2012), 113-114.

things. For the holy soul of Christ, living together with God the Word, travels everywhere collectively. It went into the very highest heaven, into which no other man has ascended. But these things have been fastened upon the same human appearance which God the Word bears. Of the fact that the child of God is present everywhere at once, John stands not least as a witness. Hearing Christ himself with his own ears, with a cry he became [a witness] with his own words: ‘No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son who is in the Father’s bosom—he has described him’.²³⁸

Eustathius quotes two verses from John’s Gospel to corroborate his teaching on Jesus’ omnipresence: John 3:13 and 1:18. Eustathius attributes the words of 3:13 to ‘the child of God’ (Greek, *ho tou theou pais*). Greer and Mitchell chose to render *pais* as ‘Son’, and they are not imprecise in doing so, for *pais* really is a ‘kindred term’ for Son that reflects Eustathius’ distinctive usage.²³⁹ In lines 13-14, Eustathius describes this *pais* as ‘present everywhere at once’; other occurrences of this term in *On the Medium Against Origen* indicate that Jesus is clearly the understood divine referent.²⁴⁰ Also supporting this identification is the introductory phrase ‘saying in advance’ (Greek, *prolegōn*) in line 4, which implies that the words were spoken prior to Jesus’ crucifixion and ascension. Eustathius also appears to credit the Gospel-writer (‘John’) with ‘hearing’ the content of 3:13 from Jesus’ own lips (cf. lines 14-15). His comment points to the eyewitness testimony of John’s Gospel, and likely reveals that Eustathius believed he was present during Nicodemus’ nocturnal visit.²⁴¹ It may be further noted that his citation of 3:13

²³⁸ *On the Medium Against Origen* 18.2-5. Translated by Bilby (2012), with minor modifications.

²³⁹ Kelley M. Spoerl, ‘Two Early Nicenes: Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra’, in Udoh (ed.), *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of E. P. Sanders*, 126.

²⁴⁰ Cf. *On the Medium Against Origen* 23.6, 30.6; *Against the Ariomaniacs* fragment 40 (analyzed below).

²⁴¹ Eustathius’ identification of John as a ‘witness’ (Greek, *martus*) is significant, in that it denotes one who testifies to information about a person or an event ‘concerning which the speaker has direct knowledge’.

includes the connective conjunction *kai* ('and') at the beginning of the verse; without 3:12, Eustathius' citation seems awkwardly placed, suggesting he may have had a copy of the Gospel with him as he wrote.

Additional citations of this verse are found in *Against the Ariomaniacs*, which Eustathius composed between the years 325-330. In the passage below he again addresses Jesus' omnipresence against the Ariomaniacs.

From the same words of the Savior, it is possible to show the opponents babbling. For he says, 'No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven'. Consequently, not only did the unattainable Word of God 'fasten himself to heaven, and was upon earth', but also acting as God himself he allotted such great increase of authority to man who had contained him that, through the soul he at once both traverses the entire earth and dwells in the heavenly bodies. For we say that the Son of Man, rather than the Son of God, has passed into heaven and came from heaven itself, and being in heaven again, continues unshakably. He led the ascending occupations of the soul. Or let the pretenders say that Christ took up a soulless body. When he was on the earth opposite Nicodemus, addressing him, he expressly confesses that the Son of Man was going about and dwelling in heaven.²⁴²

At the beginning of this excerpt Eustathius' explicitly refers to John 3:13 as 'the words of the Savior' (Greek, *tōn tou sōtēros logōn*). After explaining how Jesus' soul could traverse the whole earth and dwell in heaven at the same time, Eustathius provides further context for his citation of 3:13.²⁴³ In lines 11-13 he mentions that Jesus addressed

Cf. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Second Edition. Volume 1. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 418-419.

²⁴² *Against the Ariomaniacs* fragment 20. Translated by Cartwright (2012), with minor modifications.

²⁴³ Mogens Müller, *The Expression 'Son of Man' and the Development of Christology: A History of Interpretation* (London: Equinox, 2008), 64: '[Eustathius] interprets John 3:13 as a *pars pro toto*-saying, claiming that when Christ witnesses that he was born human and is the only one who has ascended to

Nicodemus while he was ‘opposite’ him. Eustathius here uses the Greek adverb *antikrus* as a preposition, which implies a sense of being ‘face to face with’.²⁴⁴ Such references make it crystal clear that Eustathius viewed Jesus as speaker. This is corroborated by his subsequent citations of this verse in this next passage from *Against the Ariomaniacs*.

When Paul says ‘into a third heaven’ he reveals that there is also another one. For he says this not with an article, but without an article. But the Lord, proclaiming it with the addition of the article, says, ‘*No one has ascended into ‘the’ heaven*’. The heaven that is higher than all, which is attached to the greater glory, into which the divine nature, shining forth most, is seen more distinctly by those who have been deemed worthy to proceed there. So, then *no one has ascended* into this [heaven], in which the child himself will sit with the Father. So therefore, the Lord also says, ‘*No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven*’...No one has ever arrived at this farthest point, except only the child of God, who traverses everything at once by soul and Spirit. Furthermore, conversing with Nicodemus, he said that the Son of Man was in heaven...For on one hand whenever he talks about the soul’s ascending occupations, he pronounces that it did these things in its own right, saying, ‘*No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*’. On the other, when he declares the migration of the body suspended in mid-air, having said it, he brings on directly, ‘*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, in order that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life*’.²⁴⁵

Eustathius begins by drawing his readers’ attention to a grammatical issue. Although the apostle Paul referred to entering ‘a third heaven’ in 2 Corinthians 12:2, this was not the ‘highest heaven’ since it lacked the definite article (*arthrou*). Eustathius

heaven and descended from there again, and always abides in heaven, then this is said with regard to the soul’.

²⁴⁴ Cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Volume 3. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 344.

²⁴⁵ *Against the Ariomaniacs* fragment 40.

contrasts this with what was said by ‘the Lord’ (Greek, *ho kurios*) in John 3:13, which does include the article (‘the heaven’) and is cited twice more in lines 8-9 and 13-15. Confirming our earlier attribution of 3:13 to Jesus, Eustathius again refers to him as the child of God in lines 7 and 10. He also relates that John 3:13 was originally spoken while ‘conversing with Nicodemus’ (Greek, *tō Nikodēmō prosomilōn*). At the end of the excerpt, Eustathius makes his first citation of 3:14-15, including the connective *kai* (‘and’) at the beginning of 3:14. The overall flow of Eustathius’ thought suggests that he has Jesus in mind as speaker, and this is corroborated in our final excerpt from *Against the Ariomaniacs*. Below, he explicitly identifies the speaker of John 3:14 as ‘the Savior’ (Greek, *ho sōtēr*).

The Savior did not in every way associate himself with the wild snake when he said, ‘Even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up’, but he likened the causes of salvation to [his] being stretched out on the cross.²⁴⁶

Eustathius here clarifies the meaning of Jesus’ comparison of himself with the ‘wild snake’ (Greek, *herpēstikō thēriō*). What Jesus really meant, Eustathius explains, is that the salvific consequences of Moses’ serpent and the crucifixion were similar. In Numbers 21 the people were saved by looking at the bronze serpent, and in the Gospel it is belief in the Son of Man that produces eternal life. Because Eustathius earlier cited 3:14 together with 3:15, we can be confident that he believed Jesus spoke these words, too.

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 298-373).

²⁴⁶ *Against the Ariomaniacs* fragment 41. Draft translation.

1. Background Material

Not much of Athanasius' life prior to the convening of the Council of Nicea is known. From what can be gleaned from his own writings and later sources, it appears that he grew up in a relatively small town among the lower classes in Egypt. His complexion was dark like that of the Copts, and besides Greek he spoke Coptic.²⁴⁷ Through the course of his life he maintained close contact with monks residing in the Egyptian desert, visiting and even hiding among them on a number of occasions. This was especially the case when bishop Alexander of Alexandria summoned him on his deathbed. Despite the fact that he was the elderly bishop's personal secretary during the Council and also a church deacon, Athanasius was surprisingly reluctant to succeed Alexander as bishop, to the point of fleeing in the opposite direction. Ultimately, though, he gave his consent, and was ordained the new bishop in April of the year 328. In this senior position he would become the most vocal opponent of Arianism, defending in person and in writing the 'orthodox' theological understanding of the triune God (following the newly-written Nicene Creed).²⁴⁸ Athanasius believed that the Scriptures, which he so often cited in his writings, were integrated into the spiritual reality of the Christian tradition; reportedly, he had both Testaments memorized by heart.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984), 173.

²⁴⁸ Athanasius' anti-Arian efforts were oftentimes opposed by political leaders under the influence of prominent Arians, who would (falsely) charge him of crimes against the faith and the state. In the course of his bishopric Athanasius was forced into exile five times; the first was by order of the emperor Constantine in 335. Within his lifetime he earned the epithet 'Athanasius against the world'. Cf. John J. Brogan, 'Athanasius', in McKim (ed.), *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, 129.

²⁴⁹ Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 709.

Several quotations from John 3 appear in Athanasius' literary corpus. The earliest is found in one of his *Festal Letters*, written in the winter of 329-330 for the celebration of Easter later that year. Surviving only fragmentarily in Coptic translation, *Festal Letter* 24 (2) stresses the themes of withdrawal from the world and a renewal of true faith.²⁵⁰ Scripture is most often alluded to or incorporated into the bishop's own sentences, but at a few points in the brief letter he identifies the biblical speaker (e.g., 'according to the word of the proverbist', 'the Savior himself says'). Athanasius' next work referencing John 3 is a polemical treatise titled *Against the Arians*. Its composition began as early as the year 339 and it still survives in the Greek original. In the treatise Athanasius reviews the core biblical proofs that Arius and his followers *claimed* were in support of their doctrines. Of the Gospels, John's naturally lends itself to being referred to very often, especially the Christological statements in the prologue.²⁵¹ In its present condition, *Against the Arians* is divided into four 'discourses', though some scholars have questioned whether the fourth was really written by Athanasius.²⁵² Because several quotations from John 3 appear in the treatise, it will be interesting to see whether or not opinions on the speakers differ amongst the discourses. Athanasius' overall manner of scriptural citation in *Against the Arians* is mixed; quotations are frequently introduced

²⁵⁰ See David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford Early Christian Studies. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 157, 320.

²⁵¹ Cathleen S. Walbrodt calculates a total of 282 quotations from John's Gospel in *Against the Arians*, accounting for approximately 27% of all scriptural citations. See her *Athanasius' Contra Arianos IV: A Reconsideration* (Unpublished MA thesis. Durham University, 1993), 18-22.

²⁵² Reasons include lack of manuscript support and attestation in quotations from later Church Fathers, as well as the fact that the discourse deals more with the heresy of the Marcellians. More recently, however, Cathleen S. Walbrodt's thorough analysis of its style and scriptural exegesis has persuasively shown that nothing within the fourth discourse *prevents* Athanasian authorship; she contends that it was a separate work by him, perhaps left incomplete but redacted posthumously by his students. See her *Athanasius' Contra Arianos IV: A Reconsideration* (Unpublished MA thesis. Durham University, 1993), 1-12, 108-114; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume III (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1966 [1960]), 27-28.

with information on the speakers or biblical books in which they are found (e.g., ‘the divine apostle when he writes to the Corinthians’, ‘Noah says’, ‘the former Jews also, denying the Word, and saying’), though allusions lacking introductory formulae occasionally appear. For the most part, he also takes care to properly distinguish between the words of biblical authors and characters.²⁵³

Athanasius’ final quotation from John 3 is found in his encyclical letter *To the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*. Written around 356, in this letter the Scriptures take a central role in his urging of the African bishops to uphold the decisions of Nicea and to reject any contrary doctrines. Many biblical allusions appear in Athanasius’ letter without formal introductory markers, but some direct quotations are provided with details of context (e.g., ‘our Lord himself said’, ‘it is written in the Proverbs’, ‘the Father says’).

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The first of Athanasius’ works to be analyzed is *Festal Letter 24 (2)*, which was composed fairly early in his episcopate. In the excerpt provided below, Athanasius cites a portion of John 3:18 in the midst of his comments on the topic of faith.

Lack of faith is a great evil, my beloved, just as faith is the mother of all the virtues. Both lack of faith and faith give birth, but lack of faith gives birth to evil and its forms while faith gives birth to hope and every virtue. Therefore, the unbeliever is the first to receive the punishment of the judgment from the place where the Lord says, ‘*Whoever believes in me will not be judged, but whoever does not believe has already been judged*’. The ruler of the synagogue, as it is written in the Gospels, when he approached the Savior, did not find the blessing

²⁵³ E.g., *Against the Arians* 3.37: ‘Thus John was aware that Christ, when asking, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ was not ignorant, for he says, ‘And this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do’.’

for his daughter to have life again except through the entreaty and faith toward God.²⁵⁴

Warning his readers about the dangers of having little faith, Athanasius turns to Scripture to explain how God's judgment for unbelievers takes place. In his use of John 3:18a-b as a proof-text, Athanasius attributes this authoritative saying to the 'Lord' (Coptic, *joeis*). Elsewhere in the *Festal Letter*, 'Lord' is paired with 'Jesus Christ' three times.²⁵⁵ The title also appears on its own in three other places, each indicating that Jesus is the understood referent.²⁵⁶ One of these, found just two paragraphs after our excerpted passage, proves critical for determining Athanasius' understanding of the speaker's identity, for he attributes Jesus' statement in John 7:37-38 to the 'Lord' as well.²⁵⁷ The substitution of 'in me' (Coptic, *eroi*) in place of 'in him' is likewise significant.²⁵⁸ In Athanasius' view, only the Savior himself could have the power to claim 'whoever believes *in me* will not be judged'. Another indication that Athanasius has Jesus in mind is the ease with which he transitions from citing John 3:18 to alluding to Mark 5:22-43, where Jesus (identified by Athanasius as 'the Savior') is called on to raise Jairus'

²⁵⁴ *Festal Letter* 24 (2). Translated by Brakke (1995).

²⁵⁵ 'Lord Jesus Christ' occurs twice in the paragraph that follows this excerpt and once at the letter's closing.

²⁵⁶ One is found in his final statement: 'I pray that you might be saved in the Lord'. Another occurs earlier: '...the Lord is with us until the completion of this age', an obvious reference to Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20. While Jesus is also given other titles in the *Festal Letter* (e.g., Savior, true lamb, only-begotten), 'Lord' is certainly the most prevalent. Athanasius does not seem to use the title for God in general terms.

²⁵⁷ It reads: 'And formerly the Lord attracted them through Moses with a pillar of fire and a cloud, but now he calls us through himself, saying, 'Let whoever is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture said, streams of living water will pour forth from that person, welling up to eternal life'. Therefore, let all people zealously and eagerly prepare to go to the festival; let them hear the Savior inviting them'. Note: as in our main excerpt above, Athanasius here cites the 'Lord' and then mentions 'the Savior'.

²⁵⁸ Like others, Athanasius is probably quoting without the Gospel text immediately before him.

daughter back to life (lines 6-9).²⁵⁹ For all of these reasons, we can express relative confidence in asserting that the introductory phrase ‘the Lord says’ here carries the very same meaning as ‘Jesus says’.

The next excerpted passage comes from the second discourse of *Against the Arians*, written about a decade later. In this section of the treatise, Athanasius builds up scriptural support for the reality of Jesus’ human incarnation and salvific resurrection.

This the apostle, learning from him, was saying, ‘Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might bring to nothing him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage’. And: ‘Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead’. And again: ‘For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit’. And also John says, ‘For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him’. And again the Savior was saying of himself, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see might see, and those who see might become blind’.²⁶⁰

In this series of New Testament verses, Athanasius quotes from Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, Romans and twice from John’s Gospel. Interestingly, he appears to attribute the consecutive Gospel quotations to two different speakers: John 3:17 is prefaced with ‘John says’ (Greek, *ho Iōannēs phēsin*) and John 9:39 with ‘the Savior was saying’ (Greek, *ho sōtēr elegen*). Athanasius uses the name ‘John’ elsewhere in the second

²⁵⁹ Mark 5:35-36: ‘While he was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house who said, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’ As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he said to the ruler of the synagogue, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe’.

²⁶⁰ *Against the Arians* 2.55. Translated by Newman and Robertson (1892), with minor modifications.

discourse to designate the Gospel-writer (10 times), the writer of 1 John or Revelation (4 times), and the Baptist (once).²⁶¹ At other points in the treatise Athanasius also identifies verses as being spoken ‘in the Gospel according to John’ (Greek, *en tō kata Iōannēn euangeliō*).²⁶² Could ‘John says’ here be another way of simply saying ‘John’s Gospel says’, or has Athanasius here provided us with our very first instance of an author interpreting the speaker of John 3:17 to be the Gospel-writer, and not Jesus? Two issues must first be addressed in order to formulate an answer.

The first relates to the probability of Athanasius’ intent. It appears that an individual *person* is implied by the overall flow of the biblical quotations, for ‘the apostle’ speaks the verse from Hebrews (and very likely the two subsequent Pauline verses), while ‘the Savior’ speaks the verse from John’s Gospel at the end of the excerpt.²⁶³ Challenging this position, however, is the second issue: manuscript reliability. A lack of uniformity in the manuscript tradition of *Against the Arians* exists concerning the key phrase ‘John says’ (Greek, *ho Iōannēs phēsin*). In the excerpt provided above, we followed Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca*, which provides the reading *ho Iōannēs phēsin* in the main text. However, Migne also includes in a critical footnote the fact that both Codex Goblerianus and the manuscript collations of Felckmann omit the verb *phēsin*.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Gospel-writer: *Against the Arians* 2.1; 2.12; 2.32; 2.39; 2.44 (twice); 2.47; 2.58; 2.59; 2.81. Writer of 1 John or Revelation: *Against the Arians* 2.23; 2.54; 2.69; 2.80. The Baptist: *Against the Arians* 2.54.

²⁶² See e.g., *Against the Arians* 1.46; 2.44; 3.17; 4.16.

²⁶³ See the other various occurrences of ‘John’ in *Against the Arians* 1.19; 1.24; 1.43; 1.50; 1.60; 2.9; 2.19; 3.17; 3.21; 3.24; 3.30; 3.33; 3.34; 3.37; 3.59. ‘John’ is also given a writing role as well.

²⁶⁴ Since the Greek minuscule Codex Goblerianus has been digitized online by the British Library (labeled Harley MS 5579), I was able to confirm the omission on the verso of folio 147. This manuscript also contains a variant for the phrase ‘the Savior was saying’ (Greek, *ho sōtēr elegen*); it instead reads ‘the Savior says’ (Greek, *ho sōtēr phēsin*). Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (26), 263-264. The codex can be viewed at: <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/>

This is no minor variant! Adding to the uncertainty of Athanasius' original meaning is Migne's parallel Latin translation, which reads 'John does write' (Latin, *Ioannes vero scribit*). What precise role did John have here? Fortunately, this is not Athanasius' only citation of John 3:17, and so it behooves us to deliberate over this issue after the remaining quotations from John 3 have been fully analyzed. We therefore turn to our next passage, found in the fourth discourse of *Against the Arians*.²⁶⁵ At this point in the treatise, Athanasius has been attacking the heretical positions of Sabellius and Arius.²⁶⁶ In defense of Trinitarian orthodoxy, Athanasius looks directly to the testimony of Scripture, chiefly John's Gospel.

'For if', he says, 'I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but now they shall have no excuse', he says, 'having heard my words, through which those who observe them shall reap salvation'. Perhaps they [heretics] will have so little shame as to say that this utterance belongs not to the Son but to the Word; but from what preceded it appeared plainly that the speaker was the Son. For the one who here says, 'I came not to judge the world but to save', is shown to be none other than the only-begotten Son of God. For before John himself says, '*For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for their deeds were evil*'. If the one who says, 'For I did not come in order to judge the world, but that I might save it', is the same one who says, 'Whoever sees me, sees him that sent me', and if the one coming to save the world, and not judge it, is the only-begotten Son of God, it is plain that it is the same Son who says, 'Whoever sees

²⁶⁵ It is to be remembered that the authenticity of the fourth discourse is still a matter of scholarly debate.

²⁶⁶ They were allegedly either equating Jesus with the Father or stripping him of his divinity entirely.

me, sees him that sent me'. For also the one who says, 'Whoever believes in me', and, 'If any one hears my words, I do not judge him', is the Son himself, concerning these things does he not say, *'Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God?'* And again, *'And this is the condemnation'*, of him who does not believe in the Son, *'that light has come into the world'*, and they did not believe in him, that is, in the Son. For he himself must be the light that lights every man coming into the world. And as long as he was upon earth according to the incarnation, he was light in the world, as he said himself, 'While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light', for 'I have come', he says, 'as a light into the world'.²⁶⁷

At the beginning of this excerpt Athanasius quotes a portion of Jesus' statement in John 15:22 and offers a brief paraphrase of it in his own words. He then cites John 12:47b in line 7, identifying the speaker as the 'Son'. He goes on to explain that this same Son is shown to be God's only-begotten through a prior saying made by 'John himself' (Greek, *ho autos Iōannēs*). An extensive quotation of John 3:16-19 is then provided in lines 5-12. Elsewhere in the fourth discourse, Athanasius uses the name 'John' to designate the Gospel-writer (9 times) and the writer of 1 John or Revelation (twice).²⁶⁸ In one place John the Baptist is referred to, but the 'Baptist' epithet is affixed.²⁶⁹ That Athanasius explicitly attributes John 12:47 to Jesus—and quotes him twice more at the end of this excerpt (12:36a, 12:46a)—indicates that the verses from John 3 probably belong to an individual as well (i.e., not to the title of the Gospel). Because the 'John' most frequently referenced in this discourse is the Gospel-writer, in terms of probability he appears to be

²⁶⁷ *Against the Arians* 4.17-18.

²⁶⁸ Gospel-writer: *Against the Arians* 4.1; 4.4; 4.16; 4.19; 4.26; 4.29; 4.31; 4.32; 4.33 (the title 'evangelist' is frequently used as well). Writer of 1 John or Revelation: *Against the Arians* 4.26; 4.28.

²⁶⁹ See *Against the Arians* 4.19.

the best candidate for being regarded as the speaker of these verses.²⁷⁰ After reexamining the fourth discourse of *Against the Arians*, however, there does exist one challenge to Athanasius' identification of the speaker as 'John himself'. In the paragraph that immediately precedes the excerpted passage above, Athanasius writes the following:

For what can be greater or more perfect than 'one', and 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me', and 'He that has seen me, has seen the Father?' For these utterances also belong to the Son. And hence John himself says, 'Whoever has seen me, has seen him that sent me', and, 'Whoever receives me, receives him who sent me', and, 'I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness', and, 'And, if any one hears my words and does not observe, I do not judge him; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. The word which he shall hear, the same shall judge him in the last day, because I go unto the Father'.²⁷¹

It is virtually certain that Athanasius considered all these quotations from John's Gospel to be Jesus' own words, since first-person singular pronouns (e.g., 'I' and 'me') are repeatedly employed in the verses. And yet in line 3 Athanasius introduces Jesus' declaration in John 13:20b with the words 'John himself says' (Greek, *phēsi ho autos Iōannēs*). While this attribution may be a careless error on his part or the result of manuscript corruption, it at the very least calls into question the certainty of Athanasius' identification of 'John himself' as the speaker of John 3:16-19 in the prior excerpt. It could even be argued, given the apparent self-contradiction, that Athanasius meant 'John himself says' as another way of simply stating 'John himself writes'. *Phēsin* must not

²⁷⁰ Note: Athanasius proceeds in lines 12-15 to cite five of Jesus' statements about himself, and then prefaces his second citation of John 3:18-19a with the ambiguous phrase 'concerning these things does he not say' (Greek, *peri ou tauta phēsin*). Given the series of Jesus' statements surrounding this citation of 3:18-19a, it is unclear whether or not Athanasius still has 'John' in mind as the speaker here (the verb *phēsin* on its own is not gender-specific).

²⁷¹ *Against the Arians* 4.17.

always mean ‘say’ in terms of speaking (though this is the most natural use of it), but could also reflect a sense of ‘tell’, ‘claim’, ‘report’, ‘affirm’, ‘imply’, ‘assert’, or ‘make known’.²⁷² If such alternatives were intended by Athanasius, the Gospel-writer’s role in John 3 might better be described not as *speaker* but as *recorder*: the words are indeed in his Gospel, so to a degree John does share and ‘speak’ its content, but he is not the original source. Unfortunately, we cannot summon Athanasius to determine his actual intent, so we must consider all the evidence available to us. Recall that we have already observed a discrepancy with respect to the speaker of John 3:18 in *Festal Letter 24 (2)*, as he there attributed the verse to Jesus (i.e., ‘the Lord’). Keeping this in mind, we now transition to the last of Athanasius’ quotations of John 3 in *Against the Arians*. The following excerpt is also found within his fourth discourse, just a few sections later. It contains Athanasius’ sole reference to the second Johannine passage under consideration.

Yet it is written to place the sight of the Father, not in the Word but in the Son, and to attribute the saving of the world, not to the Word, but to the only-begotten Son. For, it says, Jesus said, ‘Have I been so long while with you, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He that has seen me, has seen the Father’. Nor is it written that the Word knows the Father, but the Son; and not that the Word sees the Father, but the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father. And what more does the Word contribute to our salvation than the Son, if, as they hold, the Son is ‘one’, and the Word another? For the command is that we should believe, not in the Word, but in the Son. For John says, ‘*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life*’. And holy

²⁷² Cf. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (New York: Harper, 1883), 1665; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Second Edition. Volume 1. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 397, 404; Bernard A. Taylor, *Analytical Lexicon to the Septuagint: Expanded Edition* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 564.

baptism, in which the substance of the whole faith is lodged, is administered not in the Word, but in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁷³

Athanasius here explains that it is not the Word that saves (as some mistakenly think), but the only-begotten Son who makes provision for the salvation of the world. He asserts that Scripture explicitly instructs people to believe ‘in the Son’ (Greek, *en to huiō*). Athanasius alludes to several verses from John’s Gospel in this excerpt, and in line 9 points to what ‘John says’ (Greek, *phēsi ho Iōannēs*) in support of his reasoning. A portion of John 3:36 is then cited. As we have previously stated, the name ‘John’ applies to more than one individual in *Against the Arians*. While the Gospel-writer is the most often intended referent, ‘John’ can also refer to the Baptist (Greek, *Iōannēs ho Baptistēs*).²⁷⁴ The mention of ‘holy baptism’ (Greek, *hagion baptisma*) immediately following this verse citation might be evidence of Athanasius’ underlying thought process, segueing, as it were, from the words of the Baptist to baptism’s significance. On the other hand, Athanasius may well have had the Gospel-writer of the same name in mind. It must be conceded, therefore, that the attribution of 3:36 to ‘John’ is simply not specific enough to establish Athanasius’ position one way or the other.²⁷⁵

Our final quotation from John 3 is found in Athanasius’ letter *To the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, written about seventeen years after *Against the Arians*. The excerpt below comprises the encyclical letter’s opening lines.

²⁷³ *Against the Arians* 4.20-21.

²⁷⁴ See e.g., *Against the Arians* 3.33. If this is Athanasius’ intention, this would be the first time the Baptist is given a speaking role in this treatise, though his words are cited elsewhere: *Homily on the Passion and Cross of the Lord* 222; *Dialogues on the Holy Trinity* 1244 (disputed authenticity).

²⁷⁵ At three other places Athanasius cites John 3:35, yet in each no speaker is identified. See *Against the Arians* 3.26; 3.35; *On Luke 10:22 (Matthew 11:27)* 2.

All things whatsoever our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as Luke wrote, ‘has both done and taught’, he achieved after having appeared for our salvation. For he came, as John says, ‘*not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him*’. And among the rest we have especially to admire this instance of his goodness, that he was not silent concerning those who should fight against us, but plainly told us beforehand that, when those things should come to pass, we might at once be found with minds established by his teaching.²⁷⁶

That Athanasius included this partial citation of John 3:17 so early in his letter testifies to the authority that he gave to the content of these words. Jesus was not only his Savior, but the whole world’s. Athanasius here introduces 3:17b with the words ‘as John says’ (Greek, *hōs ho Iōannēs phēsin*). In other parts of the letter Athanasius regards ‘John’ as both the Gospel-writer and author of 1 John, so it appears that this is who he is thinking of.²⁷⁷ Athanasius also seems to consider John’s role not to be one of writing, but of speaking, for just before this he alludes to Acts 1:1c with the words ‘as Luke wrote’ (Greek, *hōs egrapsen ho Loukas*). It must be acknowledged, however, that this is according to the main text of Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca*. In a footnote Migne again points out a variant reading in Codex Goblerianus and the manuscript collations of Felckmann: instead of ‘Luke wrote’ they contain the reading ‘Luke says’ (Greek, *ho Loukas phēsin*).²⁷⁸ While the introductory phrase ‘John says’ is consistent in surviving manuscripts, the question is once again raised as to Athanasius’ exact meaning of the use of the verb *phēsin* in this and the excerpts analyzed above. In order to draw some conclusions, let us now recapitulate our findings from each excerpt.

²⁷⁶ *To the Bishops of Egypt and Libya* 1.1. Translated by Atkinson and Robertson (1892), with minor modifications.

²⁷⁷ See e.g., *To the Bishops of Egypt and Libya* 1.4; 2.13; 2.15; 2.17.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (25), 537-538.

In the first passage from *Festal Letter* 24 (2), we established that Athanasius attributed John 3:18a-b to Jesus. Both the title ‘Lord’ and appearance of the adaptation ‘in me’ left little room for doubting this attribution. While Athanasius was probably relying on his memory and not on a physical copy of the Gospel before him,²⁷⁹ this by no means discounts the attribution to Jesus. Rather, his recollection of this verse underlines his opinion that the Gospel-writer would not have spoken the words ‘whoever believes *in me* will not be judged’. It ought to be remembered, though, that this *Festal Letter* has as a whole come down to us only in Coptic, and we are thus relying on its unknown translator to have faithfully preserved Athanasius’ citation in Greek.²⁸⁰ This being said, the likelihood that the translator arbitrarily added the title ‘Lord’ and swapped the phrase ‘in him’ for ‘in me’ is low, as there is no reasonable purpose for doing so. Further, we might expect that the translation was produced *in order to improve* the letter’s circulation and chances of long-term preservation in the Coptic-speaking community, so to doubt its authenticity on these grounds is needless.

At this early point in Athanasius’ career as bishop (c. 330), it could be argued that the verses preceding John 3:18 were also considered Jesus’ words (according to narrative context). In fact, if this were the *only* extant quotation from Athanasius on John 3, we could have claimed this as highly likely. Yet we discovered that in the second discourse

²⁷⁹ John J. Brogan, *The Text of the Gospels in the Writings of Athanasius* (PhD dissertation. Duke University, 1997), 17-18: ‘It is likely that Athanasius memorized extensive portions of Scripture as a youth. As an adult, when he used Scripture extensively in his writings, it is likely that he cited the biblical text from memory...He learned enough rhetoric to utilize Scripture for his polemical purposes. He cited short passages from memory, making changes in his biblical text when needed. His lack of training (and disinterest?) in philological matters caused him to be freer in his citations of the text’.

²⁸⁰ The Coptic translation is very likely faithful to the Greek on the basis of a brief citation from another part of *Festal Letter* 24 (2) found within the work of the Alexandrian merchant Cosmas Indicopleustes (c. mid-sixth century). In addition, since Athanasius himself spoke Coptic it is conceivable that he (or one of his own assistants) could have been responsible for the translation.

of *Against the Arians*, written about ten years later, Athanasius introduced John 3:17 with the words ‘John says’. After further analysis, however, it was then discovered that the key verb ‘says’ (Greek, *phēsin*) was not found in every ancient manuscript, and might not have been there from the beginning. Given this variance, we were consequently unable to determine Athanasius’ exact understanding of John’s role in this passage (whether it was a speaking role or a writing one), and we moved on to the fourth discourse of *Against the Arians*, which remains of dubious authenticity. In it John 3:16-19 was attributed to ‘John himself’ (Greek, *ho autos Iōannēs*), with no known manuscript variants of the introductory phrase.²⁸¹ We then presented one piece of evidence challenging this attribution: in the section immediately preceding this quotation, Athanasius also presented Jesus’ declaration in John 13:20b as the words of ‘John himself’. We argued that such an inconsistency might prove substantive enough to prevent us from confidently asserting what Athanasius’ position on the speaker was, and whether he really denied that 3:16-19 comprised Jesus’ words in the excerpt prior.

Issues were also present in determining Athanasius’ intent when he cited a portion of John 3:36. We concluded that the phrase ‘John says’ was too imprecise to be helpful in establishing Athanasius’ position on the speaker; the name ‘John’ could have equally applied to the Gospel-writer as to the Baptist.

Lastly, Athanasius included a partial citation of John 3:17 in his encyclical letter, prefaced with the words ‘John says’ (Greek, *ho Iōannēs phēsin*).²⁸² While the manuscript

²⁸¹ The absence of the adaptation ‘in me’ in 3:18 and overall accuracy of the Greek text may indicate direct copying from John’s Gospel, though there is no way to be completely certain.

²⁸² It is worth noting that Athanasius may have been influenced by the language of John 12:47 here, since Jesus is portrayed not as being *sent* but as having *come*. The main verb in 3:17 is *apesteilen* (‘sent’ by God), while in 12:47 it is *ēlthon* (‘I came’). Athanasius’ text reads *ēlthe* (‘he came’).

tradition was consistent in this particular reading, some manuscripts included a variant for the nearby introductory phrase ‘Luke wrote’ (Greek, *egrapsen ho Loukas*), instead reading ‘Luke says’ (Greek, *ho Loukas phēsin*). Taken as a whole, such findings make it difficult to even conjecture what Athanasius’ actual position was in a defensible manner. A thoroughgoing examination of the process of manuscript transmission, in consultation with all of Athanasius’ known works and citations of John’s Gospel, would no doubt greatly aid in coming to an answer, but such an endeavor lies beyond the scope of the present study.²⁸³ If we cannot establish Athanasius’ own wording or intention with confidence (e.g., his use of *phēsin* in light of its range of nuances),²⁸⁴ tackling much broader interpretative questions is likewise inhibited. As a consequence, his position on both Johannine passages will likely remain a mystery.

Aphrahat of Persia (c. 270-350).

²⁸³ Regarding ancient manuscripts in general, it was common scribal practice to abbreviate certain terms and proper names that held religious significance (known as *nomina sacra*). This would be accomplished by contracting and overlining a word, usually using only the beginning and ending letters. For instance, ‘Jesus’ (*Iēsous* in Greek and *Iesus* in Latin) would often be abbreviated *IS* and *IHS*. Over time, the name ‘John’ also came to be abbreviated, and Greek scribes chose the first two letters *IŌ* to contract *Iōannēs*. Given that the difference between the abbreviated forms of Jesus and John was sometimes just a single letter, it is distinctly possible that on occasion inadvertent substitutions occurred. See further on *nomina sacra* in the third chapter of Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

²⁸⁴ Take for instance Athanasius’ *Letter to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* 1.20.6, in which *phēsin* is rather ambiguously employed (here presented in italics): ‘Indeed, the Son is sent from the Father: ‘For God’, *he says*, ‘so loved the world that he sent his only-begotten Son’. But the Son sends the Spirit: ‘For if’, *he says*, ‘I go away, I will send you the Paraclete’. And the Son glorifies the Father, saying, ‘Father, I have glorified you’. But the Spirit glorifies the Son: ‘For he’, *he says*, ‘will glorify me’. And the Son *says*, ‘I declare to the world the things I heard from the Father’. But the Spirit receives from the Son: ‘For he shall receive from what is mine and announce it to you’, *he says*’. Translated by DelCogliano et al (2011), with minor modifications. Within this series of citations of Jesus’ words, it is unclear whether or not Athanasius interprets John 3:16a in like manner. Although ‘the Son’ is the last identified subject, immediately prior to this passage Athanasius relates that he will be quoting what ‘the divine Scriptures have given to us’ (Greek, *hē theia graphē dedōken hēmin*). Khaled Anatolios’ translation (2004) of this passage seems to have been influenced by this statement, since he renders *phēsin* ‘it says’ for 3:16a.

1. Background Material

Also known as the ‘Persian Sage’ and by his Greek name ‘Aphraates’, Ya‘qub Aphrahat was a well-educated man of noble Persian background. Although very little biographical information is known of him, from Aphrahat’s writings we can gather that he possessed a vast knowledge of Scripture and held some ecclesiastical position in the early-fourth century Persian church.²⁸⁵ His language was Syriac, and because he spoke only broken Greek²⁸⁶ Aphrahat had minimal influence from prior Greek Fathers of the church or from the great philosophers of classical and post-classical Greece.²⁸⁷ With the even more distant Latin West he had virtually no contact. His twenty-three *Demonstrations* (homilies with poetical quality) reflect this independence, especially since no trace of a discussion regarding Arianism (the most dominant heresy of the time in the West) or the outcome of the Nicene Council is to be found.²⁸⁸ For this reason, Aphrahat’s interpretations of Scripture provide a unique glimpse into a branch of Christian literary tradition somewhat distanced from the main Greek and Latin-speaking

²⁸⁵ A fourteenth century tradition identifies him as ‘bishop of Mar Mattai’. It is equally possible, however, that he was only a monk or priest of high standing among his fellow clergymen. See further in Naomi Koltun-Fromm, *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17-18.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Theodoret, *Religious History* 8.2.

²⁸⁷ Alexander Golitzin, ‘*Topos Theou: The Monastic Elder as Theologian and as Theology. An Appreciation of Archimandrite Aimilianos*’, in Conomos and Speake (eds.), *Mount Athos the Sacred Bridge: The Spirituality of the Holy Mountain*, 223.

²⁸⁸ The Council had convened only ten years before Aphrahat’s writing. Had he been living in the domain of the Roman Empire, mention of it would have been expected. Cf. Naomi Koltun-Fromm, *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18; Christopher Buck, *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Baha’i Faith* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 40.

churches of the Roman Empire.²⁸⁹ Additionally, Aphrahat's reliance on a Syriac version of the Bible may reveal how some ancient translators regarded our specific passages from John 3, showing promise of comparative novelty.

Quotations and allusions to Scripture abound in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*, so much so that his command of both Testaments is difficult to overestimate.²⁹⁰ Interestingly, recent scholarship also concludes that the Persian Sage quoted Scripture from memory, an opinion met with general acceptance.²⁹¹ With regard to his style of scriptural citation in the *Demonstrations*, Aphrahat is accustomed to including some form of identification marker or narrative context preceding each verse or passage quoted (e.g., 'the blessed apostle said concerning himself and Barnabas', 'Hannah said thus in her prayer', 'our Lord again thus said to his disciples'). Of course, exceptions can be found—in a number of places Aphrahat modifies or incorporates biblical verses into his own sentences.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The first of Aphrahat's references to John 3 is found in the sixth section of his *Demonstrations*, subtitled 'On Covenanters'. This portion was composed sometime in the

²⁸⁹ Aphrahat's quotations likewise provide valuable insight into the form(s) of the biblical texts as they existed in early Syriac translation. See Tjitze Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (PhD dissertation. Vrije Universiteit, 1975), 300-301.

²⁹⁰ Stephen S. Taylor, 'Paul and the Persian Sage: Some Observations on Aphrahat's Use of the Pauline Corpus', in Evans and Sanders (eds.), *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition*, 316-317: 'Whether [Aphrahat] is teaching, admonishing, polemicizing or merely waxing doxological he is always moving from one biblical text to another...William Wright indexed 794 quotations from the Old Testament and 446 from the New. Parisot counted 987 quotations of, or close allusions to, the Old Testament and 753 to the New Testament. If we rely on Robert Owens' computations, this averages out to about four per column of Syriac text or about one [quotation] every sixth line'.

²⁹¹ Cf. Konrad D. Jenner et al, 'CALAP: An Interdisciplinary Debate between Textual Criticism, Textual History and Computer-Assisted Linguistic Analysis', in Van Keulen and van Peursen (eds.), *Corpus Linguistics and Textual History: A Computer-Assisted Interdisciplinary Approach to the Peshitta*, 37.

year 337 and addressed primarily to ascetics, who would have appreciated his comparison of the ascetic and prophetic figures, Elijah and John the Baptist.

Something of Christ is in us, yet Christ is in heaven at the right hand of his Father. And Christ did not receive only a measure of the Spirit, but rather his Father loved him and delivered everything into his hands, and gave him authority over his whole treasury. For John said, *'The Father did not give only a portion of the Spirit to his Son, but loved him and delivered everything into his hands'*. And our Lord also said, 'Everything has been handed over to me by my Father'...Our Lord testifies concerning John that he is the greatest prophet of the prophets. He received only a measure of the Spirit, for he obtained the Spirit in the same amount as Elijah. Just as Elijah lived in the wilderness, so too the Spirit of God led John into the wilderness, and he lived on mountains and in caves. Birds brought food to Elijah, and John ate flying locusts. Elijah girded his loins with a leather strap, and John girded his loins with a leather belt. Jezebel persecuted Elijah, and Herodia persecuted John. Elijah rebuked Ahab, and John rebuked Herod. Elijah divided the Jordan, and John opened up baptism. The spirit of Elijah rested two-fold upon Elisha, and John placed his hand on our Savior, and he received the Spirit without measure...²⁹²

At the very beginning of this excerpt Aphrahat addresses a subject that must have seemed somewhat confusing to his listening audience: how is it that Jesus can be within Christians and in heaven with the Father at the same time? Aphrahat reasons that Jesus can be divided among people and 'suffer no loss' since his Spirit has no limit. He finds his most explicit and relevant line of support in the words that 'John said' (Syriac, *emar Yuhanan*), loosely citing John 3:34b-35.²⁹³ Aphrahat continues to discuss Jesus' reception of the Spirit by means of comparing the prophet Elijah with John the Baptist (consistently

²⁹² *Demonstrations*, 'On Covenanters' 12-13. Translated by Lehto (2010).

²⁹³ Upon comparison with the Gospel text Aphrahat is clearly paraphrasing, though the similarities are close enough to confirm that he is recalling these distinct verses: John 3:34b-35 reads: 'For God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand'.

referred to simply as ‘John’). For several reasons it seems highly unlikely that Aphrahat had the Gospel-writer of the same name in mind. First, in the whole of the twenty-three *Demonstrations* the Gospel-writer is never identified by name nor given a speaking role, but is limited to a rather passive writing one (e.g., John 1:1a is introduced with the words ‘as is written in the beginning of the Gospel of our Savior’). In fact, none of the other Gospel-writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are ever mentioned by name amongst Aphrahat’s writings, indicating his understanding of the gospel as Jesus’ own. This is contrasted with the fact that the Baptist speaks on numerous occasions in the *Demonstrations*,²⁹⁴ and is always referred to as ‘John’ (without the ‘Baptist’ epithet).²⁹⁵ Lastly, the immediate context of the excerpted passage above centers on the Baptist’s role in preparing the reception of the Holy Spirit. Aphrahat’s final sentence explicitly mentions that after the Baptist placed his hand on Jesus (i.e., baptized him), ‘he received the Spirit without measure’. For these reasons, we can be relatively confident that Aphrahat did indeed have the Baptist in mind when citing what ‘John said’.²⁹⁶

The second and last of Aphrahat’s references to John 3 comes from the eighth of his *Demonstrations*, subtitled ‘On the Dead Coming to Life’. It was composed in the same year as ‘On Covenanters’.

The schools [that are] instruments of the evil one take exception to the word that our Lord spoke, ‘*No one has ascended to heaven except the one who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who was in heaven*’. They say, ‘Look! Our Lord testified that an earthly body does not ascend to heaven!’ Those who

²⁹⁴ E.g., *Demonstrations*, ‘On Prayer’ 5; ‘On the Passover’ 10; ‘On the Peoples in Place of the People’ 8.

²⁹⁵ See e.g., ‘On Covenanters’ 3, 5; ‘On Fasting’ 14; ‘On Prayer’ 5; ‘On the Passover’ 10 (twice); ‘On the Peoples in Place of the People’ 8; ‘On Persecution’ 13 (twice); ‘On the Grapecluster’ 20.

²⁹⁶ On Aphrahat’s identification of the speaker, Tjitze Baarda affirms: ‘John the Baptist is meant’. See his *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (PhD dissertation. Vrije Universiteit, 1975), 94, 326.

are ignorant do not understand the meaning of this saying. For when our Lord taught Nicodemus, he did not understand the meaning of [his] word[s]. Then our Lord said to him, ‘*No one has ascended into heaven and come [back] down*’, in order to talk to you [about] what is there. ‘If I speak to you about things that are earthly and you do not believe, how will you believe if I speak to you about things that are heavenly?’²⁹⁷

At the beginning of this passage, Aphrahat reminds his audience that some are indeed offended by what was spoken by ‘our Lord’ (Syriac, *māran*).²⁹⁸ Apparently, these individuals had misunderstood what John 3:13 meant, in that they took the statement ‘no one has ascended to heaven’ quite literally, to the point of excluding Jesus himself! Aphrahat explains that even Nicodemus, whom ‘our Lord taught’, had also failed to apprehend the verse’s true meaning. This, however, was fulfilled in Jesus’ own words to him in John 3:12 (lines 8-10). The significant amount of narrative material introduced with Aphrahat’s direct quotation of 3:13—once fully and a second time in part—leaves no doubt that the Persian Sage understood this Johannine verse to belong on Jesus’ lips. Aphrahat’s opponents—those labeled ‘instruments of the evil one’—likewise interpreted the speaker of 3:13 the same way. Since no quotations of 3:14-21 and 3:36 appear in the *Demonstrations*, we cannot ascertain Aphrahat’s opinion of who spoke these verses.

²⁹⁷ *Demonstrations*, ‘On the Dead Coming to Life’ 24.

²⁹⁸ Especially in this *Demonstration*, wherever the title ‘Lord’ is paired with the possessive adjective ‘our’, it invariably refers to Jesus. See e.g., sections 13, 14, 16, 18, 23.

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-367).

1. Background Material

Hilary was born in or near the city of Poitiers and rose to the position of bishop sometime in the early 350s. Apart from the fact that Hilary was a convert to Christianity, little biographical information of him is known prior to his condemnation at the synod of Béziers in 356. Hilary had evidently opposed the majority decision to censure Athanasius of Alexandria for his support of Nicene Christianity, and because of this opposition Hilary was exiled to Phrygia for three years. From his extant writings it appears that he eventually made his way back to central Gaul and continued his pastoral duties there for the remainder of his life. Being fluent not only in Latin but also Greek,²⁹⁹ Hilary familiarized himself with various Greek theological works while in Asia Minor, which greatly supplemented his solid knowledge of the Latin theological tradition (especially the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian and Novatian).³⁰⁰

Hilary's principal work, *On the Trinity*, was produced during the time of his exile. Clearly anti-Arian in purpose, in it Hilary uses Scripture to form an elaborate argument against those who would distort the nature of the triune God. His stated goal was to faithfully exegete Scripture, rather than be found guilty of reading *into* the biblical text ('eisegesis') as the Arians did.³⁰¹ As might be expected in this type of polemic, Jesus is

²⁹⁹ During his exile Hilary took to some translation work for his treatise *Against Ursacius and Valens*. He also had some interest in textual criticism. For instance, in *On the Trinity* 6.45 he offers insightful comments on a textual variant he had discovered in many Greek manuscripts containing Romans 8:32.

³⁰⁰ See Carl L. Beckwith, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity: From De Fide to De Trinitate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8-9.

³⁰¹ Hilary claims in *On the Trinity* 1.18: 'For he is the best reader (Latin, *optimus lector*) who allows the words to reveal their own meaning rather than imposing one on them, who takes meaning from the text rather than bringing meaning to it, and who does not force on the words a semblance of meaning that he had determined to be right before reading them'. Translated by Beckwith (2008).

the most often quoted authority. When citing Scripture, Hilary normally provides some degree of information on the speaker (e.g., ‘Christ utters concerning himself’, ‘the Father cries from heaven’, ‘the angel explains to her the mighty working of God, saying’). Several quotations from John 3 are found in *On the Trinity*, with one other appearing in his *Homilies on the Psalms*. Dating from the last few years of Hilary’s life (c. 364-367), this collection was written primarily to update the church’s traditional interpretations in response to the Arian controversy.³⁰² Hilary’s citation style in these homilies is normally quite detailed (e.g., ‘the prophet Solomon teaches us’, ‘on the way to the cross he said’, ‘testified by Saint John in the Apocalypse, where he says’). He is also careful to distinguish between the voice of the biblical writer and the characters within.³⁰³ As in *On the Trinity*, Jesus’ words are quoted most frequently.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The first of Hilary’s quotations from the Johannine passages under consideration is found in the sixth book of *On the Trinity*. At this point in the work, Hilary is pointing out some of the many places in the Gospels where Jesus reveals his true identity and relationship with the Father. Hilary makes his immediate purpose clear: ‘Let us hear what it is that the Son has told us concerning himself’.

And yet, in the face of these constant expressions of his humility, to charge him with presumption because he calls God ‘his Father’, as when he says, ‘Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up’, or, ‘You have made my Father’s house a house of merchandise’. I can conceive of no one

³⁰² Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1003.

³⁰³ E.g., *Homily on Psalm 1 3*: ‘And the evangelist Matthew further asserts that these words were spoken by the Son, when he says, ‘For this reason he spoke in parables, that the saying might be fulfilled: ‘I will open my mouth in parables’’. The Lord then gave fulfillment in act to his own prophecy, speaking in the parables in which he had promised that he would speak’.

foolish enough to regard his assertion, consistently made, that God is his Father, not as the simple truth sincerely stated from certain knowledge, but as a bold and baseless claim. We cannot denounce this constantly professed humility as an insolent demand for the rights of another, a laying of hands on what is not his own, an appropriation of powers which only God can wield. Nor, when he also calls himself the Son, saying, *'For God did not send his Son into this world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him'*, and again, *'Do you believe in the Son of God?'*, can we accuse him of what would be an equal presumption with that of calling God his Father?³⁰⁴

Prior to this excerpt, Hilary has cited five other sayings of Jesus, each representative of the 'constant expressions of his humility'. Hilary finds it ludicrous that anyone could rightfully accuse Jesus of presumption when he calls God 'his Father' and himself 'the Son'. After inserting two other sayings of Jesus and some discussion of his own, Hilary then quotes two verses from John's Gospel in succession, introducing them with the phrase 'he also calls himself the Son, saying' (Latin, *se quoque filium profiteatur dicens*). Hilary's use of such an introduction for John 3:17 and 9:35b is crystal clear—Hilary understands the speaker to be Jesus ('the Son'). Approximately fifteen sections later, Hilary quotes another verse from John 3 in order to challenge those who take the term 'only-begotten' to mean a created being (rather than the Creator).

But John described the only-begotten Son as God, not as a perfect creature. His words, 'Who is in the bosom of the Father', show that he anticipated these blasphemous designations; and, indeed, he had heard his Lord say, *'For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life'*. God, who loved the world, gave his only-begotten Son as a manifest token of his love.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ *On the Trinity* 6.25. Translated by Watson (1899), with minor modifications.

³⁰⁵ *On the Trinity* 6.40.

According to Hilary's interpretation, John had described Jesus as the 'only-begotten Son' in his Gospel prologue (1:18) with the express intention of emphasizing his full divinity. Hilary then explicitly asserts that John 'had heard' (Latin, *audiens*) this same thing from the lips of 'his Lord' (Latin, *domino suo*).³⁰⁶ According to Hilary, since the disciple John was present to hear the content of John 3:16 'live', he was also able to record these words in his own Gospel. Hence, the nocturnal dialogue with Nicodemus was not completely private because it included at least one other eyewitness: the Gospel-writer himself.

A third quotation from John 3 in *On the Trinity* is found in his tenth book. Here Hilary is in mid-discussion about the process of Jesus' supernatural conception; he assures his readers that at all times Jesus remained in the form of God.

In his birth, the cause of which was transmitted solely by the Holy Spirit, his mother performed the same part as in all human conceptions: but by virtue of his origin he never ceased to be God. This deep and beautiful mystery of his assumption of manhood the Lord himself reveals, saying, '*No one has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*'.³⁰⁷

Recognizing the mystery of God taking on human flesh, Hilary looks to Scripture for insight. His citation of John 3:13 is attributed to the 'Lord himself' (Latin, *dominus ipse*), which elsewhere in the tenth book always refers to Jesus.³⁰⁸ Thus far, then, all of Hilary's references to the first Johannine passage (3:13, 16-17) have been consistent in

³⁰⁶ 'Lord' is a repeatedly occurring title used for Jesus in *On the Trinity*, and is always understood this way when a verse from the New Testament is referred to.

³⁰⁷ *On the Trinity* 10.15-16.

³⁰⁸ See e.g., *On the Trinity* 10.18; 10.49; 10.55.

the placement of the words on Jesus' own lips. In his *Homily on Psalm 1* excerpted below, Hilary extends this to 3:18-19b while elaborating on the meaning of Psalm 1:5.

Now what we are to understand by the privilege of rising again and being judged is revealed by the Lord in the Gospels, saying, *'Whoever believes in me is not judged, but whoever does not believe has been judged already. And this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light'*. The terms of this saying of the Lord are disturbing to inattentive hearers and careless, hasty readers. For by saying, *'Whoever believes in me shall not be judged'*, he exempts believers, and by adding, *'But whoever does not believe has been judged already'*, he excludes unbelievers from judgment. If, then, he has thus exempted believers and debarred unbelievers, allowing the chance of judgment neither to one class nor the other, how can he be considered consistent when he adds thirdly, *'And this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light'*? For there can apparently be no place left for judgment, since neither believers nor unbelievers are to be judged. Such no doubt will be the conclusion drawn by inattentive hearers and hasty readers. The utterance, however, has an appropriate meaning and a rational interpretation of its own. *'Whoever believes'*, he says, *'shall not be judged'*. And is there any need to judge a believer? Judgment arises out of ambiguity, and where ambiguity ceases, there is no call for trial and judgment. Hence not even unbelievers need be judged, because there is no doubt about their being unbelievers...And this is why the Lord, after saying that believers would not be judged and that unbelievers had been judged already, added, *'And this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light'*.³⁰⁹

At the beginning of this excerpt, Hilary labels John 3:18-19 a 'saying of the Lord' (Latin, *dicti dominici*) that has caused some disturbance for 'inattentive hearers' and 'hasty readers'.³¹⁰ In pointing this out, he takes it upon himself to diligently interpret its

³⁰⁹ *Homily on Psalm 1* 20-22. Translated by Watson and Pullan (1899), with minor modifications.

³¹⁰ Note: The final phrase in John 3:18 ('because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God') is omitted.

‘appropriate meaning’. As this is a homily on an Old Testament book, the title ‘Lord’ refers to ‘YHWH’ most often—yet, when used in the context of a New Testament verse or concept, it always serves as the equivalent for Jesus.³¹¹ The presence of the adaptation ‘in me’ rather than ‘in him’ when quoting 3:18 (lines 2, 6) also points to the identification of Jesus—rather than God in general terms—as speaker.³¹² Hilary again cites in lines 20-23 what the Lord ‘added’ after speaking 3:18, and such a description makes most sense for a character within the Gospel narrative, i.e., Jesus.

While it is true that Hilary never cites John 3:14-15, he almost certainly regarded these verses as Jesus’ own words given their placement between 3:13 and 3:16. We cannot say the same for 3:20-21, however, since one could argue either way for their attribution. Hilary’s position on 3:31-36 is also unknown, since his sole quotation from this passage does not contain an explicit speaker reference.³¹³

Zeno of Verona (d. 372).

1. Background Material

Little is known of the life and career of Zeno. It is probable that he was not a native of Verona in Italy, but rather African by birth. Zeno’s extant sermons reflect the influence of both pagan and Christian writers from Roman North Africa (foremost among them Cyprian and Tertullian); in addition, later iconography portrays Zeno with a darker

³¹¹ See e.g., *Homily on Psalm 1* 2; 4 (twice); 10 (twice); 14 (twice); 15; 16; 18; 24.

³¹² It is possible that Hilary quoted these two Johannine verses from memory, given the adaptation ‘in me’ and the introduction he gives them (the plural ‘Gospels’ rather than the singular). Of course, Hilary may have had notes while delivering the homily, and then worked the verses into their final homiletic form.

³¹³ John 3:31 cited in *Homily on the Psalms* Prologue 7. A brief portion of 3:18 is also cited in *Tractatus Mysteriorum* 1.36.

skin tone and designates him ‘the Moorish bishop’.³¹⁴ Precisely when Zeno became bishop of Verona is likewise uncertain, though a date in the early 360s is most commonly put forward. He proved to be an able theologian and skillful orator who was revered for the quality of his Latin sermons.³¹⁵ These sermons were collected together after his death and comprise the very earliest of those still extant from the Western Church.

An analysis of Zeno’s sermons reveals that he had considerable rhetorical training and a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.³¹⁶ His opposition to Arianism can easily be perceived, along with the tensions involved in confronting the anti-Christian efforts of the emperor Julian the Apostate (reigned 361-363). Toward the end of his life Zeno delivered *Sermon on Psalm 100*, a Lenten sermon with noticeable traces of influence from Hilary of Poitiers’ *Homilies on the Psalms* (just analyzed above). Although short in length, this sermon is a fine work of biblical exposition on the theme of judgment. In it Zeno twice quotes from John’s Gospel, and both of these come from the third chapter. As is true of Zeno’s sermons in general, citations from Scripture are oftentimes formally introduced with some level of narrative detail or speaker identification (e.g., ‘David in the Psalm expresses’, ‘the apostle says’).

³¹⁴ See further in Gordon Jeanes, *The Day Has Come! Easter and Baptism in Zeno of Verona* (Alcuin Club Collection 73. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 13-17; Louis Palanca, *The Prose Rhythm and Gorgianic Figures in the Sermons of St. Zeno of Verona* (PhD dissertation. The Catholic University of America, 1970), 1-3.

³¹⁵ E.g., in a letter dated to the turn of the century, Zeno’s younger contemporary Ambrose of Milan refers to him as ‘Zeno of holy memory’ (Latin, *Zeno sanctae memoriae*).

³¹⁶ Zeno also kept close associations with local monastic communities, and his decision to often preach on charity and living a life of poverty suggests that he had been a monk himself before his consecration as Veronese bishop.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The first excerpt from Zeno's *Sermon on Psalm 100* comprises the work's opening lines. It should be noted that according to the modern numbering system, Zeno is here preaching on what is Psalm 101 in English Bible versions.

Worshippers heedless of the sacred law are often entangled with great error if they do not take into account the context of the sentences or too little research on the senses. Therefore when in the present psalm the prophet says, 'From mercy and judgment I will sing praises to you, Lord', in the same manner the Lord in the Gospel says, '*Whoever believes in me will not be judged, and whoever does not believe is judged already*'. He takes in these words from the faithful by the court; he has the infidels from the outset excluded by the court...Another saying of the Lord might be brought forward, the sense in which it was spoken already makes clear the peculiar meaning of the words: '*Whoever*', he says, '*believes in me will not be judged*'.³¹⁷

After initially citing Psalm 101:1, Zeno questions why David would speak of his own judgment if there is no judgment for believers, i.e., for those considered 'faithful' (Latin, *fidelis*). In lines 4-6 Zeno turns to the testimony of John 3:18a for clarification. According to what was said by 'the Lord in the Gospel' (Latin, *dominus in evangelio*), those who do not believe are the only ones that will face judgment. That Zeno here interprets Jesus as the speaker of 3:18a is readily apparent—the speaker is described as a character *within* the Gospel text and twice called 'Lord'.³¹⁸ Most importantly, Zeno substitutes the key phrase 'in him' for 'in me', just as his contemporary Hilary did only a few years prior. Such details taken together firmly establish Zeno's view that these were

³¹⁷ *Sermon on Psalm 100* 1. Draft translation.

³¹⁸ Zeno treats John 3:18a as being 'spoken', and in lines 8-9 refers back to the content of 3:18a as a 'saying of the Lord' (Latin, *domini dictum*). Apart from 'Lord' appearing within citations from Psalms and Romans, the title is appended to 'Jesus Christ' at the end of this sermon.

Jesus' own words about himself. Writing one paragraph later, Zeno cites the next verse from John 3 as he contrasts the eternal states of believers and unbelievers.

For we should never know—as the righteous are destined for eternal life, the wicked for eternal punishment—who these are for whom judgment is prepared. We must ask who those are in the court. And from whom could we learn it, unless [from] the Lord himself, who continues his speaking, saying, *'And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather the light'*. He certainly has referred to the fluctuating and uncertainty of Christians who stand between the righteous and the wicked in the middle, who join any side because they put themselves on both sides.³¹⁹

Zeno reminds his listening audience that the 'Lord himself' (Latin, *ipso domino*) did more teaching on the subject of judgment. Prior to citing the text of John 3:19, Zeno mentions that this Johannine verse comprises a *continuation* of the words he cited earlier. According to context, he must be referring to the preceding verse, 3:18. This reference to 'his previously mentioned statement' (Latin, *suum dictum prosequitur*) effectively links both verses to a common speaker, Jesus (the 'Lord himself').

As mentioned earlier, Zeno appears to have drawn influence from Hilary's *Homily on Psalm 1*. Both of Zeno's citations omit two substantive phrases from John 3:18 and 3:19 ('because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God'; 'because their deeds were evil'), and like Hilary he twice substitutes 'in him' for 'in me'. It remains unclear whether Zeno consulted the text of John's Gospel as he composed his sermon. It may be pointed out, however, that he refers to the source of his Johannine quotation in the singular instead of the plural as Hilary does ('Gospel' instead of 'Gospels').

³¹⁹ *Sermon on Psalm 100 2*. Draft translation.

Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-373).

1. Background Material

Ephrem was born to Christian parents in the city of Nisibis, an important Romano-Persian trading post in northeastern Mesopotamia. He served as a deacon and teacher in the catechetical school there until the city's fall to the Sassanid empire in the early 360s.³²⁰ Fleeing with others for fear of persecution, he eventually settled in the Christian community within the city of Edessa (present-day Urfa in Turkey). At heart Ephrem was a theologian, exegete and poet. His writings—which include commentaries, polemical tracts, verse homilies and hymns—gained such popularity that many were translated into other languages even within his own lifetime.³²¹ Like Aphrahat before him, Ephrem's native language was Syriac, and his works appear relatively uninfluenced by both the Greek philosophical tradition and certain theological expressions of the Greek and Latin churches.³²²

During the last decade of his life in Edessa, Ephrem produced perhaps his most important work: a commentary on Tatian's *Diatessaron*.³²³ Although Ephrem did not comment on the entirety of this controversial second-century 'Gospel harmony', his approach was scholarly, analyzing from the literal to the symbolic meanings of the text

³²⁰ Cf. Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9-10.

³²¹ The first translations to appear included: Greek, Arabic, Coptic, Latin, Armenian and Ethiopic.

³²² Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14-15.

³²³ Fortunately, a significant percentage of Ephrem's *Diatessaron* commentary survives in its Syriac original. See further in Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 25-38.

before him.³²⁴ Ephrem's citation style in the commentary is mixed. Scriptural verses are normally incorporated into his own sentences or alluded to without specifying the speaker, yet he does at times also provide detailed introductions (e.g., 'Joshua son of Nun declared', 'the angels were crying forth', 'Simon revealed in the Acts of the Apostles'). It is to be remembered, though, that Tatian's *Diatessaron*, rather than the Syriac Bible, is the standard text that governed Ephrem's exegesis. For this reason, his take on John 3 may contain genealogical traces of how Tatian also regarded the Johannine passages.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Immediately prior to the following excerpt, Ephrem has been commenting on Jesus' cursing of the fig tree (related only in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew). Ephrem's transition to Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus appears to reflect the *Diatessaron's* own ordering of these accounts.

[Let us examine] that [text], '*No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man*'. Because they were asking for a sign of him, he said, 'If I have spoken to you about earthly things and you did not believe me, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? *No one has gone up to heaven*, to return and become a witness to me among you'. Because he knew that they were about to say to him that a body does not go up, he said to them, '*The one who has come down from heaven*'. It was not that he came down from heaven in bodily form, but, because Mary's conception did not come about through the seed of man. Gabriel came down from heaven, however, bearing a greeting in his mouth. This was why he said, '*The one who has come down from heaven*'. We should also say that it was after the word of Nicodemus, that our Lord said to him, 'You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?' The things he should have known were those [matters] concerning the Law and the Prophets, the cleansing of hyssop, the waters of ceremonial

³²⁴ Cf. Sidney H. Griffith, 'Ephraem the Exegete: Biblical Commentary in the Works of Ephraem the Syrian', in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 1406.

sprinkling, and the baptisms of purification. If types of these had not [already] been outlined before the coming of the Son, our Lord would certainly have been treating Nicodemus unjustly. But, if they were hidden in the Scriptures, and he had not discerned them, it was appropriate that [the Lord] should shake him out of his sleep...³²⁵

In the first half of this excerpt Ephrem explains the context of the sayings found in John 3:12-13. Interestingly, he asserts that other people were present besides Nicodemus to hear these words: some were asking Jesus to perform a sign for them, and others were planning to challenge the claim that one had ascended up to heaven. Scholars have long sought to make sense of the second-person plural references in 3:7, 11-12.³²⁶ Ephrem's description of a larger audience thus sheds light on this interpretive question, as it leaves no doubt as to his position on the speaker of 3:13. In his view, these words belonged to Jesus, whom Ephrem consistently refers to as 'our Lord' in the remainder of the excerpt and later in his discussion of 3:4-8.

While several other verses from our Johannine passages are paraphrased or quoted in the *Diatessaron* commentary,³²⁷ only one of them is useful in determining Ephrem's opinion on speaker identification. In the twentieth section, Ephrem analyzes Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest. He emphasizes Jesus' full acceptance of his salvific mission, though it be costly indeed, and he then inserts a series of quotations to prove this.

³²⁵ *Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* 16.11-12. Translated by McCarthy (1993).

³²⁶ 3:7: 'you (*humas*) must be born again'; 3:11: 'you do not receive (*lambanete*)'; 3:12: 'I have spoken to you (*humin*)...and you do not believe (*pisteuete*), how will you believe (*pisteueste*) if I tell you (*humin*)'.

³²⁷ See *Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* 9.14 (3:34 paraphrased); 14.29 (3:13 quoted); 16.13 (3:13 quoted); 16.15 (3:14 quoted); 21.7 (3:16a quoted).

‘Father’, he said, ‘let this chalice pass from me’. He, who had described his being slain through his prophets, and had prefigured the mystery of his death through his just ones, when [the time] came to accomplish [this death], he certainly did not refuse to drink [the chalice]. If he had not wished to drink it, but rather had wanted to reject it, he would not have compared his body to the temple in this saying, ‘Destroy this temple and on the third day I will rebuild it’, to the sons of Zebedee, ‘Can you drink the chalice which I am going to drink?’, ‘There is a baptism for me [with which] I must be baptized’, and, ‘*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so will the Son of Man be lifted up*’, and, ‘As Jonah was in the belly of the fish, so will the Son of Man be in the bosom of the earth’, and, ‘I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’, and, ‘The Son of Man goes, according as it is written about him’. Take note that, on the evening of the night when he delivered himself up...³²⁸

In this excerpt, John 3:14 is surrounded by other sayings of Jesus from the Gospels of John, Matthew and Luke. Though this Johannine verse is introduced only with the conjunction ‘and’, when we look elsewhere in Ephrem’s commentary we find a number of places where sayings of Jesus are presented in series.³²⁹ There also seems to be an intentional parallel between citing Matthew 12:40 (lines 9-10) immediately after John 3:14: two Old Testament prophets are invoked along with the fulfillment in the sacrificial activity of the Son of Man. Since Ephrem’s whole logic behind introducing these and the other sayings is to stress the willingness of Jesus to go to the cross, it is probable that Ephrem believed 3:14 functioned as Jesus’ own testimony about himself. With respect to Ephrem’s position on 3:15-21 we can only speculate. After citing 3:13 in the first excerpt, Ephrem referred to Jesus shaking Nicodemus ‘out of his sleep’. This reference could be interpreted in the following manner: now that Nicodemus was finally awake, he was

³²⁸ *Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron* 20.3. Note: this passage is taken from the Armenian version of Ephrem’s commentary, as lacunae exist in Syriac MS 709.

³²⁹ E.g., *Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron* 12.11; 15.9; 18.11; 21.29.

ready to discern what was ‘hidden in the Scriptures’ through Jesus’ further revelation to him.

Ambrosiaster (c. late-fourth century).

1. Background Material

Modern scholarship has been unable to pinpoint the identity of Ambrosiaster, author of the earliest complete set of Latin commentaries on Paul’s letters.³³⁰ The name ‘Ambrosiaster’ (meaning ‘pseudo-Ambrose’) became attached to this fourth century exegete several centuries ago when Benedictine editors concluded that his writings, which from an early date had circulated under the names of Ambrose and Augustine, did not belong to either of these Latin fathers. As history would have it, the very survival of Ambrosiaster’s writings was due to their erroneous attribution.³³¹ While specifics on this author’s life cannot be determined with certainty, some details may be extrapolated from his literary corpus. Most scholars believe Ambrosiaster was a Roman presbyter, whose active period of writing may be located during the reign of Pope Damasus (366-384). Based on his use of legal references, he probably received training in the classics and judicial rhetoric. From his extant writings it is clear that Ambrosiaster worked primarily

³³⁰ This set includes Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Ambrosiaster evidently did not consider the book of Hebrews to have been written by Paul.

³³¹ Sophie Lunn-Rockcliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3: ‘[T]he efficacy—or saving value—of a text was dependent on the orthodoxy and holiness of its author; thus Christians attempted to weed out pseudonymous texts, to discard forgeries, and to read and canonize only ‘authentic’ texts which were indeed by their purported authors’.

from Old Latin copies of the Scriptures, but from time to time he shows an awareness of Greek textual variants.³³²

A few quotations from John 3 are present in Ambrosiaster's commentaries on 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. As a commentator, Ambrosiaster favored the literal sense of interpretation over the allegorical in the Pauline letters.³³³ He frequently cites verses from both Testaments and supplies information on the speaker or place in which a quotation is taken (e.g., 'David says in Psalm 140', 'Moses alluded to the cross when he said', 'the Samaritan woman said to the Lord', 'Mark the evangelist says'). Allusions without introductory formulae are also commonplace in the commentaries. With regard to the Gospels, Ambrosiaster takes care to distinguish between the words of the characters and the writers.³³⁴ Ambrosiaster also quotes from John 3 in his *Quaestiones*, a collection of brief questions and answers on topics dealing with theology and the exegesis of Scripture. His brief citation of John 3 appears in the context of a discussion on divine judgment in *Quaestio* 126, and only a limited number of other biblical quotations are formally introduced.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* contains two quotations from the first Johannine passage that include information on the speaker's identity. In the first,

³³² Cf. Amy M. Donaldson, *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings Among Greek and Latin Church Fathers Volume I* (PhD dissertation. University of Notre Dame, 2009), 138-139.

³³³ Cf. Gerald L. Bray, *Ambrosiaster: Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (Ancient Christian Texts. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), xix.

³³⁴ *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 2.8: 'After the temptations which the devil dared to inflict on our Lord, 'he departed', says the evangelist, 'until the time [should come]'. The Lord himself says, 'The prince of this world has come and found nothing in me'; *Commentary on Ephesians* 5.2: 'God is said to have given him up when he allowed him to be killed, just as the Lord said to Pilate, 'You would not have any power against me if it had not been given to you''. Translated by Bray (2009).

Ambrosiaster interprets the meaning of the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 5:13: 'God judges those outside; drive out the wicked person from among you'.

Here, by way of contrast, he goes so far as to order brother to examine brother, just as elsewhere he says, 'Test yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Examine yourselves'. Outsiders will be condemned on the day of judgment, because the Lord has said, '*Whoever does not believe has been judged already*'. There is no hope here; such a person is to be considered dead already.³³⁵

Ambrosiaster's exegesis of this Corinthian verse calls to his mind two other biblical references, one from Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:5 and the other from 'the Lord' (Latin, *dominus*) in John 3:18b. Outside of his discussions on passages from the Hebrew Bible, Ambrosiaster most often employs this title as a short form of 'Lord Jesus Christ'. Most importantly, whenever 'the Lord' is given a speaking role—that is, quoted as *saying* something—such quotations are invariably the words of Jesus from the Gospels.³³⁶ It is thus highly probable that Ambrosiaster is here attributing 3:18b to Jesus. This conclusion is consistent with Ambrosiaster's next quotation from John 3, appearing just two paragraphs later. In the following excerpt, Ambrosiaster remarks on the judgment of the present world, as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 6:2: 'Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?'

There is nothing superfluous in what the apostle says here. He speaks of this world in order to indicate that there is another as well. The apostle John also

³³⁵ *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 5.13*. Translated by Bray (2009), with minor modifications.

³³⁶ E.g., *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 2.8; 3.10; 3.22-23; 4.3; 4.5; 5.4-5; 6.12; 6.18; 7.21; 7.22; 9.16; 10.21; 11.1; 11.18-19; 12.31; 14.21; 14.38; 15.10; 15.24-27; 15.52; 16.13; 16.17-18. Cf. also his comments on Jesus' title 'Lord' in *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 8.6; 12.3.

says, 'Do not love this world', and the Lord in the Gospel says, '*God so loved the world*', and so forth. Therefore it is this world which has gone wrong...³³⁷

The contrast between the words of the apostle John and 'the Lord' underlines Ambrosiaster's understanding of the verses' speakers. His introduction to John 3:16a also specifies that the words were spoken 'in the Gospel' (Latin, *in evangelio*). If Ambrosiaster had thought this verse belonged on the lips of the Gospel-writer, it would have been much easier to simply *not* make a distinction between the speakers of 1 John 2:15 and John 3:16a. As we have discussed above, the numerous quotations of Jesus that Ambrosiaster attributes to 'the Lord' give us confidence that he had Jesus in mind.

Another quotation from John 3 is found in his *Commentary on Ephesians*. Ambrosiaster quotes and then elaborates on Paul's message in Ephesians 4:10: 'He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things'.

This is what the Lord says: '*No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven*'. The same thing is found in a psalm which says: 'Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them'. First of all he descended to the earth where he was born as a man. Later he died and descended to hell, from which he rose on the third day...³³⁸

Both John 3:13 and Psalm 19:6a confirm the truth of Paul's words in this Ephesian verse. Ambrosiaster attribution of this Johannine verse to 'the Lord' comes as no surprise, since we have already discovered that John 3:16 and 3:18b share this identification. Just as we saw in the *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, the words of Jesus are

³³⁷ *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 6.2.

³³⁸ *Commentary on Ephesians* 4.10. Translated by Bray (2009), with minor modifications.

always referenced when ‘the Lord’ is given a speaking role in this commentary.³³⁹ The subsequent details that Ambrosiaster provides in lines 4-6 likewise highlight that Jesus is the understood subject. One final quotation from John 3 appears in Ambrosiaster’s ‘Q&A’ collection *Quaestiones*. The following excerpt comprises the opening lines of *Quaestio* 126, subtitled ‘On the One Who Perceives’.

It is written: ‘The righteousness of the righteous person shall not deliver him on the day he has wandered from the truth, and the wickedness of the wicked person shall not be held against him when he has repented’. And the Lord in the Gospel: ‘Whoever does not believe’, he says, ‘has been judged already’, so that whoever believes is not subject to a sentence of judgment, but an exception is made of faith deserving of praise and a worthy future.³⁴⁰

After initially paraphrasing Ezekiel 33:12, Ambrosiaster cites a portion of John 3:18 to contrast the consequences of belief and unbelief. For the believer there will be no judgment and a ‘worthy future’ (i.e., long/eternal life), whereas for the unbeliever judgment has already taken place. Ambrosiaster again attributes this Johannine verse to ‘the Lord’, but this time he specifies its written source: ‘in the Gospel’ (Latin, *in evangelio*). His use of the singular may indicate that he has John’s Gospel in mind. The only other use of the title ‘Lord’ in *Quaestio* 126 is found in the context of a later citation of Luke 6:46, and so with this second attribution we remain confident that Jesus is the understood speaker. Because Ambrosiaster never quotes from John 3:31-36 or verses following 3:18, his opinion on the identity of the speaker(s) is not determinable.³⁴¹

³³⁹ E.g., *Commentary on Ephesians* 2.20; 2.21-22; 3.17; 4.2-3; 4.30; 4.32; 5.2; 5.4; 5.10.

³⁴⁰ *Quaestio* 126.1. Draft translation.

³⁴¹ Two references to 3:18a occur without context in *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 2.15; 15:53.

However, we can be relatively confident that he regarded 3:14-15 and 3:17 as Jesus' words, since they are interspersed between verses attributed to him (3:13, 3:16, 3:18).

Skeireins Gothic Commentary on John (c. fourth century).

1. Background Material

The *Skeireins* is a Gothic palimpsest codex containing commentary on a portion of John's Gospel.³⁴² A considerable amount of mystery surrounds this fragmentary document, with questions such as authorship, exact provenance and the original length of the manuscript remaining unknown. In comparison with other Gothic manuscripts and certain linguistic features, the *Skeireins* codex itself (our only extant copy) probably dates from the earlier part of the sixth century. Based on internal evidence, modern scholars regard the commentary as being originally produced sometime in the fourth century; however, many seriously question whether it first appeared in Gothic. Most favor some form of translation-theory from Greek, with occasional influence from Latin over time.³⁴³ The presence of punctuation (e.g., cadence and pause marks) in the commentary suggests that the *Skeireins* was intended to be read aloud, perhaps within a church setting for ceremonious reading.³⁴⁴ From what can be inferred from the content of the work, the author of the commentary (hereafter termed 'the Skeireinist') was most certainly a

³⁴² The Gothic word *skeireins* is 'an abstract formed on the basis of the verb *skeirjan* (to explain)'. See James W. Marchand, 'The Gothic Intellectual Community: The Theology of the *Skeireins*', in Williams (ed.), *The Making of Christian Communities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 63.

³⁴³ See further discussion in William H. Bennett (ed. and trans.), *The Gothic Commentary on the Gospel of John: skeireins ai waggeljons thairh iohannen. A Decipherment, Edition, and Translation* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1960), 41-42; Ernst A. Ebbinghaus, 'Review: [*The Gothic Commentary on the Gospel of John* by William H. Bennett]'. *Language* 39 (1963), 131.

³⁴⁴ See Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 248; K. R. Brooks, 'Review: [*The Gothic Commentary on the Gospel of John* by William H. Bennett]'. *The Modern Language Review* 58 (1963), 87.

Christian, as is made clear by the various descriptors applied to Jesus throughout (e.g., ‘Lord’, ‘Savior’, ‘Master’, ‘Son’).

As a commentator on the text of John’s Gospel, the Skeireinist approaches Scripture from a more or less direct angle, explaining and elaborating upon the meaning of the Gospel before him.³⁴⁵ Not all Johannine verses are commented on, but this selectivity indicates to us what he considered especially important, or what he felt needed clarification for the sake of his readers. Fortunately for us, John 3 is one of the chapters still partially extant, and the Skeireinist discusses some of its content. Normally in the commentary, quotations from Scripture are introduced with some narrative context or speech identification markers (e.g., ‘and the Savior himself, praying for his disciples, said to the Father’, ‘for this reason he teaches us clearly with the words’, ‘Andrew also, who said’), though the Skeireinist can also incorporate a biblical verse into his own line of thought. He also endeavors to correctly distinguish between the voice of the Gospel-writer and those of the characters within the text.³⁴⁶

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following excerpt from the *Skeireins* contains several references to the initial verses of the second Johannine passage under consideration.

But the Lord’s teaching, beginning out of Judea, also expanded to the entire earth, thriving everywhere until now, increasing and drawing every man to the knowledge of God. And therefore, the greatness of the Lord being clear indeed, he proclaimed the words, *‘He who comes from above is above all’*. He would not

³⁴⁵ His scriptural citations correspond to the Gothic New Testament of bishop Wulfila (c. 311-383).

³⁴⁶ For instance, at *Skeireins* 3a:5-14 he comments on the purpose behind the narrative aside found in John 3:24, which he correctly attributes to the evangelist (Gothic, *aivaggelista*): “...and there they came and were baptized. John was not yet cast into prison’. Saying this then, the evangelist revealed that the plan involving him was near an end through the beguiling of Herod’.

have proclaimed him supreme without a reason, but declared as well how vast the power of his greatness, saying him to be born of heaven and come from heaven and come from above, but himself born *'of the earth and speaking from the earth'* because he was by nature a man; whether holy, whether being a prophet and testifying to righteousness, he was nevertheless from the earth and was speaking with a natural logic. But *'he who has come from heaven'*, even if he seemed to be in the flesh, nevertheless *'is above all, and what he has seen and heard, that he testifies, and no man receives his testimony'*. And even though he came from heaven to earth for the plan concerning men, yet he was by no means earthly or speaking from the earth but born of heaven, transmitting the hidden things that he had seen and heard from the Father. Now these matters were declared by John, not merely that he might proclaim the Lord's greatness, but to censure and rebuke that impious contention of Sabellius and Marcellus, who dared to say that the Father and the Son are one.³⁴⁷

Prior to this excerpt the Skeireinist has commented on the narrative material from John 3:24-26, in which John the Baptist, referred to simply as 'John' (Gothic, *Iohannes*), is the central subject.³⁴⁸ Both a paraphrase of John 1:26-27³⁴⁹ and direct quotations of John 3:29c-30 and 3:30 are attributed to this 'John', who is undoubtedly taken as the Baptist. This is followed by the Skeireinist's explanation (in lines 3-4) that the words 'he who comes from above is above all' in John 3:31a were proclaimed to emphasize the greatness of the Lord, i.e., Jesus. At this point, the only thing known with certainty regarding the Skeireinist's understanding of the identity of the speaker in 3:31a is that he is male ('he proclaimed'). However, this ambiguity becomes clearer in his subsequent statements: 'he would not have claimed him supreme without a reason...but himself born of the earth and speaking from the earth because he was by nature a man...being a

³⁴⁷ *Skeireins* 4b:7-4d:23. Translated by Bennett (1960).

³⁴⁸ In *Skeireins* 3b:15-6 the Baptist is given one other designation: 'John, the precursor of the gospel'.

³⁴⁹ The wording of this paraphrase contains elements from the parallel saying in the Synoptic Gospels.

prophet and testifying to righteousness...he was nevertheless from the earth and was speaking with natural logic' (lines 4-10). Based on these descriptive details there can be little doubt that the speaker of John 3:31-32 is in the Skeireinist's opinion a *character* in the Gospel narrative. In this regard the Baptist is the leading candidate. The speaker is portrayed as contrasting himself (merely a man) to Jesus (the superior one from heaven). At the end of the excerpt, the Skeireinist challenges an 'impious contention' of Sabellius and Marcellus: they considered the Father and the Son to be 'one and the same signified under different names'. Oddly, the Skeireinist states that such matters were declared by John to 'censure and rebuke' this specific heretical contention. Sabellius was active in the early-third century and Marcellus some time after him, so such a claim appears to be exaggerated in order to strengthen his own doctrinal position against these men.³⁵⁰

Regrettably, the only verses quoted from Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in the *Skeireins* are 3:3-5. The Skeireinist does make a general comment that Jesus perceived that Nicodemus would later come to faith,³⁵¹ yet this is far too vague to make any claim for his position on the identity of the speaker in 3:13-21. Similarly, in what is extant of the commentary the remaining verses from the second Johannine passage are not cited; we can only confidently say that the Skeireinist considered 3:31-32 to be the Baptist's words concerning himself and Jesus.

³⁵⁰ The possibility also exists that the Skeireinist believed John was *prophetically* censuring these heretics, i.e., that he knew such men would rise up in later centuries to spread heresy. These verses would thus serve as a Spirit-inspired witness to the truth of the Gospel. In the Skeireinist's view, the Father and the Son are two distinct persons but both still fully God. Cf. *Skeireins* 5b:20-22

³⁵¹ Cf. *Skeireins* 2c:7-13, likely a reference to John 19, where Nicodemus openly assists Joseph of Arimathea in the burial of Jesus.

Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379).

1. Background Material

Basil was born into a Christian family with a distinguished tradition of piety. His grandmother Macrina the Elder had in early life become a convert and disciple of Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. 210-270), the first bishop of Neocaesarea in Pontus and a former pupil of Origen of Alexandria.³⁵² From as early as Basil could remember, his grandmother imparted to him the central tenets of the faith and church tradition.³⁵³ After being educated in schools of rhetoric at Caesarea (in Cappadocia), Constantinople and Athens, Basil decided to pursue a life of asceticism. In time he was appointed a reader, and then a presbyter in the early 360s. Ultimately he was consecrated bishop of Caesarea in 370 following the death of his predecessor, Eusebius. Basil proved to be not only a gifted preacher and ecclesiastical leader, but also a man of social action.³⁵⁴ In the outskirts of the metropolis he founded a charitable facility that included a church, a lodging for travelers, a center for feeding the poor (*ptōchotropheion*), and a hospital.³⁵⁵ Basil's emphasis on the communal aspects of ascetic life fostered a less individualized approach to Christian monasticism, which endured for centuries after him.

³⁵² See Nikolai A. Lipatov, 'Basil of Caesarea', in McKim (ed.), *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, 168.

³⁵³ Cf. Basil, *Letter* 223.3.

³⁵⁴ At Basil's funeral service, his friend Gregory of Nazianzus compared Basil to numerous biblical figures (John the Baptist, the apostles Peter, Paul and John) because of his humility, zeal, eloquence, and concern for the destitute. Cf. *Funeral Oration for St. Basil* 75-77.

³⁵⁵ Basil's hospital, according to many historians the first of its kind, triggered the construction of a network of other hospitals in parts of the Eastern Empire over the years. Basil persuaded many wealthy Christians to fund such humanitarian efforts, and presumably to employ those serving as nurses and physicians (Greek, *nosokomontas*; *iatreuontas*). Cf. Basil, *Homily to the Rich*; *Letters* 94, 143, 150, 176.

Throughout his episcopate Basil defended the Nicene Creed against the spread of Arianism by the emperor Valens (d. 378). Because he was held in high esteem by so many (nicknamed ‘the Great’ within his own lifetime), much of Basil’s literary output has come down to us in its original Greek form or in early translation. One of his earliest works to include references to John 3 is found within the corpus known as the *Asketikon*. These writings have a rather complex redaction history, which can only here be summarized briefly.³⁵⁶

While still a presbyter (c. 363-365) Basil composed the *Small Asketikon*, a book on monastic reform that was based on his question-and-answer sessions with the monks of Pontus. Although it has not survived in Greek except for a few fragments, it was translated into Syriac within Basil’s lifetime (c. 370s). Independent of the Syriac, Rufinus of Aquileia translated the *Small Asketikon* into Latin around the year 396. Although the Syriac translation is a ‘freer’ and ‘less intelligent’ version than that of Rufinus’ Latin edition,³⁵⁷ when viewed together they provide an important early window into Basil’s understanding of the Johannine text. In the year 370, Basil reworked the *Small Asketikon* and published an expanded version which became known as the *Great Asketikon*. Throughout these years revisions were continually made, giving us the so-called ‘Longer Rules’ and ‘Shorter Rules’, from which even further recensions appeared. This intricate redaction history has ramifications for our analysis of Basil’s citations of John 3, because

³⁵⁶ For detailed treatments see Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 354-369; Johan Leemans, ‘Biblical Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea’s *Asketikon*’, in Weidemann (ed.), *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses*, 247-252.

³⁵⁷ See Paul J. Fedwick, ‘The Translations of the Works of Basil Before 1400’, in Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium*, 444-446; Anna M. Silvas (ed. and trans.), *Basil of Caesarea. Questions of the Brothers: Syriac Text and English Translation* (Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity 3. Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21-37.

as we will observe the citations are not uniform with respect to the speaker. While verses from both Testaments are abundantly cited, at many points Basil incorporates them into his own sentences without formally identifying them as such.

Basil's next citation of John 3 appears in his *Homily on Psalm 7*, which he preached sometime within the years 363-378.³⁵⁸ Basil's preferred method of delivery was extempore preaching, that is, without notes or advanced preparation—this gave his listening audience a sense of immediacy and inspiration.³⁵⁹ For this reason we can be relatively confident that his biblical citations, apart from those on the central text of Psalm 7, were cited from memory. Typically these verses contain little formal introduction, but at times the speaker is identified. This is comparable to his citation style in his *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, which likely originated as a series of homilies preached in the early 360s.³⁶⁰

The last two works including portions of John 3 are *Concerning Baptism* and *Hypotyposis of the Ascetic Life*.³⁶¹ Basil composed these during the years 372-376, offering readers an exposition of the significance of baptism and the importance of asceticism. The brevity of *Hypotyposis of the Ascetic Life* allowed it to circulate as a

³⁵⁸ While chronological precision is not possible with many of his homilies on the Psalms, there are some indications that this homily belongs on the earlier end of this date range. E.g., Philip Rousseau points out that Basil's discussion on the topic of family history and upbringing fits better within the earlier stages of his career. See his *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 24-25 (fn 74).

³⁵⁹ In *Letter 207*, Basil refers to the Psalms as the 'oracles of the Spirit' (Greek, *logiois tou pneumatos*).

³⁶⁰ Erasmus was the first to doubt the commentary's authenticity, and for centuries since Erasmus it was categorized as a dubious work (i.e., 'Pseudo-Basil'). Yet several recent scholars have challenged this claim and offered persuasive evidence of its authenticity. See Enrico Cattaneo, *Il Commento a Isaia di Basilio di Cesarea: Attribuzione e Studio Teologico-Letterario* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2014).

³⁶¹ Older arguments casting doubt on the authenticity of *Concerning Baptism* have been seriously weakened by recent studies, and scholars now generally accept it as an authentic work of Basil's. Cf. Umberto Neri (ed. and trans.), *Basilio di Cesarea: Il Battesimo. Testo, Traduzione, Introduzione e Commento* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1976).

preface to *Concerning Baptism* and only a handful of scriptural references appear in it. On the other hand, biblical verses from abound in *Concerning Baptism* (especially from Paul's epistles and the Gospels), and many include detail on their respective speakers (e.g., 'David says', 'the apostle Paul has told us', 'Jesus Christ said').

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Since some of Basil's Johannine citations within the *Asketikon* corpus are extant in three languages (Syriac, Latin, Greek), it will be convenient to analyze them in tandem. The following excerpts are found in the Syriac *Questions of the Brothers*, Rufinus' Latin translation *Rule of Basil*, and the expanded Greek edition *Shorter Rules*.

Question: The brothers say: In what way can one perfect love for one's neighbor?

Response: Basil says: Firstly, by fearing the judgment against those who transgress our Lord's commandments, for '*whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God shall stay over him*'. Then again, by being solicitous for eternal life, for 'my commandments are eternal life'.

Question: How shall one be able to fulfill love for one's neighbor?

Response: In the first place, by fearing the judgment against those who trespass the commandment of the Lord, for he himself said, '*Whoever does not believe in the Son shall not have life, but the wrath of God shall stay over him*'. Second, by yearning to reach eternal life, for 'his commandment is eternal life'.

Question: By what means is one able to accomplish love for one's neighbor?

Response: First, by fearing the judgment of those transgressing the commandment of the Lord, having said: '*Whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him*'. And then, by laying claim to eternal life, for 'his commandment is eternal life'.³⁶²

In each of these excerpts the question posed to Basil is essentially the same: How can a person love his neighbor as much as he loves himself? In the first excerpt (lines 1-

³⁶² *Questions of the Brothers* 41. Translated by Silvas (2014); *Rule of Basil* 39.1-2. Translated by Silvas (2013); *Shorter Rules* 163. My translation.

5), the Syriac translator prefaces the response with the phrase ‘Basil says’, revealing his self-understanding as a reporter of Basil’s words. Because a quotation formula for John 3:36b is not present, it is unclear whether or not Basil is attributing the verse to ‘our Lord’ (Syriac, *de-māran*). However, the excerpts from Latin and Greek do make this more clear. In line 8, Basil introduces 3:36b with the words ‘he himself said’ (Latin, *ipse dixit*), which he appears to link with ‘the commandment of the Lord’ (Latin, *mandatum domini*). It is important to point out, however, that a variant reading exists in the manuscript tradition of this latter phrase: four Latin manuscripts instead read ‘the commandment of God’ (Latin, *mandatum dei*).³⁶³ This variant reading may have been original to Rufinus, though the Syriac is in agreement with the Greek *Shorter Rules* on ‘Lord’. In the third excerpt (lines 11-15), Basil prefaces his citation of 3:36b with the phrase ‘the commandment of the Lord, having said’ (Greek, *tēn entolēn tou kuriou eipontos*). What is important to notice about each of these citations is the absence of any mention of the Gospel-writer or the Baptist, our expected speakers. We observe this same peculiarity in the next set of excerpts from Basil’s *Asketikon* corpus.

In the Gospel moreover it is written: ‘If your brother has offended against you, reprove him between you and him...but if he will not hearken even to the church, let him be reckoned to you as the Gentile and the tax-collector’. How great is the judgment of those who remain silent concerning iniquity, is revealed by the word of our Lord who said, ‘*Whoever does not obey the Son, the wrath of God shall stay over him*’.

Further, in the Gospel he says, ‘If your brother sins against you, go and confront him, between you and him alone...if however he refuses to listen even to the

³⁶³ The manuscripts, which date from the ninth century, are Codex Sangallensis 926, Codex Lambacensis 31, Codex Parisiensis bibl. Nat. Lat. 12238 and Codex Guelferbytanus 4127, according to the apparatus in Klaus Zelzer (ed.), *Basili Regula: A Rufino Latine Versa* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 86. Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1986), 83.

church, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax-collector'. But how great is the condemnation of this sin can be learned first of all from the pronouncement of the Lord where he says, *'Whoever disobeys the Son shall not have eternal life, but the wrath of God stays over him'*.

In the Gospel: 'If your brother sins against you, go show him his fault between you and him alone...and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax-collector'. But how great is the judgment of this sin, is possible to learn first from the general declaration of the Lord, having said, *'Whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him'*.³⁶⁴

Minor differences can be found between Basil's responses in each of these excerpts, yet their overall message is the same. He first cites Matthew 18:15-17, locating the verses 'in the Gospel', followed by another partial citation of John 3:36. In the first excerpt (lines 1-6), Basil appears to be citing this Johannine verse from memory, since the phrase 'shall not see life' is omitted. Rufinus' version (lines 7-12) modifies this to 'shall not have eternal life', while the Greek 'shall not see life' matches the text as it is found in the Gospel (lines 13-17). John 3:36b is introduced in three ways that have no substantive differences in meaning—in Syriac: 'the word of our Lord who said'; in Latin: 'the pronouncement of the Lord where he says';³⁶⁵ and in Greek: 'the general declaration of the Lord, having said'. From these it is evident that Basil believed 'the Lord' spoke these words, although we have not yet determined how he understood this reference (i.e., for Jesus specifically or for God more generally). Since further citations of 3:36 occur below, we will return to this question at the appropriate time.

³⁶⁴ *Questions of the Brothers* 108.2-5. Translated by Silvas (2014); *Rule of Basil* 122.1-5. Translated by Silvas (2013); *Shorter Rules* 47. Translated by Clarke (1925), with minor modifications.

³⁶⁵ Note: The Latin phrase 'where he says' (*qua dicit*) is omitted in one manuscript, Codex Londiniensis (c. tenth century). Cf. Klaus Zelzer (ed.), *Basili Regula: A Rufino Latine Versa* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 86. Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1986), 149.

The next two excerpts from the *Shorter Rules* have no parallel in Syriac or Latin, and therefore constitute later additions to the *Asketikon*. It is probable that these additions were made by Basil himself around the year 370.³⁶⁶ In the following passage Basil concludes his response to the question: ‘In what sense are some called sons of disobedience and children of wrath?’

Now one is a child of wrath in so far as he has made himself worthy of wrath. For as the apostle called those who are worthy of the Lord and do the works of light and day ‘sons of light and sons of day’, so also it is appropriate to understand the phrase ‘we were children of wrath’. However, one must know that the son of disobedience is also a child of wrath. The Lord declared, ‘*Whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*’.³⁶⁷

In clarifying the meaning of the designation ‘child of wrath’, Basil looks to three places in Scripture that touch on the subject: 1 Thessalonians 5:5, Ephesians 2:3 and John 3:36. Basil explains that one is ‘worthy’ (Greek, *axion*) of such a designation by his own evil-doing, and in line 5 he equates this with being a ‘son of disobedience’. Basil then prefaces his citation of John 3:36b with the phrase ‘the Lord declared’ (Greek, *tou kuriou apophēnamenou*). Thus far we have found Basil to be relatively consistent in the attribution of this Johannine verse to ‘the Lord’; however, later in the *Shorter Rules* he again cites 3:36 with an entirely different attribution. Below, Basil responds to the question: ‘How are we to deal with those who avoid greater sins but commit small sins, regarding them as venial offenses?’

³⁶⁶ Silvas refers to this version as likely comprising Basil’s ‘final editorial stamp’. Cited in Johan Leemans, ‘Biblical Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea’s *Asketikon*’, in Weidemann (ed.), *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses*, 249-250.

³⁶⁷ *Shorter Rules* 268. Translated by Clarke (1925), with minor modifications.

First of all we must know that in the New Testament it is impossible to observe this distinction. For one sentence is passed against all sins, that of the Lord who said, ‘Everyone that commits sin is the slave of sin’. And again: ‘The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day’. And of John crying, ‘*Whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*’. Disobedience receives this threat not because it is worse than other sins, but because it is refusing to hear.³⁶⁸

Basil begins by dismissing the notion that some sins are worse than others. He explains that the New Testament clearly affirms that every sin will be called to account, yet such disobedience is also completely forgivable.³⁶⁹ Basil cites three verses from John’s Gospel in support of this. In line 3 he attributes John 8:34 to ‘the Lord’ and then introduces 12:48b with the indefinite phrase ‘and again’ (Greek, *kai palin*). Given that this latter verse contains the first-person verb *elalēsa* (‘I have spoken’), we can be sure that Basil understood Jesus to be the speaker. We then arrive at 3:36b, which for the first time is not attributed to ‘the Lord’; instead, Basil prefaces his citation with the words ‘and of John crying’ (Greek, *kai tou Iōannou boōntos*). The action of ‘crying’ appears in patristic writings when both the Gospel-writer and the Baptist are cited,³⁷⁰ so we cannot immediately be sure which ‘John’ Basil has in mind. Nevertheless, we can note the fact that it would have been far simpler for Basil to treat this verse as a saying of ‘the Lord’, since two of Jesus’ statements had just been cited (lines 3-4). It is therefore quite possible that such a distinction was made intentionally, whether by Basil himself or a scribal ‘corrector’.

³⁶⁸ *Shorter Rules* 293.

³⁶⁹ Cf. W. K. Clarke (trans.), *The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil* (London: SPCK, 1925), 342 (fn 3).

³⁷⁰ See the use of this phrase in e.g., Chrysostom, *Homily on 1 Corinthians* 38.3 (citing John 1:29); Pseudo-Chrysostom, *On Holy Theophany* 1 (citing John 1:26-27); *Epistula Felicis Altera* 9 (citing John 1:1). In all four Gospels, the Baptist is depicted as a ‘voice crying in the wilderness’.

Our next partial citation of John 3:36 is taken from Basil's short treatise *Hypotyposis of the Ascetic Life*, which prefaces *Concerning Baptism*. Here he informs his readers that the effect of sinful living (death) is the opposite of God's commandment (eternal life).

In order that you do not fall on some sharp point out of ignorance to [your] death, which is sin, or transgress any commandment of God, concerning this it was written: 'His commandment is eternal life'. And from these things you might escape what the Lord says: '*Whoever disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him*'.³⁷¹

We may first point out a striking similarity in Basil's choice of scriptural citations: in all three versions of the *Asketikon*,³⁷² he cited identical portions of John 3:36 and 12:50 in close succession. Here the order is reversed, but the attribution of 3:36b to 'the Lord' (Greek, *tou kuriou*) is the same. This may indicate that Basil had a copy of his earlier work (or another source) before him; it is also conceivable that his memory was triggered whenever one of these verses was cited (his 'mental text'). Basil's final three citations of this Johannine verse appear in *Concerning Baptism*. This first excerpt from the treatise is especially noteworthy, as it contains his first *complete* citation of John 3:36 (all Greek words in the verse being accounted for).

If we carefully heed these words, fully convinced of their truth, we will be able to escape the terrible doom written by Moses in threat and prophecy: 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me. You shall hear him in all things that he may command you. And it will happen that every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed utterly from among the people'. And John the Baptist, of whom there was no greater among those born of women, says more directly and with greater severity: '*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life,*

³⁷¹ *Hypotyposis* preface 1. Draft translation.

³⁷² Cf. *Questions of the Brothers* 41; *Rule of Basil* 39.1-2; *Shorter Rules* 163.

but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him'.³⁷³

Basil begins by quoting a portion of Moses' warning in Deuteronomy 18 regarding the consequences of unbelief (lines 2-5). This leads him to cite the more 'direct' and 'severe' testimony found in John 3:36, attributed for the first time to 'John the Baptist' (Greek, *Iōannou tou Baptistou*). Basil also prefaces the verse with an allusion to Jesus' description of the Baptist as 'the greatest among those born of women' (cf. Matthew 11:11/Luke 7:28). He may have been done this to remind readers of the Baptist's credentials and to heed his words. We again find Basil attributing John 3:36 to the Baptist later in the second book of *Concerning Baptism*, excerpted below.

Yet to cite on this occasion one or two passages from the many bearing on this subject, let us hear John the Baptist saying, '*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son*', and that which is not restricted is all-inclusive, '*will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*'. The Lord himself affirmed in a definitive manner that 'not one iota or one stroke of the law shall pass until all is fulfilled'.³⁷⁴

In commencing his discussion of the justification of God's wrath, John 3:36 is the first verse that comes to Basil's mind. In introducing the verse he employs the phrase 'let us hear' (Greek, *akousōmen*), suggesting that Basil was either delivering this portion of the treatise orally (so his audience could 'hear' the words), or that he believed the Baptist spoke these words in a narrative framework (i.e., to his disciples). Importantly, in lines 5-6 Basil goes on to cite Jesus' declaration in Matthew 5:18, placing the words on the lips of 'the Lord himself' (Greek, *autou tou kuriou*). As we observed in our analysis of

³⁷³ *Concerning Baptism* 1.2.13. Translated by Wagner (1962), with minor modifications.

³⁷⁴ *Concerning Baptism* 2.5.

Shorter Rules 293, it is plausible that Basil was intentionally distinguishing the Baptist's words from Jesus' own. That being said, it must be noted that two variants in the manuscript tradition exist.³⁷⁵ The first of these variants is found in Codex Mosquensis 120, which dates from the tenth century; it omits the epithet 'the Baptist', thus reading 'let us hear John saying'. Here the Baptist may still have been the understood referent, as Basil elsewhere refers to him as 'John'.³⁷⁶ The second manuscript, Codex Vaticano gr. 476, dates from the twelfth century and contains the reading 'John the evangelist' (Greek, *Iōannou tou euangelistou*) instead of 'John the Baptist'. Since Basil makes one final citation of 3:36 just a few paragraphs later, we will discuss these variants after analyzing the following excerpt.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared, 'Whoever despises me and does not receive my words has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day'. John the Baptist, too, of whom there was no greater, clearly testifies: *'Whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him'*.³⁷⁷

As in the previous excerpt, Basil cites John 3:36 in close proximity to a Gospel saying attributed to Jesus. In this case he quotes John 12:48 in lines 1-3, which we may remember was also referenced in combination with 3:36b in *Shorter Rules* 293.³⁷⁸ John the Baptist is once again ascribed the words of 3:36, and for the second time Basil

³⁷⁵ See the critical apparatus in Umberto Neri, *Basilio di Cesarea: Il Battesimo. Testo, Traduzione, Introduzione e Commento* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1976), 338.

³⁷⁶ E.g., *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* 4.137: 'The prophecy distinctly predicts the same things as John does when he speaks about the Lord: 'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire', and about himself: 'I baptize you with water for repentance''. Translated by Lipatov (2001).

³⁷⁷ *Concerning Baptism* 2.5.

³⁷⁸ Observed by Umberto Neri, *Basilio di Cesarea: Il Battesimo. Testo, Traduzione, Introduzione e Commento* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1976), 45-46.

mentions his status as the ‘greatest’. Since no variants exist among the Greek manuscript tradition for this attribution and in our first excerpt from *Concerning Baptism*, it is probable that the two variants mentioned above were not original.

Having completed our analysis of Basil’s citations of John 3:36, we may now summarize our findings in order to come to a conclusion on his identification of the speaker. We discovered that Basil cited this verse a total of eight times; half of these were attributed to John the Baptist, while the other half were attributed to ‘the Lord’. As noted earlier, it was not immediately clear in each case whether the title ‘Lord’ stood for Jesus specifically or God more generally. Because Basil elsewhere employed this title with both meanings, there still remains ambiguity over his original intention. Complicating matters of course is the complex redaction history that his works endured, as well as the apparent discrepancy in the four attributions of 3:36 to the Baptist. Three leading scholars on Basil have addressed this issue directly, and their proposed solutions are worth outlining as we come to our own conclusion.

In 1953, J. Gribomont published his groundbreaking study on the history of Basil’s ascetic works, offering a few comments on the identification of the Baptist as the speaker of John 3:36 in *Shorter Rules* 293. He insisted that since Basil consistently attributed this verse to ‘the Lord’ in the *Asketikon*, the Baptist’s name must have been inserted by an ‘overscrupulous corrector’ (French, *correcteur trop scrupuleux*).³⁷⁹ In his view, a later scribe had ‘corrected’ Basil’s attribution to match his own understanding of

³⁷⁹ He further asserted that Basil did not quote this verse from memory, as is usually assumed, but that he made use of his copy of *Morals*, a handy compilation of New Testament verses. John 3:36 is indeed cited there, but no speaker is identified. See J. Gribomont, *Histoire du Texte des Ascétiques de S. Basile* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 32. Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1953), 231-232.

the speaker.³⁸⁰ It seems that because Gribomont did not accept the Basilian authorship of *Concerning Baptism*, he did not mention the three citations of 3:36 within it.³⁸¹ In 1976, Umberto Neri published his critical edition and Italian translation of *Concerning Baptism*, providing a wealth of data from which he defended the authenticity of the treatise. Neri outlined two possibilities for the discrepancy between the identification of the speakers amongst Basil's works.³⁸² He first proposed that since *Concerning Baptism* was one of Basil's final works, he may have himself noted the 'error' and consequently provided the 'correct' attribution. By this time, his earlier works would have circulated outside of his control, and so were left 'uncorrected'. Neri also echoed Gribomont's earlier hypothesis that the attribution to the Baptist came about via later redaction. Finally, in 1989 Jeanne Ducatillon published her study and French translation of *Concerning Baptism* in the Sources Chrétiennes series. Like Gribomont and Neri, she speculated that at an early point of transmission a corrector changed the attribution from 'the Lord' to the Baptist, according to his own reading of the passage.³⁸³ However, Ducatillon also allowed for the possibility that the attribution may have been original to Basil, in that he may have realized the discrepancy and made the 'correction' himself.³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ This must have occurred very early, since no variant readings exist for the attribution to 'John'.

³⁸¹ While the treatise may have remained faithful to Basil's thought, Gribomont believed it likely comprised the notes of one of his disciples (thus not by Basil's own hand). Cf. Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 130 (fn 148).

³⁸² See Umberto Neri, *Basilio di Cesarea: Il Battesimo. Testo, Traduzione, Introduzione e Commento* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1976), 220-221.

³⁸³ See Jeanne Ducatillon, *Basile de Césarée: Sur le Baptême* (Sources Chrétiennes 357. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 144.

³⁸⁴ Ducatillon's use of the phrase 'it can be admitted' (French, *on peut admettre*) shows that she was not absolutely convinced that the attribution to the Baptist was unoriginal (especially since not a single manuscript of *Concerning Baptism* includes the title 'Lord' for John 3:36).

In light of this inconclusive set of proposals and complex picture of redaction history, Basil's position on the speaker of John 3:36 appears to be indeterminable. Since he never cited the preceding verses (3:31-35), it seems unlikely that he turned to the Gospel text to reread the verse in its historical context each and every time he quoted it.³⁸⁵ Admittedly, the verse's content is reminiscent of Jesus' other sayings, and so in the end Basil may have initially made the attribution without a full awareness of its placement in the Gospel text. Having established this, there are still two citations from the first Johannine passage that need to be analyzed, to which we now turn.

Basil makes two partial citations of John 3:18 in his *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* and in *Homily on Psalm 7*. While he does not specify the speaker's identity in these citations, he does include the distinct reading 'in me' within them. For ease of analysis, both excerpts are here presented together.

Inasmuch as we have piled up our sins as fuel for the fire, according to the saying: 'A fire is lit from my anger'. But when we cease from sins: 'I will give judgment against my enemies'. He says, '*Whoever believes in me is not at all judged, but whoever disbelieves is already judged*'. So the enemies are responsible for the judgment.

Words about judgment are scattered in many places in Scripture, as most cogent and essential for the teaching of true religion to those who believe in God through Jesus Christ. Since the words concerning the judgment are written with various meanings, they seem to hold some confusion for those who do not accurately distinguish the meanings. '*For whoever believes in me is not judged, but whoever disbelieves is already judged*'. But if the one who does not believe is

³⁸⁵ On Basil's scriptural 'stock-borrowing', see Johan Leemans, 'Biblical Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea's Asketikon', in Weidemann (ed.), *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses*, 246-267.

the same as an impious person, how has it been said that the impious will not rise up in judgment?³⁸⁶

In the first excerpt (lines 1-5), Basil reasons that when believers correct their ways they are no longer enemies of God or subject to his judgment.³⁸⁷ In the midst of his interpretation of Isaiah 1:24 he inserts an portion of John 3:18. Although no subject is identified—the Greek only has *phēsin* (‘he says’)—the adaptation ‘in me’ indicates that Basil would not have had the Gospel-writer in mind. From his Christian perspective, only God, or Jesus more specifically, could make such an authoritative claim. Basil’s citations of Deuteronomy 32:22 and Isaiah 1:24 both include the possessive adjective ‘my’ (lines 2-3), and in context these declarations of YHWH may indicate that Basil takes God as speaker of John 3:36 (in general terms). It could be argued, however, that Basil would have insisted on the primacy of belief in Jesus, the one who would ultimately judge every person according to his or her (un)belief. When we look at the second excerpt (lines 6-13) we find similar ambiguity in terms of the speaker. Basil acknowledges to his listening audience that divine judgment is a complex matter, and cites John 3:18 as a verse that has caused ‘some confusion’ (Greek, *tina sunchusin*). Ironically, by failing to identify the speaker and immediately moving on to a separate discussion (the difference between an unbeliever and an impious person), Basil has created confusion of his own. Upon closer analysis, both of his citations of 3:18 contain more adaptations than the prepositional phrase ‘in me’, as displayed below:

³⁸⁶ *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* 1.54. Translated by Lipatov (2001), with minor modifications; *Homily on Psalm 7* 4. Translated by Way (1963), with minor modifications.

³⁸⁷ Basil goes on to explain that God’s anger and judgment are in fact intended for the benefit of sinners, that they might be purified through ‘divine fire’ (Greek, *to theion pur*).

C. *Isaiah* - ‘Whoever believes in me is not at all judged, but whoever disbelieves is judged already’.

ho pisteuōn eis eme ou mē krithē ho de apistōn ēdē kekritai

H. *Psalm* - ‘For whoever believes in me is not judged, but whoever disbelieves is judged already’.

ho pisteuōn gar eis eme ou krinetai ho de apistōn ēdē kekritai

John 3:18a - ‘Whoever believes in him is not judged, but whoever does not believe is judged already’.

ho pisteuōn eis auton ou krinetai ho de mē pisteuōn ēdē kekritai

Such variations indicate that Basil was in all likelihood recalling from memory, and may not have had the historical context of John 3:18 in mind. To be sure, he was certainly recalling this particular Johannine verse, as shown by the inclusion of the unique phrase *ēdē kekritai* (‘is judged already’). In the end, too much uncertainty surrounds Basil’s citations of 3:18 to determine his position one way or the other, and as in the case of Athanasius we are left with more questions than answers.

Didymus the Blind (c. 313-398).

1. Background Material

Didymus was an exceptionally learned man, despite suffering from blindness from early childhood. Not only was he well-versed in a variety of ‘secular’ subjects (e.g., poetry, mathematics, logic, astronomy), he also possessed a vast knowledge of the Bible. Exactly how Didymus overcame his handicap to acquire such learning is not known with certainty—his student Rufinus of Aquileia wrote matter-of-factly that Didymus was ‘taught by God’ (Latin, *deo docente*).³⁸⁸ His learning and spiritual insight eventually gained the notice of bishop Athanasius, who appointed him as a teacher at the

³⁸⁸ Cf. Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.7.

catechetical school in his hometown of Alexandria. In this capacity Didymus excelled; for decades he devoted himself to the interpretation of Scripture and to studying the legacy left by Origen, whom he much admired.³⁸⁹ Didymus composed—that is, dictated to students—a large number of theological treatises and biblical commentaries, working from Greek copies of the Hebrew Bible (Septuagint) and the New Testament.³⁹⁰ In later centuries his defense of Origen and his doctrines came under scrutiny, and in the anti-Origenistic decrees under emperor Justinian, Didymus' works were condemned. For this reason much of his literary output has perished, surviving only in fragments from later authors that quote him and, rather fortunately, in the recently discovered Tura papyri.

Three of Didymus' extant works contain quotations from our Johannine passages. The first two consist of collections of fragments believed to be transcriptions of Didymus' lectures on the book of Psalms. These collections, titled *Fragments on the Psalms* and *Commentary on the Psalms*, were probably produced in the 370s and reflect Didymus' pedagogical approach to the biblical text as he lectured.³⁹¹ Like so many other writers his scriptural citation style in the Psalms material is mixed; at many points biblical verses are incorporated into Didymus' sentences, but whenever he does provide information on a verse's speaker, he can be quite detailed (e.g., 'the Lord said to the whole city', 'according to what is written in John's epistle', 'Peter in the Acts of the Apostles says').

³⁸⁹ Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 725.

³⁹⁰ Didymus was not familiar with the Hebrew language and admits this in *Commentary on Zechariah* 12.

³⁹¹ Frequently in the *Commentary on Psalms*, questions and objections from his Alexandrian students are interjected into the text, giving the work a classroom feel. See further in Anne B. Nelson, *The Classroom of Didymus the Blind* (PhD dissertation. University of Michigan, 1995), 9-13, 28-32.

Didymus' third work referencing John 3 is his *Commentary on Zechariah*. It had been commissioned by Jerome in 386 and was completed as early as the following year.³⁹² In it Didymus offers brief comments on the literal/historical aspects of each verse, and then moves on to the spiritual level.³⁹³ When citing Scripture, he at times provides contextual details (e.g., 'the Savior said of himself', 'the Solomonic oracle in Proverbs speaks', 'John in Revelation spoke in the following elevated terms'), while at other times he uses generic introductory markers or incorporates verses into his own sentences. As in his work on the Psalms, when he does identify the speaker he is careful to distinguish between the words of characters and the biblical authors.³⁹⁴

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Didymus makes his first citations of John 3 at two points within the lecture collection *Fragments on the Psalms*. Since both citations comprise brief portions of John 3:18 and center on the theme of God's judgment, they are here presented in tandem.

The ungodly will rise up, but those who are self-condemned will not be judged, for he says, '*Whoever does not believe in me is judged already*'. On account of unbelief his condemnation is shown.

But also those of a discerning mind and citizenship behold the crown of faith; having been called, they will rejoice exceedingly, not being bound by the

³⁹² Cf. Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 6.

³⁹³ Oftentimes, Didymus leaves room for other 'possible' interpretations to be considered valid by his readers, further highlighting his somewhat open-ended hermeneutic. Cf. Robert C. Hill, *Didymus the Blind: Commentary on Zechariah* (The Fathers of the Church 111. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 15.

³⁹⁴ E.g., *Commentary on Zechariah* 1.16: 'Of him Wisdom [Jesus] said to the adversaries on building him, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I shall raise it up', the text adding, 'He said this of the temple which is his body', in the evangelist's words'.

judgment which the Lord came to execute. For the Lord says, 'Whoever believes in me is not judged', that is, they are not subject to any accusation.³⁹⁵

Didymus here draws on Psalm 1:5 and 97:8-9 to contrast the consequences of belief and unbelief. In the first passage, he notes that the resurrection of 'the ungodly' (Greek, *hoi asebeis*) will not actually include a judgment; according to John 3:18b, such people have been 'judged already' (Greek, *ēdē kekritai*). Didymus' use of this phrase is critical for establishing that this Johannine verse is being referenced, for as previously noted it appears in the New Testament just one time. Although no speaker is here specified, Didymus' inclusion of the substitution 'in me' instead of 'in him' is significant. Later in the *Fragments on the Psalms* he cites the preceding part of 3:18, once again including the reading 'in me' (lines 6-7).³⁹⁶ This time, however, Didymus identifies the speaker as 'the Lord' (Greek, *ho kurios*). His earlier reference to the coming of the Lord to 'execute judgment' (Greek, *krisei poiēsai*) points directly to the incarnation of Jesus, thereby establishing that he is the understood referent.

Didymus' next citation of a portion of John 3 is found in his *Commentary on the Psalms*. Below, he discusses why Jesus preferred to use the title 'Son of Man', quoting John 3:13 for the first time.³⁹⁷

Therefore, in order to show that he is 'of Mary', he called himself 'Son of Man'.
Now the same Word of God is also sometimes called 'Son of Man', for when he

³⁹⁵ *Fragments on the Psalms* 6; 952. Draft translation.

³⁹⁶ Supporting the notion that Didymus here has John 3 in mind is his paraphrase of 3:20-21 four paragraphs later: 'Therefore every evil person is made manifest by the light, shaming [and] hating the light, not coming to it, that his deeds should be exposed. Of him who does the truth, he comes to the light that his deeds may be seen, that they have been done in God' (*Fragments on the Psalms* 954). My translation.

³⁹⁷ Didymus quotes 3:13 twice more, but in both places does not identify who he believes the speaker to be. See *Commentary on Psalms* 35 ('it is said in the Gospel'); *Fragments on the Psalms* 155 ('he says').

says, 'No one has ascended into heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man', he speaks about himself [as] the Word of God.³⁹⁸

Didymus here relates that Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of Man to make clear that he was man. In his use of the phrase 'of Mary' (Greek, *ek tēs Marias*), Didymus affirms that Jesus was indeed born in the flesh. However, this same Son of Man is identical to the Word of God, who existed in heaven prior to his descent to earth. Didymus then appears to attribute John 3:13 to him, since the verse is followed by the words 'he speaks about himself' (Greek, *kat' autou legei*), which in terms of narrative context aligns with his prior citations of 3:18.

One last Johannine citation appears in the twelfth chapter of the *Commentary on Zechariah*. Having digressed from his analysis of Zechariah 12:8, Didymus challenges the heresies propounded by the docetists, who deny the humanity of Jesus, and the teachings of individuals such as Paul of Samosata and Photinus the Galatian, which reject Jesus' status as 'only-begotten Son'.

While these people were banished from the church for being recognized as completely impious, then, we by contrast hold fast to the ancient position of the assembly of the faithful, and confess that God the Word came down, assuming the human condition complete with soul, body and spirit. The fact that the Father gave the Son for the child to be born John the evangelist makes very clear, in showing the incarnate one saying about himself, '*God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, so that everyone believing in him might have eternal life*'. What is sent to the Romans by the Christ-bearing Paul in these words has the same meaning, 'God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh so as to condemn sin in the flesh'.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ *Commentary on Psalms* 30. Draft translation.

³⁹⁹ *Commentary on Zechariah* 12.8. Translated by Hill (2006), with minor modifications.

In identifying himself and his readers with the ‘faithful’, Didymus looks to Scripture for support of the church’s stance on Jesus’ divine sonship. The two verses that he includes, John 3:16 and Romans 8:3, both reveal Didymus’ view on the speakers. He makes it crystal clear that John the evangelist, as author of the Gospel, has *recorded* the words of ‘the incarnate one’ (Greek, *ton enanthrōpēsanta*). This distinctive title is reserved for Jesus alone,⁴⁰⁰ and Didymus here unambiguously takes John 3:16 to be what this incarnate one said ‘about himself’ (Greek, *peri heautou*). Thus, with 3:16 also attributed to Jesus along with 3:13 and 3:18, it is very likely that he regarded the preceding verses not cited (3:14-15, 3:17) to belong on Jesus’ lips as well.⁴⁰¹ We may also note that this makes Didymus the third Alexandrian to include the adapted reading ‘in me’, following his predecessors Origen and Athanasius.

Ambrose of Milan (c. 339-397).

1. Background Material

Born into an aristocratic family at Trier (in modern-day Germany), Ambrose relocated in his teenage years to the city of Rome after the untimely death of his father. In the imperial capital Ambrose received the finest education in rhetoric and law, in addition

⁴⁰⁰ E.g., in the first chapter of his commentary, Didymus interprets the rider of the red horse in Zechariah’s vision to be Christ ‘the incarnate Savior’ (Greek, *ho enanthrōpēsas sōtēr*). Cf. also uses of *enanthrōpēsanta* in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.19; 3.7; 4.12.

⁴⁰¹ A partial citation of John 3:19 is found in *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 47. However, the most vital information on the speaker’s identity is presented in square brackets in the critical edition: *en goun tō euang[eliō ho Iōannēs] legei* (‘hence in the Gosp[el John] says’). Binder and Liesenborghs clearly state that such bracketed information is lacunose in the Tura manuscript, and thus purely conjectural: ‘Gap by external damage to the papyrus’ (German, *Lücke durch äussere Beschädigung des Papyrus*). Cf. Gerhard Binder and Leo Liesenborghs (eds.), *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zum Ecclesiastes (Tura-Papyrus). Teil I.1. Kap. 1,1-2,14* (Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 25. Bonn: Habelt, 1979), xxxiii, 234.

to undergoing a thorough study of Greek.⁴⁰² He soon became a professional rhetorician and in 370 moved to Milan, Italy. His strong Christian upbringing produced in him a keen sense of ethics, philosophical contemplation and love for the Scriptures. At the age of thirty-five Ambrose was appointed bishop of Milan, just four years after first arriving to the city. In this position he enthusiastically studied Scripture under the priest Simplicianus, who had also baptized Ambrose. He remained politically active and influential throughout his career, especially through his abundant writings, which included exegetical homilies, liturgical hymns, biblical commentaries, and theological/ethical treatises. Because he was bilingual, Ambrose could also draw from the interpretations of Greek writers such as Irenaeus, Origen, Didymus and Basil of Caesarea. With regard to Scripture, Ambrose made frequent use the literal, moral and allegorical/mystical senses.

Four of Ambrose's works make reference to John 3 and provide enough detail from which to deduce his view on the speaker. The earliest is a treatise called *Exposition of the Christian Faith*. He began writing it in 378 at request of the emperor Gratian, and it took two years to complete. Ambrose's twin objectives in the work were to provide a systematic defense of Christ's divinity and to attack the Arian position with the scriptural evidence against it. Ambrose is found to cite Scripture profusely; at times he quotes and translates verses directly from the Greek text.⁴⁰³ A substantial portion of his citations from the Bible are introduced with speech markers (e.g., 'the Son himself says', 'the prophet said', 'in the Gospel of Luke the Father says').

⁴⁰² Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1045.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1049-1050.

Ambrose next cites John 3 about a decade later in *On the Duties of the Clergy*, a mostly pedagogical work promoting Christian virtue within the church. In it Ambrose exhorts those of the clergy and ‘the faithful’ to devote themselves to virtue, prayer and Scripture reading.⁴⁰⁴ Throughout the work he makes frequent reference to biblical characters that lived righteous lives. Verses are at times formally introduced (e.g., ‘Moses wrote that God said’, ‘the apostle asks’, ‘he offered himself to the destroying angel and said’), while the generic ‘it is written’ also appears recurrently.

Around the same period Ambrose references a portion of John 3 again in *Concerning Repentance* (c. 384-394). This work was directed against Novatians who insisted that forgiveness was not possible if one’s sins were too ‘heavy’. Ambrose strongly takes issue with the notion that only ‘lighter sins’ are forgivable by drawing from the testimony of Scripture, arguing that God’s mercy is always available if one speedily repents and confess his or her sin. As in his other two treatises, biblical verses are usually supplied with information regarding the speaker (e.g., ‘David says in the Psalm’, ‘Jesus rebuked James and John’, ‘the Lord said to Mary Magdalene’). Ambrose also is fond of extending the voice of the biblical character into his own paraphrase of verses, employing a dramatic effect known as *prosopopoeia*.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ In *On the Duties of the Clergy* 1.88, Ambrose remarks with frustration how such things were not being regularly practiced outside the church walls: ‘Why not employ those periods, when you are free from church responsibilities, in reading? Why not go to see Christ again, speak to Christ, listen to Christ? We speak to him when we pray, we listen to him when we read the divine oracles’ (Latin, *divina legimus audias*). Translated by Davidson (2001).

⁴⁰⁵ According to the Alexandrian rhetorician Aelius Theon (first century A.D.), *prosopopoeia* was a persuasive literary device defined as ‘the introduction of a person to whom words are attributed that are suitable to the speaker, and have an indisputable application to the subject being discussed...[When using it], one should have in mind what the personality of the speaker is like and to whom the speech is addressed’ (*Progymnasmata* 8). Translated by Kennedy (2003).

The last of Ambrose's works to contain a portion of John 3 is a collection of sermons titled *Commentary on Twelve Psalms*. Preached between the years 390-397 and taken down by stenographers, this collection was polished by Ambrose and dictated for publication by his secretary Paulinus.⁴⁰⁶ Many digressions and textual considerations punctuate his exegesis of Psalms 1 and 36, in which two Johannine citations are found. On the whole, when quoting Scripture Ambrose is careful to specify the particular speaker's identity or general context in which the words appear (e.g., 'Isaiah cries aloud', 'Agabus the prophet said').

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Ambrose's first citation from John 3 is found in the fourth book of his *Exposition of the Christian Faith*. In the passage provided below he discusses Jesus' claims to have been sent by God and to be the source of life along with the Father.

How then do they suppose that we are to understand these words? For the comparison can be shown as twofold. The first comparison being after the following manner: 'As the living Father has sent me, I live by the Father'; the second: 'Even as the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so also he that eats me will live by me'. If they [our adversaries] choose the former, the meaning is this: 'As I am sent by the Father and have come down from the Father, so (in accordance therewith) I live by the Father'. But in what character was he sent and came down, except as Son of Man, just as he himself said before, 'No one has ascended into heaven, except he who came down from heaven, the Son of Man?' Then, just as he was sent and came down as the Son of Man, so as the Son of Man he lives by the Father. Furthermore, he that eats him, as eating the Son of Man, does also himself live by the Son of Man. Thus, he has compared the effect of his incarnation to his coming.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Íde Ní Riain, *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on Twelve Psalms* (Dublin: Halcyon Press, 2000), xv.

⁴⁰⁷ *Exposition of the Christian Faith* 4.125-127. Translated by Romestin (1896), with minor modifications.

Ambrose here focuses on two interpretations of John 6:57. He insists that those opposed to the truth must understand the verse in its ‘Son of Man’ context. The content of John 3:13 comes to Ambrose’s mind, and in line 8 he introduces his citation with the words ‘just as he himself said before’ (Latin, *sicut ipse supra dixit*). Ambrose then affirms in lines 12-13 that ‘he compared’ (Latin, *comparavit*) his incarnation to his coming. Such references suggest that the speaker of both of these Johannine verses are very likely understood as linked.⁴⁰⁸ Ambrose cites the next verse (3:14) in the third book of *On the Duties of the Clergy*, written about a decade or so later.

He cast down his staff and it became a serpent which devoured the serpents of Egypt; this signifying that the Word should become flesh to destroy the poison of the dread serpent, by the forgiveness and pardon of sins. For the staff stands for the Word that is true, royal, filled with power, and glorious in ruling. The staff became a serpent; so he who was the Son of God begotten of the Father became the Son of Man born of a woman, and lifted, like the serpent, on the cross, poured his healing medicine on the wounds of mankind. Wherefore the Lord himself says, ‘Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up’.⁴⁰⁹

In this excerpt Ambrose recounts the account in the book of Exodus where Moses and Aaron attempted to convince Pharaoh to free the Hebrew people. As a display of power, Aaron’s staff miraculously becomes a serpent that subsequently eats the other magicians’ serpents. Ambrose interprets Aaron’s staff allegorically: it is a symbol of Jesus’ future incarnation. At the end of the excerpt Ambrose also includes the testimony of ‘the Lord himself’ (Latin, *ipse dominus*), citing John 3:14. In *On the Duties of the*

⁴⁰⁸ John 3:13 is cited once more in *Commentary on Gospel According to Luke* 7.74, but without surrounding context to determine Ambrose’s position on the speaker.

⁴⁰⁹ *On the Duties of the Clergy* 3.94. Translated by Romestin (1896), with minor modifications.

Clergy, ‘Lord’ is a common title for Jesus as well as God in general terms, so we cannot be absolutely certain about Ambrose’s meaning. However, the fact that Jesus and his prophetic coming are his topics of discussion seems to lend more support to interpreting the title as a reference to Jesus.⁴¹⁰

Ambrose’s next work, *Concerning Repentance*, contains two citations from John 3. In the first, Ambrose explores John’s Gospel to determine if the Novatians’ claims about the status of the lapsed are supported by Scripture.

Since, then, we have spoken of the general epistle of John, let us inquire whether the writings of John in the Gospel agree with your interpretation. For he writes that the Lord said, ‘*God so loved this world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life*’. If then you wish to reclaim any one of the lapsed, do you exhort him to believe, or not to believe? Undoubtedly you exhort him to believe, but according to the Lord’s statement, ‘*will have eternal life*’.⁴¹¹

Ambrose here supplies his first citation of John 3:16 with one of the clearest introductions of all writers surveyed thus far, referring to both the Gospel-writer (‘John’) and Jesus (‘the Lord’) at the same time. The Gospel-writer’s role is purely literary in Ambrose’s view; it is ‘the Lord’ who speaks: ‘he writes that the Lord said’ (Latin, *scribit enim dixisse dominum*). Ambrose further contends in lines 5-7 that ‘the Lord’s statement’ (Latin, *domini sententiam*) does not at all harmonize with the interpretation of the Novatians. The repeated use of ‘Lord’ points directly to Jesus, who we supposed was the understood speaker in his prior citation of 3:14 above. Later in the treatise, Ambrose cites

⁴¹⁰ Ambrose also cites John 3:14 along with 3:15 at *On the 42 Camps of the Sons of Israel* 35, but does not explicitly identify the speaker’s name. He prefaces his citation with the words: ‘As he himself explained in the Gospel, saying...’ (Latin, *sicut ipse exponit in evangelio dicens*).

⁴¹¹ *Concerning Repentance* 1.48. Translated by Romestin (1896), with minor modifications.

other verses from John 3, though he does not indicate the identity of the speaker until he arrives at the following section, here excerpted.

But with reference to this passage they allege that he who believes in Christ ought to keep his sayings, and say that it is written [that] the Lord says, ‘I have come as a light into this world, that whosoever believes in me may not abide in darkness. And if any one hears my word and keeps it, I do not judge him’. He doesn’t judge, and do you judge? He says, ‘that whosoever believes in me may not abide in darkness’, that is, ‘If he is in darkness he may not remain therein, but may amend his error, correct his fault, and keep my commandments, for I have said, ‘I do not desire the death of the wicked, but the correction’. I said above that *whoever believes in me is not judged*, and I keep to this, *for I have not come to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through me*. I pardon willingly, I quickly forgive; I will have mercy rather than sacrifice, because by sacrifice the just is rendered more acceptable, by mercy the sinner is redeemed. I come not to call the righteous but sinners. Sacrifice was under the law, in the Gospel is mercy. The law was given by Moses, grace by me’.⁴¹²

After citing John 3:18a and 3:36 prior to this excerpt, Ambrose here makes allusions to both 3:18a and 3:17 in an extensive paraphrase framed in the voice of Jesus (‘the Lord’). Seeking to discount the Novatians’ view, Ambrose paraphrases Jesus’ words in lines 6-14 with repeated first-person references. He alludes to 3:18a in line 8, prefacing it with the words ‘I said above’ (Latin, *dixit supra*) and also substituting the phrase ‘in him’ for ‘in me’. This confirms that Jesus is portrayed as speaking. Ambrose follows this up with an allusion to 3:17 in lines 8-9. The adaptations of the verse are compared below:

Ambrose - ‘For I have not come to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through me’.

non enim veni ut iudicem mundum sed ut salvetur mundus per me

⁴¹² *Concerning Repentance* 1.54.

John 3:17 - 'For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him'.

non enim misit deus filium suum in mundum ut iudicet mundum sed ut salvetur mundus per ipsum

Given that he has previously quoted from John 3 three times, this resemblance is not coincidental. Ambrose almost certainly has 3:17 in mind and has adapted this and the other verses so that Jesus himself speaks them.

Ambrose's last two citations from John 3 appear in his *Commentary on Twelve Psalms*. In the following excerpt he discusses the interpretation of Psalm 1:5a and clarifies its true meaning with a citation of John 3:18-19.

Regarding that line: 'The wicked shall not rise again in judgment', we know what the Gospel has to say. It says that not all are going to be judged and condemned...Some would see a contradiction here, forgetting that when the Savior spoke it was of infidels and impious people that he was speaking, people who did not believe in the Lord Jesus. For he says, '*Whoever believes in me will not be judged, but whoever refuses to believe is already judged, because he has refused to believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and men have shown they prefer darkness to light, for their deeds were evil*'.⁴¹³

Employing John 3:18-19 as a proof-text, Ambrose here asserts that no real contradiction exists between Psalm 1:5a and what 'the Savior spoke' (Latin, *salvator dixit*). That John 3:18 and 3:19 are linked together highlights Ambrose's belief in a shared speaker, though the words are immediately prefaced only with 'he says' (Latin, *ait*). However, as in *Concerning Repentance*, Ambrose substitutes the prepositional

⁴¹³ *Commentary on Psalm 1* 51. Translated by Ní Riain (2000), with minor modifications.

phrase ‘in him’ with ‘in me’,⁴¹⁴ effectively confirming our earlier assessment that Jesus is the understood speaker of 3:18. Evidence that Ambrose considered Jesus’ words to extend further than 3:19 is found in the last of his citations in *Commentary on Twelve Psalms*. In the excerpt below, Ambrose digress from the text of Psalm 36:18 to discuss Jesus’ eternal nature as both Word and Son.

Listen a little harder and hear Scripture saying, ‘What has been made in him is life’. ‘In him’, it says, ‘has been made’. It does not say, ‘The Word of God was made’. But if this disturbs you and raises up misrepresentations in your mind, at least you will not misrepresent God the Father, for the Son of God said, ‘*Whoever does the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be made manifest, because they are made in God*’.⁴¹⁵

As a corrective to those who misrepresent Jesus as being a created being, Ambrose here references John 3:21 as a challenge to distorting the truth. Scripture is very clear, Ambrose insists, on Jesus’ eternality, and 3:21 reveals that he is the true unoriginate light. His plain identification of the speaker as ‘the Son of God’ (Latin, *dei filius*) establishes that the whole of 3:13-21 belongs on Jesus’ lips. Because Ambrose never cites 3:31-36, we are unable to make any judgments on his view of this passage.

⁴¹⁴ Rebecca R. Harrison notes Ambrose’s use of the first-person for John 3:18-19 in *Jerome’s Revision of the Gospels* (PhD dissertation. University of Pennsylvania , 1986), 196.

⁴¹⁵ *Commentary on Psalm 36 35*. Translated by Ní Riain (2000), with minor modifications.

Jerome (c. 347-420).

1. Background Material

Jerome was born on the eastern confines of northern Italy to moderately wealthy Christian parents. As a youth he left home to be educated at Rome, where he studied Latin rhetoric for some time. Because of his fascination with languages, by his early twenties Jerome had become not only fluent in Greek but also in Hebrew, which he learned from a certain Jew named Baranina.⁴¹⁶ In his late twenties he became deathly ill, and before recovering had his famous anti-Ciceronean dream⁴¹⁷—this compelled Jerome to abandon secular learning and devote himself entirely to the study of Scripture. Throughout his life Jerome did extensive traveling (e.g., Turkey, Egypt, Cyprus, Palestine), and in 379 he was ordained an Antiochene priest. A prolific writer, much of his literary output still survives, including several biblical commentaries. Without doubt he was one of the most learned of the Latin Fathers, and is perhaps best known for his chief role in the preparation of the Vulgate translation of the Bible. Although Jerome had committed to keeping away from classical writers, he had by no means forgotten his rhetorical training, and utilized his learning in the exegesis of Scripture.⁴¹⁸ Jerome spent the last thirty-four years of his life in Bethlehem, where he led a monastery and produced many more translations, letters and polemical works.

⁴¹⁶ In *Letter* 84, Jerome relates that because Baranina feared retribution from his Jewish colleagues (presumably for teaching a Christian), he was only willing to teach him Hebrew by night. For this reason Jerome called his teacher ‘another Nicodemus’ (Latin, *alterum Nicodemum*).

⁴¹⁷ Cf. *Letter* 22.30.

⁴¹⁸ Pierre Jay, ‘Jerome’, in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 1105: ‘Jerome also puts into the service of the elucidation of the text being commented on the whole stock of tools of grammatical, rhetorical, and logical procedure: semantic study, paraphrase, regard for context, appeal to argumentation, different forms of reasoning’.

Jerome first cites a portion of John 3 in his *Dialogue Against the Luciferians*, composed in Antioch shortly after he returned from the hermit life in the Desert of Chalcis (c. 379). In the dialogue, Scripture repeatedly serves as the proof-text on which Jerome defends traditional church teaching on baptism. His foremost concern is the issue of accepting those who were baptized by Arians back into the church. Luciferians did accept former Arians back, but not if these Arians had themselves been bishops. Jerome finds this Luciferian policy contradictory, and through his mouthpiece Orthodoxus he challenges this way of thinking as held by Helladius, the representative Luciferian. Numerous references and allusions to both Testaments are found scattered in the dialogue, and it is Jerome's common practice to introduce these with brief identification markers (e.g., 'Ecclesiastes bids us', 'in the Gospel the Lord says', 'he who from his mother's womb cried out'), though there are not a few places where he fails to provide information on the speaker. When Jerome does identify the speaker of a biblical verse or passage, he is consistent in distinguishing between the voices of the writers and the characters.⁴¹⁹

One other quotation from John 3 is found in Jerome's homilies on the book of Psalms, which he preached in the first few years of the fifth century while residing in Palestine. His original hearers were monks attending liturgical services, and as a consequence the homilies have a colloquial feel. In *On Psalm 1* Jerome is normally found to paraphrase verses from the Bible. Occasionally he specifies the book or speaker (e.g., 'God said to Abraham', 'the prophet Amos says', 'we read in the Apocalypse of John'), but just as often biblical verses are introduced with the generic 'Scripture says' or

⁴¹⁹ At one point he attributes a saying of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel to what 'God says', but shortly thereafter clarifies his belief in 'God the Son'. Cf. *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 15.

integrated into his own sentences. Among the Gospels, only John's is quoted in the homily, suggesting that he had been previously reading it, or that its contents were in his view simply more relevant to this particular Psalm.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

This first passage is taken from the seventh section of Jerome's *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* (note that Orthodoxus and Helladius are here in mid-debate).

Orthodoxus: For it is written, 'John came, who baptized in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins'. And soon after: 'And they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins'. For as he himself preceded the Lord as his forerunner, so also his baptism was the prelude to the Lord's baptism. '*The one that is of the earth*', he was saying, '*speaks of the earth; the one that comes from heaven is above all*'. And again, 'I indeed baptize you with water, he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit'. But if John, as he himself confessed, did not baptize with the Spirit, it follows that he did not forgive sins either, for no man has his sins remitted without the Holy Spirit.⁴²⁰

In this section of the dialogue, attention is centered on the role of John the Baptist and the significance of his baptism. Immediately prior to this excerpt, Helladius brings up Acts 19, in which followers of the Baptist had been baptized, but had never even heard of the Holy Spirit. Jerome interprets this as a challenge to baptism's relation to the reception of the Holy Spirit and the remission of sins, and so through his mouthpiece Orthodoxus explains that John's baptism was one for the *future* remission of sins. This was to find its fulfillment through the one to come after him, namely, Jesus.⁴²¹ Some narrative material is cited from Mark's Gospel regarding the Baptist's supportive role as Jesus' 'forerunner'

⁴²⁰ *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 7. Translated by Fremantle (1892), with minor modifications.

⁴²¹ Jerome later reasons that the Holy Spirit is received only through the baptism of Christ, and this is fully dependent on recognition of the cross and resurrection.

(Latin, *praecursor*),⁴²² and Jerome then introduces a paraphrase of John 3:31b. According to the context, the speaker of 3:31b appears to be linked with the speaker of Matthew 3:11, which immediately follows it. This saying of the Baptist builds additional support for properly understanding his secondary role. Just after this excerpt, John 3:30 is also cited, and Jerome identifies the verse's speaker as 'John himself' (Latin, *ipso Ioanne*). It seems very likely, then, that he takes John 3:31b to be the Baptist's own utterance.

Jerome's next Johannine reference occurs in his first homily, *On Psalm 1*. Here he has just begun his exposition of Psalm 1:5 (quoted in lines 3-5).

Since we have already discussed at length the just man and his likeness to the tree, also the wicked man and his likeness, and have talked about the present world, it remains for us to meditate on the future life and on eternity. 'Therefore in judgment the wicked shall not stand, nor shall sinners, in the assembly of the just'. We read in the Gospel according to John: '*Whoever believes in me is not judged, but whoever does not believe in me is already judged*'. Who is left to be judged if both he who believes will not be judged and he who does not believe is already judged? Who will be judged on the day of judgment? Let us reflect upon the one who stands between the believer and the non-believer, the one that is to be judged. *Whoever believes will not be judged*. Now he who believes does not sin; he who believes according to the truth does not sin; he who has true faith does not sin. Actually, when we commit sin, it is because our mind is wavering in faith. When we are giving way to anger, when we are detracting from the reputation of another, when we are yielding to fornication, just where is our faith? Hence what he says, '*Whoever believes in me will not be judged*', there is no need to judge him; he is already blessed. Further, he who does not believe is

⁴²² The title 'forerunner' (Greek, *prodromos*) very quickly became a standard way of referring to the Baptist in patristic literature and iconography. See e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.9.1; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 1; *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 1.60; Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 2.194; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Funeral Oration for St. Basil* 75; Chrysostom, *Homily 14 on Matthew* 1. This was the case even outside 'orthodox' circles: Heracleon, Fragment 8 (quoted approvingly by Origen in *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 6.197). Similar terminology (*antecursor*; *praenuntius*) is found in Tertullian, *On Baptism* 6.1, and Ambrose, *Commentary on Gospel According to Luke* 1.38. Cf. also canon 82 of the Quinisext Council of 692.

already judged; he has already been judged unto punishment...Let us at this point consider the meaning of the words ‘Therefore in judgment the wicked shall not stand’. They shall not rise to be judged because they have already been judged, for ‘*whoever does not believe in me is already judged*’.⁴²³

Seeking to expound the nature of God’s judgment, Jerome juxtaposes Psalm 1:5 with the text of John 3:18a-b. While Jerome is explicit in identifying the biblical book from which this Johannine verse comes from, no speaker is at this point specified. However, the addition of the phrase ‘in me’ could possibly rule out the idea that the Gospel-writer would have said this in his own ‘voice’. Jerome’s paraphrase, probably recalled from memory,⁴²⁴ is here compared with the Gospel text:

Jerome - ‘Whoever believes *in me* is not judged, but whoever does not believe *in me* is already judged’.

John 3:18a - ‘Whoever *believes in him* is not judged, but whoever does not believe is already judged’.

As we have argued in the case of earlier writers (e.g., Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary, Didymus), the presence of ‘in me’ (here twice) suggests that the speaker is indeed the one who *saves*, namely, Jesus ‘the Savior’. In line 15, Jerome again paraphrases 3:18b, but does not name the subject that speaks (the Latin verb *dicit* ‘says’ does not specify gender). However, ‘in me’ is once again used. Since Jerome’s topic is centered on God’s judgment of Christians and non-Christians, it quite likely that Jerome would want to mention Jesus’ own words on the subject. To a certain extent, Jerome’s repeated use of ‘in me’ implies this. If this conclusion is accepted, then those verses preceding 3:18 were

⁴²³ *On Psalm 1*. Translated by Ewald (1964), with minor modifications.

⁴²⁴ Jerome’s paraphrasing of this verse is related to the fact that the homilies were not intended for publication. His audience was made up of simple monks, so for simplicity’s sake he chose to quote loosely from memory. Cf. Marie L. Ewald, *The Homilies of Saint Jerome* (Volume 1. The Fathers of the Church 48. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), xxviii.

probably also considered part of Jesus' speech, given their placement in the Gospel text. Concerning Jerome's position on 3:19-21 and 3:32-36 we cannot be sure, as the verses are not elsewhere quoted with enough detail to infer his identification of the speakers.⁴²⁵

Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315-403).

1. Background Material

Epiphanius was born not far from Jerusalem, in a village of Palestine called Besanduc. He was raised in a strong Christian home and received his early education from monks.⁴²⁶ Epiphanius' training—Christian and scriptural, rather than classical—was completed in Egypt, where he was mentored by the ascetic Hilarion, who had himself been taught by Antony (c. 251-356), the founder of monasticism.⁴²⁷ This background played a tremendous part in his identification of Nicene Christianity as the only true expression of the faith. Even in old age, Epiphanius maintained an intense zeal for orthodoxy and regarded any alternate 'version' a dangerous threat to the church. After founding a monastery near Eleutheropolis in Palestine and serving as abbot there for many years, he was summoned in 367 to serve as the new bishop of Salamis, a chief city on the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus. Around the year 374, Epiphanius set out to compile an extensive encyclopedia of every heresy he had either heard of or encountered first-hand. It took him about three years to complete the work, which he

⁴²⁵ E.g., *On Psalm 73* (3:13 cited); *Commentary on Isaiah* 1.47 (3:18 alluded to), 1.50 (3:20 cited), 16.11 (3:13 cited), 17.2 (3:19 alluded to), 17.29 (3:16 cited).

⁴²⁶ He himself declares that his upbringing was 'in the faith of the fathers of Nicea', as cited in Nicephorus, *Against Epiphanius* 15.61.

⁴²⁷ Cf. Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (Volume 1. New York: Brill, 1997), xi.

himself titled *Panarion* (meaning ‘medicine chest’).⁴²⁸ In terms of genre, the *Panarion* is a heresiology that describes and then refutes beliefs and sects at odds with traditional church teaching. Eighty different pre- and post-Christian sects are included in its pages.⁴²⁹ Fortunately, the work still survives in its original Greek and contains a few quotations from John 3.

Epiphanius held Scripture to be an infallible criterion of truth that deserved careful exegesis and devotion. With respect to his citation style in the *Panarion*, verses from Scripture are usually prefaced with some information on the speaker or book that a quotation comes from (e.g., ‘the Lord said to the paralytic’, ‘the bride herself said to the bridegroom in the Song of Songs’, ‘Mary and Martha said’). When Epiphanius does provide such details, he is careful to distinguish between biblical author and character.⁴³⁰ At times, he also incorporates verses into his own sentences without specifying the speaker, giving his words a ‘biblical feel’.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Epiphanius’ first quotation from John 3 is found in his description of the Ophites. We have already seen Pseudo-Tertullian comment on this group of Gnostic Christians, which the mainline church had rejected. It is obvious that Pseudo-Tertullian’s *Against All*

⁴²⁸ Epiphanius compared the effects of heresy to poison or venom, needing an antidote: the truth of Christ and his church. Cf. *Panarion* proem 1.1.1-2. In his introduction Frank Williams notes: ‘Epiphanius should not be viewed as essentially negative. There is an element of hostility in his writings, but also an element of loyalty and love. Epiphanius writes not so much to attack heresy as to defend an ideal’.

⁴²⁹ Summarizing the proliferation of heresies, Epiphanius depicts himself and his readers as sailing across a ‘shoreless sea of blasphemies’; he asserts that after refuting them all, we discover the ‘calm lands of the truth’ and the ‘haven of peace’ (i.e., orthodoxy). Cf. *Panarion*, ‘De Fide’ 1.1-3.

⁴³⁰ E.g., *Panarion* 30.23.5: ‘And again, when the Lord overturned the tables of the money-changers and said, ‘Do not make my Father’s house a house of merchandise’, John himself said, ‘They remembered that it was written: ‘The zeal of your house has consumed me’’, and they took the testimony from the prophets, I mean from David. And again, John himself said, ‘Isaiah saw, being in the Spirit’.’

Heresies was a key source for Epiphanius' own account of the Ophite sect, yet he also makes known that he learned about their practices via word of mouth.

It is no surprise if a person is cured through the things by which he was injured. And let no one speak ill of God's creation—as other erring persons do in their turn. However, this image [the bronze serpent] was made beforehand for the people in the desert, for the reason the Lord says in the Gospel after he comes: '*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*'—and this has been done. For dishonoring the Savior like serpents they were injured by the plot of the serpent, I mean the devil. And as healing came to the bitten by the lifting up of the serpent, so, because of the crucifixion of Christ, deliverance has come to our souls from the bites of sin that were left in us. But the same people use this very text literally as evidence, and say, 'Do you not see how the Savior said, '*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up?*'' And on this account in another place they say, 'He also says, 'Be wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove''.⁴³¹

Having explained to his readers the true purpose of the saving power of the bronze serpent in Moses' day, Epiphanius connects this to the saving power of the cross. He then cites John 3:14 and attributes it to what 'the Lord says' (Greek, *ho kurios legei*). Epiphanius' reference to 'the Gospel' in the singular may or may not indicate his awareness of the quotation coming from John's Gospel specifically—the reference at least implies that the title 'Lord' is likely synonymous with Jesus, since he is often called this in the *Panarion*. Epiphanius then, in quoting the Ophites' own 'literal' (Greek, *rēton*) interpretation of this same verse, records that the group attributed these words to 'the Savior' (Greek, *ho sōtēr*). At the end of the excerpt he also mentions the Ophites' appeal to Jesus' words in Matthew 10:16b, indicating that the same person is understood ('he says'). It is evident that both Epiphanius and the Ophites regarded John 3:14 as a saying

⁴³¹ *Panarion* 37.7.3-6. Translated by Williams (1997), with minor modifications.

of Jesus. Had Epiphanius thought otherwise, we might have expected him to level criticism against the false attribution. But, like Pseudo-Tertullian some seventy-five years prior, Epiphanius appears to be in full agreement with the Ophites that Jesus himself spoke these words, notwithstanding their overly literal take on the serpent symbolism.⁴³²

Epiphanius' next quotation from John 3 occurs in his discussion of the Melchizedekians. According to him, this group believed Jesus was inferior to the biblical priest Melchizedek, since he was younger and second in line to the priest.⁴³³ In the following excerpt, Epiphanius appeals to what Scripture says about the heavenly nature of Jesus, in contrast with Melchizedek.

It is plain that this righteous man was holy, a priest of God, and the king of Salem, but he was no part of the [order] in heaven and he has not come down from heaven. '*No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man*', says the holy divine Word, who tells no lies.⁴³⁴

Many Christian writers, drawing from the prologue of John's Gospel, refer to Jesus using the title 'Word' (Greek, *logos*). That Epiphanius is doing so here is certainly possible, given that immediately after this excerpt he writes: 'Our Lord, though he was not a man but the holy divine Word of God, God's Son begotten without beginning'. Two chapters later Epiphanius again quotes John 3:13, identifying the speaker more definitively.

And the prophet [Daniel] was right to give the Word this name [when he was] in heaven, and call the one he saw by the Holy Spirit 'Son of Man', since he

⁴³² Immediately after this excerpt Epiphanius writes: 'And what God has rightly ordained for us as symbols of teaching (Greek, *ta symbola didaskalias*), they [the Ophites] cite in their own deluded sense'.

⁴³³ Epiphanius asserts that they came to this belief through a rather forced interpretation of Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7:1-3. Cf. *Panarion* 55.1.1-4.

⁴³⁴ *Panarion* 55.4.3.

scrutinized the future before its arrival and named the Word ‘Son of Man’ before he was made flesh. And thus, although he reverses the order of events, the only-begotten says, ‘No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man’. He did not mean that he was flesh in heaven, but he descended from heaven, and was to be known by this name.⁴³⁵

Challenging the heretic Noetus in his attack on the divinity of Jesus, Epiphanius makes reference to Daniel’s vision of the heavenly Son of Man.⁴³⁶ He then cites what ‘the only-begotten says’ (Greek, *ho monogenēs phaskei*) in John 3:13. The use of this distinctive title in the *Panarion* unquestionably refers to Jesus,⁴³⁷ so we can now be doubly sure that he treated 3:13 as Jesus’ own words. While Epiphanius quotes from John 3 at several other points, none of these other quotations contain enough context from which to determine his position on the speaker.⁴³⁸ However, there is one interesting summarization of the initial chapters of John’s Gospel that is worth looking at.

And after expelling these money-changers and dove-sellers and the rest, and having said, ‘Take these things away and do not make my Father’s house a house of merchandise’, and hearing from them, ‘What sign will you show us, seeing that you do these things?’, and saying to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’—at which time Nicodemus came to him—and after saying many things, it says, ‘Jesus came, and his disciples, to Judea, and there he stayed with them and baptized. And John was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim, for there was much water there. For John was not yet cast into prison’. And after

⁴³⁵ *Panarion* 57.8.7-8.

⁴³⁶ Cf. Daniel 7:13.

⁴³⁷ See e.g., *Panarion* 23.6.1; 57.3.7; 65.4.2; 66.19.3.

⁴³⁸ Cf. *Panarion* 57.7.10 (3:13 paraphrased); 75.7.7 (3:13 quoted); 68.45.4 (3:17 paraphrased); *De Fide* 6.3 (3:20a quoted).

many things said by John, ‘The one having the bride is the bridegroom’, then the Gospel says, ‘When therefore Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard...’⁴³⁹

Epiphanius’ quotation style in this summary passage leaves much to desired. The ‘many things’ (Greek, *polla*) said by Jesus and John the Baptist may indicate the length of their respective discourses, but the question ‘how long’ is far from clear. He seems to have considered 3:22-24 and 4:1 as transition points, but because he does not explicitly cite from the Johannine verses under question, we are left to mere speculation.

Philo of Carpasia (c. fourth century).

1. Background Material

Philo is the first-known bishop of Carpasia, a coastal town on the northeast peninsula of Cyprus. Of his life we know very little. Our first trace of him comes from close to the end of the fourth century, when he is ordained a bishop by his contemporary Epiphanius of Salamis. A few of Philo’s writings survive, and from these it is apparent that he was well versed in the Scriptures and wrote with considerable authority. In his commentary on the biblical book Song of Songs, composed perhaps as early as the mid-380s, he quotes extensively from both Testaments.⁴⁴⁰ As is typical of expositors during this time, Philo interprets the Old Testament text through the lens of Christian symbolism, finding characters such as Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, hidden within its poetry. When quoting from the Scriptures, he at times provides introductory formulae that contain the speaker’s identity (e.g., ‘angels met Jacob and he said’, ‘the divine

⁴³⁹ *Panarion* 51.21.23-25.

⁴⁴⁰ Philo’s phrase-by-phrase commentary is still extant in both an abbreviated Greek text and a later Latin translation. Cf. Mark W. Elliott, *The Song of Songs and Christology in the Early Church 381-451* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 7. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 21-22.

prophet Jeremiah said’, ‘Jesus was saying to Thomas’), though he is more commonly found to employ the general ‘as it is written’ or quote without any surrounding detail on the speakers.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

The following passage consists of a small section of Philo’s commentary and represents his sole quotation from John 3. Following the text of the Greek Septuagint, the bishop here interprets Song of Songs 2:4 as an entreaty for God’s love.

‘He has brought me to the house of wine’. Unite me in the body of the Lord, he says, with him through the washing of the regeneration. ‘Set love before me’. Grant to me the love of the heavenly Father, of which the only-begotten speaks, *‘God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life’*.⁴⁴¹

With the exception of the conjunction ‘for’ (Greek, *gar*) omitted, Philo’s citation of John 3:16 is precise. In line 4 he explicitly identifies the speaker of this Johannine verse as ‘the only-begotten’ (Greek, *ho monogenēs*), the same title that the Gospel-writer pairs with ‘Son’ in the quoted verse. Like Epiphanius, Philo undoubtedly equates this Christological title with Jesus himself.⁴⁴² As this is the only place where Philo quotes from our Johannine passages under consideration, his treatment of 3:17-21 and 3:31-36 are not determinable. Yet as we have observed with previous writers, a strong case can be made on the basis of internal narrative flow that Philo took the preceding verses (3:13-15) to be Jesus’ words, rather than the Gospel-writer’s own.

⁴⁴¹ *Commentary on Song of Songs* 41. My translation.

⁴⁴² See e.g., *Commentary on Song of Songs* 86, where Philo places Jesus’ saying in Luke 9:58b on the lips of the same ‘only-begotten’. Various other titles also appear in the commentary (e.g., Lord, Christ, Savior).

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-395).

1. Background Material

Gregory was the third of ten children born into a distinguished Christian family residing in the Roman province of Cappadocia (modern central Turkey). His elder brother Basil helped raise and educate him in the metropolitan city of Caesarea.⁴⁴³ From Gregory's writings it is evident that he was influenced by Greek philosophy, yet unlike Origen he more effectively balanced his intellectual pursuits with orthodox doctrine. Gregory eventually married, and for about a decade taught rhetoric. It appears that his young wife, named Theosebia, had passed away prior to his calling to the bishopric of the small town of Nyssa in 372.⁴⁴⁴ Though he was the youngest of the 'Cappadocian Fathers', Gregory earned for himself a reputation as a prominent theologian, mystical thinker and champion of orthodoxy against Arianism. Writing in glowing terms of Gregory's giftedness, his older brother Basil once said that he could have governed the 'whole church under the sun', if only it were possible to gather the church into a single place.⁴⁴⁵

In Gregory's later years, his influence on the church's public affairs lessened, and he took to writing on spiritual matters. In the early 390s he produced *The Life of Moses*, in which are found two citations of John 3:14. More a treatise on the spiritual and monastic life than a Hellenistic biography like Philo of Alexandria's *Life of Moses*, Gregory organized it into two parts, summarizing the narrative of Moses' life and

⁴⁴³ The spiritual mentorship of his grandmother Macrina the Elder must have also played a role in the development of the young Gregory. It may be remembered that she had been a disciple of Gregory Thaumaturgus (d. 270), one of Origen of Alexandria's pupils.

⁴⁴⁴ See Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses* (The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1978), xv; Anthony Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 1999), 3-4.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. Basil, *Letter* 98.

providing allegorical interpretation on it.⁴⁴⁶ Gregory's intended audience seems to have included Greek-speaking intellectuals interested in the lawgiver and prophet.⁴⁴⁷ Normally, Gregory provides information on the speaker when quoting Scripture (e.g., 'David interprets it this way when he says', 'the lawgiver says in a general proclamation to all', 'the voice of the demons says'), and he takes care to distinguish between the voices of the biblical writers and the characters.⁴⁴⁸ Gregory is also found to regularly introduce verses with the general 'Scripture says' as well.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Gregory's two Johannine quotations both come from the second part of *The Life of Moses*. In this first excerpt, Gregory assures Christians that there is no reason to be disturbed about the comparison of Jesus to a serpent, since it has a biblical precedent.

The change from a rod into a serpent should not trouble the lovers of Christ—as if we were adapting the doctrine of the incarnation to an unsuitable animal. For the Truth himself through the voice of the Gospel does not refuse a comparison like this when he says, '*For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*'. And the teaching is clear.⁴⁴⁹

Gregory here finds John 3:14 to be the most appropriate verse to cite in reference to this comparison. He locates this statement in one of the Gospels and attributes it to 'the Truth' (Greek, *hē alētheia*). The personification of truth is common in Christian writers,

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 753.

⁴⁴⁷ Gregory probably knew no Hebrew since he worked directly from the Septuagint. The work became most popular in monastic circles, attested by the discovery of ancient papyrus fragments of *The Life of Moses* in Egypt.

⁴⁴⁸ E.g., *The Life of Moses* 2.163: '[T]hat which is sought transcends all knowledge, being separated on all sides by incomprehensibility as by a kind of darkness. Wherefore John the sublime, who penetrated into the luminous darkness, says, 'No one has ever seen God''.

⁴⁴⁹ *The Life of Moses* 2.31. Translated by Malherbe and Ferguson (1978), with minor modifications.

drawing from John 14:6, and at many other points in *The Life of Moses* Gregory uses the title synonymously with Jesus.⁴⁵⁰ Conveniently, Gregory later quotes this same verse and further clarifies his view on the speaker's identity.

Nevertheless, the person who looks to the one lifted up on the wood rejects passion, diluting the poison with the fear of the commandment as with a medicine. The voice of the Lord teaches clearly that the serpent lifted up in the desert is a symbol of the mystery of the cross when he says, '*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*'.⁴⁵¹

Again Gregory points out that the 'symbol' (Greek, *sumbolon*) of the bronze serpent that Moses lifted up correlates to the saving mystery of Jesus' crucifixion. In quoting John 3:14, Gregory ascribes the verse to 'the voice of the Lord' (Greek, *hē phōnē tou kuriou*), understanding it to be a statement that the speaker both 'teaches' and 'says' (Greek, *didaskei; phēsin*). Although the title 'Lord' occasionally appears in place of YHWH, normally Gregory refers to the deity of the Old Testament as simply 'God' (Greek, *ho theos*). Whenever 'the Lord' is given a speaking role in the treatise for verses from the Gospels, Gregory always references the words of Jesus.⁴⁵² Therefore, with this double attestation, we can conclude with relative confidence that Gregory identified Jesus as the speaker of John 3:14. In all likelihood, then, Gregory would have treated 3:13 the same way according to narrative context and flow. His positions on the speaker of 3:15-21 and 3:31-36 are indeterminable.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ E.g., *The Life of Moses* 2.20: 'For if Truth is God and Truth is light—the Gospel testifies by these sublime and divine names to the God who made himself visible to us in the flesh'.

⁴⁵¹ *The Life of Moses* 2.277.

⁴⁵² See e.g., *The Life of Moses* 1.9; 2.184; 2.251; 2.287; 2.304.

⁴⁵³ Gregory quotes John 3:13 in *Against Apollinarius* 3.1.139 and 3:20a in *Concerning Those Who Have Died*, but does so without providing contextual details.

John Chrysostom (c. 349-407).

1. Background Material

John Chrysostom was born into a well-to-do family in the city of Antioch. While he was still an infant his father suddenly died, so the task of his upbringing fell squarely upon the shoulders of his twenty-year-old mother Anthousa. As a devout Christian she had refused to remarry, choosing instead to manage her household herself as best she could.⁴⁵⁴ Chrysostom began his formal schooling at the age of seven, and by the time he was fourteen he had gained a thorough grounding in Greek classical literature. He then attended the school of rhetoric headed by the famous pagan sophist Libanius of Antioch (d. 393), where he excelled in the arts of composition and public speaking.⁴⁵⁵ After graduation, Chrysostom came under the influence of Diodore, the future bishop of Tarsus, and henceforth devoted himself to the study of Scripture and the monastic life. He was ordained a deacon in 381 and then a priest five years later. For roughly a decade Chrysostom happily fulfilled a preaching assignment in the Antiochene church, where he gained notoriety for his passion and eloquence at the pulpit. In 397-398 he was literally forced by the emperor Arcadius to become the next bishop of Constantinople.

Chrysostom believed strongly that ‘the source of all evil [was] ignorance of the holy Scriptures’, and he made it his first priority to provide his congregation with a genuine exposition of the Bible. Approximately 18,000 scriptural citations can be found

⁴⁵⁴ See J. N. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 5-6.

⁴⁵⁵ When asked who should succeed him as the next school chair, Libanius famously replied that it would have been John, ‘had not the Christians stolen him from us’. His oratorical brilliance earned him the posthumous epithet ‘Golden Mouth’ (Greek, *chrysostomos*)

among his theological treatises and six hundred or so homilies.⁴⁵⁶ Because Chrysostom was not primarily an exegete but a preacher, he often focused his attention on drawing out moral lessons from the biblical text he referenced. Three sets of his exegetical homilies contain portions from John 3: those on John's Gospel, the Psalms and Hebrews. In the first set, delivered during his ministry in Antioch around 391, Chrysostom explores the whole Gospel in a consecutive manner (totaling eight-eight homilies). Scriptural verses are normally cited with introductory formulae or details of narrative context (e.g., 'David, pointing to the crucifixion, said', 'Mary believed, saying', 'Nicodemus upbraids them, saying'), but some citations occur without such information. In keeping with his attempt to make the text clearer to his hearers, Chrysostom commonly adds his own paraphrase of verses after citing them, as if the biblical characters/authors were still speaking in their own 'voice' (i.e., using *prosopopoeia*).

A similar citation style is found in Chrysostom's homilies on the Psalms, two of which include portions of John 3. These probably date from his years serving as a priest for his Antiochene congregation (386-398). In *On the Psalms* 4, Chrysostom draws numerous moral lessons from the Greek Septuagint text, often citing verses from other biblical books in the process (especially Paul's letters and the Gospels). At times he provides a given speaker's identity, but more often than not he cites verses without such detail or within a series (separated by generic phrases such as 'and again'). We also find

⁴⁵⁶ Citation totals: 7,000 from the Hebrew Bible and 11,000 from the New Testament. Of these, 1,300 are from John's Gospel. See further in Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 786.

this in *On the Psalms* 41, preached in the context of a special liturgical celebration prior to Chrysostom's relocation to Constantinople.⁴⁵⁷

The third set of exegetical homilies analyzed below is *On the Letter to the Hebrews*, consisting of thirty-four homilies. Chrysostom composed this set as bishop in the winter of 402-403, but the homilies were not published until after his death by a presbyter of Antioch named Constantius. While Chrysostom alludes to and quotes Scripture often in these homilies, he frequently does so without providing information on the speakers' identities.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Due to the abundance of verses from John 3 that appear in *On John*, only a select few passages need to be excerpted to determine how Chrysostom understood the speakers. The first passage below is excerpted from the twenty-seventh homily, where he has been preaching on John 3:12-15. Chrysostom then arrives at 3:16, which he both cites and then paraphrases.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life'. What he says is of this kind: 'Do not marvel that I myself am to be lifted up that you may be saved, for this seems good to the Father, and he has so loved you as to give his Son for slaves, and ungrateful slaves'. Yet a man would not do this even for a friend, nor readily even for a righteous man, as Paul has declared when he said, 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die'. However he spoke at greater length, as speaking to believers, but here Christ speaks concisely because his discourse was directed to Nicodemus, but still in a more significant manner, for each word had much

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Robert C. Hill, 'Psalm 41 (42): A Classic Text for Antiochene Spirituality'. *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68 (2003): 25-33.

significance. For by the expression, ‘*God so loved*’, and that other, ‘*the world*’, he shows the great strength of his love.⁴⁵⁸

Chrysostom’s paraphrasing of John 3:16 in lines 3-5 is critically important in that it includes first-person and second-person references: ‘I myself am to be lifted up that you may be saved’ and ‘he has so loved you’. These should not be taken as Chrysostom’s own words, for he intends to link the speaker of the paraphrase to the Johannine verse just cited. Accordingly, the content of this paraphrase indicates that Chrysostom held Jesus to be the speaker of 3:16. He then goes on to remark in amazement at how undeserving everyone is of the Son’s redemptive death. Citing Romans 5:7, Chrysostom further notes that while Paul’s audience was made up of ‘believers’ (i.e., Christian readers), the speaker and audience were very different with respect to John 3:16. Using the transitional phrase ‘but here’ (Greek, *entautha de*) in line 8, Chrysostom pivots back to 3:16 and explicitly identifies Christ as the speaker. He also reveals that ‘his discourse was directed to Nicodemus’ (Greek, *pros Nikodēmon ēn ho logos*). This statement establishes a connection between 3:16 and earlier verses in John 3 in which Jesus and Nicodemus conversed. Chrysostom concludes by repeating the initial words of 3:16, attributing them in a straightforward manner to the same speaker, namely Jesus.

Perhaps within a week’s time of his delivery of the homily just excerpted above, Chrysostom preached his twenty-eighth homily on John’s Gospel, from which this next passage derives.

Think then what proofs of lovingkindness these are: by grace to remit sins, and not to punish him who after grace has sinned and deserves punishment, but to give him a season and appointed space for his clearing. For all these reasons

⁴⁵⁸ *On John 27.2*. Translated by Marriott (1889), with minor modifications. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) cites this passage in his *Catena Aurea*, a continuous gloss on the four Gospels.

Christ was saying to Nicodemus, '*God did not send his Son to condemn the world, but to save the world*'.⁴⁵⁹

Chrysostom here shows no hesitation in extending Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus to John 3:17. He claims that Jesus spoke these words in order to explain how God shows 'lovingkindness' (Greek, *philanthrōpias*) toward sinners, and how he is so abundantly patient with them. Later in his thirtieth homily, he makes the earliest of his references to the second Johannine passage in which he identifies the speaker. In the following excerpt, Chrysostom again uses a paraphrase to clarify the meaning of John 3:31-32, which he follows up with additional commentary.

John's meaning is of this kind: 'I desire to hear what he says, for he *comes from above*, bringing thence those tidings which none but he knows rightly, for *what he has seen and heard* is the expression of one who declares this. *And no one receives his testimony*'. Yet he had disciples, and many besides gave heed to his words. How then does he say, '*No one?*' He says '*no one*' instead of 'few people', for had he meant 'no one at all', how could he have added, '*The one that has received his testimony has set to his seal that God is true?*' Here he lays hold of his own disciples, as not being likely for a time to be firm believers. And that they did not even after this believe in him, is clear from what is said afterwards, for even when he was dwelling in prison he sent them thence to him, that he might the more bind them to him.⁴⁶⁰

We note first that the paraphrase at the excerpt's beginning contains the first-person pronoun 'I' and is attributed to a certain 'John' (Greek, *Iōannēs*). In the homilies, Chrysostom uses this name for both the Gospel-writer and the Baptist, so it is not immediately clear whom Chrysostom has in mind. Upon closer analysis of the paraphrase and subsequent commentary, however, we find that the context demands that this 'John'

⁴⁵⁹ *On John* 28.1.

⁴⁶⁰ *On John* 30.2.

be a character within the Gospel story, who had his own disciples (lines 4, 8) and spent time in jail (line 10). Such details fit quite neatly within the narrative sequence of John 3:24, in which reference is made to the Baptist's upcoming imprisonment, as well as Matthew 11:2-3/Luke 7:18-20, where the Baptist hears of Jesus' miracles in prison and sends his own disciples to him. Chrysostom explains that the seeming contradiction in John 3:32b-33 ('no one receives his testimony', 'the one that has received his testimony') is really no contradiction at all—John intentionally used this language to emphasize how his own disciples were not yet willing to receive Jesus, even during his imprisonment.

Our next excerpt is taken from Chrysostom's thirty-first homily. It was delivered shortly after the homily cited above and continues the exposition of John 3:31-36.

And so Christ appears to have spoken to most at the beginning, and so John did now, speaking of him as of some wonderful man, and darkly introducing high matter. For instance, he was saying, 'A man cannot receive anything of himself'. Then after adding a high expression, and saying, *'The one coming from heaven is above all'*, he again brings down his discourse to what is lowly, and besides many other things says this: *'God does not give the Spirit by measure'*. Then he proceeds to say, *'The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand'*. And after that, knowing that great is the force of punishment, and that the many are not so much led by the promise of good things as the threat of the terrible, he concludes his discourse with these words: *'Whoever believes on the Son has eternal life, but whoever does not believe the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him'*.⁴⁶¹

Chrysostom begins this excerpt by identifying the speaker of these many Gospel quotations as 'John'. In line 3 he cites a portion of John 3:27, unquestionably an authentic saying of the Baptist. Chrysostom then proceeds to cite portions of John 3:31, 3:34 and all of 3:35-36 in succession. He understands each verse (including 3:27) in the context of

⁴⁶¹ *On John* 31.1.

a single ‘discourse’ (Greek, *logos*), which John ‘concludes’ (Greek, *katakleiei*) with 3:36. That the Baptist is the understood speaker is quite evident due to such contextual detail in each of these quotation transitions.

When Chrysostom later reaches Jesus’ teaching on the resurrection in John 5, two verses from John 3 spring to his mind. In his thirty-ninth homily, he uses these verses to clarify Jesus’ words for his listening audience.

But when he spoke generally he also added, ‘Those that have done good shall go forth unto the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment’. Thus also John led on his hearers by speaking of the judgment, that ‘*whoever does not believe on the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*’. So also he himself led on Nicodemus: ‘*Whoever believes in the Son*’, he was saying to him, ‘*is not judged, but whoever does not believe is judged already*’. And so here he mentions the judgment seat and the punishment, which shall follow upon evil deeds. For he had said above, ‘Whoever hears my words and believes on him that sent me is not judged’.⁴⁶²

After citing Jesus’ statement in John 5:29, Chrysostom recalls in line 3 the words that ‘John’ also spoke on the subject of the judgment (i.e., John 3:36). Once again, it must be determined whether ‘John’ could refer to the Gospel-writer with the same name as the Baptist. One clue from the context of the quotation suggests that the latter John is the better candidate. According to Chrysostom, 3:36 was originally spoken to the ‘hearers’ (Greek, *akroatēn*) of John. This Greek term, which could also be rendered ‘disciples’, denotes those who *hear*, but do not really *listen* or *take action* upon what is heard.⁴⁶³ Chrysostom has repeatedly emphasized in his homilies that the Baptist’s disciples were

⁴⁶² *On John* 39.3.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Timothy Friberg et al (eds.), *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 41.

confused and frequently misunderstood his lesser role in relation to Jesus' own. It is very unlikely that Chrysostom would refer to the reading audience of the Gospel-writer in this way—thus, the context is far more intelligible when understood between the Baptist and his disciples as portrayed in the Gospel narrative.

In lines 5-7, Chrysostom quotes a paraphrased portion of John 3:18, stating that the words were spoken directly to Nicodemus.⁴⁶⁴ Although Chrysostom does not explicitly identify Jesus as the speaker ('he himself'), we must remember that the context of the thirty-ninth homily is Jesus' lengthy discourse in John 5. The pronoun 'he' typically refers to Jesus in this homily, and the fact that the character Nicodemus is the one to whom the words are directed testifies to Chrysostom's belief that Jesus is indeed the speaker (who else spoke to Nicodemus?).⁴⁶⁵ We can also see at the excerpt's end that the paraphrase of John 5:24 returns to the main exposition of Jesus' words in John 5; lines 3-7 constitute a digression in Chrysostom's thought which flows in his mind naturally from various teachings of Jesus in John's Gospel.

Our last excerpt from *On John* comes from Chrysostom's fifty-second homily. Here he has been preaching on John 8:12 and comments on the fact that the Jewish rulers had rejected Jesus' claims about himself.

'I am the light of the world'. A great thing to say, great of a truth, but it did not greatly amaze them, because he did not now make himself equal to the Father, nor assert that he was his Son, nor that he was God, but for a while calls himself 'a light'. They indeed desired to disprove this also, and yet this was a much greater thing than to say, 'He that follows me shall not walk in darkness'. Using

⁴⁶⁴ Note: Chrysostom substitutes 'in him' for 'in the Son' (Greek, *eis ton huion*) in all of his quotations of 3:18. This is also preserved in the Syriac version of his homilies on John's Gospel (Syriac, *ba-barā*).

⁴⁶⁵ The Syriac version of Chrysostom's homily actually identifies Jesus as the speaker: 'In the same way our Lord himself also to Nicodemus, for he was telling him, 'Whoever believes...''

the words 'light' and 'darkness' in a spiritual sense, and meaning thereby 'abides not in error'. And here he draws on Nicodemus, and brings him in as having spoken very boldly, and praises the servants who had also done so. For to 'cry aloud' is the act of one desirous to cause that they also should hear. At the same time he hints at these who were secretly contriving treacheries, being both in darkness and error, but that they should not prevail over the light. And he reminds Nicodemus of the words which he had said before, '*Whoever does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd*'. For since they had asserted that none of the rulers had believed on him, therefore he says, '*Whoever does evil does not come to the light*' to show that their not having come proceeds not from the weakness of the light, but from their own perverse will.⁴⁶⁶

According to Chrysostom, Nicodemus was present among the crowd of people in John 8 (lines 7, 12).⁴⁶⁷ He believes that Jesus intentionally chose the images of light and darkness in order to remind Nicodemus about 'the words which he had said before' (Greek, *tōn rēmatōn elege prōēn*), citing John 3:20. The conversational context is obvious, and simply corroborates our earlier findings that Chrysostom regarded Jesus' nocturnal dialogue with Nicodemus to extend much further than 3:12. Chrysostom then paraphrases a portion of 3:20 in line 15 and explains how the Jewish rulers effectively prevented themselves from believing in Jesus because of their own stubborn determination not to.

Chrysostom's next two citations of John 3 appear in his homilies on the Psalms, to which we now turn. The first of these is found within his comments on Psalm 4:4, where David has written of the repentance of the heart (i.e., from sins committed

⁴⁶⁶ *On John 52.2.*

⁴⁶⁷ It may be remembered that without the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53-8:11), Nicodemus has only just attempted to defend Jesus before his Pharisaic colleagues in 7:50-51.

internally). In the following excerpt Chrysostom provides his Antiochene congregation with a series of four related biblical verses.

Isaiah as well: ‘This people seek me, and desire to know my ways, like a people that have practiced righteousness and not forsaken my ordinance’. And Hosea: ‘Sow seeds of righteousness for yourselves, light the light of knowledge’. But Christ taught and said, ‘*Whoever does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light*’; and again: ‘How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise from the only God?’⁴⁶⁸

In contrasting righteousness with evil, Chrysostom adds two verses from John’s Gospel to his citations of the prophets Isaiah and Hosea. His identification of ‘Christ’ (Greek, *Christos*) as the speaker of John 3:20a accords with his previous citation of this verse in *On John* (just analyzed above). He next cites John 3 in his lengthy homily on Psalm 41, providing another series of biblical verses on the depth of God’s love.

Concerning this Paul said, ‘Thanks be to the Lord for his indescribable gift’. And again: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him’. And again: ‘Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and untraceable his ways’. But the kind of love [that] was displayed on our behalf, the Word proves—indeed being astonished, John said, ‘*For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son*’.⁴⁶⁹

After quoting verses from 1-2 Corinthians and Romans in lines 1-5,⁴⁷⁰ Chrysostom comments that God’s love was ‘displayed on our behalf’ (Greek, *peri hēmas epedeixato*) and proved by the Word (*logos*). This leads him to cite John 3:16a, which he

⁴⁶⁸ *On the Psalms* 4.6. Translated by Hill (1998), with minor modifications.

⁴⁶⁹ *On the Psalms* 41.4. Draft translation.

⁴⁷⁰ One minor adaptation is found in line 1, where Chrysostom substitutes ‘to God’ (Greek, *tō theō*) for ‘to the Lord’ (Greek, *tō kuriō*); since there is no difference in meaning, it seems to have been unintentional and a result of relying on memory.

attributes to ‘John’ (Greek, *Iōannēs*). This identification is curious, as it appears to stand at odds with Chrysostom’s direct treatment of this verse and its surrounding context in his Johannine homilies—in each of these he consistently identified Jesus as the speaker or mentioned Nicodemus as his conversation partner. A few observations concerning this apparent discrepancy may be outlined below.

First, it should be acknowledged that Chrysostom may have actually preached *On the Psalms* 41 prior to his Johannine homilies; some scholars have placed it as early as the beginning of his priesthood in Antioch (c. 386-387),⁴⁷¹ and if this is so then his partial citation of John 3:16 would predate *On John* (c. 391) by several years. As a result, a number of questions naturally arise, such as whether Chrysostom had the historical context of John 3 in mind as he prepared/delivered this Psalms homily, and whether or not he intended ‘John said’ in the literal sense of speaking (as opposed to the authorial sense). Whereas we know for certain that Chrysostom worked directly from a Greek manuscript of John’s Gospel for his verse-by-verse exegesis of the passage in *On John*, this cannot be confirmed for his Psalms homily (it contains only one other brief citation from the Gospel). It therefore remains unclear how carefully he read the Johannine text prior to his preaching.

Upon closer analysis of the excerpt above, we observe that Chrysostom’s partial citation of John 3:16 follows immediately after a series of citations from the apostle Paul. It is not difficult to imagine that Chrysostom may have wished to *differentiate* John 3:16a from Paul’s words by naming the apostle responsible for recording this particular verse: John himself. In this way, his listening audience would have been informed that this verse

⁴⁷¹ See Wendy Mayer, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom—Provenance: Reshaping the Foundations* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 273. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2005), 92.

was not Pauline like the others, but Johannine.⁴⁷² A parallel example of this type of differentiation is found in another homily, *On the Psalms 45*, which is here excerpted.

[H]e also says that what belongs to the Father are his: ‘All that is mine is yours, and all yours is mine’. For Paul in speaking also of the resurrection says that ‘God raised him from the dead’, while John says, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’.⁴⁷³

Chrysostom first cites a brief portion of Jesus’ prayer in John 17. He then quotes parts of Romans 10:9 and John 2:19, identifying the speakers as Paul and John, respectively. Without question, Chrysostom knew that Jesus originally spoke this latter verse (especially because of the first-person pronoun ‘I’),⁴⁷⁴ yet the words are introduced by ‘John says’ (Greek, *Iōannēs phēsi*). This attribution must be taken in an authorial sense; in Chrysostom’s mind, John can be portrayed as ‘speaking’ these words insofar as they appear within his Gospel. The fact that Paul is cited immediately before this supports the notion that his earlier attribution of John 3:16a to ‘John’ was similarly intended as a way of differentiating his words from Paul’s.

Chrysostom’s final citation of John 3 appears in the sixth homily of *On the Letter to the Hebrews*. In the midst of his interpretation of Hebrews 3:13, he offers his audience a series of scriptural citations that shed light on the dangers of not keeping the faith.

For as unbelief brings forth an evil life, so also a soul, ‘when it is come into a depth of evils, becomes contemptuous’, and having become contemptuous it endures not even to believe, in order thereby to free itself from fear. For they

⁴⁷² Chrysostom’s employment of the same verb *elegen* (‘Paul said’, ‘John said’) to introduce these verses may also reflect his view that both of these apostles ‘spoke’ the words in an authorial sense. His comment in line 6 that John was ‘astonished’ at God’s love may support this notion as well, if he interpreted John’s astonishment in a passive manner (i.e., listening to Jesus originally make such a claim).

⁴⁷³ *On the Psalms 45.8*. Translated by Hill (1998).

⁴⁷⁴ In fact, John 2:19 begins: ‘Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple...’’

said, ‘The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard’. And again, ‘Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?’ And again, ‘Wherefore has the wicked man provoked God to wrath?’ And again, ‘The fool has said in his heart, there is no God; they are corrupt and become abominable in their doings’. ‘There is no fear of God before his eyes, for he was deceitful before him, to find out his iniquity and to hate’. And Christ also shows this same thing, saying, *‘Every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light’*.⁴⁷⁵

After providing six citations from Proverbs and the Psalms in lines 1-9, Chrysostom at last arrives at John 3:20a. As we found in his citations of this verse in *On John* and *On the Psalms* 4, he unambiguously interprets these words as Christ’s own (Greek, *Christos legōn*). Thus writing in his final years, Chrysostom continued to attribute this verse to Jesus. This triple attestation makes it highly unlikely that in *On the Psalms* 41 he was consciously identifying 3:16a as the Gospel-writer’s own commentary. Rather, the mentioning of ‘John’ was probably done because Chrysostom remembered that it was his Gospel that included the verse, and so in a sense they were also his words.

Fifth Century

Maximus of Turin (d. 420).

1. Background Material

Very little is known about Maximus’ life prior to his ordination as bishop of Turin in northern Italy. His ministry there began around the year 390, for his sermons show use of recently published writings by his contemporary, Ambrose of Milan. Maximus was evidently not a native of Turin, so he must have done some degree of traveling in his

⁴⁷⁵ *On the Letter to the Hebrews* 6.4. Translated by Gardiner (1877), with minor modifications.

career.⁴⁷⁶ According to the church historian Gennadius of Marseilles (d. 496), he was both wise in the Scriptures and a capable teacher of his congregation.⁴⁷⁷ The clear and fluid prose of his sermons reveals that he had a decent education and some familiarity with secular classics, though he was no master of rhetoric compared to the likes of Leo the Great and Augustine.

Maximus' Latin sermons, which number just over one hundred, reveal his pastoral concerns,⁴⁷⁸ inventive homiletic style, and conventional mode of biblical exegesis. He cites portions of John 3 in three of his sermons. Of these, only two have a precise date of delivery: *Sermon 37* and *Sermon 39A* were both preached during the time of Easter in the year 398.⁴⁷⁹ Maximus begins *Sermon 37* by drawing an interesting parallel between Odysseus and Jesus: as Odysseus tied himself to the mast of his ship to prevent himself from giving in to the temptations of the Sirens, in similar manner Jesus was bound to the cross to save humanity from sin. Maximus then looks to the Bible for more imagery, arriving at the account of Moses fashioning the bronze serpent and its New Testament parallel. In *Sermon 39A* Maximus discusses Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene, and he exhorts his listeners to maintain a sincere faith. The third of Maximus' sermons included in our survey is *Sermon 59*; as mentioned, its

⁴⁷⁶ Addressing his audience, Maximus alludes to his arrival among them in *Sermon 33*. Some scholars infer from *Sermon 105* that he may have been an eyewitness of the martyrdom of three Christians in the province of Raetia (modern-day Switzerland).

⁴⁷⁷ His congregation included a good number of converts from paganism, as well as some who were lax in church attendance. Maximus was never afraid to address his flock with words of rebuke, yet he showed patience with them, encouraging them in 'the Lord's commandments'. See e.g., *Sermon 3* and *Sermon 33*.

⁴⁷⁸ Maximus' sermons are also reflective of the deteriorating situation in the vicinity of Turin, as the church was called upon as a kind of welfare agency during the first barbarian invasions. Cf. Rita Lizzi, 'Ambrose's Contemporaries and the Christianization of Northern Italy'. *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 156-173.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Boniface Ramsey, *The Sermons of St. Maximus of Turin* (Ancient Christian Writers 50. New York: Newman Press, 1989), 304-305.

date of delivery is unknown, and thus can only be located within the timeframe of Maximus' ministry in Turin with a *terminus ante quem* of c. 420. In this sermon Maximus interprets the purchase of the potter's field as a consequence of Judas' betrayal of Jesus for money. In each of these sermons Maximus normally identifies the speakers of biblical verses (e.g., 'the prophet David says', 'holy Simeon says to Mary', 'the Savior said to the young man in the Gospel'), though sometimes he employs the generic formula 'Scripture says'.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Maximus' earliest citation from John 3 is found in *Sermon 37*. In the following excerpt from it, Maximus preaches on the bronze serpent account in Numbers 21, which provides a neat segue to its New Testament fulfillment.

He [Moses] ordered the people to place their hope for health in that sign, and from that object there came forth such relief from the serpents' bite that whatever wounded person either looked at the cross with the serpent or hoped in it immediately received back his health. The Lord himself recalls this fact in the Gospel, saying, '*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up*'. Thus, if the serpent fixed to the wood brought health to the children of Israel, how much more does the Lord, crucified on the gibbet, offer salvation to the nations!⁴⁸⁰

Maximus here instructs his congregation that the favor bestowed upon the Israelites has also been extended to the 'nations' (Latin, *populis*). Salvation, he explains, was made possible through the cross, which was prefigured by the healing power of the bronze serpent long ago. Maximus' citation of John 3:14 in lines 5-6 is introduced with the words 'the Lord himself recalls this fact in the Gospel, saying' (Latin, *facti etiam*

⁴⁸⁰ *Sermon 37.3*. Translated by Ramsey (1989), with minor modifications.

dominus in evangelio meminit dicens). Throughout this sermon the title ‘Lord’ solely applies to Jesus, and the subsequent context of the citation confirms this as well (this same ‘Lord’ was crucified and could offer salvation).⁴⁸¹

Maximus cited another portion of John 3 a week later in *Sermon 39A*. Below, he discusses the relationship of the Father and the Son, which entails the concept of omnipresence.

For inasmuch as one abides in the other, this means that the Father and the Son are always together. Or does the Son say that he is ascending to that place where he is dwelling before he ascends? For the same Lord said, *‘No one has ascended into heaven except he who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven’*. If therefore the Savior is in heaven when he descends, all the more is he in heaven before he ascends.⁴⁸²

Maximus here affirms his belief in the unity of the Father and Son in terms of place, as they are ‘always together’. In lines 2-3 he alludes to the ascension which the ‘Son’ earlier spoke about, and then appears to link this with what ‘the same Lord said’ (Latin, *dixit idem dominus*), citing John 3:13. Given Maximus’ preference for applying this title to Jesus, as well as the appearance of the titles ‘Son’ and ‘Savior’ (Latin, *filius; salvator*) in the surrounding context (lines 2, 5), it is reasonable to conclude that he believed Jesus was the speaker.

The last of Maximus’ citations of John 3 appears in *Sermon 59*, which shows some dependence on the *Exposition of Luke* by Ambrose of Milan. In the following

⁴⁸¹ The notion that the account in Numbers 21 was being *recalled* also implies that the speaker of John 3:14 was a character in the Gospel who could look back at the event as past.

⁴⁸² *Sermon 39A.2.*

excerpt, Maximus offers his audience an allegorical interpretation of the field that was purchased with the money Judas received (and then returned) for betraying Jesus.

Therefore, if the price of our life is the blood of the Lord, see that it is not an ephemeral earthly field that has been purchased but rather the eternal salvation of the whole world. For the evangelist says, '*For Christ did not come to judge the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him*'. See, I say, how it is not so much a small portion of field that has been furnished with that money as the vast property of the whole world, as the prophet David says, 'Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations as your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession'.⁴⁸³

In interpreting the 'field of blood' not as an earthly one but rather as symbolizing the 'whole world' and its redemption, Maximus selects two particular portions of Scripture to highlight God's providential role: John 3:17 and Psalm 2:8. His quotation of John 3:17 in lines 3-4 deviates from the Vulgate text at several points. As displayed below, these differences suggest that Maximus was either intentionally adapting the verse according to the sermon's context, or that he was quoting loosely from memory.⁴⁸⁴

Maximus - 'For Christ did not come to judge the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him'.
non enim venit Christus ut iudicet mundum sed ut salvetur mundus per ipsum

John 3:17 - 'For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him'.

⁴⁸³ *Sermon 59.2.*

⁴⁸⁴ From time to time we find Maximus conflating verses together, as in *Sermon 17*: 'Now is that time which the blessed apostle describes when he says, 'In the last days the iniquity of many abounds and charity grows cold''. Ramsey rightly points out that Maximus is here conflating 2 Timothy 3:1 with a saying of Jesus in Matthew 24:12. It is possible that his adapted quotation of John 3:17 was (sub)consciously influenced by other verses such as 1 Timothy 1:15 and/or John 12:47, and that he really did think he was citing the verse accurately, but the name 'Christ' may have given him reason to attribute the verse to the Gospel-writer (i.e., speaking about him).

*non enim misit deus filium suum in mundum ut judicet mundum sed
ut salvetur mundus per ipsum*

With respect to the speaker, Maximus prefaces this verse with the phrase ‘the evangelist says’ (Latin, *ait evangelista*). Within his sermon collection he occasionally refers to the Gospel-writers as ‘evangelists’, sometimes affixing their names as well (e.g., ‘John the evangelist’ or ‘the evangelist Luke’).⁴⁸⁵ Despite the fact that the sermon’s manuscript tradition is consistent in the attribution of 3:17 to ‘the evangelist’, two underlying issues surrounding the use of the verb *ait* bear upon correctly interpreting Maximus’ attribution.

The first issue is concerned with Maximus’ subsequent citation of Psalm 2:8 in the excerpt above. In line 6 he introduces this verse with the words ‘the prophet David says’ (Latin, *ait David propheta*), yet an analysis of the original context of this Psalm reveals that this is actually a declaration of God himself (‘the Lord’) addressed to David:

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. Then he shall speak to them in his wrath, and distress them in his deep displeasure: ‘Yet I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion’. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to me, ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession’.⁴⁸⁶

Maximus’ identification of David as speaker (along with the verb *ait*) is rather odd in light of the abundant first-person references in this passage, as well as the presence of the introductory phrase ‘the Lord has said to me’. From Maximus’ Christian perspective, the content of Psalm 2:7-8 refers not only to God’s acceptance of David as his ‘son’, but also more importantly to the prophecy of the coming incarnation of Jesus, the only-begotten

⁴⁸⁵ That Maximus did not attach the name ‘John’ to the title ‘the evangelist’ may indicate that he was unsure in which Gospel the verse was found.

⁴⁸⁶ Psalm 2:4-8.

Son of God. Maximus' attribution of Psalm 2:8 to David presents two interpretive possibilities: [1] he was not at the moment aware of the verse's immediate context, or [2] he was using the verb *ait* not in the sense of David *speaking* the words, but rather of *reporting* them (i.e., David wrote the Psalm, so by extension the words are his). The latter interpretation is intriguing and bears some weight, inasmuch as Maximus uses the same verb *ait* to attribute John 3:17 to 'the evangelist' right before it.

The second underlying issue focuses squarely on Maximus' use of *ait* elsewhere in his sermons. While the verb is most often employed as an action of speech, the following passage from *Sermon* 64 adds to the complexity of deciphering Maximus' meaning.

And therefore the Lord came to the washing not so that he himself might be purified by the waters, but so that the streams of water might purify us, for he went down into the waters, thereby destroying the sins of all believers. But it was necessary that he who bore the sins of all should destroy the sins of all, as the evangelist says, 'This is the lamb of God, this is the one who takes away the sins of the world'.⁴⁸⁷

Though the date of this sermon's composition is uncertain, like *Sermon* 59 it shows dependence on Ambrose's *Exposition of Luke* and includes the same introductory phrase 'the evangelist says' (Latin, *ait evangelista*). However, the verse loosely quoted in lines 5-6 (John 1:29b) is in fact John the Baptist's own declaration.⁴⁸⁸ The implications of this attribution are profound, in that establishing Maximus' original understanding of the verb *ait* is proving more and more elusive. It is hardly possible that Maximus regarded

⁴⁸⁷ *Sermon* 64.1.

⁴⁸⁸ Maximus' Latin reads: *hic est agnus dei hic est qui tollit peccata mundi*. The Vulgate text reads: *ecce agnus dei qui tollit peccatum mundi*.

1:29b as the Gospel-writer's own words in narrative context, but rather saw him as responsible for reporting them in an authorial sense (as was likely the case with the attribution of Psalm 2:8 to David above). Many Latin writers in our survey have employed the verb *ait* (or *dicit*) when introducing a biblical verse, and to be sure the most common and natural meaning of *ait* is 'say'; yet in certain contexts it may also be rendered 'speak', 'affirm', 'assent', 'tell', 'relate', 'assert', or 'aver'.⁴⁸⁹ In light of the interpretive challenges outlined above, it behooves us to treat Maximus' attribution of John 3:17 to 'the evangelist' with due caution. The evidence suggests that he probably did not have the historical context of the passage in mind, and that his use of *ait* did at times go beyond the ordinary sense of speaking (even in the immediate context). Although we were able to establish that Maximus considered 3:13-14 to be Jesus' words,⁴⁹⁰ his position on the speaker in the rest of the passage remains unclear. In the absence of further Johannine citations, this situation will likely remain the same.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430).

1. Background Material

Of all the patristic writers surveyed in this chapter, none has provided us with more autobiographical material and sheer literary output than the towering figure of

⁴⁸⁹ According to Perseus, the online Latin word study tool operated by the Department of the Classics at Tufts University.

⁴⁹⁰ On this identification we are on more certain footing since *Sermon 37* and *Sermon 39A* were preached within a week's time, and the verses (both attributed to 'the Lord') follow after one another. In addition, a certain *Sermon 43* that circulated under Maximus' name introduces a citation of John 3:13 with the words 'according to what the Savior says'. Though the sermon is probably not authentic, the attribution to Jesus is consistent with his earlier citation of 3:13. Cf. Migne *Patrologia Latina* (57), 621-624.

Augustine.⁴⁹¹ Born in the North African town of Thagaste and formally educated in rhetoric at both Madaura and Carthage, by the time Augustine had returned to his hometown at the age of twenty he was entirely prepared to teach rhetoric himself. For the next decade of his life Augustine earned a reputation as a rhetorician in the prominent cities of Carthage, Rome and Milan. During this time he had embraced the Manichaean movement in pursuit of rationalism and philosophy, but through a combination of his mother's prayers and the compelling sermons of Ambrose of Milan, Augustine eventually became disillusioned with it and in July 386 converted to the Christian faith. Not long after his baptism the subsequent year, Augustine was ordained a priest in the port city of Hippo Regius (modern-day Annaba, Algeria), and then in 395 rose to the office of bishop. He would devote the rest of his life to the exploration of the Scriptures, and in that process also the discovery of himself.⁴⁹²

A voluminous writer, Augustine's influence on the theological tradition of Western Christianity is difficult to overestimate.⁴⁹³ Foremost among his writings that make reference to John 3 is his extensive *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, constituting

⁴⁹¹ Over the course of some forty years, Augustine produced hundreds of sermons, commentaries, letters, philosophical dialogues, and theological and polemical treatises. It has been calculated that the number of words among all of his works totals over 5,000,000. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) claimed in *Etymologies* 6.7: 'Augustine with his intelligence and learning overcomes the output of all these [patristic writers], for he wrote so much that not only could no one, working by day and night, copy his books, but no one could even read them'. Translated by Barney et al (2006).

⁴⁹² Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1149: '[Augustine's] exegesis became an original contribution to biblical exegesis not so much by the imposition of a new theoretical frame as by the freshness and intensity of his inner inquiry. Scripture allowed him to interpret *himself*, even more than he interpreted Scripture. The focal importance of the 'self' in Augustinian exegesis is a key factor in the enduring relevance of Augustine's hermeneutics right into modern times'.

⁴⁹³ His position on the identities of the speakers in John 3 is therefore unusually relevant in our analysis of Latin authors following after him, for his authoritative writings formed the very interpretative foundation upon which they would build. See e.g., David Lambert, 'The Making of Authority: Patterns of Augustine's Reception, 430-c.700', in Pollmann and Otten (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, 15-23.

124 sermons delivered on Johannine passages. Augustine's sermons, which may be described as a fusion of scriptural exegesis and spiritual reflection, date to the first quarter of the fifth century and were transcribed by secretaries in his congregation. In these Augustine frequently quotes Scripture in order to draw out evangelistic lessons from the text, and often uses the impersonal formula 'it is written' to introduce verses. At other times, however, he provides more specific details related to the speaker of a given verse or passage (e.g., 'the angel said to Mary', 'the Jews answered', 'the Lord himself had said shortly before').

Augustine also quotes from John 3 in two earlier works directed against his former religion. The first, titled *Answer to Adimantus, Disciple of Mani*, was written in 394 while Augustine was still a priest in Hippo. In it he attempts to refute the views of one of Mani's foremost disciples, Adimantus, who held that the Old and New Testaments were at odds with one another and contained irreconcilable differences of thought. When citing Scripture in this work, Augustine normally provides information related to the speaker or the book in which a citation appears (e.g., 'the Lord says to the Jews in the Gospel', 'on the words in Deuteronomy', 'of this wisdom John speaks'). Augustine's second anti-Manichaean work that references John 3 is *Answer to Faustus the Manichaean*, composed soon after he became bishop of Hippo (c. 397-400). Augustine here responds to the repeated attacks on Christianity made by a Manichaean bishop named Faustus. Among the many topics covered, Augustine defends the importance of the Old Testament in its prediction of Christ's advent. Biblical citations are typically introduced with some degree of contextual detail (e.g., 'God said to Cain', 'Matthew himself says', 'the Lord said after his resurrection').

A handful of Augustine's other sermons include citations of John 3. One of the earliest of these is *Sermon 292*, dating from about the year 399. Augustine preached this sermon in Hippo to commemorate the birthday of John the Baptist.⁴⁹⁴ He first outlines the significance of the Baptist's role as Christ's forerunner, and in the second half of the sermon censures the Donatists for their misconceptions about (re)baptism. As if the 'heretics' were present, he urges them to follow the Baptist's example of humility. Most of Augustine's citations from Scripture comprise the Baptist's own words, or what Jesus said about him in the Gospels. In these and other biblical references, Augustine normally provides some information on the identity of the speaker (e.g., 'the friend of the bridegroom said', 'the Lord replies', 'the apostle says'). Preaching on the same occasion in 413 at Carthage, Augustine again celebrated the Baptist's birthday in *Sermon 293*. One of the central themes he communicates to his listening audience in this sermon is the 'witness' function of the Baptist. He asserts that the Baptist taught 'outside the circle' of Jesus, and even had his own following, precisely so that others would believe his testimony about Jesus' identity (i.e., from an 'outsider' perspective). Many of Augustine's citations from Scripture are weaved into this sermon without indicating who originally spoke the words, but some references do specify the speaker (e.g., 'John says about Christ', 'the Jews said to the Lord').

Of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings on the topic of infant baptism, three include portions of John 3: *On Merits and Forgiveness of Sin and Infant Baptism, Sermon 294* and *Letter 193*. Augustine produced the first of these, *On Merits and Forgiveness of Sin and Infant Baptism*, between the years 411-412 at the request of a Roman commissioner

⁴⁹⁴ Augustine explains how the Baptist contrasts with other biblical figures: the Baptist's 'very birth performed service for the Lord', whereas with others it was only later in life. See *Sermon 292.1*.

named Marcellinus. It is highly likely that Augustine had a copy of John's Gospel with him during the writing process, since he includes within the treatise an uninterrupted citation of John 3:1-21.⁴⁹⁵ Seeking to justify the baptism of infants, Augustine insists that it is only through baptism that freedom from the sin inherited through Adam is secured. Scripture is oftentimes introduced with the generic 'it is said', but Augustine does provide details now and again (e.g., 'Jeremiah says', 'God had spoken', 'it was declared the virgin Mary'). Augustine's *Sermon 294*, also dealing with the necessity of infant baptism, was preached three days after *Sermon 293*, again in the city of Carthage.⁴⁹⁶ Even a cursory reading of this sermon exhibits the conflict within Augustine on this issue. On the one hand, his intellect convinced him that infants were in need of baptism to obtain salvation, while on the other, his heart recoiled at the thought of unbaptized infants being subjected to damnation.⁴⁹⁷ Several citations from the first Johannine passage are found in this sermon, and formal introductory speech markers are often included with these and other scriptural verses (e.g., 'Peter speaks in the Acts of the Apostles', 'Nicodemus was wondering when he said', 'the apostle says').

Around the year 418, Augustine wrote *Letter 193* to a Christian layman named Marius Mercator. In the opening paragraphs Augustine thanks Mercator, whom he calls his 'dearest son', for writing against Pelagianism. He touches on a number of topics in the brief letter, but it is once again in the context of infant baptism that John 3 is

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. H. A. Houghton, *Augustine's Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166.

⁴⁹⁶ The Carthaginian church was on this day (June 27) honoring a female martyr named Guddens (d. 203).

⁴⁹⁷ The English translator of *Sermon 294* remarks in a footnote that this inner conflict resulted in 'a rather bad sermon'. See Edmund Hill, *Augustine: Sermons 273-305A: On the Saints* (The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century. Hyde Park: New City Press, 1994), 195.

referenced. Augustine cites Scripture several times, but does so mostly without identifying the speaker or source. Another portion of John 3 is cited in a separate letter addressed to Consentius, an inquisitive Christian residing on the Balearic Islands off the coast of Spain. Augustine composed *Letter 205* in response to the many theological questions Consentius posed to him (c. 419-420). One of his inquiries had to do with the concept of the resurrection of all people. Augustine affirms for him that both the just and unjust will indeed rise on ‘the last day’, but only believers will be transformed into incorruptibility. For the most part Augustine introduces biblical citations with speech markers (e.g., ‘the Lord said after the resurrection’, ‘the voice of the angel sounded’), presumably so that Consentius can consult them himself.

Another work analyzed below is Augustine’s *Enchiridion*, also known as *On Faith, Hope and Charity*. Augustine wrote this handbook around the years 419-422 at the request of his friend Laurentius, who desired to have a single, concise volume on the basics of Christian doctrine.⁴⁹⁸ Already in his mid-sixties by this time, Augustine had written enough to fill up several bookshelves with his own writings, but he took on the (unfamiliar) challenge of brevity and focused on three virtues: faith, hope and love. Scripture is cited often in the *Enchiridion* and is normally introduced with identification markers (e.g., ‘the evangelist John said’, ‘the apostle Paul says’, ‘our Lord said plainly’).

Around this same period Augustine produced a six-volume polemical treatise called *Against Julian*. As its title implies, the treatise was directed against the ex-bishop Julian of Eclanum (c. 380-454), who on account of his Pelagian thinking had been deposed in 419 and subsequently exiled, yet remained quite active for his cause.

⁴⁹⁸ An *enchiridion* is a ‘handbook’, i.e., a book that the hand can hold.

Augustine's biblical citations and references to Latin Fathers throughout the work reflect his polemical agenda, serving as prooftexts against Pelagianism. At times these are prefaced with information regarding where the citations come from, as well as the speakers (e.g., 'the book of Ecclesiasticus says', 'in the Gospel our Lord says').

Augustine again wrote against Julian of Eclanum in his last work to be surveyed, *Incomplete Work Against Julian*. Though Augustine began writing this tome in 428 in response to Julian's *To Florus*, he had set it aside and then died prior to finishing it.⁴⁹⁹ Augustine had been previously charged with omitting phrases and sentences in his excerpts from Julian's writings, so in this work he purposefully included extensive portions of Julian's *To Florus*.⁵⁰⁰ As a result, the first six books of *To Florus* have been preserved in their entirety (which otherwise would have been lost given Julian's official condemnation), and one of these contains a portion of John 3. Augustine's style of scriptural citation in his *Incomplete Work Against Julian* is comparable to his other works—although the generic 'Scripture says' appears from time to time, introductory information on the speakers is typically provided (e.g., 'we read in the Psalm', 'Paul says', 'the Lord says in the Gospel').

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Augustine's earliest citation from John 3 appears in his *Answer to Adimantus, Disciple of Mani*, written about a year prior to his consecration as bishop of Hippo. In the passage provided below, he discusses the relationship between the bronze serpent account recorded in Numbers 21 and the crucifixion of Jesus.

⁴⁹⁹ Hence the title 'Incomplete Work' (Latin, *opus imperfectum*).

⁵⁰⁰ The church historian Gennadius of Marseilles (d. 496) refers to this final work of Augustine's as 'a book containing a discussion, where each defends his side'. Cf. his *On Famous Men* 46.

And since we are healed of deadly desires through faith in the cross of the Lord, the cross by which death was hanged on the tree, those who were poisoned by the bites of the serpents were for this reason immediately healed when they looked at the serpent that was fixed to and raised up on the branch of a tree. The Lord himself bore witness to this sacred sign when he said, *'Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up'*. By taking up the most ignominious kind of death in the eyes of human beings, that is, death on the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ revealed to us his love.⁵⁰¹

In describing Moses' lifting up of the serpent as a 'sacred symbol' (Latin, *sacramento*), Augustine is reminded of John 3:14. In lines 4-5 he prefaces his citation of this verse with the words 'the Lord himself bore witness...when he said' (Latin, *huic ipse dominus attestatus est dicens*).⁵⁰² Other occurrences of the designation 'Lord himself' in this work consistently refer to Jesus,⁵⁰³ and 'Lord' on its own is Augustine's preferred shorthand title for him. Further support for the identification of Jesus as speaker comes in the final sentence of this excerpt, in which Augustine pairs 'Lord' with 'Jesus Christ'. Just a few years later, Augustine cited this verse again in the twelfth book of *Answer to Faustus the Manichaeon*, here excerpted.

The enemy attempting to stop them in their way is overcome by Moses stretching out his hands in the figure of the cross. The deadly bites of serpents are healed by the brazen serpent, which was lifted up that they might look at it. This is explained by the words of the Lord himself: *'Just as Moses lifted up'*, he says,

⁵⁰¹ *Answer to Adimantus, Disciple of Mani* 21. Translated by Teske (2006).

⁵⁰² Augustine is probably here quoting from memory due to his use of the Old Latin reading *eremo* instead of *deserto*, the former being a simple transliteration of the Greek term for 'desert'. See H. A. Houghton, *Augustine's Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 145.

⁵⁰³ See e.g., *Answer to Adimantus, Disciple of Mani* 1; 8; 9; 20.

'the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life'.⁵⁰⁴

One of the significant aspects of this passage is that it establishes Augustine's belief that John 3:14 and 3:15 belong to a single speaker. In line 4, he introduces both of these verses with the words 'this is explained by the words of the Lord himself' (Latin, *quod verbis ipsius domini declaratur*). As we found in the previous treatise, instances of 'Lord himself' overwhelmingly refer to Jesus, with the only exceptions being references to God in the Hebrew Bible. The general flow of Augustine's typological interpretation likewise points to Jesus as subject and speaker. Augustine claims in line 2 that Moses made the sign of the cross with his hands, and he then links the lifting up of the serpent to salvation by citing from John's Gospel. For these reasons, we can assert that in this early period of Augustine's career he believed Jesus' words continued through 3:15.

Around the turn of the century, Augustine made his first citation from the second Johannine passage in *Sermon 292*. Through his preaching he insists that the Donatists must correct their doctrine by looking to the humility of the Baptist, 'the friend of the bridegroom' (Latin, *amicum sponsi*). In the excerpt below, Augustine clarifies that even though the Baptist had his own disciples, he himself was a disciple of Jesus as well.

Listen too, again, to the one we are concerned with, the friend of the bridegroom. Now the fact is that together with Christ he had, it seems, his own disciples, and wasn't one of Christ's disciples; listen to him, though, confessing himself to be one of Christ's disciples. See him there among Christ's disciples, and all the more surely so, the humbler he was; all the humbler, the greater he was. See him carrying out what is written: 'The greater you are, humble yourself all the more in all matters, and you will find grace in God's presence'. He has already said, 'I am not worthy to undo the strap of his sandal'; but it wasn't there that he showed

⁵⁰⁴ *Answer to Faustus the Manichaeon* 12.30. Translated by Stothert (1887), with minor modifications.

himself to be a disciple. *'The one who comes from heaven'*, he said, *'is above all;* but we have all received from his fullness'. So he himself too was among the disciples, though altogether with Christ he gathered [his own] disciples. Listen to him confessing even more clearly that he was a disciple: *'The one who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom stands and listens to him'*. And that's why he stands, because he listens to him.⁵⁰⁵

Augustine begins his address to the Donatists (as if they were actually present) by pointing out that the Baptist 'confessed' on numerous occasions that he was Jesus' disciple. In lines 7-8 Augustine provides the first confession: a paraphrase of John 1:27. Clarifying that this was not the Baptist's most explicit confession, Augustine then cites portions of 3:31 and 1:16 in lines 9-10. He also comments that the speaker of these verses had 'gathered [his own] disciples' (Latin, *discipulos colligebat*). Then in lines 12-14, Augustine hearkens back to the comparative theme of the 'friend of the bridegroom' in citing John 3:29. He concludes that this is the clearest of all his other confessions; the implication is that all of these belong to one and the same speaker, namely, the Baptist.

Augustine next cites John 3 in the twelfth sermon of his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* (dated 406-407). Here he centers his attention directly on the exegesis of the text of John 3, and so it is most probable that he had prepared notes for this sermon with the Gospel at hand. In this first excerpt, Augustine remarks to his listening audience how marvelous God's will is, which leads him to make his earliest citation of John 3:13.

You see, brothers, God wanted to be the Son of Man, and he wanted men to be sons of God! He descended because of us; let us for our part ascend because of him. For only the one who came down and ascended says, *'No one has ascended into heaven but the one who came down from heaven'*... So how is it that no one ascends except the one who came down, because just one came down and just

⁵⁰⁵ *Sermon* 292.8. Translated by Hill (1994), with minor modifications.

one ascended? What about the rest? What else could that mean, except that, since they will be his members, he ascends as one man? This is what follows: *'No one has ascended into heaven but the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven'*. Does it astonish you that he was both here and in heaven? He put his disciples in the same position.⁵⁰⁶

Two clues in this passage demonstrate that Augustine regarded Jesus as the speaker of John 3:13. The first is found in line 3, where Augustine introduces the verse with the explanatory phrase 'for only the one who came down and ascended says' (Latin, *solus enim descendit et ascendit qui hoc ait*). According to the content of 3:13, it is the Son of Man (Jesus) who alone has both come from and gone up to heaven. Augustine provides a second clue in the last two sentences of the excerpt. He first asks rhetorically whether his hearers are astonished at the claim made in 3:13, namely that the Son of Man was in two places at once. He then remarks that 'his disciples' (Latin, *discipulos suos*) felt the same way, presumably after hearing the words themselves. This reference implies that 3:13 was spoken in the historical context of Jesus' ongoing ministry (i.e., with 'his disciples'). Later in this sermon, Augustine transitions to the next two Johannine verses, which he cites once again.

He endured death, then, but he hanged death on the cross, and mortal men are delivered from death. A great matter, which was done in a figure with the ancients, the Lord calls to mind: *'And just as'*, he says, *'Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life'*. A great mystery is here, as they who read know...A great mystery about what was enacted there, [which] the Lord himself testifies in this passage, so that no one can give any interpretation other than that which is indicated by truth itself.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 12.8. Translated by Hill (2009), with minor modifications.

⁵⁰⁷ *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 12.11. Translated by Gibb and Innes (1888), with minor modifications.

Augustine here explains that Jesus' death actually destroyed death. He points out in lines 2-3 that this 'great mystery' was foretold long ago. Augustine prefaces his citation of John 3:14-15 with the words 'the Lord calls to mind' (Latin, *commemorat illud dominus*). Then in lines 6-8, he reiterates that the 'truth itself' (Latin, *ipsa veritas*) confirms what 'the Lord himself testifies in this passage' (Latin, *ipse dominus testatur in hac lectione*).⁵⁰⁸ Augustine's use of the verb *commemorat* is noteworthy, as it implies a recall of the past: the speaker of 3:14-15 is portrayed as speaking a time long after the events surrounding Moses and the bronze serpent occurred. For this reason the title 'Lord' specifically refers to Jesus, corroborating our findings from his anti-Manichaean writings. In the rest of the sermon Augustine carries on his commentary to 3:21, but for whatever reason avoids making any explicit mention of the speaker or original audience.⁵⁰⁹

Augustine directly treats the second Johannine passage in his fourteenth sermon in the *Tractates on the Gospel of John*. In this first sermon excerpt, Augustine attempts to clear up any misunderstanding that may arise in the interpretation of John 3:31.

And now what we have just heard becomes clear and distinct. '*The one who comes from above is above all*'. See what he says about Christ. What of himself? '*The one who is from the earth is of earth, and speaks of the earth. The one who comes from above is above all*'—this is Christ. '*But the one who is of the earth, is of earth, and speaks of the earth*'—this is John. And is this everything, that John is of the earth, and speaks of the earth? Is all of the testimony he gives to Christ of the earth? John utters the words of God when he bears witness to Christ, does he not? Then how does he speak of the earth? John was saying this about a

⁵⁰⁸ The personification of truth, influenced by Jesus' statement in John 14:6, is a commonplace within Augustine's writings; here he may be applying the title to Jesus.

⁵⁰⁹ Augustine's frequent use of third-person singular verbs without a specifying subject (e.g., 'he says') may imply a continuation of thought from 3:13-15 onwards.

man. In regard to man, he is from the earth and of the earth; if however he speaks anything divine, it is because he has been enlightened by God. I mean, if he was not enlightened, he would be earth speaking of earth...Let the grace of God come; let it light up man's darkness, as it says, 'You, Lord, will light my lamp; my God, light up my darkness'. Let it lift up the human mind, turn it toward its own light, and he now begins to say what the apostle says, 'Not I, though, but God's grace with me'; and, 'I live, though no longer myself, but Christ is living in me'. That is what 'He must increase, but I must decrease' amounts to. So then John, simply as John, *'is of the earth and speaks of the earth'*. If you have heard anything divine from John, it comes from the one enlightening him, not from him who receives it.⁵¹⁰

Augustine here contends that the earthly-heavenly comparisons made in 3:31 were intended to differentiate Christ from all other people, including the speaker 'John' (Latin, *Ioannes*). In lines 5-10, Augustine carefully explains that though the words that John 'utters' (Latin, *voces*) indeed come from God, he himself is not divine, but rather 'enlightened by God' (Latin, *illuminatus est a deo*). After quoting verses from the Psalms and Paul's letters to support this perspective, Augustine also cites the Baptist's statement in John 3:30. Given the abundance of comparative references that permeate Augustine's discussion, little doubt exists as to the identity of this 'John' referred to. In the next section of this sermon, Augustine expounds on the meaning of 3:31b-33.

'The one who comes from heaven is above all, and he bears witness to what he has seen and heard, and no one accepts his testimony'. If no one accepts it at all, why did he come? So then, *'no one'* means no one in a particular group. There is a people, prepared for the wrath of God, who will be damned with the devil; among these no one accepts the testimony of Christ. For, if absolutely no one, not a single human being accepts it, how could what follows make sense: *'But whoever has accepted his testimony certifies that God is true?'* So perhaps if

⁵¹⁰ *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 14.6-7. Translated by Hill (2009), with minor modifications.

John were questioned on the point, he would answer and say, ‘I know what I meant by *‘no one’*...For God knows who will believe and who will not; God knows those who are going to persevere in what they have believed, and those who are going to slide away; and all those who will have eternal life have been counted by God, who already knows that other people have been set aside’. And if he knows it himself and if he has also given knowledge of it to his prophets through his Spirit, he has also given it to John. So then, John was taking a look—but not with his eyes, for as far as he is concerned himself *‘he is of the earth and speaks of the earth’*—but, in that grace which he received from God, he saw a particular people, ungodly, unbelieving.⁵¹¹

Augustine’s initial citation of John 3:31b-32 underlines the unity of these verses with one another and indicates a common speaker. Until Augustine tackles the confusing phrase ‘no one’, he does not reveal who this speaker is. In lines 3-5, he explains that ‘no one’ really refers to individuals who have already rejected the ‘testimony of Christ’ (Latin, *testimonium Christi*). John 3:33 supplies Augustine with proof that many have indeed believed and accepted his testimony. He then offers a hypothetical situation in which ‘John [is] questioned on the point’ (Latin, *Ioannes interrogatus*), and in lines 8-12 includes a lengthy response in the voice of John (employing *prosopopoeia*). At the end of the excerpt Augustine again cites a portion of 3:31 and associates the words with this same John—here he is clearly interpreted as a character within the Gospel narrative, since Augustine refers to him as seeing a people who do not believe Christ’s testimony. This is followed by further commentary on the next Johannine verse, excerpted below.

‘For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God’. He was saying this, of course, about Christ, to distinguish him from himself. What then? God sent John himself, did he not? Did he himself not say, ‘I was sent ahead of him’, and, ‘The one who sent me to baptize in water?’ And was it not said about him, ‘Behold, I

⁵¹¹ *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 14.8.

am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare the way for you?’ Did he not also speak the words of God, seeing that it was also said of him that he was ‘more than a prophet?’ So then, if God also sent him and he speaks the words of God, how do we understand him to have distinctly said of Christ, ‘*The one whom God sent speaks the words of God?*’ But see what he adds: ‘*For God does not give the Spirit by measure*’.⁵¹²

Augustine continues to interpret the closing verses of John 3 in a comparative context. He maintains that the speaker of 3:34a intended to ‘distinguish’ (Latin, *distingueret*) himself from Christ. Augustine then alludes to four points in Scripture that emphasize the supportive role of the Baptist, whom he identifies as ‘John himself’ (Latin, *ipsum Ioannem*).⁵¹³ Augustine notes in lines 7-8 that while it is true that John was sent by God and speaks his words, it is Christ who truly deserves this superior status. Augustine then adds another citation of 3:34a, this time in association with 3:34b. His commentary extends into the next section of this sermon, which is excerpted below.

But Christ, who gives, does not receive by measure. You must continue to observe what comes next—because he had said about the Son, ‘*For God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hand*’, he added, ‘*he has placed all things in his hand*’, to let you know here too in what distinct way he said, ‘*The Father loves the Son*’. What is the reason, then? Does the Father not love John? And yet he has not placed all things in his hand.⁵¹⁴

Augustine informs his audience that the content of John 3:34b-35 was ‘added’ (Latin, *adiexit*) to stress the immeasurable love the Father uniquely bestows upon the Son. The reception of the Holy Spirit, Augustine asserts, is wholly different between

⁵¹² *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 14.10.

⁵¹³ These include: John 3:28; John 1:33; Matthew 11:10; Matthew 11:9.

⁵¹⁴ *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 14.10-11.

Christ and John. Though the Father indeed ‘loves John’ (Latin, *diligit Ioannem*), he did not place ‘all things’ in his hand, but in Christ’s own. Augustine stresses the fact their roles are inherently ‘distinct’ (Latin, *distinctione*), which is important to take note of. Once again, the comparative nature of Augustine’s language indicates that the Baptist continues to be the understood speaker. In the previous excerpt he had been identified as the speaker of 3:34, and here this verse is linked together with 3:35 in lines 2-4. Moreover, the mention of ‘John’ at the end of the excerpt reveals that Augustine believed he was still speaking; he clarifies that the Father did place all things ‘in his hand’, but rather in the Son’s.

Our next passage comes from Augustine’s treatise *On Merits and Forgiveness of Sin and Infant Baptism*. In the excerpt provided below, he builds his case against the Pelagians’ use of certain verses from John 3. According to Augustine, the Pelagians taught that all infants, regardless of their baptismal state, would have salvation and gain access to eternal life. This they based on their reading of Jesus’ words about new birth in John 3:3 and 3:5. Since Augustine believed his opponents had interpreted these verses entirely out of context, he decided to quote the whole of John 3:1-21 and then discuss the proper meaning of the text.⁵¹⁵

Next we ought to see whether the Lord Jesus, the one and only good teacher, has not in this very passage of the Gospel intimated, and indeed shown us, that [salvation] only comes to pass through the remission of their sins that baptized persons reach the kingdom of God; although to persons of a right understanding, the words ought to be sufficiently explicit as they stand in the passage: ‘Unless

⁵¹⁵ It is highly unlikely that Augustine cited these twenty-one verses from memory, given its accuracy and considerable length. Supporting the conclusion that he had John’s Gospel before him while writing is the fact that immediately prior to this excerpt, Augustine makes mention of ‘that very chapter of the Gospel’ (Latin, *ipsum evangelii capitulum*) in reference to the Johannine verses that the Pelagians were using. His citation of 3:1-21 corresponds for the most part with the Vulgate.

one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’; and: ‘Unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’. For why should one be born again, unless to be renewed? From what is he to be renewed, if not from some old condition? From what old condition, but that in which ‘our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed?’ Or whence comes it to pass that the image of God does not enter into the kingdom of God, unless it be that the impediment of sin prevents it? However, let us see, as earnestly and diligently as we are able, what is the entire context of this passage of the Gospel, on the point in question:

[Augustine here cites the text of John 3:1-21 uninterrupted]

Thus far the discourse wholly relates to the subject of our present inquiry; from this point the narrator digresses to something else. Now when Nicodemus did not understand what was being told to him...⁵¹⁶

Having earlier accused the Pelagians of interpreting John 3:3 and 3:5 out of context, Augustine here does the opposite by providing over half of John 3 verbatim. In citing John 3:1-21 as the ‘entire context’ (Latin, *totam circumstantiam*) of Jesus’ words in these two verses, Augustine makes clear that the content of 3:1-21 constitutes a single literary whole. After providing some initial commentary on 3:3 and 3:5 (lines 1-12) and citing all twenty-one verses from John 3, Augustine makes two explanatory remarks that bear much significance in determining his identification of the speaker.

Augustine first states: ‘Thus far the discourse wholly relates to the subject of our present inquiry’ (Latin, *huc usque est ad rem de qua quaerimus pertinens totus sermo ille contextus*). This description of John 3:1-21 as a *sermo* (‘discourse’) suggests that he interpreted the entire passage in a conversational or dialogical manner. The Latin term

⁵¹⁶ *On Merits and Forgiveness of Sin and Infant Baptism* 30. Translated by Holmes (1887), with minor modifications.

normally denotes a continuation of speech and/or discussion;⁵¹⁷ this contrasts sharply with Augustine's second remark: 'from this point the narrator digresses to something else' (Latin, *deinceps in aliud narrator abscedit*). This remark clarifies why Augustine felt it was unnecessary to cite the verses that followed after 3:21: the Gospel-writer ('narrator') had moved on to 'something else' that was unrelated in subject matter.⁵¹⁸ Augustine recognized that it was 'from this point' (Latin, *deinceps*) that the Gospel-writer began to 'digress'. Put another way, it seems Augustine did not at all view 3:13-21 as digressive material, but interpreted these verses as intrinsic to what preceded, namely the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. It is important to remember the high likelihood that Augustine here worked directly from a copy of John's Gospel; his lengthy citation is precise, and his stated goal was to not commit the same interpretive errors made by the Pelagians that 'cherry-picked' verses out of context.⁵¹⁹ Although his subsequent exegesis of the passage provides few explicit speaker identifications, Augustine certainly viewed the verses in a connected manner. John 3:14 and 3:18 are prefaced by the words 'and he goes on to say' (Latin, *sequitur et dicit*), and 3:16 with 'so he consequently says' (Latin, *sic consequenter dicit*), 3:19 'he adds indeed' (Latin, *quod vero adjungit*), 3:21 'however he says' (Latin, *autem dicit*). Then at the end of the chapter he writes the following:

⁵¹⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 6.8: 'A *dialogus* ('dialogue') is a conversation of two or more people; Latin speakers call it a 'discussion'. What the Greeks call 'dialogues' we call 'discussions'. A *sermo* ('discussion') is so called because it is interwoven between each of the two participants'. Translated by Barney et al (2006).

⁵¹⁸ For more on Augustine's understanding of the 'narrator' and 'narrative' see e.g., *On the Holy Trinity* 11.8.14; *Answer to Faustus the Manichaeon* 7.1-2, 17.4; *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 61.4; *Exposition on the Psalms* 6.11; *On Christian Doctrine* 2.28.44.

⁵¹⁹ We can almost picture Augustine copying one Johannine verse at a time, and having reached John 3:21, thought to himself, 'That's far enough; I've copied the whole context of 3:3 and 3:5'. Of course, he may have also instructed a secretary to copy 3:1-21 for him. The point is that much care was taken given the apologetic circumstances.

This then is the way in which spiritual regeneration is effected in all who come to Christ from their carnal generation. He explained it himself, and pointed it out when he was asked, ‘How could these things be?’ He left it open to no man to settle such a question by human reasoning, lest infants should be deprived of the grace of the remission of sins.⁵²⁰

Citing Nicodemus’ question as impetus for the discourse that followed, Augustine intimates in lines 3-5 that Jesus’ words left no room for misinterpretation by human reasoning. This is an obvious reference to the ‘erroneous’ thinking of Pelagians on infant baptism. We know from our earlier analysis that Augustine treated 3:13-15 as Jesus’ own words, and it seems likely (though not certain) that he understood the rest of the passage in like manner. Turning to Augustine’s next Johannine citation in *Sermon 293*, here he preaches on some of the similarities (and differences) between Jesus and John the Baptist.

Christ has them [disciples], John has them too. Christ baptizes, John baptizes too. And they come to John and say to him, ‘That one to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing; and all are coming to him’—hoping that like a jealous rival he might say something bad about Christ. But then the lamp burns all the more steadily; shines all the more brightly, then it is fed all the more securely, the more it distinguishes itself from the day. ‘Already’, he said, ‘I have told you that I am not the Christ. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. *The one who comes from heaven is above all*’. Then, those believing him were filled with admiration for Christ.⁵²¹

Augustine begins by discussing the context of John 3:26 (cited in lines 2-3), where the Baptist’s disciples question him about Jesus’ identity. Augustine claims that these disciples had hoped he would speak against Jesus, as they supposed him to be a ‘jealous rival’. Yet this was not so, Augustine explains, since he personified a ‘lamp’

⁵²⁰ *On Merits and Forgiveness of Sin and Infant Baptism* 33.

⁵²¹ *Sermon 293.6*. Translated by Hill (1994), with minor modifications.

(Latin, *lucerna*) bearing witness to Jesus.⁵²² Then in line 6-8, Augustine strings together three declarations from John 3, which he seems to believe have a common speaker. The first two of these comprise the Baptist's words in 3:28 and 3:29, while the third makes up the initial clause of 3:31. Immediately after these citations, Augustine relates that those who believed the Baptist ('him') then began to admire Christ. Such details of context confirm our earlier findings that Augustine believed the Baptist's words did indeed extend past 3:30.

Augustine makes his next citations of John 3 in *Sermon* 294, preached just three days after *Sermon* 293. At various points in the sermon he engages in debate with an imaginary Pelagian, whom we quickly learn has rejected the necessity of infant baptism for salvation. Below, Augustine draws on two verses from John's Gospel for scriptural support, one of which was read aloud to the congregation on that very day.

And then didn't you hear what the Lord himself said, in this same discourse with Nicodemus, when this same reading was read today? *'Whoever believes in him is not judged, but whoever does not believe has been judged already'*. But what does that mean, *'has been judged already?'* Has been condemned. You know, of course, that 'judgment' is often put for 'condemnation'; the Scriptures provide the evidence, above all with that one plainest piece of evidence that nobody can gainsay: when the Lord was dealing with the resurrection: 'Those who have done good', he said, 'to the resurrection of life; those who have done evil to the resurrection of the judgment'; obviously, he put judgment for condemnation.⁵²³

Augustine begins by appealing to the Pelagian's own recollection of the Gospel passage (Latin, *lectio*) read earlier in the day. He reminds him that its context is 'what the

⁵²² Augustine here draws on Jesus' reference to the Baptist in John 5:35: 'He was the burning and shining lamp' (Latin, *ille erat lucerna ardens et lucens*).

⁵²³ *Sermon* 294.14. Translated by Hill (1994), with minor modifications.

Lord himself said in this same discourse with Nicodemus' (Latin, *ipse dominus in eodem sermone ad Nicodemum quid dixerit*). John 3:18 is explicitly cited in lines 2-3, and so we know for sure that Augustine interpreted it within Jesus' discourse.⁵²⁴ He then explains that the terms 'judgment' and 'condemnation' are synonymous, as evidenced by another statement made by Jesus ('the Lord') in John 5:29. Augustine continues to argue with the imaginary Pelagian in the next paragraph, and in lines 5-6 gives him a chance to respond.

And you have the nerve to argue or believe otherwise? *'Whoever does not believe has been judged already'*. In another place: *'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life'*—which you were promising to unbaptized infants. *'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life'*.

'But so does the infant', [the Pelagian] replies, 'who does not believe, although it does not have the kingdom of God'.

But see what follows: *'Whoever rejects the Son does not have life, but the wrath of God abides upon him'*. Where do you place baptized infants? Surely in the ranks of believers. I mean, that's why even by the ancient, canonical, and well-established custom of the church, baptized infants are called the faithful...So that's why they have eternal life, since *'whoever believes in the Son has eternal life'*. Don't promise them eternal life without this faith, and without that sacrament of this faith. *'But whoever rejects the Son'*, and whoever does not believe in the Son, *'does not have life, but the wrath of God abides upon him'*. He did not say 'will come upon him', but *'abides upon him'*. He was looking back at the origin when he said, *'the wrath of God abides upon him'*.⁵²⁵

Augustine adds one further Johannine citation to support his argumentation against his imaginary Pelagian opponent: John 3:36. Parts of this verse are cited at several points in this excerpt in order to show that baptized infants are indeed believers; Augustine's view therefore contrasts sharply with the Pelagian claim that unbaptized

⁵²⁴ Hill translates *sermone* 'talk', which also conveys the sense of a back-and-forth exchange between dialogue partners.

⁵²⁵ *Sermon* 294.14.

infants have eternal life, too. However, his identification of the speaker of this verse is nowhere clearly stated. In relation to John 3:18 (cited in lines 1-2) Augustine notes that 3:36 is found ‘in another place’ (Latin, *alio loco*). This perhaps indicates that he was unsure of where in Scripture this ‘place’ really was, and that he was citing from memory. In the previous excerpt Augustine referred to ‘the reading [that] was read today’ (Latin, *lectio hodie legeretur*), which included 3:18; but whether or not more of the chapter was read is unknown.⁵²⁶ At the very end of the excerpt above, Augustine mentions that the speaker of 3:36 was ‘looking back at the origin when he said’ these words. This vague reference, however, could potentially apply to anyone. As we shall see in Augustine’s later citations of this verse, his identification of the speaker will prove problematic.

Our next excerpt is taken from the seventy-fourth sermon in *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, delivered between the years 414-416. Within Augustine’s comments on the base text of John 14:15-17, he explains how the ‘measure’ (Latin, *mensuram*) of the Holy Spirit that a person receives can vary.

For were it not that he was possessed by some in smaller measure than by others, saint Elisha would not have said to saint Elijah, ‘Let the spirit that is in you be in a twofold measure in me’. But when John the Baptist said, ‘*For God does not give the Spirit by measure*’, he was speaking exclusively of the Son of God, who did not receive the Spirit by measure; for in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁶ Earlier in *Sermon 294* Augustine cited John 3:5, 3:9 and 3:13-15, so the Gospel lection most likely began at 3:1. Evidence from the lectionary manuscripts indicates that on certain days 3:1-15 was read, and on another 3:16-21. Perhaps at Carthage these lections were combined. H. A. Houghton concludes on the basis of his Johannine citations in this sermon that Augustine must have consulted a Latin codex, either prior to his preaching (prepared notes) or after (edited according to its text). Cf. his *Augustine’s Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 132-133.

⁵²⁷ *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 74.3. Translated by Gibb and Innes (1888).

Augustine here sets Jesus apart from all others, since his reception of the Spirit was measureless. He contrasts the words of 2 Kings 2:9 with John 3:34, identifying the latter verse as comprising the words of ‘John the Baptist’ (Latin, *Ioannes Baptista*). Augustine also comments in line 4 that the Baptist ‘was speaking exclusively of the Son of God’. This attribution is in agreement with Augustine’s first citation of 3:34, made during his direct preaching on this passage about a decade earlier.

Augustine cites another portion of John 3 in his ninety-fifth sermon, delivered between 418-419. In the following passage he comments on Jesus’ identification of the devil as the ‘prince of this world’ in John 16:11.

For it is not of the heavens and of the earth, and of all that is in them, that the devil is prince, in the sense in which the world is to be understood, when it is said, ‘And the world was made by him’. But the devil is prince of that world, whereof in the same passage he immediately afterwards subjoins the words, ‘And the world did not know him’; that is, unbelieving people, wherewith the world through its utmost extent is filled: among whom the believing world groans, which he who made the world chose out of the world, and of whom he himself says, ‘*The Son of Man did not come to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him*’. He is the judge by whom the world is condemned, the helper whereby the world is saved.⁵²⁸

Augustine here clarifies for his listening audience that the devil is only a prince of the ‘unbelieving’ world. He laments that so many belong to this world (‘its utmost extent is filled’), yet he reminds his congregation that believers are no longer a part of it (lines 6-7). Augustine then provides a paraphrase of John 3:17, the first portion of which seems

⁵²⁸ *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 95.4.

to be conflated with Matthew 20:28;⁵²⁹ he introduces this paraphrase with the words ‘of whom he himself says’ (Latin, *de quo ipse dicit*). If this speaker is linked to the one ‘who made the world’ (line 7), then Augustine no doubt believed Jesus spoke these words. Such an identification is strengthened by the title ‘Son of Man’ in the paraphrase. In all likelihood Augustine was fully aware that this was Jesus’ favorite self-designation (a circumlocution for ‘I’).⁵³⁰ We may also note that at the end of the excerpt he continues to speak of Jesus as subject, describing him in contrasting terms as ‘the judge by whom the world is condemned’, but also ‘the helper whereby the world is saved’.

We now turn to Augustine’s next Johannine reference, found in *Letter* 193. Writing to Marius Mercator, he again cites John 3:36 in his attack on the Pelagian view of infant baptism (i.e., their rejection of its necessity for procuring salvation).

But since infants also receive the same bath that produces the forgiveness of sins in whoever receives it, they [Pelagians] believe that this forgiveness, which is not produced in them, is produced in others. When, therefore, they say, ‘They do not believe in that sense, but they believe in this sense’, they certainly are clear that infants believe. Let them, therefore, hear the Lord: *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not have life, but the wrath of God remains abides upon him*’...For it does not say ‘comes upon them’, but ‘*abides upon them*’.⁵³¹

In lines 3-4, Augustine explains that the Pelagians make an interesting admission: infants can in fact believe in some sense *through* those who baptize them. Augustine

⁵²⁹ John 3:17: ‘For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him’; Matthew 20:28: ‘Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’.

⁵³⁰ Cf. Mark Edwards, *John Through the Centuries* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 32-33.

⁵³¹ *Letter* 193.3. Translated by Teske (2004).

capitalizes on what he thinks is a flaw in their belief, since they seem to be admitting that forgiveness is somehow still needed for infants. Noting this ‘common ground’, he calls on the Pelagians to ‘hear the Lord’ (Latin, *audiant dominum*), and follows this with a full citation of John 3:36. Elsewhere in *Letter* 193, the title ‘Lord’ is frequently applied to Jesus,⁵³² and few instances can be interpreted in a general sense as referring to God. Because three more citations of this verse will be analyzed below, we need not here speak definitively of this attribution to the ‘Lord’.⁵³³ Yet it will be important to question in each case whether or not Augustine has the historical context of 3:36 in mind, since this verse *follows after* words he has unambiguously attributed to John the Baptist (3:31-35).

Our next passage is taken from Augustine’s *Letter* 205, addressed to his ‘most beloved brother’ Consentius. Here he elaborates on the future resurrection of all people and its eternal consequences.

Hence we undoubtedly ought to understand this as a transformation for the better, because all, both the just and the unjust, will rise. But, just as the Lord says in the Gospel, ‘Those whose actions were good will rise for life, but those whose actions were bad will rise for judgment’, here he calls eternal punishment a judgment, just as he says in another place, ‘*Whoever does not believe has been judged already*’.⁵³⁴

Augustine finds two Johannine verses helpful for explaining details of the resurrection to Consentius: 5:29 and 3:18. The first of these is explicitly attributed to Jesus, as it is prefaced by the words ‘just as the Lord says in the Gospel’ (Latin, *sicut*

⁵³² E.g., he attributes Mark 16:16 (containing language similar to John 3:36) to the ‘Lord’ in the paragraph following this excerpt. In this verse Jesus declares, ‘Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned’.

⁵³³ It may be remembered that the writings of Basil also included references to the ‘Lord’ with John 3:36.

⁵³⁴ *Letter* 205.14. Translated by Teske (2004), with minor modifications.

dominus in euangelio loquitur).⁵³⁵ In line 5 Augustine employs a similar formula in his partial citation of 3:18: ‘just as he says in another place’ (Latin, *sicut alio loco inquit*). The doubling of *sicut* (‘just as’) and similar content of both Johannine verses suggests that they share a common speaker. We may also recall Augustine’s earlier citation of 3:18 in *Sermon 294*: there he specified that the ‘Lord’ spoke these words to Nicodemus.

Turning now to Augustine’s theological handbook *Enchiridion*, we find one citation from John 3 in its thirty-third chapter. In order to aid readers being introduced to the Christian faith (i.e., for ease of topical reference), Augustine provides the following lengthy subtitle: ‘How the just condemnation under the wrath of God bound the human race until the Savior would come, who would liberate us from this wrath’.

So the human race was justly held in condemnation, and all its members were children of wrath. Of this wrath it is written: ‘For all our days have come to an end, and in your wrath we have ceased to be; we finish our years like a sigh’. Of this wrath indeed Job says, ‘A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of wrath’. Of this wrath also the Lord Jesus says, ‘*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not believe in the Son does not have life, but the wrath of God abides on him*’. He does not say ‘will come’, but ‘*abides upon him*’.⁵³⁶

Augustine here selects three biblical verses that pertain to the ‘wrath’ (Latin, *ira*) which everyone endures: Psalm 89:9, Job 14:1 and John 3:36. Each of these is prefaced with the formula ‘of this wrath’ followed by the source/speaker. For the first verse, Augustine only uses the generic phrase ‘it is written’ (Latin, *scriptum est*), but for the second he specifies that ‘Job says’ (Latin, *dicit Iob*) these words. Augustine introduces

⁵³⁵ With the exception of single citation from Deuteronomy, Augustine applies the title ‘Lord’ to Jesus in *Letter 205* at eleven other places: *Letter 205.1*; *205.2* (twice); *205.11* (twice); *205.12* (thrice); *205.14*; *205.16*; *205.17*.

⁵³⁶ *Enchiridion 33*. Translated by Harbert (1999), with minor modifications.

the third verse, John 3:36, with ‘the Lord Jesus says’ (Latin, *dicit dominus Iesus*). With such specificity there is no question whom Augustine has in mind—this attribution is perplexing, however, for in earlier years he had interpreted 3:31-35 as the words of the Baptist.⁵³⁷ It is often pointed out that Augustine generally tended to cite from memory, and one clue that he was doing so here is the adaptation ‘whoever does not believe in the Son’ (Latin, *qui non credit in filium*), instead of the Vulgate’s ‘whoever rejects the Son’ (Latin, *qui incredulus est filio*). His previous citations of 3:36 contained the latter reading, though some Old Latin manuscripts contain the former. This reading is also found in Augustine’s *Against Julian*, written concurrently with the *Enchiridion* (c. 421). The following passage is excerpted from his sixth book in a chapter subtitled: ‘No one is liberated from the wrath of God except through the mediator, Christ’.

No one is liberated from this wrath of God unless he is reconciled with God through the mediator, wherefore the mediator himself says, ‘Whoever does not believe in the Son does not have life, but the wrath of God abides upon him’. He did not say ‘will come’, but ‘abides upon him’.⁵³⁸

Augustine here stresses humanity’s need for a mediator, one who can provide both deliverance from wrath and reconciliation with God. Augustine finds the content of John 3:36 to adequately sum up this truth, and in line 2 he identifies the speaker as ‘the mediator himself’ (Latin, *ipse mediator*). This title is used synonymously with Jesus elsewhere in *Against Julian*,⁵³⁹ so this identification provides another example of depicting Jesus as speaker. Notably, this fourth citation of 3:36 highlights a definite

⁵³⁷ Shaw (1887) includes the following footnote in his English translation of the *Enchiridion*: ‘These words, attributed by the author to Christ, were really spoken by John the Baptist’.

⁵³⁸ *Against Julian* 6.24.79. Translated by Schumacher (1957), with minor modifications.

⁵³⁹ E.g., *Against Julian* 4.3.14: ‘No one lives rightly except through Jesus Christ our Lord, the one mediator of God and people’. Cf. *Against Julian* 2.9.32; 5.11.45; 6.24.81; 6.25.82.

pattern amongst Augustine's writings: as shown below, all of his statements which follow after these citations of 3:36 share a striking similarity of phrasing:⁵⁴⁰

Tract. Jo. 14 - He did not say 'the wrath of God comes to him', but 'the wrath of God abides on him'.

non dixit ira dei venit ad eum sed ira dei manet super eum

Letter 193 - For it does not say 'comes upon them', but 'abides upon them'.

non enim dictum est venit super eos sed manet super eos

Sermon 294 - He did not say 'will come upon him', but 'abides upon him'.

non dixit veniet super eum sed manet super eum

Enchiridion - He does not say 'will come', but 'abides upon him'.

non ait veniet sed manet super eum

A. Julian - He did not say 'will come', but 'abides upon him'.

non dixit veniet sed manet super eum

Such resemblance suggests that Augustine was not citing John 3:36 from a physical copy of the Gospel each and every time, but may have been drawing from another source that included this comment along with this verse (and perhaps its identification of the speaker as Jesus). Given the size of Augustine's personal library, tracing down this specific source might at first seem unrealistic. However, a few pieces of evidence can help us move beyond mere speculation.

First of all, we know that Augustine was in the habit of collecting notes for himself. Having a compilation of biblical citations and miscellaneous comments was quite practical for preparing sermons and other compositions.⁵⁴¹ We also know that

⁵⁴⁰ Added here is *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 14.13, which was not analyzed above because no speaker was identified. The passage reads as follows: 'Carnal thought does not apprehend what I say: let it defer understanding, and begin by faith; let us hear what follows: *'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him'*. He did not say 'the wrath of God comes to him', but *'the wrath of God abides on him'*'. Translated by Gibb (1888).

⁵⁴¹ Late in his life (c. 427) Augustine published the *Speculum* ('Mirror'), an immense collection of biblical excerpts centered on ethical living. Comprising about 60,000 words, he clearly had been working on it for years, and it is possible that other such collections had been in the making that were never published.

Augustine was familiar with the writings of Cyprian of Carthage, especially *To Quirinus*, which he cited on at least twelve occasions.⁵⁴² It is possible that Augustine drew on this *testimonium* for his citation of John 3:36, since Cyprian also quoted the verse.⁵⁴³ While Cyprian did not identify the speaker, the verse does follow after three other citations of Jesus' words from the Gospels of Matthew and John.⁵⁴⁴ Without looking up the actual passage in the Gospel, Augustine could have taken this as an authoritative saying of Jesus. In addition, the fact that neither the Baptist nor the Gospel-writer is mentioned by name would put the onus on Augustine to determine who originally spoke the words, and so he may have ultimately gone with Jesus.

Another possible source for Augustine may have been Basil of Caesarea. It is not unlikely that he was influenced by Basil's own identification of Jesus ('the Lord') as the speaker of John 3:36, since it is found throughout his *Asketikon* corpus. We know that Augustine had access to some of the Cappadocian's writings in both Latin and his original Greek⁵⁴⁵—in *Against Julian* he cited from Basil's *Homily on Fasting* and refers to him as one of many 'great fellow bishops' (Latin, *tantis coepiscopis*).⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴² Cf. Anthony Dupont, *Gratia in Augustine's Sermones ad Populum during the Pelagian Controversy: Do Different Contexts Furnish Different Insights?* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 32.

⁵⁴³ In addition to Cyprian's *To Quirinus*, other patristic examples of *testimonia* (collections of thematically grouped biblical excerpts with brief commentary) include Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa's *Testimonies Against the Jews* and Pseudo-Epiphanius' *Testimony Book*, although they mostly contain Old Testament verses. See further in David E. Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 456-457.

⁵⁴⁴ These are John 14:6, 10:9, and Matthew 13:17. See *To Quirinus* 2.27.

⁵⁴⁵ Augustine (had) translated a portion of his work—in *Against Julian* 1.5.18 he writes: 'Although I found it in translation, I prefer for the sake of greater fidelity to truth to translate it word for word from the Greek'. Augustine's Latin text reads: *quod etsi reperi interpretatum tamen propter diligentiore[m] veri fide[m] verbum e verbo malui transferre de Graeco*.

⁵⁴⁶ These bishops include Innocent, Cyprian, Gregory Nazianzus, Hilary and Ambrose. Cf. *Against Julian* 15.16-18; 1.6.22.

The relative persuasiveness of these proposals is of course a matter of opinion without direct evidence; yet at the very least they help us to make some sense out of Augustine's identification of Jesus as the speaker. In his direct treatment of John 3:31-36 in the *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, he explicitly attributed the first five verses to the Baptist. His position on 3:36 was unclear there only due to the fact that he employed indefinite verbs when citing (e.g., 'let us hear what follows', 'he did not say'). Since this verse is cited one further time in his unfinished treatise *Incomplete Work Against Julian*, we may segue to it and then offer some concluding thoughts.

You say these things as if all human beings are punished on account of some one kind of sin, or as if we say that those who are already living adult lives are children of wrath on account of sin alone. *'Whosoever does not believe in the Son'*, as the Son himself says, *'will not have life, but the wrath of God abides upon him'*.⁵⁴⁷

Augustine here responds to Julian of Eclanum's attack on the doctrine of 'original sin'. After intimating that Julian had misunderstood his position, he emphasizes the more important point: belief in the Son, as negatively stated in John 3:36b, allows one to avoid the wrath he or she was born into. Augustine's attribution of the verse to 'the Son himself' (Latin, *ipse filius*) is congruous with his prior citations, since Jesus is obviously intended. The adaptations present in the verse suggest that Augustine is again citing from memory (i.e., his 'mental text').⁵⁴⁸

Having completed our analysis of Augustine's citations of John 3:36, we are now able to summarize our findings and offer concluding remarks on his identification of the

⁵⁴⁷ *Incomplete Work Against Julian* 4.128. Translated by Teske (1999), with minor modifications.

⁵⁴⁸ Augustine's text reads: *quisquis non credit in filium non habebit vitam sed ira dei manet super eum*; the Vulgate reads: *qui autem incredulus est filio non videbit vitam sed ira dei manet super eum*.

speaker. We may first note that every one of his citations of 3:36 lacks narrative context; this contrasts with his citations of 3:31-35 in the *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, where we are most sure he consulted the Gospel text directly. Because of its placement after 3:31-35, it seems quite likely that Augustine's numerous citations of 3:36 were taken (literally) 'out of context'. Yet it ought to be noted that this was not generally the case with his other Johannine citations. For instance, in *Letter 265* Augustine included several direct citations within his response to a devout woman named Seleuciana. As early as 403,⁵⁴⁹ she had written to him concerning a certain Novatianist claim that Peter was never baptized. Augustine assured Seleuciana that Peter and the other disciples were indeed baptized, and in the following excerpt explained in what sense Jesus baptized.

Yet on account of the Lord's statement, 'Unless one is reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven', we should certainly have no doubt that they were baptized. Scripture, however, makes both of these statements about the Lord, that 'he baptized more people than John' and that 'he himself did not baptize but his disciples', in order that we might understand that he baptized by the presence of his majesty but did not baptize by his own hands. For the sacrament of baptism is his, but the ministry of baptizing belonged to the disciples. So then, when John the evangelist says in his Gospel, 'After these things Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea, and he stayed there with them and baptized', then speaking about him a little later, he says, 'Therefore, when Jesus learned that the Pharisees heard that Jesus was making more disciples and baptizing more people than John, although Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples, he left Judea and went back again to Galilee'.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. H. A. Houghton, *Augustine's Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 147. In a footnote Houghton also mentions the proposed dating of the letter by others: Mandouze (405-408), Anoz (420).

⁵⁵⁰ *Letter 265.4-5*. Translated by Teske (2005), with minor modifications.

Augustine here alludes to and cites several verses from John's Gospel in order to build scriptural support against the heretical claim that Peter was never baptized. In lines 1-2 he paraphrases John 3:5, and after alluding to portions of 4:1-2 within his comments he prefaces his citation of 3:22 in line 8 with 'so then, when John the evangelist says in his Gospel' (Latin, *tunc ergo quando dicit Ioannes evangelista in evangelio suo*). This is immediately followed with a similar phrase that introduces an uninterrupted citation of 4:1-3: 'then speaking about him a little later, he says' (Latin, *tunc paulo post de illo loquens ait*). Houghton points out that with the exception of just two words, Augustine's text of 4:1-3 is identical to the Old Latin version exemplified in Codex Sarzanensis (early-sixth century), leading him to conclude that he must have relied on at least one manuscript for this citation.⁵⁵¹ We may add to this evidence from the paragraph preceding this excerpt, where Augustine mentioned to Seleuciana that a certain textual variant existed in the Latin codices, whereas in the Greek text the matter was easily resolved. With relative confidence, then, we can picture Augustine skimming John 3-4 with a manuscript in hand, shifting his eyes from the Gospel text to the letter he was writing. Such concentration also makes sense from the perspective of his concern for Seleuciana's orthodoxy, which was being challenged by a Novatianist.

When we take a closer look at the excerpt provided above, we notice the contextual detail that Augustine includes. In line 8 he identifies both the speaker and the source of John 3:22. Having consulted an Old Latin manuscript of the Gospel, Augustine noted that this verse represents the Gospel-writer's narration of Jesus' baptizing ministry. He then links the speaker with 4:1-3, recognizing these verses as another point where

⁵⁵¹ Cf. H. A. Houghton, *Augustine's Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 147-148.

narration has resumed. This may well reflect Augustine's opinion that the preceding passages (3:13-21, 3:31-36) were not spoken by the Gospel-writer. As we concluded in the case of Basil, the content of John 3:36 very much seems like something Jesus could say, and so it is understandable that Augustine attributed the verse to him without a full awareness of its placement in the narrative context of John's Gospel.⁵⁵²

One final citation of John 3 appears in Augustine's *Incomplete Work Against Julian*. In actual fact, this citation is found within an excerpt of Julian of Eclanum's lost treatise *To Florus* (c. 420s). Having been accused of misrepresenting Julian's views in earlier works, Augustine here sought to counter this accusation by quoting Julian carefully and extensively. In the following passage, Augustine provides his readers with some of Julian's comments on divine judgment.

But when Scripture says that it will be inflicted on the day of sin, this is the custom of Scripture which often says that one who is already condemned will be condemned. This is the reason for what the Lord says in the Gospel: '*Everyone who does not believe in me is already judged, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God*'; not that the unbelief which denies Christ is going to be subjected to everlasting punishment before the day of judgment, since all who come to the faith were first non-believers.⁵⁵³

Julian (according to Augustine) claims that Scripture typically refers to condemnation as both a present and a future reality. His prime example is John 3:18b, which he introduces with the phrase 'the Lord says in the Gospel' (Latin, *in evangelio dominus inquit*). Two important clues strongly suggest that Julian has Jesus in mind as speaker. The first is the use of the title 'Lord' in extant excerpts of *To Florus*; Julian's

⁵⁵² Augustine may also have believed that in 3:36 the Baptist was *citing* Jesus' own words from elsewhere in the Gospels (thus both speaking the same content).

⁵⁵³ *Incomplete Work Against Julian* 6.30. Translated by Teske (1999), with minor modifications.

citations from the Gospels show that he often quoted Jesus in this manner.⁵⁵⁴ The second clue is the inclusion of two adaptations in 3:18 that are not found in Augustine's own citations of this verse: the attributive adjective *omnis* ('everyone') is added at the beginning of the verse, followed by the distinctive phrase 'in me'. Notably, Augustine does not take issue with these adaptations in his rebuttal in the next paragraph, or with Julian's attribution of 3:18 to 'the Lord'.

In our analysis of Augustine's citations of John 3:18 we have already established that he believed Jesus was the speaker. Had he not shared Julian's position on the speaker's identity, we might have expected him to criticize his theological opponent on the matter (as he was normally eager to do). This apparent agreement and the distinctiveness of Julian's adaptations both indicate that Augustine was in all likelihood quoting Julian faithfully.⁵⁵⁵

Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428).

1. Background Material

Theodore was born in the city of Antioch in Syria. His family was well off, so he was able to study rhetoric and literature at the illustrious school of Libanius. Theodore here became lifelong friends with John Chrysostom, and while still in their teenage years

⁵⁵⁴ See e.g., *Incomplete Work Against Julian* 2.53 (John 8:44a: *secundum quod dominus in evangelio ait*); 2.57 (Matthew 19:6a: *unde dominus ait*); 4.79 (John 14:30b: *dominus dicit in evangelio*); 5.21 (Matthew 12:33: *tunc ergo dominus ait*).

⁵⁵⁵ Note: Another excerpt of Julian contains a citation of John 3:20, without the speaker identified (*Incomplete Work Against Julian* 3.187). In context, Julian is quoting a Manichaean source. See H. A. Houghton, *Augustine's Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 178, 215.

they entered a local monastery together. After a brief period in which Theodore seriously contemplated becoming a lawyer and getting married, he was dissuaded by his friend and returned again to the monastic life.⁵⁵⁶ In 392 he was consecrated bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia (modern Misis in Turkey). In this leadership position Theodore gained further popularity as a gifted preacher and biblical commentator, which earned him the nickname ‘The Interpreter’ (Syriac, *mephasqana*).

Although Theodore’s literary output was considerable, most of it has not come down to us. Approximately 125 years after his death, his works and person were condemned as heretical (i.e., Nestorian) at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. Fortunately, the East Syrian Church continued to read and translate the bishop’s writings. Such is the case with his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, which survives in a Syriac translation made within forty years of his death.⁵⁵⁷ The commentary dates to the first decade of the fifth century and reflects Theodore’s exegetical maturity as one of the leading Antiochene theologians of the day. In it, Theodore interprets the biblical text almost exclusively via the literal sense, intending to convey its historical meaning with as much clarity and precision as possible (i.e., paying close attention to history and chronological development).⁵⁵⁸ He frequently quotes Scripture and has a habit of immediately following it with his own paraphrase, employing the first person to engage readers directly as if the biblical character was still speaking (an ancient rhetorical

⁵⁵⁶ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume III (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1966 [1960]), 401.

⁵⁵⁷ Since Theodore knew some Syriac himself and was venerated by his Syriac translators, it is probable that the text reflects Theodore’s thought accurately. Cf. Marco Conti, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Ancient Christian Texts. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), xxiii-xxiv.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Manlio Simonetti, ‘Theodore of Mopsuestia’, in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 809; Bruce A. McDonald, ‘Theodore of Mopsuestia’, in McKim (ed.), *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, 970.

technique known as *prosopopoeia*). Theodore at times prefaces his citations with information regarding the speaker's identity (e.g., 'the blessed David says', 'the Samaritan woman said to him', 'the blind man wisely answered their question by saying'), but about just as often makes no such effort to specify, such as using the indefinite 'he/it says'.

John 3 is quoted in one other of Theodore's writings, his *Commentary on Jonah*.⁵⁵⁹ Forming a part of his larger *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, this exegetical work was written early in his career—certainly prior to becoming bishop of Mopsuestia—and it is extant in its entirety in the Greek original. Theodore for the most part sticks to exegeting the book of Jonah and drawing parallels to the life and ministry of Jesus (typological linking). While other biblical books are hardly cited, Theodore takes care when he does cite to identify the speaker's identity in each case.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Our first passage is excerpted from the preface to the *Commentary on Jonah*. It is the only citation from John's Gospel found in Theodore's brief commentary.

God was capable of delivering them completely from the attack, or at least causing them to find some other remedy for the bite, and he wanted them to gain a cure from the injury of the assailants by way of an example in case we should marvel greatly at God's giving a cure from death through the death of Christ the Lord, and providing us with immortal life through the resurrection. Hence the Lord also says, '*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone believing in him may not perish, but may have eternal life*'.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁹ Theodore cites two other Johannine verses (3:13 in *Eighth Homily* 12; 3:16 in *Fifth Baptismal Homily* 2), but without identifying the speaker.

⁵⁶⁰ *Commentary on Jonah*, preface 321. Translated by Hill (2004).

In Theodore's view, the bronze serpent event recorded in the book of Numbers was clearly a prophetic anticipation of Christ's passion. He reasons that God truly desired to reveal his plan of ultimate salvation in this way. Since John 3:14-15 comes to Theodore's mind, he cites it with the introductory formula 'hence the Lord also says' (Greek, *hothen kai ho kurios phēsi*). In the paragraph that follows after this excerpt, Theodore also cites Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:40-41 with a nearly identical formula: 'hence the Lord also says at one time'. Apart from these two references, the title 'Lord' regularly appears throughout the commentary in the variant form *despotēs* and is paired with Christ (as in lines 4-5). *Kurios* only appears elsewhere in the direct context of the story of Jonah, so it is admittedly within the realm of possibility that Theodore may have intended 'Lord' in a general, rather than specific, sense. In my view, however, the presence of *kurios* in the very next paragraph to introduce an indisputable Jesus saying (Matthew 12:40-41), with a nearly identical formula to boot, certainly shifts the probability towards accepting 'Lord' as a title for Jesus himself. Fortunately, Theodore's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* deals directly with these and other verses, so it is appropriate to segue to it for confirmation.

Theodore's treatment of John 3 in his Johannine commentary is extensive, and it is unnecessary to subject every verse citation to analysis. Instead, key passages will be excerpted to spotlight his view of the speakers. In the first passage provided below, Theodore discusses the same verses just cited in the excerpt from the *Commentary on Jonah*. He has just wrapped up his explanation of the Son of Man's ascent and descent

from heaven—clearly understanding John 3:13 in the context of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus⁵⁶¹—and he then proceeds with his exegesis.

After talking about his ascension, since this would have appeared incredible because he [still] had to be given over to suffering, he added, ‘*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life*’. It is as if he said, ‘Let no cross frighten you in any way or make you doubt my words’. For, just as Moses in the desert lifted up the serpent which is bronze in its nature, and the power of him who ordered it to be lifted up saved those who looked at it, so now Christ bears his human destiny and suffers the pain of the cross.⁵⁶²

As previously pointed out, Theodore commonly employs the stylistic feature of a paraphrase in order to clarify what a given biblical text says. In this particular case, the message of John 3:14-15 is summed up in his brief paraphrase: ‘Let no cross frighten you in any way or make you doubt my words’ (line 5). In paraphrasing like this, Theodore intentionally links the identity of the speaker of 3:14-15 to these words, speaking in the same manner and person. According to the general conversational context in the excerpt, Theodore appears to understand the speaker to be a character within the Gospel narrative, speaking *prior* to the crucifixion (cf. line 2). The two second-person pronouns ‘you’ most probably refer to the Jewish leaders whom Nicodemus represents, and who would be ‘frightened’ about the cross and doubt the ‘incredible’ claims made in 3:13-15.⁵⁶³ A bit

⁵⁶¹ While commenting on John 3:13, Theodore writes in *Commentary on the Gospel of John 2*: ‘The term ‘descended’ does not appear to be consistent because [his human nature] was born of the seed of David and did not in fact descend from heaven...And since *the meaning of his words overwhelmed the mind of Nicodemus*, by linking them with divinity he established what he intended to say’ (emphasis added).

⁵⁶² *Commentary on the Gospel of John 2*. Translated by Conti (2010).

⁵⁶³ Conti includes the possessive adjective ‘my’ (‘my words’), which would point directly to Jesus. Vosté’s Latin translation does not contain this first-person reference, but reads: *ne crux ullo modo vos terreat, inquit, neque dubios vos reddat de iis quae sunt dicta*. Nevertheless, the double appearance of the second-person pronoun *vos* (‘you’) points both to a speaker and an audience within the Gospel narrative.

later in the commentary, Theodore again employs the paraphrase stylistic feature when he cites John 3:17-18 in this next excerpt.

And since he said that the Son of Man would be raised up and that God gave his only Son, and since there would be those who would not believe who thus would be condemned, he therefore added, *'Indeed, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him'*. And so he comes back to the purpose of what happened to him: 'The purpose established by God is not that someone may be damned, but that all may be saved'. And then what? *'All who believe in him'*, he says, *'are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God'*. He says, 'The intention of God is this: that all may believe and be saved, and this is why I came to be among humanity. Those who do not believe are the cause of their own damnation. But believers have the right to salvation. If some do not believe, they are the authors of their own condemnation: indeed, his grace is offered to all who want it'.⁵⁶⁴

In the first sentence of this excerpt, Theodore makes reference to the lifting up of the Son of Man and the giving of the Son to the world (John 3:14-16). He follows this up by citing 3:17, and after paraphrasing this verse cites 3:18 with yet another accompanying paraphrase in lines 9-13. Theodore's view of the speaker of these Johannine verses is revealed in his paraphrase of 3:18. Lines 10-11 contain the significant explanatory statement 'this is why I came to be among humanity'.⁵⁶⁵ Incontrovertibly, this statement alludes to the incarnation; in Theodore's view Jesus himself was declaring why he was sent into the world. This is corroborated later in Book 4 of his commentary, as seen in the following excerpt.

⁵⁶⁴ *Commentary on the Gospel of John 2*. Translated by Conti (2010), with minor modifications (e.g., his translation of John 3:18 includes the reading 'in me' instead of 'in him'; the Syriac *beh* is third-person singular, which Vosté renders *in eum*).

⁵⁶⁵ Vosté's translation reads: *et propterea veni ego inter homines*. The Syriac *etiyt* is first-person singular.

At this point our Lord began his regular teaching, something that he usually did after his signs when the greatness of what had occurred confirmed what he said. And Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind'. In another passage he had also said, '*God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world*'. But now: 'I came into this world for judgment'. The previous passage spoke about the purpose of his coming.⁵⁶⁶

Theodore here explains that Jesus' statement in John 9:39 reflects his 'regular teaching' (Syriac, *bmlpywta*) done after performing a miracle. Jesus had just cured a man born blind, and so his words about receiving/losing sight in lines 3-4 are quite timely, in Theodore's opinion. He then affirms that the earlier words of John 3:17a belong to the same speaker, but were spoken instead to explain the incarnation ('the purpose of his coming'). Theodore reaches the final verses of the first Johannine passage in Book 2 of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Having completed his interpretation of John 3:19, he then moves on to expounding the remaining verses.

He makes it clear that a sick mind has no regard for the doctrine of truth. And in order to confirm this he says, '*All who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it might be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God*'. Those who enjoy evil do not turn their attention to the good. In fact, they hate it because they know that it condemns their evil. Those who do what is true pursue virtue. They know virtue is praiseworthy and a good testimony of their conscience. Notice then that he said, '*All who do evil*' and '*those who do what is true*', and not, 'Whoever did' or 'committed'. Certainly it happens that those who have done evil sometimes abandon their inclination to evil and tend toward goodness, while those who appear to do what is true sometimes fall into evil. Therefore he said, '*All who do*' and '*those who do*', because one who is devoted to wickedness is never brought to virtue, and anyone who is a lover of

⁵⁶⁶ *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 4.

truth is always a follower of virtue as well. After reporting these words the evangelist added, ‘After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized’. He described the events he related above as happening in Jerusalem. Then he added those things that Jesus did after he had left the region of Judea, teaching and baptizing.⁵⁶⁷

Through most of this lengthy excerpt, Theodore refrains from specifying the identity of the speaker in John 3:20-21, preferring to use the indefinite third-person pronoun ‘he’ instead (lines 2, 8, 12). Even so, it is in lines 14-15 that we are provided with an important summary statement. Theodore claims, ‘After reporting these words the evangelist added’, and then cites John 3:22.⁵⁶⁸ While there’s no question that ‘these words’ refer (at the very least) to 3:20-21, Theodore explicitly identifies them as having been ‘reported’ (Syriac, *damr*). In the rest of the commentary, he is consistent in employing the verbal action ‘reporting’ in the sense of writing down things that are spoken or done. This indicates that Theodore considered 3:20-21 to be words spoken by a character in the Gospel and subsequently reported by the Gospel-writer. Supporting this is Theodore’s comments in lines 16-17 that the Gospel-writer ‘described the events he related above as happening in Jerusalem’; the setting of 3:20-21 is thus situated within the very city that Jesus and Nicodemus had engaged in conversation (cf. John 2:23).

In Theodore’s next excerpt from the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* both John 3:30 and a portion of 3:31 are cited. As is his custom, they are subsequently paraphrased from the first-person point of view.

⁵⁶⁷ *Commentary on the Gospel of John 2.*

⁵⁶⁸ Theodore’s last mentioning of the ‘evangelist’ (Syriac, *ewyglsta*) in connection with verses from John 3 appears at the beginning of the chapter. Vosté’s translation reads: *his ergo dictis evangelista addit.*

‘He must increase, but I must decrease’. He says, ‘This will certainly not happen in a short time, but it is necessary that the things that are his increase while those that are mine decrease’. Why? *‘The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things’*. He says, ‘Since he came from above, he is consequently above everything. I, because I am of the earth, am necessarily like one who is of the earth’.⁵⁶⁹

Theodore here insists that the logic behind John the Baptist’s need to ‘decrease’ is revealed in John 3:31: he is ‘of the earth’, while Jesus is ‘from above’. Theodore then proceeds to rephrase 3:31 and adds two first-person pronouns in lines 5-6: ‘I, because I am of the earth’.⁵⁷⁰ This usage without question reveals Theodore’s belief that 3:30-31b are inseparable in terms of the speaker: the Baptist intentionally spoke this way to contrast himself with Jesus (i.e., earthly vs. heavenly origin). As Theodore comments on the rest of these verses from the second Johannine passage, his preference is to employ the masculine third-person pronoun in citations. However, when he reaches the final verse of this chapter, Theodore provides an extensive paraphrase of it, disclosing the speaker’s identity and narrative context.

After he had said all this in order to prove the power of Christ our Lord, he rightly concluded by adding, *‘Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath’*. ‘Since these things are so’, he says, ‘whoever believes in him will participate in eternal life; whoever does not believe will face eternal damnation. Therefore, because of all this, it is all the more fitting that everyone should become diligent so that through faith in him they might be worthy of the promise of future blessedness and escape the threats of judgment’. These are the words of John. After the evangelist inserted this story and related the words that the disciples of John said

⁵⁶⁹ *Commentary on the Gospel of John 2.*

⁵⁷⁰ Theodore uses the Syriac first-person singular pronoun *enā*. Vosté’s Latin translation of this phrase reads: *ego autem quia de terra sum, omnino sum tamquam qui necessario de terra est.*

to the Jew when they came to John, and related John's words in reply where he clearly taught the greatness of Christ, he returned to the order of his narration by saying, 'Now when Jesus learned...'⁵⁷¹

Theodore concludes his exegesis of the chapter by first citing and paraphrasing John 3:36, and then summarizing the context of 3:26-36. According to Theodore, the Gospel-writer 'related' the words of the Baptist's disciples and then the Baptist's own reply and teaching (lines 9-10). The manner in which Theodore here refers to 'John' and 'the evangelist' indicates that they are in distinction from one other and by no means the same person.⁵⁷² This is supported by Theodore's claim that the evangelist 'returned to the order of his narration' in John 4:1 (lines 11-12), after having reported the words of another for some time. Moreover, Theodore describes 3:36 as a 'concluding' statement, which necessitates that what preceded must also belong on the same speaker's lips.⁵⁷³ It is therefore reasonable to assert that in Theodore's opinion, the whole of 3:31-36 comprises one literary unit one and must be attributed to a single speaker. As with 3:13-21, he did not regard these passages as commentary by the Gospel-writer, but rather as a faithful reporting of the words of Jesus and the Baptist.

Severian of Gabala (d. 425).

1. Background Material

⁵⁷¹ *Commentary on the Gospel of John 2.*

⁵⁷² While the name 'John' is occasionally used for the Gospel-writer in the commentary, his preferred title is 'evangelist'. 'John' as a reference to the Baptist appears half the time with the epithet 'Baptist', and half without. In Vosté's critical edition he includes 'Baptist' in parentheses. His translation of line 8 reads: *haec sunt verba Iohannis (Baptistae)*.

⁵⁷³ Another example of this type of transition appears in *Commentary on the Gospel of John 6*: 'This is how our Lord concluded his speech to his disciples. He includes his passion as the fulfillment of his words. Therefore the evangelist continues by saying, 'After Jesus had spoken...'' Translated by Conti (2010).

Almost nothing is known of the life of Severian prior to his appointment as bishop of Gabala (near Laodicea in Syria). From his exegetical homilies it is apparent that he had a solid rhetorical education and possessed a vast knowledge of the Scriptures.⁵⁷⁴ It is also clear that Severian was a devoted follower of the Antiochene method of exegesis, which generally stressed the historical/common-sensical approach to the biblical text; yet his adherence to this approach did not prevent him from applying typological interpretation from time to time.⁵⁷⁵ Around the turn of the century Severian traveled to Constantinople to make a career for himself as a preacher, initially getting along well with John Chrysostom, who welcomed him as *locum tenens*. For some years he continued to preach in the imperial capital and gained favor with Eudoxia the empress. In his ambition, however, Severian soon came to vehemently oppose Chrysostom, and a rivalry between the bishops ensued. Ultimately, Severian succeeded in getting Chrysostom deposed and exiled at the Synod of the Oak in 403-404.

Approximately fifty of Severian's homilies have come down to us, nearly all of which survived (rather paradoxically) because they circulated under Chrysostom's own name.⁵⁷⁶ Throughout the homilies, Severian portrays himself as a fighter of heretics, encouraging his hearers (often addressed as 'brothers') to maintain a strict orthodox

⁵⁷⁴ Gennadius of Marseilles relates that Severian was an 'admirable preacher' (Latin, *declamator admirabilis*) and 'well-read in the divine Scriptures' (Latin, *divinis scripturis eruditus*). According to Socrates Scholasticus (d. 440), when Severian preached in Greek he had a strong Syriac accent, indicating this was his mother tongue. Cf. Gennadius, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 21; Socrates, *Church History* 6.1.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 833.

⁵⁷⁶ Given that Severian's homilies were held in Constantinople, Remco F. Regtuit surmises that confusion may have arisen about their attribution due to poor recordkeeping. Regtuit also points out the possibility that the removal of Severian's name was a deliberate intervention due to his status as an enemy of Chrysostom. Cf. his 'Severian of Gabala and John Chrysostom: The Problem of Authenticity', in Schoors and Van Deun (eds.), *Philohistôr: Miscellanea in Honorem Caroli Laga Septuagenarii*, 136.

position in refuting heresy. Three of his Greek sermons contain portions of John 3 that are analyzed below. The first, *Homily on the Serpent*, was composed in 400. In this homily he includes a lengthy exposition on the account of Moses' bronze serpent in Numbers, usually identifying the speakers of biblical verses (e.g., 'David says in the book of Kings', 'John the Baptist says in the Gospel'); occasionally 'Scripture' is also given a speaking role. A similar citation style is observed in Severian's second work, *Homily on the Phrase 'Put Your Hand'*, composed in the following year. In this homily he takes as a starting point the interpretation of Genesis 24, in which the aged Abraham commanded his servant to put his hand under his thigh; by doing so the servant swore to bring back a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's kin in Mesopotamia (in order to fulfill God's promise of having descendants forever). Severian normally prefaces his biblical citations with identification markers on the speakers (e.g., 'Isaiah says', 'our Savior himself said to the Pharisees', 'the evangelist says').

Severian's last citation of John 3 appears within his *Homily on the Holy Spirit*. While this homily's dating remains uncertain, its opening words reveal that it was preached a day after celebrating the feast of Pentecost.⁵⁷⁷ Verses from the Bible permeate the homily to the extent that his language maintains a 'biblical feel' throughout. Severian very often incorporates these verses into his own sentences, but speakers are also identified as well (e.g., 'our Savior says to the holy apostles'). With respect to John's

⁵⁷⁷ Noted by C. Datema, 'Towards a Critical Edition of the Greek Homilies of Severian of Gabala'. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 19 (1988): 113. Severian writes: 'Yesterday, you who love Christ, we were praising the advent of the holy and worshipful Spirit...' Translated by Sewell (2014).

Gospel he takes care in distinguishing the voices of the characters and the Gospel-writer.⁵⁷⁸

2. Text(s) and Analysis

We begin with the *Homily on the Serpent*, which contains Severian's first citation of John 3:14-15. In the following passage he draws on the typology of these verses in reference to Numbers 21, alluding to the bronze serpent as 'that ancient icon' (Greek, *tēn eikona tēn archaian ekeinēn*).

But because the matter has not been confirmed, hear when the Lord confirmed that ancient icon and took it up to himself. For when he spoke to Nicodemus, a certain ruler of the Jews, as to a teacher of the people and one who was able to understand the observance of the dispensation, he said, '*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life*'.⁵⁷⁹

Severian begins by pointing out to his listening audience that Jesus ('the Lord') appropriated the symbol of the serpent to himself. Severian understands this in the context of the crucifixion, where Jesus would be 'lifted up' like the first serpent. In lines 2-4 he provides the context of his subsequent citation of John 3:14-15: the words were uttered 'when he spoke to Nicodemus' (Greek, *Nikodēmō dialegomenos*). Severian also mentions the status of Nicodemus as a Jewish leader, viewing him as one who could perceive the meaning behind these enigmatic statements. Later in this homily he again cites 3:14-15, here excerpted.

⁵⁷⁸ E.g., *Homily on the Holy Spirit* 1: 'Our Savior says, 'The person who believes in me, just as the Scripture said, rivers of living water will flow from his heart'. And the evangelist, explaining this water, adds, 'He said this about the Spirit, whom those who believe in him were going to receive''. Translated by Sewell (2014).

⁵⁷⁹ *Homily on the Serpent* 2. Translated by Ullmann (1995), with minor modifications.

A serpent was crucified that the bites of the serpents might be made ineffective; Christ was crucified that the deeds of the demons might be made ineffective. One serpent was impaled; other biting ones were rendered ineffective. One Christ was on a cross; the others were the demons which were rendered ineffective. As there the icon of the serpent which appeared rendered ineffective the bites of the serpents, so here Christ's mortification of death became a mortification and a cleansing of demons. Therefore the Savior fitly matches the icon to himself when he said, '*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life*'.⁵⁸⁰

Severian here further develops the typology of Jesus as a crucified serpent (Greek, *estaurōthē ophis*). After elaborating on the differences between him and the other biting serpents (depicted as 'demons'),⁵⁸¹ Severian culminates with his second citation of John 3:14-15. The verses are unambiguously attributed to 'our Savior' (Greek, *ho sōtēr*), who had purposely identified himself with the serpent (*tēn eikona pros heauton armozōn*). With this double attestation, then, we are assured that Severian believed Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus extended at least this far. Unfortunately, because he never cites those verses that follow we cannot infer his position any further than 3:15.

Severian does however quote portions of the second Johannine passage under consideration, to which we now turn. The first of these is found in the second section of his *Homily on the Phrase 'Put Your Hand'*. Below, he warns his listening audience of those who would devise heretical interpretations of Scripture, such as the notion that Jesus was not in heaven prior to the incarnation.

⁵⁸⁰ *Homily on the Serpent* 3.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. Douglas W. Ullmann, *Moses' Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21:4-9) in Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (PhD dissertation. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1995), 173-174.

Therefore John also speaks in harmony, saying, *'The one who comes from above is above all'*. Yet it is necessary to inquire carefully and to destroy heretical strife. Since wrongly following the apostolic expression and having no godly understanding, the children of heresy imagine and invent the profane...O heretic! Surely you say, 'And he gave him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, those in heaven and on earth and under the earth'. Do you see it says he was lifted up after the cross? Do you see it says after his passion he received the reward by being lifted up? If therefore he was lifted up after the cross, as you say, why did John the Baptist, before the passion and before the cross, say, *'The one who comes from above is above all'*, and not 'he came to be?' Wherefore in arguing with the Jews, Jesus also said, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I am'.⁵⁸²

Severian initially identifies the speaker of John 3:31a only as 'John', but we find in lines 9-10 that he definitely has the Baptist in mind (Greek, *ho Baptistēs Iōannēs*). By citing this verse—along with Philippians 2:10-11 and John 8:58—Severian attempts to trap the proverbial heretic in his own words; if he acknowledges the truth of these biblical statements, Jesus cannot have been 'lifted up' (exalted) only *after* his crucifixion. Severian finds the Baptist's words in 3:31 to directly contradict this, since he declared Jesus to be the 'one who comes from above', that is, the pre-existent 'man from heaven'.

Severian makes his final citation of John 3 in *Homily on the Holy Spirit*. In the following excerpt he focuses his attention on Jesus' reception of the Spirit, finding ample proofs in the testimony of the Baptist.

John the Baptist testifies, 'And I did not know him. But the one who sent me to baptize in water, he said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Holy Spirit descending and remaining'—he did not say 'giving him one gift', but 'remaining' completely—'this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit and in fire''. And then John, in his desire to show that our Savior did not receive a gift

⁵⁸² *Homily on the Phrase 'Put Your Hand' 2*. Draft translation.

like a human, says, '*God does not give the Spirit from a measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand*'.⁵⁸³

Severian begins by quoting the words of the Baptist in John 1:33.⁵⁸⁴ In lines 3-4 Severian briefly interrupts him by underlining what he did *not* say: it was not a mere gift that Jesus received from the Spirit, since he specifically said it 'remained' upon him. Severian then describes 'John' (Greek, *ho Iōannēs*) as desiring to prove that Jesus ('our Savior') did not receive the Spirit like any other human being. He follows this with a citation of John 3:34b-35 in lines 6-7. The question we must answer here is whether Severian's identification of 'John' indeed refers to the Baptist. Several clues point us in this direction, which may be outlined as follows.

The first indication that Severian understands the Baptist to be speaking these words is the overall context of the citation. He has been building support for the belief that what Jesus received was not a 'gift' (Greek, *dōron*) of the Spirit, but all of its fullness. Severian twice mentions the word 'gift' as a corrective against this view (lines 3, 5), which appears to link his citations of John 1:33 and 3:34-35. It also seems fitting that the Baptist would 'desire to show' that Jesus was unlike all others, since the Gospel depicts him as the one preparing the way for Jesus and pointing others to him. In addition, Severian uses the adverb *eita* ('then') in line 5 to signal the passage of time; in all likelihood he recognized that these two Johannine statements were not made immediately after one another, but were spoken further apart. This is congruous with the narrative framework of the Gospel, which separates the words by roughly two chapters.

⁵⁸³ *Homily on the Holy Spirit* 6. Translated by Sewell (2014).

⁵⁸⁴ Severian is probably here quoting from memory due to the addition of the prepositional phrase 'and in fire' (Greek, *kai puri*), which appears only in Matthew 3:11/Luke 3:16.

Another indication is Severian's use of present-tense verbs to introduce his citations of John 1:33 and 3:34-35. In line 1 the Baptist 'testifies' (Greek, *marturei*) about what God told him; in lines 5-6 John 'says' (Greek, *legei*) how the giving of the Spirit was immeasurable. We may add to this Severian's way of referring to the Baptist and the Gospel-writer in the homily. The Gospel-writer is mentioned only twice, the first time as 'John the evangelist' and the second as 'the evangelist' (citing John 7:39 and 1:3). In contrast, the Baptist appears with regularity and is called both 'John' and 'John the Baptist'. A prime example of this is found two paragraphs before our excerpted passage above. Here Severian cites two of the Baptist's statements in close proximity, attributing them first to 'John' and then to 'John the Baptist':

He was deemed worthy of the Holy Spirit, he was baptized in the Jordan. And John says, 'I saw the heavens opened up, and the Spirit of God descending as a dove and remaining upon him'. Did you see how he received the Holy Spirit on his human form? No one is so impious as to think that his divinity received the Spirit. John the Baptist says, 'He stood among you, whom you do not know, and I did not know him. But the one who sent me to baptize in water, he said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and remaining on him, this is my son''.⁵⁸⁵

Such evidence indicates that although Severian alternated between including and not including the 'Baptist' epithet, he believed the speaker was the same. We may therefore conclude that in addition to his attributing John 3:31 to the Baptist (in *Homily on the Phrase 'Put Your Hand'*), Severian also believed he continued speaking up through 3:35.

⁵⁸⁵ *Homily on the Holy Spirit* 6.

John Cassian (c. 360-435).

1. Background Material

John Cassian was born into a propertied Christian family in the Roman province of Scythia Minor (present day Romania). He received a first-rate classical education, excelling in both Latin and Greek. At about twenty years of age he set off for Palestine, accompanied by his dear friend Germanus, and joined a monastery in Bethlehem. Not long after, they journeyed together to the Egyptian desert of Skete, spending a decade amongst the hermits and leaders of various monasteries. Cassian was enamored with monastic life, and sought to bring the practices and ideals of eastern monasticism to the West. In a visit to Constantinople, he was ordained a deacon by John Chrysostom and traveled to Rome, where he entered the priesthood. Eventually, he relocated to the coastal city of Marseilles (in southern France), where he composed three treatises and founded two monasteries, one for men and another for women.⁵⁸⁶ *The Conferences*, Cassian's masterpiece, is based on the engaging conversations he and Germanus had with a number of *abbas* (senior monastic fathers) while residing in Egypt. Cassian purposively structured the treatise in a dialogical question-and-answer format, in order to highlight the oral instruction and wisdom that each *abba* had imparted to them.⁵⁸⁷ In reading, one recognizes that Cassian was not simply a compiler of words, but a true 'master of the inner life'.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ See Boniface Ramsey, *John Cassian: The Conferences* (Ancient Christian Writers 57. New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 6; Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1272.

⁵⁸⁷ This format was a recognized classical rhetorical technique known as *erotapokriseis*, which other Christian writers (such as Theodoret and Cyril of Alexandria) made use of.

⁵⁸⁸ Boniface Ramsey, *John Cassian: The Conferences* (Ancient Christian Writers 57. New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 23-24.

The Bible is quoted profusely in *The Conferences*. Through each of the twenty-four conferences, the *abbas* reveal the primacy that Scripture should take in monastic life. The very first of these conferences, featuring an elderly monk named Abba Moses, contains a quotation from John 3. As the framework is dialogical, scriptural verses are introduced with some variance, yet more often than not the speakers are identified (e.g., ‘the prophet mentions’, ‘in the Gospel the Lord says to the Pharisees’, ‘the evangelist says’). Naturally, we have to assume that Abba Moses’ words went through some degree of editing. Cassian completed *The Conferences* in the 420s, decades after his initial meeting with Abba Moses, and he himself had to translate the *abba*’s words into Latin.⁵⁸⁹ Yet considering Cassian’s deep admiration of the holy man, in all likelihood he would have tried to preserve the essence of what was originally spoken, which included his biblical references as well.⁵⁹⁰ Though John 3 is not quoted in Cassian’s complementary work *The Institutes*, several quotations are found in his anti-Nestorian polemic titled *On the Incarnation of the Lord: Against Nestorius*. This treatise seems to have been produced rather hastily, around the year 430, and in it Cassian speaks in his own voice. Scriptural quotations, mostly from the New Testament, abound, and are usually introduced with some identification marker or narrative context (e.g., ‘the devil in the Gospel when tempting the Lord said’, ‘Habakkuk declares’, ‘Gabriel said to the virgin Mary, the

⁵⁸⁹ Cassian composed his work in Latin, but he includes some Greek and Coptic terminology.

⁵⁹⁰ Cassian relates that he and Germanus had to ‘tearfully beg’ (Latin, *lacrimis posceremus*) Abba Moses to even speak with them. Christopher J. Kelly posits two reasons for this: [1] Abba Moses wished to avoid vanity (i.e., impressing them through eloquent speech), and [2] he wanted to confirm that the visitors were genuine in their pursuit of deeper spiritual truth. Cf. his *Cassian’s Conferences: Scriptural Interpretation and the Monastic Ideal* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 18-19.

mother of God'). Cassian also makes an effort to distinguish words belonging to the characters and the biblical writers.⁵⁹¹

2. Text(s) and Analysis

In the fourteenth chapter of Cassian's first conference, Abba Moses explains how the doctrine of Jesus' descent to Hades is fully compatible with his promise to the thief on the cross that he would be with him 'today' in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Abba Moses mentions that certain heretics denied the possibility that Jesus could be in both places at once, and that for this reason they punctuated the verse differently: 'Amen I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise' instead of, 'Amen I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise'. In the following excerpt, Abba Moses defends the church's traditional teaching on this important topic.

Thus this promise is understood [by the heretics] not as having been fulfilled immediately after his passage from this life, but as to be fulfilled after the event of the resurrection. They do not realize that before the day of his resurrection he said to the Jews, who believed that he, like them, was subject to human limitations and fleshly weakness, '*No one has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*'.⁵⁹²

Abba Moses here makes an interesting comparison between the Jews of Jesus' day and the heretics he is familiar with, in that both parties limited the power of Jesus. The Abba provides significant narrative context with his quotation of John 3:13 (e.g., 'before the day of his resurrection he said'), and it is clear that the speaker is understood as Jesus. He also interprets other Jews being present to hear these words. As previously

⁵⁹¹ E.g., *On the Incarnation of the Lord: Against Nestorius* 7.15: 'How does he say that the Lord was 'without genealogy', when the Gospel of the evangelist Matthew begins with the Savior's genealogy, saying, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham?'' Translated by Gibson (1894).

⁵⁹² *The Conferences* 1.14.6. Translated by Ramsey (1997), with minor modifications.

mentioned, Cassian is undoubtedly responsible for the editing of Abba Moses' teaching, and it is fair to question whether or not he concurred with placing 3:13 on Jesus' lips. Fortunately, we have three additional quotations of this same verse in his later treatise *On the Incarnation of the Lord: Against Nestorius*, here presented in tandem.

But by Christ, by whom the apostle said that all things were created, and by the Word, by whom the evangelist relates that all things were made, we are meant to understand one and the same person. Hear, I tell you, what the Word of God, himself God, has said of himself: *'No one'*, he says, *'has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven'*.

Finally how can we think that the author of life was himself deprived of life? And yet Peter says, 'You have killed the author of life'. No one who is set on earth can be in heaven. And how does the Lord himself say, *'The Son of Man who is in heaven?'*

But still, you, who think that our Lord Jesus Christ could not have ascended into heaven, unless he had been raised up by the Spirit—tell me, how is it that he himself says, *'No one has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven?'*⁵⁹³

While Cassian's specific purposes in citing John 3:13 may differ in each of these excerpts, his position on the identity of the speaker is clear: these are the words of Jesus, the 'Word of God' and the 'Lord himself'. Not coincidentally, Cassian again applies the title 'Lord himself' (Latin, *ipse dominus*) to the speaker of another verse from John 3. In the excerpt below, Cassian asserts that Paul was fully inspired by God when he wrote in Romans 8:3: 'God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh'.

If you would know how admirably the apostle preached this, hear how this utterance was put into his mouth, as if from the mouth of God himself, as the Lord says, *'For God did not send his son into the world to judge the world, but*

⁵⁹³ *On the Incarnation of the Lord: Against Nestorius* 4.6; 7.4; 7.22. Translated by Gibson (1894), with minor modifications.

that the world might be saved through him'. For lo, as you see, the Lord himself affirms that he was sent by God the Father to save mankind.⁵⁹⁴

Cassian finds Paul's apostolic preaching in Romans 8:3 to be identical to what was affirmed by 'the Lord' in John 3:17. Perhaps God himself had placed these words into Paul's mouth, Cassian surmises. That the title 'Lord' refers to Jesus is virtually certain from context clues that Cassian provides, most notably his final sentence: 'the Lord himself affirms that he was sent by God the Father to save mankind'. Since 'Lord' also appears most frequently in this treatise as short form of 'Lord Jesus Christ',⁵⁹⁵ we can be relatively confident that Cassian fully understood 3:17 to belong on Jesus' lips. If our conclusions are correct, it is also very likely that the verses between those that Cassian cites (3:14-16) should be regarded as part of Jesus' discourse.⁵⁹⁶ Cassian's position on the second Johannine passage is wholly unknown.

Cyril of Alexandria (c. 378-444).

1. Background Material

Cyril was about seven years old when his uncle Theophilus became bishop of Alexandria. Theophilus had himself in his youth been a disciple of Athanasius, and in time he summoned his young nephew to the provincial capital to further his education and Christian training. Cyril showed a remarkable aptitude for learning the Scriptures and excelled in the studies of grammar, rhetoric and classical literature. He was strongly

⁵⁹⁴ *On the Incarnation of the Lord: Against Nestorius* 4.4.

⁵⁹⁵ Among other occurrences, see e.g., *On the Incarnation of the Lord: Against Nestorius* Preface; 1.2; 1.3; 2.2 (twice); 2.3; 2.4 (twice); 2.5 (twice); 3.13; 3.14; 3.15 (thrice); 4.2; 4.3; 4.5 (twice); 4.6; 4.7; 4.9; 5.2; 5.4; 5.7; 5.10; 6.6; 6.12; 6.18; 6.22 (thrice); 7.3; 7.5; 7.11; 7.13 (twice); 7.14; 7.16 (thrice); 7.19; 7.22.

⁵⁹⁶ Cassian quotes John 3:16a in *The Conferences* 9.34.11, but with no details of context provided.

influenced by the writings of earlier Church Fathers, and throughout his career considered himself a continuer of their tradition.⁵⁹⁷ In 403 he was ordained a lector of the Alexandrian church,⁵⁹⁸ and in that same year accompanied his uncle to the Synod of the Oak held in Constantinople. By the time of his uncle's passing in 412, Cyril had established himself as an able leader, and was quickly consecrated as successor of the patriarchate. His thirty-two years in office, though punctuated with controversy, proved influential in the church's trajectory.

Cyril may aptly be described as one of the most prolific commentators on Scripture from antiquity. Many of his commentaries on books from both Testaments survive in whole or in part. Through these Cyril sought to show how the church's theological tradition offered a consistent interpretation of the Bible.⁵⁹⁹ This consistency of doctrine, he repeatedly emphasized, was in sharp contrast to the positions held by his Arian and Nestorian opponents. A significant number of Cyril's exegetical and polemical writings include quotations from John 3. The earliest references are found in four of his *Festal Letters*, all composed within an eight-year period prior to the outbreak of the Nestorian crisis. Although these letters are not as theologically sophisticated as some of his doctrinal treatises, they all deal explicitly with Christ and his impact, and were

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 11.

⁵⁹⁸ According to Severus of Ashmunein (d. 987), Cyril could memorize anything from just a single read, and during his training in monasteries committed himself to reading through most of the New Testament every night. With respect to Cyril's reading of Scripture in the church, Severus relates that 'all the people, when they heard him read, desired that he might never cease reading, because he read so sweetly' (*History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* 11). Translated by Evetts (1904).

⁵⁹⁹ Robert L. Wilken, 'Cyril of Alexandria: Biblical Exegete', in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 841-843, 853.

occasioned by the celebration of Easter.⁶⁰⁰ In the four letters Cyril normally identifies the speaker of a biblical verse or passage (e.g., ‘according to the holy Psalmist’, ‘an angel spoke to her from heaven saying’, ‘Christ declared’), though Scripture is often given a general speaking role as well (e.g., ‘Scripture says’). Cyril cites John 3 next in his twelve-book *Commentary on John*, most of which still survives in the Greek original. The verse-by-verse commentary antedates the Nestorian crisis, being composed between the years 425-428.⁶⁰¹ In it Cyril regularly quotes verses from both Testaments, and usually provides some detail as to the speaker or biblical book that a quotation comes from (e.g., ‘Ezekiel distinctly cried out to us’, ‘Matthew says’, ‘Christ says to his mother’, ‘the Savior asked him’). On occasion Cyril also provides his readers with a paraphrase in which he styles his writing as if speaking in the biblical character’s own ‘voice’, employing a literary device used by many writers called *prosopopoeia*.

Several other quotations from John 3 are found in Cyril’s *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* (specifically in the books of Hosea, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk and Malachi). Due to the theological tranquility sensed in this extensive work, a composition date prior to 428 is most fitting. Cyril’s approach to the biblical text has been described as ‘striking’ in its affinities to the literal/historical approach of Antiochene exegesis, for it does not reflect the school of Alexandria and its focus on allegorical interpretation; it may be that Cyril had Theodore of Mopsuestia’s own *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* available to him for the writing process.⁶⁰² Typically, scriptural citations are

⁶⁰⁰ John J. O’Keefe, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Festal Letters 1-12* (The Fathers of the Church 118. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 27.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 2000), 96.

⁶⁰² See Robert C. Hill, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* (The Fathers of the Church 115. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 5-6.

introduced with some degree of information on the speaker's identity (e.g., 'the prophet Jeremiah laments', 'the divinely inspired John addresses us', 'Christ encouraged them in the words'), but at times the general 'Scripture says' appears.

Cyril's next work making reference to John 3 is the *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten*. It is fully preserved in a mid-fifth century Latin translation made by Marius Mercator. Cyril wrote the work some time after 431, and in it he discusses the significance of the names of Christ (i.e., Emmanuel, Jesus) and the divine-human unity within him. Normally, Cyril includes the identity of the speaker of a biblical verse when citing (e.g., 'the divine David said', 'the blessed Paul said of Christ', 'when Jesus found him in the temple he said'). Cyril makes reference again to John 3 in *On the Unity of Christ*. This treatise was written during his final years (c. 438), when the aged bishop could reflect back on the course of the whole Nestorian controversy.⁶⁰³ *On the Unity of Christ* is structured as a dialogue, through which Cyril attacks the 'heretical' teachings of Diodore and Theodore. He expresses his understanding of Christology quite maturely, and the Scriptures serve as primary reference points in the fictional exchange. Normally, Cyril is found to introduce verses with some information on who speaks (e.g., 'Zechariah also prophesies', 'the blessed Gabriel said to the holy virgin', James, his disciple, says'), but occasionally allusions and the formula 'it is written' occur. He is also attentive to differentiating between the voices of the biblical characters and writers.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰³ See John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 11.

⁶⁰⁴ *On the Unity of Christ* 716: 'In that case it is so clear that they must also deny that Emmanuel is God; and so it would seem that the evangelist interpreted the term pointlessly when he said, 'And being translated, this means 'God with us''.

Cyril's final citation of John 3 appears in his twenty-ninth *Festal Letter*, written for the celebration of Easter in 441. In it he exhorts his audience to by all means 'keep festival', but also to remember that virtuous behavior and orthodox theology are paramount to the faith. As with his other *Festal Letters*, Cyril cites Scripture with regularity, oftentimes including some information on the speakers (e.g., 'the divinely inspired David sings', 'some of them told Pilate and Caiaphas', 'Christ himself said').

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Our first excerpt among Cyril's writings comes from his fifth *Festal Letter*, composed in the year 417. Cyril explains to his readers that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac in order to foreshadow how his own Son would later be sacrificed.

God said to him in words of the deepest significance, 'Take your son'—and, as though to kindle in him the affection suiting a parent for a one and only child, he adds and repeats—'the beloved one, whom you have loved: Isaac; and offer him on one of the mountains which I will tell you of', all but saying, 'That in your suffering you may learn what it is that the Father of all will later undergo when he offers as the supernatural sacrifice the Son he has loved'. The Savior himself in fact expressed his complete astonishment at it, saying, '*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life*'.⁶⁰⁵

After citing Genesis 22:2 in lines 1-4, Cyril adds his own paraphrase of this verse, even pointing out that 'the Savior himself' (Greek, *autos ho sōtēr*) was amazed at the depth of God's selfless love. Cyril then proceeds to cite John 3:16, attributing the words to the 'Savior'. This title appears frequently in the fifth *Festal Letter* and consistently signifies Jesus,⁶⁰⁶ so it is quite reasonable to interpret it this way. Writing three years

⁶⁰⁵ *Festal Letter* 5.6. Translated by Amidon (2009), with minor modifications.

⁶⁰⁶ See e.g., *Festal Letter* 5.4; 5.7 (twice); 5.8. The title is oftentimes also paired with 'Christ'.

later, Cyril quotes from the first Johannine passage again in his eighth *Festal Letter*. Here he addresses an imaginary man who claims that because Jesus was *born*, it is illogical to maintain that he has existed eternally. Cyril goes on to defend the apostle Paul's assertion in Hebrews 13:8 that Jesus is 'the same yesterday and today and forever'.

And do not wonder, man, at Paul's words. For he was not having his own way with the doctrines of orthodoxy and simply straining them to fit his views when he said this; rather, he had been taught by the Savior's own words. For what he said to Nicodemus may be seen in the Gospels, if you want to find out. But I will quote the words, so that everyone may be helped: 'If I have told you earthly things', he says, 'and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? *And no one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man*'.⁶⁰⁷

Cyril contends that Paul had been taught his orthodox doctrine by 'the Savior's own words' (Greek, *autōn tōn tou sōtēros rēmatōn*). These words, Cyril continues, were addressed to Nicodemus and recorded in the Gospels. For the benefit of his readers, Cyril then offers to provide these words and cites John 3:12-13. That these two Johannine verses are cited together indicates their inseparability in Cyril's mind: Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus certainly extended to 3:13. Two years later, Cyril makes another reference to John 3 in his tenth *Festal Letter*, excerpted below. Writing on the topic of the judgment, he explains that although it is true that Jesus is the ultimate judge of the world, the true purpose of his coming was not to condemn it but to save it.

For he has sojourned [among us] in the last days of this age, as is evidenced by the sacred and divine Scriptures: 'He has judged the world in justice', according to the voice of the psalmist. How has he judged it? By condemning those in error or punishing those who have long disregarded the divine laws. But then, how is it that he can still be speaking truthfully when he cries out concerning himself, 'For

⁶⁰⁷ *Festal Letter* 8.5.

God did not send the Son into the world that he might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.⁶⁰⁸

Cyril recognizes the difference in emphasis between the claims in Psalm 96:13 and John 3:17, but reasons that both are nevertheless accurate. While he does not identify the speaker of the Johannine verse by name, Cyril affirms that the speaker ‘cries out concerning himself’ (Greek, *boōn autos peri hautou*). He appears to understand 3:17 as a self-reference, and since the subject of the verse is the Son, Jesus is a likely candidate indeed. Writing about three years later (425), Cyril makes a second citation of John 3:16 in his thirteenth *Festal Letter*. Below, Cyril reminds his readers that they need not be afraid of the penalty of sin (i.e., death), since God’s love provides new life.

But let Paul release you from the fears connected to these things when he writes, ‘And he brought us to life when we were dead through the transgressions and sins in which we once walked...But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our transgressions, brought us to life together with Christ’. For it is just as the Savior himself said, ‘*For God the Father loved the world so much, that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life*’.⁶⁰⁹

Following his citation of the apostle Paul’s words of comfort in Ephesians 2:1-5, Cyril points out that this same message of salvation was spoken of by ‘the Savior himself’ (Greek, *autos ho sōtēr*). John 3:16 is then quoted in a slightly adapted form (‘God the Father’ instead of just ‘God’), which may or may not have been intentional given the verse’s emphasis on the divine Father-Son relationship of the Trinity. Regardless, Cyril’s use of the title ‘Savior’ is restricted to Jesus and thus verifies our

⁶⁰⁸ *Festal Letter* 10.1.

⁶⁰⁹ *Festal Letter* 13.4a. Translated by Amidon (2013), with minor modifications.

previous findings from his fifth *Festal Letter*. Just a few paragraphs later, Cyril also references a portion of the second Johannine passage (his earliest), here excerpted.

But he cannot cease to be God because of what is human about him. But it is just in this way that he is God, the divinity which is above all not yielding the victory to the flesh, but rather carrying what has been assumed into its own glory. The wise John, accordingly, even though he understood that he had been born of a woman, did not say that he had come from below or from the earth, but from above, *'For the one who comes from above is above all,'* he clearly cried. Casting away as far as possible, then, the silly, vain tales of the unbelievers, we will recognize our own Lord, even if he has become a human being.⁶¹⁰

In discussing Jesus' human nature, Cyril points out that even though Jesus 'assumed' human flesh, his divinity was never diminished. Cyril then looks to a biblical authority to support this claim, selecting 'the wise John' (Greek, *ho sophōs Iōannēs*). Cyril's partial citation of John 3:31 (although brief) is attributed to this 'John', whose words are further described in line 6 as being 'clearly cried' (Greek, *anakekragei saphōs*). Unfortunately, it remains uncertain whom Cyril here has in mind. The name 'John' appears in this *Festal Letter* only once more, when citing a portion of John 1:1—yet the speaker there is introduced as 'the blessed John' (Greek, *ho makarios Iōannēs*). Given Cyril's reverence for both the Gospel-writer and the Baptist, the title 'wise' could be applied to either of these John's, and thus we must await the results of our analyses of additional citations in order to make a judgment one way or the other.

Cyril's next citation is similarly ambiguous, but ought to be included since it appears in the opening pages of the *Commentary on John*. In this passage he challenges those who would claim that Jesus and the Father were not entirely equal.

⁶¹⁰ *Festal Letter* 13.4b.

Another: If the divine nature is not subject to quantification but whatever is inferior admits to degrees, how could the Son, who is God by nature, be considered inferior? If, as they say, he is inferior to the Father, he will be subject to quantification. Another: The blessed John says concerning the Son, *'He does not give the Spirit by measure'*, to those who are worthy, of course. Since there is no measure in the Son, he is therefore immeasurable.⁶¹¹

To defend his belief that the Son of God is 'immeasurable' (Greek, *ametrētos*) just like the Father, Cyril utilizes John 3:34b as a proof-text. The partial verse is introduced with the words 'the blessed John says concerning the Son' (Greek, *ho makarios Iōannēs peri tou huiou phēsin*). Again, it is unclear which 'John' Cyril has in mind; the title 'blessed' is attached to both the Gospel-writer and the Baptist throughout the Johannine commentary.⁶¹² The existence of further citations of this verse (and others within this passage) causes no need to resort to speculation. We may therefore proceed with the next of Cyril's passages, also found in the first book of the *Commentary on John*. Here Cyril engages his readers on the doctrine that Jesus is the 'true light'. Cyril insists on his distinction from any other light of creation; in his view, Jesus himself is the light which illumines all Christians.

Therefore, we are not of the same nature as the Word who is so far above us by nature. Another in descriptive form: We find our Lord Jesus Christ saying in the Gospels, *'And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come into the light'*.⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ *Commentary on John* 1.34. Translated by Maxwell (2013), with minor modifications.

⁶¹² To name a few others awarded the title 'blessed': Paul, Abraham, Daniel, Job, Luke, Moses, the Psalmist.

⁶¹³ *Commentary on John* 1.101.

Cyril makes his position on the identity of the speaker of John 3:19-20a abundantly clear in this passage. Though he does not specify from which Gospel the words come, Cyril's attribution of them to 'our Lord Jesus Christ' (Greek, *ho kurios hēmōn Iēsous Christos*) leaves no room for misinterpretation. Cyril treats the text of John 3 in the second book of his commentary, and it should be noted that here we can more clearly identify how he viewed the speakers in light of a more concentrated exegesis (with a copy of John's Gospel at hand, in all likelihood). Below, he cites 3:3-4 (presented in brackets) and offers his readers a paraphrase of the content, speaking as it were in the voice of Jesus (using *prosopopoeia*).

[‘Amen, amen, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above’. Nicodemus said to him]

He says, ‘Faith does not consist in what you think, Nicodemus. Talk is not sufficient for righteousness, nor will you establish your godliness with mere words. For not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. The will of my Father is that a person be made a participant in the Holy Spirit and that the citizen of the earth be reborn into a strange and unaccustomed life and be called a citizen of heaven’. And when he says that the rebirth by the Holy Spirit is ‘from above’, he shows clearly that the Spirit is of the substance of God the Father, just as of course he says about himself somewhere, ‘I am from above’. But also, the supremely wise evangelist again says concerning him, ‘*The one who comes from above is above all*’. We will discuss more fully at the proper time the fact that the Spirit is certainly from the substance of God the Father.⁶¹⁴

Once Cyril completes his insightful paraphrase of Jesus' words in lines 1-7, he offers a preview of an upcoming discussion: the relation of the Holy Spirit to God the

⁶¹⁴ *Commentary on John* 2.101.

Father in terms of ‘substance’ (Greek, *ousias*).⁶¹⁵ Cyril then goes on to cite small portions of John 8:23 and 3:31. His use of the enclitic adverb ‘somewhere’ (Greek, *pou*) in line 9 may suggest that he is quoting from memory, and since both of these verses have not yet been treated in his commentary, this is all the more likely. Cyril seems to attribute 8:23b to Jesus (‘he says about himself’), and then states plainly that 3:31a was spoken by ‘the supremely wise evangelist’ (Greek, *ho sophōtatos euangelistēs*). Like the title ‘blessed’, ‘supremely wise’ is applied to many other biblical characters and authors, but the name ‘evangelist’ is reserved for each of the Gospel-writers.⁶¹⁶ Because we have not yet completed our analysis of Cyril’s citations of this verse (and passage in general), it remains to be seen whether or not this position on the speaker of this verse is consistent. Later in the *Commentary on John* Cyril directs his full attention to the exegesis of this second Johannine passage, after which we may draw conclusions.

In this next excerpt, Cyril observes after citing John 3:17 that more than one ‘message’ (Greek, *logos*) can be derived from this verse. In his explanation he makes explicit mention of Nicodemus’ own reaction to hearing the words.

This, therefore, is one message of the passage under consideration, and no ordinary one, I think. A devotion to learning moves me to mention a second message in addition to this, which turns through the same revolutions and introduces a sense related to the foregoing. The Savior saw that Nicodemus was stuck in the Mosaic laws and clinging to the ancient commandment, that he was shuddering at the rebirth through the Spirit and shrinking back from the new evangelical way of life, thinking it, it seems, that this would be more difficult to

⁶¹⁵ As can be observed in the final sentence of the excerpt, Cyril speaks directly to his audience, informing them of his intention to deal with this topic ‘more fully at the proper time’.

⁶¹⁶ That the name ‘John’ is not provided may provide further evidence that Cyril is quoting from memory. Cyril also occasionally refers to the writers of the four Gospels collectively as ‘the evangelists’ (Greek, *hoi euangelistai*) in the *Commentary on John*.

bear than what was already commanded. As God, he was not ignorant of the fear that sprang from ignorance. So by using one short statement, he frees him from confusion about this. He shows that the commandment given through Moses is more grievous because it condemns the world. He thus presents himself as a gentle judge, saying, *'For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. The one who believes in the Son is not judged, but the one who does not believe is judged already because he did not believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God'*. He proved by his actions that he is the Son of God the Father.⁶¹⁷

Cyril provides his readers in lines 4-8 with what he considers the perspective of Nicodemus, one 'stuck in the Mosaic laws' (Greek, *tois mōusaikois empepēgota nomois*) and 'shrinking back from the new evangelical way of life' (Greek, *tēn nean euangelikēn katoknounta politeian*). Cyril comments that 'the Savior saw' (Greek, *ho sōtēr etheōrei*) this behavior and attempted to clarify Nicodemus' confusion with the statement he had made in John 3:17. After equating the Savior with 'God' in line 8, Cyril then introduces a citation of 3:17-18 with the phrase 'he thus presents himself as a gentle judge saying' (Greek, *hēmerotētos de brabeutēn heauton eispherei legōn*). In conjunction with his use of the title 'Savior', Cyril undoubtedly believed this self-reference applied to none other than Jesus. His treatment of the rest of 3:19-21 does not contain any explicit mention of the speaker's identity, yet it also does not show signs that a change of speaker has occurred. In addition to his earlier citation of 3:19-20a (see above), an important indication that Cyril believed Jesus was still speaking is found at the conclusion of his comments on 3:21, following his citation of 3:22-24 (presented in brackets below).

[And after these things Jesus came into the land of Judea with his disciples. But John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water

⁶¹⁷ *Commentary on John 2.228-229.*

there, and people came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison]

After the conversation with Nicodemus has reached its conclusion, the divine evangelist furnishes us with something else that is most beneficial. Since he was illumined by the divine Spirit to explain the most necessary subjects, he knew that it would be of immense profit to his readers to know clearly how superior the baptism of Christ is and to what degree it surpasses the baptism of John.⁶¹⁸

Cyril here mentions the Gospel-writer (Greek, *ho thespesios euangelistēs*) for the first time since his commentary on John 3:4. Cyril explains that he wanted Gospel readers to comprehend the significance and differences between the baptisms of Jesus and John, so he provided the details recorded in 3:22-24. At the beginning of Cyril's comments, however, he offers an important summary of the events that immediately transpired prior to this, referring specifically the conclusion of 'the conversation with Nicodemus' (Greek, *tēs pros Nikodemon homilias*). Maxwell chooses to translate *homilias* 'instruction', but the term more properly involves a shared interaction or intercourse between two individuals. I regard Pusey's translation 'conversation' more accurate. Additionally, Cyril's use of the preposition *pros* with Nicodemus in the accusative case implies association, hence the rendering 'with' rather than 'to'.⁶¹⁹ If Cyril had believed Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus had ended much earlier (around 3:12 or so), it stands to reason that he would not have included this particular summary statement after citing 3:22-24.

Cyril finally arrives at the text of John 3:31-36 later in the second book of his *Commentary on John*. In the course of his exegesis on 3:31, Cyril focuses his attention on

⁶¹⁸ *Commentary on John* 2.232.

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 380.

the meaning of the term *anōthen* (rendered in English as ‘from above’). This leads him to quote what certain opponents, whom he calls ‘Christ-fighters’ (Greek, *christomachoi*), might say on its interpretation and its impact on Jesus’ identity. Cyril then provides his own response according to the ‘Spirit-bearers’ (Greek, *pneumatophoroi*) in Scripture.

I perceive, however, that the mind of the Christ-fighters will never rest, and that they will likely come with their incessant babbling and say, ‘When the blessed Baptist says that the Lord came *‘from above’*, what argument will force us to suppose that just because he says *‘from above’*, he came from the substance of the Father and not rather from heaven or even from his inherent superiority over all things, and that is why he is understood and said to be over all?’ When they pelt us with such arguments, they will hear in return, ‘We will not follow your unsound reasoning, sirs, but only the divine Scripture and the sacred writings. We must therefore search in them to see how they define for us the force of *‘from above’*. So let them hear one of the Spirit-bearers crying out, ‘Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights’. See, he says explicitly that *‘from above’* is from the Father...But if you think *‘from above’* must be taken to mean ‘from heaven’, then let the term be used also of every angel and rational power, since those who dwell in the city above come to us from heaven, and they ‘ascend and descend’, as the Savior says somewhere, ‘on the Son of Man’. What then is it that persuaded the blessed Baptist to attribute that which was in the power of many to the Son alone exclusively and to say, *‘The one who comes from above’*, as though he is the only one descending from above? I guess he should have made the honor to be common to the others and said, *‘Those who come from above are above all’*.⁶²⁰

Cyril first mentions *anōthen* (‘from above’) in the context of his fictive depiction of the Christ-fighters. According to him, this group would have questioned the meaning of the term as employed by ‘the blessed Baptist’ (Greek, *ho makarios Baptistēs*). After citing James 1:17a and alluding to John 1:51 (lines 10-11, 15-16), Cyril returns to his

⁶²⁰ *Commentary on John* 2.241-242.

discussion of *anōthen* and questions what prompted the Baptist ‘to say’ (Greek, *eipein*) the words recorded in John 3:31a, which Cyril later cites in line 18 and rephrases in line 20. That Cyril did not employ the imprecise name ‘John’ in both places within this excerpt is significant and reflects his view that the Baptist spoke these words. Such a conclusion, however, is at odds with what we found earlier, namely that Cyril explicitly attributed 3:31a to the Gospel-writer (‘evangelist’). This discrepancy will be dealt with in comprehensive fashion when our analysis of Cyril’s works has been completed.

In the midst of his commentary on the remainder of John 3:31, Cyril also mentions that the Baptist was addressing ‘his disciples’ (Greek, *tois heautou mathētais*). Then in the passage provided below, he explains that the Baptist was trying to distinguish himself from Jesus, in order that they might believe and follow after him instead.

While persuading them to run full speed to believe in Christ—since he speaks, he says, of what he knows accurately—he draws again on a sort of comparison with our affairs, so that we may understand what is more divine. And so he says, ‘*What he has seen and heard, this he testifies. And no one receives his testimony*’. The blessed Baptist does not say this thinking that no one receives the testimony that Christ is indeed God by nature and that, since he comes ‘*from above*’ and from the Father, he is ‘*above all*’. For many received it and believed it, and Peter even said in front of everyone, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’.⁶²¹

Cyril continues to attribute verses from the second Johannine passage to ‘the blessed Baptist’ (Greek, *ho makarios Baptistēs*). After citing John 3:32, Cyril clarifies that the Baptist did not literally mean that ‘no one’ recognizes Christ, since even Peter had done so. What he really meant, Cyril avers after this excerpt, is that some simply did not receive him because of their preexisting lack of faith. In Cyril’s subsequent

⁶²¹ *Commentary on John* 2.246-247.

commentary on 3:33-35, he devotes himself more to the subject matter of the verses than the speaker. He mentions the Baptist by name once in connection with John 3:34a,⁶²² and then when he reaches 3:36 writes the following.

'The one who believes in the Son has eternal life'. The supremely wise Baptist does not testify simplistically or without examination about the fact that life is set forth as a reward to those who believe in Christ; rather, he brings us a proof from the very quality of reality, so to speak. The only-begotten is life by nature, 'for in him we live and move and have our being'... So since life by nature is once again restored to us by faith, how is he not telling the truth who says, *'The one who believes in the Son has eternal life?'* That is, he has the Son himself and not some other life conceived of besides him. *'But the one who disobeys the Son will not see life'*. Perhaps someone will say, 'Does the Baptist then advocate a different opinion to us and corrupt the teaching of the resurrection, saying that the believer will be given life but maintaining that the unbeliever *'will not see life'* at all?'⁶²³

At the beginning of this passage Cyril awards the Baptist another title, one which had been previously applied to the Gospel-writer: 'the supremely wise' (Greek, *hosophōtatos*). Cyril remarks that the Baptist did not in 3:36a 'testify simplistically' (Greek, *haplōs epimarturei*), but rather revealed that the profound truth that life without the Son is no life at all. After citing the next phrase of 3:36, in lines 9-11 Cyril addresses a hypothetical objection to the Baptist's teaching. In the paragraphs that follow after this excerpt, Cyril explains that 'having life' and 'seeing life' are distinct realities. Cyril then concludes by citing the final phrase of 3:36 and attributing it to the Baptist,⁶²⁴ appearing

⁶²² *Commentary on John 2.249*: 'Also, as the holy Baptist himself testified in the following words, 'He whom God has sent speaks the words of God''.

⁶²³ *Commentary on John 2.258-259*.

⁶²⁴ *Commentary on John 2.60*: 'But he rouses them to that life in which they can surely see good days and spend eternal life in blessedness and glory. 'But the wrath of God remains on him'. The blessed Baptist, by adding these words, has shown us more openly what he was getting at before'.

to once again regard 3:31-36 as one unit in the context of an address to the Baptist's own disciples. Two further references to the first Johannine passage are found in the *Commentary on John* and analyzed below. In this next excerpt, Cyril emphasizes to his readers that trusting God is the responsibility of each one of us.

By faith and not by investigation are the things above us received. And as the one who so believes is admired, so the one who has fallen into the opposite is in no way free from blame. The Savior himself testifies to this for us, saying, '*The one who believes in the Son is not judged, but the one who does not believe has already been judged*'.⁶²⁵

In Cyril's opinion, failure to have faith (without sight) results in judgment. He looks to John 3:18a-b for confirmation of this, citing what 'the Savior himself testifies' (Greek, *autos ho sōtēr marturēsei*). Cyril again cites the words of the 'Savior' in this final excerpt from his Johannine commentary, found in the ninth book.

As to their phrase, that 'the Son is essentially encompassed by the Father', I do not in the least understand what in the world it means, or what it signifies—I speak the truth, as I feel it my duty to do—so great is the obscurity of the expression. The real sense of the words seems embarrassed of itself, and inclined to veil itself in overmuch dimness, not daring to explain itself openly and clearly. For even as '*the one who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest he should be reproved*', according to the Savior's word—even so every argument with an evil tendency is wont to move through dark ideas, and will not go towards the light of plain speaking, lest the meanness of its inherent unsoundness should be reproved.⁶²⁶

At the beginning of this excerpt Cyril labels his opponents interpretation of Jesus' declaration in John 14:10 as obscure and nonsensical. He considers their interpretation so

⁶²⁵ *Commentary on John* 3.412.

⁶²⁶ *Commentary on John* 9.434. Translated by Randell (1885), with minor modifications

unsound that it ‘seems embarrassed of itself’ (Greek, *eruthria hōsper*). Cyril then reasons that this is so primarily because of their evil intent. He finds John 3:20 an appropriate verse to cite in support of his view, identifying them as ‘according to the Savior’s word’ (Greek, *kata tēn tou sōtēros phōnēn*). At many points in the *Commentary on John*, Cyril employs this formulaic type of phrase after citing biblical verses or passages. That Jesus is the understood speaker is clear enough from his use of the title ‘Savior’.

We may now move on to the five citations of John 3 found in Cyril’s lengthy *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*. This first excerpt is taken from the second chapter of his *Commentary on Hosea*. Below, Cyril explains that it was at the point of the cross that the mystery of salvation was finally revealed.

He personally made this mystery clear to us in saying, when on the point of enduring the cross for the life of everyone, ‘Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw everyone to myself’. We do not actually claim that he said judgment of this world will be made by him at the time of his coming, for as he himself said again, ‘*God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him*’. Now, he speaks of judgment as correct and faultless; he ruled correctly and in a matter befitting God, as I said, in our case and his, saving us and drawing us to himself.⁶²⁷

Cyril asserts in lines 4-5 that Jesus, the understood subject and speaker of John 12:31-32 (quoted in lines 2-4), did not say that judgment of the world was immediate, but eventual. Cyril then prefaces his citation of 3:17 with the words ‘as he himself said again’ (Greek, *hōs autos ephē palin*), a phrase which suggests that the same speaker as above is intended. At the end of the excerpt, Cyril also comments that the speaker of 3:17 is the

⁶²⁷ *Commentary on Hosea* 2.76. Along with Cyril’s commentaries on Amos, Micah, Habakkuk and Malachi, translated by Hill (2007), with minor modifications.

one responsible for ‘saving us and drawing us to himself’, a probable indication that Cyril here has Jesus (‘the Savior’) in mind. Cyril next quotes from John 3 in his *Commentary on Amos*. It contains his first reference to John 3:31a since completing his Johannine commentary.

Now the statement ‘he who builds his ascension into heaven’ could be a reference also to Christ, and rightly so; it is he who came from on high and from heaven, being born by nature God from God. Accordingly, he also said, ‘I am from above’. But also the wise John testifies concerning him, saying, ‘*The one who comes from above is above all*’.⁶²⁸

Commenting on the meaning of Amos 9:6a, Cyril concedes that this could be a prophetic reference to Jesus. He states that since he is ‘by nature God from God’, it is quite probable that this is a reference to his future descent from heaven. After citing Jesus’ statement in John 8:23b, Cyril writes that ‘the wise John testifies concerning him saying’ (Greek, *memarturēke ho sophos Iōannēs peri autou legōn*). ‘John’ can refer to both the Gospel-writer and the Baptist, so we must infer from the context what his intention is. One clue is the action of John’s *testifying*; it may bespeak the supportive role that the Baptist had as forerunner. Yet it is not impossible to imagine that Cyril could have viewed the Gospel-writer as *testifying* in a literary sense, too. The second clue is the striking resemblance of Cyril’s citation pattern to *Commentary on John* 2.101 (analyzed above). Though the speaker there is explicitly identified as the Gospel-writer (Greek, *ho sophōtatos euangelistēs*), Cyril cites the very same portion of John 8:23 and follows it with a citation of 3:31a! Moreover, in both excerpts Cyril specifies that the speaker is saying these words ‘concerning him’ (Greek, *peri autou*), an obvious reference to Jesus.

⁶²⁸ *Commentary on Amos* 9.534.

How ought we to interpret this information? In my view, this excerpt from the *Commentary on Amos* does not provide enough evidence to determine Cyril's opinion on the speaker of 3:31a one way or the other, and so we must again defer judgment to the conclusion of our analysis.

Cyril's next citation of a portion of John 3 is found in final pages of his *Commentary on Micah*. Here he is expounding the content of Micah 7:17-20.

Let him therefore hear from everyone, 'what God is like you' in your goodness and forgiveness, forgiving crimes of the remnant of his inheritance? Now, by 'remnant of his inheritance' is to be understood those who have come to faith in Israel, obviously when the remaining mass has been destroyed for not believing. But Christ said somewhere, '*The one who believes in the Son is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the Son of God*'. He therefore bypasses sins and leaves to one side offenses, and did not retain his wrath as a witness, by 'as a witness' meaning 'forever' or 'always'. Though we were cast out in Adam, we were welcomed back in Christ.⁶²⁹

Cyril interprets the Hebrew prophet's words in the context of belief in Christ. He argues that those who do not believe are 'cast out' following Adam's sin, but people can be 'welcomed back' through the Savior (lines 9-10). Cyril introduces his citation of John 3:18 with the words 'Christ said somewhere' (Greek, *ephē pou Christos*). We do not have to speculate whether Cyril here is quoting this verse from memory—he himself makes it clear with the insertion of 'somewhere' (Greek, *pou*). He also adapts the wording of the verse in two places. In the first clause he has 'in the Son' rather than 'in him', and at the end of it omits the title 'only-begotten'. Nevertheless, his attribution of 3:18 to 'Christ' is clear evidence of his position on the speaker's identity. The next of Cyril's excerpted

⁶²⁹ *Commentary on Micah* 7.739-740.

passages comes from the *Commentary on Habakkuk*. Cyril has been commenting on the first two verses of Habakkuk 3, and in them finds a veiled reference to Jesus as ‘the mercy seat’ that rested upon the Ark of the Covenant.

‘You will be known’, therefore, O Lord, he is saying, for who you are on becoming like us; that you are the mercy seat, on the model of the one in the holy tent, will be clearly known. You have taken your place, in fact, ‘in between two living beings’, that is, the cherubim, and your name is ‘mercy seat’. It is a true statement, for as Christ himself says, ‘*The Father did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him*’.⁶³⁰

Cyril here takes on the voice of the prophet in an address to God. Cyril’s portrayal of Jesus as the ‘mercy seat’ is deemed a ‘true statement’ (Greek, *alēthēs ho logos*), and according to him, confirmed by John 3:17. Cyril prefaces his citation of this verse with the words ‘as Christ himself says’ (Greek, *hōs autos phēsin ho Christos*). His citation is slightly adapted, since Cyril replaces ‘God’ with ‘the Father’ as the one responsible for sending the Son, but is of no consequence in his view of the speaker as Jesus. The last of Cyril’s references to John 3 in his *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* is excerpted from the *Commentary on Malachi* below.

Accordingly, he also said to the Jewish crowds, ‘Amen, I say to you, if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins’. But John also said somewhere, ‘*The one who believes in him is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the Son of God*’. But the Baptist also proclaimed to the people of Israel, ‘Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire’.⁶³¹

⁶³⁰ *Commentary on Habakkuk* 3.122.

⁶³¹ *Commentary on Malachi* 3.598.

This passage contains Cyril's fourth citation of John 3:18, and for at least the second time he is likely to be quoting from memory, as shown by the insertion 'somewhere' (Greek, *pou*). But for the first time, he here does not explicitly attribute the verse to Jesus, but instead identifies the speaker as 'John' (Greek, *ho Iōannēs*). The sequence of different speakers in this excerpt is revealing: Jesus is quoted in lines 1-2, followed by his citation of John 3:18, and then the Baptist is quoted in lines 5-7. It is probable, then, that 'John' ought to be interpreted as representing an individual (not as a reference to the Gospel of the same name). An additional pattern should also be noted: the source of Jesus' words in lines 1-2 is John 8:24, a verse that immediately follows after 8:23, which we have seen Cyril citing repeatedly in connection with John 3. It is conceivable that for these individual citations he drew from a Christian *testimonium*: a collection of biblical prooftexts along the likes of Cyprian's *To Quirinus*. Since there are three further works of Cyril's still left to be analyzed, we will return to this matter of inconsistency and sources at the proper time.

Cyril cites from both Johannine passages several times in the *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten*. It was produced in response to the Nestorian controversy just few years after he wrote the commentaries we have already treated. Though the treatise survives in its entirety only in Latin translation, scholars express confidence that it reflects Cyril's thought on the whole.⁶³² The first excerpt provided below is found in the fourth section, in which Cyril discusses the incarnation of God the Word.

⁶³² Cyril's contemporary and papal agent in Constantinople, Marius Mercator translated numerous documents during the Nestorian controversy and forwarded them to Rome. Cf. Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 2000), 67.

But the holy virgin gave birth to a temple united to the Word, and Emmanuel is rightly said to be from heaven, for the Word is from above, and is born from the substance of God the Father himself. Yet, he descended to us, then was made man, while even so he was the one from above. But John testifies to this, saying of him, *'The one who comes from above is above all'*. And Christ himself said to the Jewish people, 'You are from below; I am from above'. And again, 'I am not of this world'. For we can recall him clearly saying, *'No one has ascended into heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man'*.⁶³³

Cyril here asserts that Mary gave birth to the Word, who is himself from heaven and born of the same 'substance' (Latin, *substantia*) as God. Cyril then proceeds to cite three verses from John's Gospel in support of his reasoning: John 3:31a, 8:23 and 3:13. His citation of 3:31a is prefaced with the words 'John testifies to this, saying of him' (Latin, *testatus est Ioannes de eo dicens*). Once again Cyril perceives this partial verse to constitute a type of 'testimony' aimed at extolling Jesus. While we cannot say definitively which 'John' Cyril has in mind, his subsequent citation of 8:23 offers further support to the theory that these two portions of John's Gospel appear together in a *testimonium* of sorts. Cyril is explicit in attributing this second Johannine verse to Jesus (Latin, *ipse Christus*), and he may have considered the subsequent citation of 3:13 to be his words as well, although 3:13's introduction contains no specified subject (Latin, *meminimus enim plane dicentis*). In light of this uncertainty, we therefore turn to the next of Cyril's excerpts from the *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten*. Cyril writes in the fifteenth chapter about the rod of Moses, which he deems a powerful symbol of the pre-incarnate Jesus.

⁶³³ *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten* 4. Translated by McGuckin (2004), with minor modifications.

And we know that this is true from this fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ himself, on account of the economy that took place in the flesh, assumed the bronze serpent—which Moses lifted up, as a healing of the serpent’s bites—as his image and type, for he says, ‘*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up, so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life*’. Just as the serpent made of bronze was a cause of salvation to those in danger, for all who looked on it were saved, so in the same way was the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶³⁴

Cyril points out to his readers that Jesus took on the ‘image and type’ (Latin, *imagine et figura*) of the serpent in order to save humanity. The account in Numbers, he explains, was a prophecy of what was to come. The introduction to Cyril’s citation of John 3:14-15 is admittedly brief; the words ‘for he says’ (Latin, *ait enim*) suggest a continuation of thought and speaker, though this does not have to be so. We can at the very least draw attention to the fact that Cyril cited 3:14 and 3:15 together, demonstrating their unity from his perspective. Our next excerpted passage from this treatise comes from the twenty-eighth chapter. Just prior to this excerpt, Cyril has quoted Isaiah 9:6, which includes a messianic reference to one called ‘Messenger of Great Counsel’ (Latin, *magni consilii nuntius*). Below, Cyril proclaims to his readers that Jesus is this foretold messenger, who announced ‘to us’ the will of God, as it is eloquently stated in John 3:16.

He is Messenger of Great Counsel because he announced to us the will of the Father who was pleased to save the whole world in him, and to reconcile the world through him and in him, for being reconciled to Christ we are reconciled to God, since the Son of God is truly God. What this counsel of the Father was, of which he was the messenger, he himself will show, saying, ‘*For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life*’. But this only-begotten Son is he who was born of the holy virgin, for it was the Word made man, God himself in the flesh, who

⁶³⁴ *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten* 15.

was thus manifested to earthly creatures. Then he said, ‘Whoever believes in me has eternal life’. He explained how it is that we believe in the Father through him and in him, saying, ‘Whoever believes in me, does not believe in me, but in the one who sent me’. And again, ‘Whoever sees me has seen the one who sent me’.⁶³⁵

Of the four verses from John’s Gospel cited in this excerpt, Cyril gives 3:16 first priority. He identifies the speaker of this verse as ‘the messenger’ (Latin, *nuntius*) who reveals the ‘counsel of the Father’ (Latin, *patris consilium*). Cyril finds 3:16 a perfect scriptural reference, since it highlights that this ‘counsel’ is the only-begotten Son himself. Cyril’s subsequent quotations all constitute Jesus’ words found later in the Gospel (6:47, 12:44, 12:45), and highlight’s Cyril’s desire to provide readers with the truth from Jesus’ own lips.

A considerable amount of time passed before Cyril made reference to John 3 again. Writing now as an elderly man, in *On the Unity of Christ* Cyril emphasizes how important it is for Jesus to share humanity ‘with us’ (i.e., having flesh and blood). Cyril seeks to clarify in the following passage that this by no means detracted from his divinity.

Christ is understood as the heavenly man, not as if he brought down his flesh from above and out of heaven, but because the Word of God came down from heaven and entered our likeness, that is to say submitted to birth from a woman according to the flesh, while ever remaining what he was, that is one from above and from heaven, superior to all things as God even with the flesh. This is what the divine John says about him somewhere: ‘*The one coming from above is above all*’. He remained Lord of all things even when he came, for the economy, in the form of a slave, and this is why the mystery of Christ is truly wonderful.⁶³⁶

⁶³⁵ *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten* 28.

⁶³⁶ *On the Unity of Christ* 723. Translated by McGuckin (1995), with minor modifications.

Cyril finds John 3:31a a suitable verse to cite in reference to Jesus' superiority. Though human, his coming from above reveals his heavenly origin. Cyril is not positive where 3:31a is found (again employing *pou*), but he identifies the speaker as 'the divine John' (Greek, *ho thespesios Iōannēs*). Elsewhere in *On the Unity of Christ*, Cyril bestows the title 'divine' to a number of biblical figures including the Gospel-writer and the Baptist,⁶³⁷ so it is uncertain whom he has in mind at this advanced stage in his life. Fortunately, later in the treatise Cyril quotes the next clause of 3:31. In this next passage, John is given a different title 'the blessed' (Greek, *ho makarios*), and Cyril points out that the statement in 3:31 is made 'about himself' (Greek, *heautou peri*).

This would apply to the divine Baptist of whom the blessed angel said, 'And he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb'. So how was the one a servant and the other the honored with all the dignities of the Lord? And the blessed John said about himself, '*The one who is of the earth speaks of the earth*', but about Emmanuel, '*The one coming from heaven is above all*'.⁶³⁸

Cyril here explains to readers that the Baptist was indeed foretold to have an important place in God's plan, yet he nevertheless functioned as a 'servant' (Greek, *oiketēs*). In support of this Cyril cites 3:31b-c, understanding the words to be the testimony of 'John' concerning himself. Though the Gospel-writer is also given the title 'blessed' in the treatise, the comparative context of this quotation strongly suggest that the Baptist is himself speaking: in lines 4-5, he is the one who is earth-bound and says only earthly things, in contrast to Jesus ('Emmanuel'), the one who is from above and

⁶³⁷ E.g., David, Peter, the apostle Paul, the disciples.

⁶³⁸ *On the Unity of Christ* 751.

reveals the things of heaven.⁶³⁹ Cyril's next quotation in this treatise appears in the context of his discussion on the biblical proofs regarding the eternal existence of Jesus.

Even when he was visible in the flesh and had entered into the limitations of the manhood, he bore witness to his own eternal existence when he said, 'Amen, I say to you, before Abraham came into being I am', and again, 'If I speak to you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? *And no one has ever ascended into heaven except him who came down from heaven, the Son of Man*'. So it is as the Word who exists eternally and before the ages, the Word come down from the heavens, the selfsame who appeared as a man like us, that he says these things.⁶⁴⁰

Cyril finds two quotations from John's Gospel to be sufficient in showing Jesus' everlasting nature. Cyril initially quotes Jesus' words in John 8:58, and then introduces 3:12-13 with the words 'and again' (Greek, *kai palin*). Cyril frequently uses this connective phrase elsewhere in *On the Unity of Christ* to cite different verses from the same speaker (usually of Jesus or Paul). While this on its own does not *guarantee* that Cyril understood Jesus to be the speaker here, his decision not to separate 3:12 from 3:13 is identical to what we saw in his eighth *Festal Letter*. The two verses are quoted together, as one continuous thought. 3:12 is undoubtedly taken to be Jesus' words, so 3:13 in Cyril's opinion naturally follows suit. Moreover, Cyril reiterates in lines 7-8 that 'the Word...says these things'. Cyril makes one further citation of John 3 in his treatise *On the Unity of Christ*, here excerpted.

I will not take up this fight for the sacred dogmas meanspiritedly; no, I shall raise up the truth in full battle array against those who think perversities. He himself

⁶³⁹ Cyril quotes 3:31a again at *On the Unity of Christ* 771, but instead of identifying the speaker, he simply states who wrote it. The text reads: 'Yet the all-wise John writes somewhere: 'The one who comes from above is above all''.

⁶⁴⁰ *On the Unity of Christ* 747.

confirms that it was the only-begotten Word of God who has destroyed the dominion of death; not a different son to him joined in a relationship to mediate the economy, but he himself, personally, confirms this saying, *‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life’*.⁶⁴¹

Cyril here exclaims that he will never cease to ‘raise up the truth’ (Greek, *antanastēsō to alēthēs*) in battle against those who would commit heresy. He cites John 3:16 as proof that the Son of God himself is responsible for death’s defeat. Nothing prevents Jesus from being understood as the speaker of this verse, and the introductory phrase ‘he himself personally confirms this saying’ (Greek, *autos mallon di heautou pistōsetai legōn*) suggests that Jesus’ personal authority is being evoked.

Cyril’s last word, so to speak, on the speaker in the first Johannine passage is found in two portions of his twenty-ninth *Festal Letter* (composed in 441). Addressing the faithful in Alexandria (and wherever his letter might be read), the sixty-something year-old Cyril explains the benefit brought about through Jesus’ incarnation.

For it was not for himself that ‘he emptied himself’, and put on the poverty of our state; it was that we might abound in what is his, and, having washed away sin with its ignominy and profanation, might gain through him purification through faith. For as the Son himself says, *‘God loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life’*. Faith is, accordingly, something truly salvific.⁶⁴²

Cyril here explains that because Jesus took upon himself the ‘poverty’ (Greek, *ptōcheian*) of sinful people, true restoration was now made possible. John 3:16 comes into Cyril’s, mind, and he explicitly attributes the words to Jesus, ‘the Son himself’

⁶⁴¹ *On the Unity of Christ* 768.

⁶⁴² *Festal Letter* 29.1. Translated by Amidon (2013), with minor modifications.

(Greek, *autos ho huios*). A few paragraphs later, subsequent verses from John 3 are also cited and attributed to Jesus. Below, Cyril discusses the root cause of sinful behavior.

Bound tightly by the chains of their own passions, accordingly, stained ineradicably by their sensuality, and conquered by unholy dirty money, they did not accept those words which might have led them off in the direction of proper behavior. They are, then, clearly convicted, as Christ the Savior of us all, says, *'Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed'*.⁶⁴³

In this final citation of John 3:20, Cyril unambiguously understands the speaker to be 'Christ the Savior' (Greek, *sōtēros Christou*), who by his very presence convicts all sin and evil.⁶⁴⁴ Jesus' authoritative words furnish Cyril's argument that evil actions start from within a person ('passions') and result in the wholesale rejection of truth.

As we have arrived to the end of Cyril's citations of John 3, we may now attend to those matters which were deferred and offer some concluding observations. With respect to 3:13-17, the identification of Jesus as speaker is never questioned. Excluding uncertain references, Cyril directly attributes the following verses to Jesus in his writings: 3:13 (thrice); 3:16 (4 times); 3:17 (4 times). With such multiple attestation we can therefore assert that Cyril definitely considered these to be Jesus' own words. With respect to John 3:18, Cyril cites this verse on four separate occasions. The two earliest appear in the *Commentary on John*, one cited in conjunction with 3:17, the other on its own. The next appears also on its own in the *Commentary on Micah*. All three of these are unambiguously attributed to Jesus. The fourth citation of 3:18 is found in the

⁶⁴³ *Festal Letter* 29.3.

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. Joseph Lucas, *Prayer of the Publican: Justification in the Desert Fathers* (Rollinsford: Orthodox Research Institute, 2011), 14-15.

Commentary on Malachi, where the verse is attributed to ‘John’. The indefinite adverb ‘somewhere’ (Greek, *pou*) prefaces this citation, as well as the one in the *Commentary on Micah*, which we have argued is probably representative of Cyril’s lack of reliance on a physical copy of the Gospel open to him while he wrote. That Cyril in the *Commentary on John* cited both 3:17 and 3:18 together in sequence raises serious doubts about this singular attribution of 3:18 to ‘John’, for on three separate occasions Cyril identified Jesus as the speaker of 3:17.⁶⁴⁵

With respect to 3:19-20, Cyril attributes these verses to Jesus alone. In the *Commentary on John*, Cyril cites 3:19 in conjunction with 3:20, and then 3:20 again on its own. Likewise in his twenty-ninth *Festal Letter* he attributed 3:20 to Jesus. Although 3:21 is never cited directly, we contended above that Cyril’s reference to ‘the conversation with Nicodemus’ following his citation of 3:22-24 is strong evidence of the prior verses belonging within a conversational context (i.e., between characters within the Gospel narrative). This reference establishes with relative certainty that Cyril regarded Jesus as speaker of 3:13-21 as a whole. In light of our comprehensive findings, the sole reference in the *Commentary on Malachi* that portrays the Gospel-writer (‘John’) as speaker is most probably unintentional. It may have resulted from Cyril’s momentary carelessness, his reliance on a *testimonium*, a later scribal corruption, or may even reflect Cyril’s impression that ‘John’ was the one responsible for *reporting* 3:18 (as opposed to *speaking*), and so in some sense he could ‘say’ the words.⁶⁴⁶ The evidence outlined above

⁶⁴⁵ Cyril’s makes his first citation of John 3:17 early in his episcopate: *Festal Letter* 5 written in 417.

⁶⁴⁶ As explained in our analysis of Athanasius’ citations of John 3, *phēsin* must not always mean ‘say’ in terms of speaking, but can also reflect a sense of ‘claim’, ‘report’, ‘imply’, ‘affirm’, or ‘make known’.

does not indicate that Cyril's position on the speaker's identity 'evolved' over time, or that he believed Jesus and the Gospel-writer were both concurrently speaking.

Cyril cites verses from the second Johannine passage several times amongst his writings. The most frequent verse to appear is 3:31, most often partially and sometimes without specifying which 'John' is in mind. Disregarding any 'vague' or 'likely' references, 3:31a is first cited in the *Commentary on John*. Prior to reaching 3:31-36 for direct exegesis, Cyril attributes 3:31a to the Gospel-writer (Greek, *ho sophōtatos euangelistēs*). This is preceded by a citation of 8:23b that also includes the adverb 'somewhere' (Greek, *pou*). It would have been redundant to repeat *pou* in the very next sentence, and so it is likely that Cyril applied the adverb (by extension) to his citation of 3:31a as well. Later in the *Commentary on John*, Cyril cites 3:31a again on its own and unambiguously attributes it to the Baptist. Cyril never questions the attribution of 3:31b-36 to the Baptist in his writings. Not including 'vague' or 'likely' references, Cyril attributes the following verses to the Baptist: 3:31b; 3:31c; 3:32; 3:34a; 3:36 (twice). It should also be noted that during Cyril's direct exegesis of 3:31-36 within his Johannine commentary—the most appropriate time to have required the text of John 3 before him—no change of speaker can be detected in his exposition. In all likelihood, then, Cyril's sole attribution of 3:31a to the Gospel-writer was unintentional and thus not representative of some alternate interpretation or 'evolution' of thinking.

One further point may be made. Maxwell explains in the introduction to his translation of Cyril's *Commentary on John* that the frequent use of 'somewhere' (Greek, *pou*) is not necessarily reflective of a lapse of memory.⁶⁴⁷ He asserts that Cyril employs

⁶⁴⁷ David R. Maxwell, *Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on John* (Ancient Christian Texts. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), xxiii-xxiv.

pou more in a formulaic way of citation, one with biblical and literary precedent.⁶⁴⁸ We have observed that most of Cyril's citations are verbatim or contain slight adaptations, but are not loose paraphrases. This highlights not only the seriousness with which the Alexandrian bishop handled the biblical text, but is also indicative of the fact that he sometimes didn't consider it necessary to supply his readers with too much contextual detail (i.e., the location of given verse, original audience). That the indefinite term *pou* is present in both of the instances where Cyril attributes verses to the Gospel-writer is especially worth noting. It is not that he 'forgot' that these verses were found in the Bible or John's Gospel in particular; Cyril's use of *pou* is more indicative of: [1] writing without having the exact page of the Gospel opened before him and/or [2] a dependence on another source, such as a *testimonium*. In summary, we can affirm with relative confidence that Cyril falls in line with those interpreters that regard 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 to comprise the words of Jesus and the Baptist, respectively.

Nonnus of Panopolis (c. 400-470).

1. Background Material

Scant details are available for us to piece together any sort of biographical sketch of Nonnus. We know that he was born in Panopolis, a city of upper Egypt, and that at some point in his life he made Alexandria his home. Here Nonnus published a lengthy epic poem titled *Dionysiaca*, as well as a hexameter verse paraphrase of John's Gospel,

⁶⁴⁸ E.g., Hebrews 2:6a: 'But one testified somewhere (Greek, *pou*), saying...'; Hebrews 4:4a: 'For he has spoken somewhere (Greek, *pou*) of the seventh day in this way...'; Philo of Alexandria, *On the Unchangeableness of God* 74: 'As the psalmist has said somewhere (Greek, *pou*)...'; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.2.14: 'As he somewhere (Greek, *pou*) expresses it...'

both of which still survive in the original Greek. Nonnus was certainly a well-known poet in his day,⁶⁴⁹ yet it remains unclear for whom his poetry was written and under what circumstances he embraced the Christian faith.⁶⁵⁰ He drew not only from a wide range of ‘pagan’ mythological traditions and poetry, but also from the full corpus of biblical and patristic literature.⁶⁵¹

Nonnus completed his *Paraphrase on John* some time between the years 431-451. In it the influence of Cyril of Alexandria’s freshly penned commentary on John’s Gospel is readily detected.⁶⁵² That Nonnus rejected Nestorian thinking is apparent by his reference to Jesus’ mother as *theotokos* (‘bearer of God’), and his allusions to other orthodox Christian writers (e.g., Origen, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzus) likewise

⁶⁴⁹ An ancient epigram (*Palatine Anthology* 9.198), attached perhaps as a preface to his poems, reads: ‘I am Nonnus; my native city was Panopolis; in Alexandria I mowed down with my vocal sword the brood of the Giants’. Translated by Spanoudakis (2014).

⁶⁵⁰ Scholars have traditionally assumed Nonnus converted *after* the writing of the *Dionysiaca*, given the unlikelihood that a Christian would write over 20,000 lines of poetry centered on Dionysus, the god of wine and ecstasy. Recent discussions, however, have favored the distinct probability that Nonnus grew up in the church and composed the paraphrase earlier on (thus with a mixed audience of ‘pagan’ and Christian elite in mind). See further in Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume III (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1966 [1960]), 114-116; Lee F. Sherry, *The Hexameter Paraphrase of St. John Attributed to Nonnus of Panopolis: Prolegomenon and Translation* (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1991), 114-115, 143-165; Alan Cameron, ‘The Poet, the Bishop, and the Harlot’. *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 41 (2000): 178-181; David Hernández de la Fuente, ‘Nonnus’ Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John: Pagan Models and Christian Literature’, in Monferrer-Sala (ed.), *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, 169-171; Laura Cavero, ‘The Appearance of the Gods in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus’. *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 49 (2009): 564-575.

⁶⁵¹ E.g., Nonnus is clearly influenced by the Synoptic tradition concerning the Baptist’s lifestyle (diet of wild honey, living in the wilderness), for he introduces him with the words: ‘In the bee-nurturing copse there was a certain mountain-ranging citizen of the lonely crag’. Translated by Sherry (1991). See further in Konstantinos Spanoudakis, *Nonnus of Panopolis: Paraphrasis of the Gospel of John XI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5-23; Lee F. Sherry, ‘The *Paraphrase of St. John* Attributed to Nonnus’. *Byzantion* 66 (1996): 428-429; Sebastian Matzner, ‘Christianizing the Epic—Epicizing Christianity: Nonnus’ Paraphrasis and the Old-Saxon Heliand in a Comparative Perspective’. *Millennium-Jahrbuch* 5 (2009): 123, 128-130.

⁶⁵² According to Alan Cameron, Nonnus also ‘clearly studied’ the homilies of John Chrysostom. Cf. his ‘The Poet, the Bishop, and the Harlot’. *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 41 (2000): 176, 181. See also Mark A. Prost, *Nonnos of Panopolis: The Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John* (Ventura: The Writing Shop Press, 2003), 228-229; Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 881.

indicate as much. Throughout the *Paraphrase on John* Nonnus is rather careful to follow the syntax of the Gospel text, but nonetheless feels free to digress from it with supplementary detail and poetic embellishment.⁶⁵³ It is a fascinating interpretation of the Gospel, and read in conjunction with the *Dionysiaca* sheds much light on the dynamics of emergent Christendom with late paganism in fifth-century Egypt. As a paraphrase, verses from John's Gospel are not *quoted* in the strict sense (as in other literary genres we have surveyed), but have rather been incorporated into Nonnus' own reimagining of the Gospel story itself.⁶⁵⁴ This being said, as a narrator Nonnus is indeed careful to report the dialogue of characters with speech markers (e.g., 'Andrew shouted out a voice of good news', 'Nicodemus answered rebuking all of them', 'Jesus spoke to the eleven banqueters'), and in imitation of the Gospel-writer, he frequently makes use of narrative asides directed to his reading audience.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

To adequately discuss Nonnus' treatment of John 3 in the *Paraphrase on John*, it is necessary to cite a substantial portion from the chapter. The following excerpt

⁶⁵³ See Lee F. Sherry, *The Hexameter Paraphrase of St. John Attributed to Nonnus of Panopolis: Prolegomenon and Translation* (PhD dissertation. Columbia University, 1991), 66-67; Konstantinos Spanoudakis, *Nonnus of Panopolis: Paraphrasis of the Gospel of John XI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 68-73.

⁶⁵⁴ As Filip Doroszewski notes in his analysis of Nonnus' retelling of John 3, the *Paraphrase on John* is indeed a kind of exegetical commentary on the Gospel text. One of the general aims of paraphrasing, according to the rhetorician Theon of Alexandria (first century A.D.), was to clarify an existing text's content. Structural and stylistic changes to its form of expression were intended to preserve the original meaning (sense) of the text and to facilitate memorization and comprehension. See Filip Doroszewski, 'Commenting with Hexameter: The Imagery of Light and Darkness in Nonnus' Poetic Exegesis of John 3:1-21', in Mejer et al (eds.), *Glossae, Scholia, Commentarii: Studies on Commenting Texts in Antiquity and Middle Ages*, 127-136; Angelika Modlinska-Piekarz, 'Byzantine Theory of Paraphrase in Rhetorical Treatises and Commentaries and the Original Version of Theon's *Progymnasmata*', in Mejer et al (eds.), *Glossae, Scholia, Commentarii: Studies on Commenting Texts in Antiquity and Middle Ages*, 101-114.

corresponds to the text of John 3:9-22. Jesus has just explained to Nicodemus in rather cryptic language what is meant by a second birth of water and spirit.

He spoke, and Nicodemus answered, 'How can these things happen?' And Christ erupted his divine voice, 'You are a teacher of Israel, but you do not perceive, but these things have escaped your notice, and you do not understand my intention. Amen, amen, let this again be a steadfast witness. What we say pregnant of prophetic voice was true. While sowing we uttered with unerring lips into the contentious ears of men, and all the things my listening learned from the ruler on high, we have taught with a knowing voice, herald of testimony. If I had said an expression about the unerring worldly deeds, and your listening is so slow to believe, if I proclaimed about the winged host and the deeds of aether, how would you believe more in inexperienced intentions while hearing the nature of the unseen heavenly court? *Never has another mortal, by shaking a windy foot, tread the inaccessible curve of the heavenly circles, unless this one alone be the divine Son of Man, who descended from heaven and joined his immortal form to unfamiliar flesh, who has his paternal ground in a starry hall and eternally inhabits of aether. And just as in the region of the deserted look-out point Moses lifted the snake, an aid to bitten men, which follows the fabricated form of woody thistle, so also the Son of Man, by making remedies for limb-consuming illnesses, shall be lifted up for mortals, in imitation of the pain-loosening dragontine face, in order that whoever should receive him in the obedient place of the mind might look upon the ennobling tranquility of life, for as long as steadfast, broad-bearded Aeon keep winding around. For the scepter-holder ruling on high so loved the polymorphous erring world, that he granted to the four-yoked world his only-begotten Son, the Word, as an aid to men, in order that whoever should receive him, since he changed his variable character and bows his willing neck toward unshakeable faith, may come to the eternal chorus of heavenly life, inhabiting an imperishable home in well-wooded paradise. For God the Father did not give the world his Son, the Word, that he judge the premature world, but that he resurrect the entire fallen human race. And whoever implores him in the place of his unerring heart and has thrown faithless frenzy to the airy winds and has correct faith, he is not judged. But if any man stretched his mind-tripping eye on human flesh and boldly unfolded a God-*

fighting throat, this man has been judged. Because in his slow-believing heart he has not yet trusted in the name of the late-born king, the Son of God, the begetter on high. This is the kindred judgment of the impious world. For from heaven to earth the brightness came, and the race of unstable men loved the fog more than the flashing brightness, and they do not desire the light as much as the gloom. For their deeds are oblique, and each and every man who commits acts of lawlessness, who has deeds worthy of the night, he loathes the light. He never will walk on a close path to the light, in order that the light not rebuke the deeds he has veiled in the hidden silence. But whoever guards all true things through the fear of God shall come self-bidden to where the light is, in order that the deeds which he had done through the will of God be made manifest'. He spoke, and afterwards, he left the plain of Galilee and slipped away into the chaste hollow of the land of the Judeans.⁶⁵⁵

For all the poetic license that Nonnus' takes in this creative expansion of the Gospel text, it is evident that he had a copy of the Gospel at hand as he wrote. All Johannine verses are accounted for in some shape or form, and when Nonnus reaches 3:13 he maintains the Gospel's third-person phrasing up through 3:21 (lines 11-42). Likewise, no change of speaker can be detected in these verses. Most important for our present purposes is the last sentence of this excerpt, which opens with 'he spoke' (Greek, *ennepe*).⁶⁵⁶ While it is true that no subject is specified with this verb, it is wholly different from the Gospel's ambiguous use of 'after these things' (Greek, *meta tauta*), which signifies little more than indefinite temporal sequence.⁶⁵⁷ Here Nonnus asserts that the

⁶⁵⁵ *Paraphrase on John* 3.48-3.111. Translated by Sherry (1991).

⁶⁵⁶ *Ennepō* is a lengthened verb form, which is preferred among Greek poets such as Homer and Sappho. It does not appear in the New Testament—there the primary choice is *eipon*, though Nonnus employs this verb too—but it does appear some sixty-five times in the *Paraphrase on John*. Cf. Bernard Coulie, Lee F. Sherry, and Cetedoc, *Thesaurus Pseudo-Nonni Quondam Panopolitani: Paraphrasis Evangelii S. Ioannis* (Thesaurus Patrum Graecorum. Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 18.

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. John F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4* (Edited by Graham N. Stanton. The International Critical Commentary. New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 244.

words just recorded were *spoken*,⁶⁵⁸ and this same speaker is paired with the one who ‘afterward, left the plain of Galilee and slipped away’. That Nonnus has Jesus in mind as speaker is further supported by his employment of *ennepō* elsewhere in the *Paraphrase on John*. Nonnus is consistent in his use of the verb within conversational contexts, that is, to introduce or conclude direct discourse.⁶⁵⁹ *Ennepō* also appears on the lips of characters (especially Jesus) when referring to something said earlier on in the narrative.⁶⁶⁰ As in the passage excerpted above, Nonnus concludes Jesus’ speech with ‘he spoke’ at several other points: after speaking to Nicodemus about the second birth (cf. line 1), after speaking at length to those skeptical of his special relationship to the Father (once again, the Gospel here reads *meta tauta* instead), after claiming to be the bread from heaven, after singling out Judas Iscariot as a ‘devil’ among the Twelve, and after telling his disciples of the heavenly mansions and his second return.⁶⁶¹ For these reasons it is reasonable to conclude that Nonnus added ‘he spoke’ in these passages deliberately; in his view, 3:13-21 comprised Jesus’ own words to Nicodemus.⁶⁶²

Nonnus’ paraphrase of the rest of the chapter, while artistic in its own right, need not be excerpted and analyzed here. Although he retains the Gospel’s third-person

⁶⁵⁸ The earliest Latin translations of Nonnus’ work render this term *dixit* (‘he said/spoke’). The editions of Nansius and Hegendorf identify the speaker as *Christus*. See ‘Appendix 2’ in David Hernández de la Fuente, ‘Nonnus’ Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John: Pagan Models and Christian Literature’, in Monferrer-Sala (ed.), *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, 186-189.

⁶⁵⁹ In introducing the speech of characters, see e.g., *Paraphrase on John* 1.60; 2.18; 3.6; 3.137; 6.104; 6.212; 8.113; 9.89; 10.22; 11.74; 11.143; 11.207; 12.156; 13.146; 14.84; 18.122; 18.182; 19.128; 19.187; 19.189; 20.88; 20.108; 21.9; 21.116; 21.133.

⁶⁶⁰ E.g., *Paraphrase on John* 6.139; 6.184; 6.202; 14.97; 14.116; 15.7; 16.16; 16.36; 16.57; 18.191; 20.69.

⁶⁶¹ *Paraphrase on John* 3.48; 6.1; 6.181; 6.226; 14.14.

⁶⁶² Elsewhere in the *Paraphrase on John*, Nonnus refers to Nicodemus as ‘faithful’, ‘obedient to God’, and ‘blameless’ (Greek, *pistō*; *peithēnios theō*; *amemphea*), reflecting his positive interpretation of him (i.e., as a character who believed in Jesus). Had Nonnus perceived their conversation to terminate with 3:10-12 (as a reprimand), we might not have expected such a view. Cf. *Paraphrase on John* 3.1-8; 6.45; 19.204-209.

phrasing through John 3:31-36 and resumes with Jesus' departure from the Judean countryside in 4:1-3, Nonnus does not include the verbal marker 'he spoke'.⁶⁶³ It may be noted, however, that all modern translations of the *Paraphrase on John* present both 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 in quotation marks.⁶⁶⁴

Quodvultdeus of Carthage (c. 390-454).

1. Background Material

Quodvultdeus, whose name in Latin means 'what God wills', is first known through Augustine of Hippo's description of him as a 'beloved son and fellow deacon'. Having persisted in his requests to the elder Augustine to write a compendium of heresies for him and his clergymen at Carthage, Quodvultdeus got his wish shortly after 429 with the production of *On Heresies for Quodvultdeus*. Around the year 437, Quodvultdeus succeeded Capreolus as bishop of Carthage. He was quite dedicated to his pastoral work, even in the course of his expulsion from the city just two years later by the Vandal king Gaiseric.⁶⁶⁵ Finding refuge in Naples, Italy, Quodvultdeus continued to write and participate actively in the church there. While in exile he composed what would become a normative work for biblical interpretation in the centuries to come, the *Liber*

⁶⁶³ Nonnus does rephrase the initial words of John 3:31 using *houtos* ('this [one]'). He writes: 'This one who came from above'—whereas the Gospel text reads: 'The one who comes from above'. Since *houtos* is deictic (pointing back to its antecedent, Jesus), a case could be made in favor of interpreting a continuity of thought in 3:31 (i.e., of the same speaker) in Nonnus' mind.

⁶⁶⁴ See the French translation of Marcellus (1861), German translation of Ebener (1985), Russian translation of Pospelov (2002), and English translations of Sherry (1991) and Prost (2003). Michele Cutino likewise treats both passages as comprising the words of Jesus and the Baptist; cf. his study of Nonnus' paraphrase of John 3 in 'Structure de la Composition et Exégèse dans la *Paraphrase de l'Évangile de S. Jean* de Nonnos de Panopolis: Une Lecture du Chant III'. *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 55 (2009): 225-246.

⁶⁶⁵ Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1251.

Promissionum ('Book of Promises').⁶⁶⁶ A few of his personal letters have also come down to us, as well as a collection of creedal homilies. Theologically, it is evident that he shared much in common with Augustine; in fact, for centuries Quodvultdeus' works were even wrongly attributed to him.

John 3 first appears amongst Quodvultdeus' creedal homilies. These were produced in the mid-430s and delivered orally in successive years just prior to Easter. It appears that Quodvultdeus' audience was primarily made up of catechumens, those seeking baptismal conversion within the church. Scripture is typically quoted from memory or paraphrased in the homilies. Like so many other writers, Quodvultdeus' citation style varies; at times he quotes without providing surrounding detail on the speaker or biblical book, yet just as often he does share such information (e.g., 'Isaiah the prophet had long ago predicted', 'listen to what John the Evangelist says', 'in the Gospel the Son says'). Two further citations from John 3 are found in the *Liber Promissionum*, dating from around the year 450. Here Quodvultdeus traces all of salvation history through both Testaments, with an emphasis on typological and allegorical exegesis.⁶⁶⁷ Though his norm is to paraphrase Scripture, with occasional inaccuracy, details of context are often provided (e.g., 'the Lord spoke the divine announcement to Abram', 'our anointed shepherd Christ the Lord says').

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Quodvultdeus' first quotation from John 3 is found in his *Second Homily on the Creed*, written while still a deacon of the church in Carthage.

⁶⁶⁶ See Thomas M. Finn, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage: The Creedal Homilies: Conversion in Fifth-Century North Africa* (Ancient Christian Writers 60. New York: Newman Press, 2004), 1.

⁶⁶⁷ It has been estimated that about one-third of this treatise is comprised of biblical references.

Let unbelievers not deceive themselves vainly when they hear the words of the psalm: ‘The wicked will not rise in judgment’. ‘In judgment’, it says; that is, they will not rise to be judged, because already they have been condemned because of their faithlessness in the past, according to the Lord’s saying: ‘*Whoever does not believe has already been judged*’. Moreover, in order to remove all doubt from the hearts of unbelievers, the apostle used the simile of the sower of seed: ‘Fool, the seed you sow does not come to life unless it dies’.⁶⁶⁸

Seeking to clarify what exactly is meant by Psalm 1:5, Quodvultdeus declares to his listeners that the wicked will indeed face judgment. After criticizing the belief of ‘unbelievers’ who think they can escape it, in lines 3-4 he claims that their judgment has *already* happened as a direct result of their ‘faithlessness in the past’ (Latin, *infidelitatem olim*). For proof of this, Quodvultdeus cites a portion of John 3:18, prefacing it with the words ‘according to the Lord’s saying’ (Latin, *secundum illam sententiam dominicam*). Finn chooses to translate this phrase ‘according to the dominical teaching’, but this seems unnecessarily inexact—where I have found these Latin words occurring together, they introduce Jesus’ own words from the Gospels.⁶⁶⁹ To be sure, *sententiam* has multiple meanings,⁶⁷⁰ yet it is most probable that Quodvultdeus meant it in the natural sense: the

⁶⁶⁸ *Second Homily on the Creed* 11.3. Translated by Finn (2004), with minor modifications.

⁶⁶⁹ To cite a few examples: [1] Finn himself elsewhere renders *propter illam sententiam domini in evangelio positam* ‘on account of this saying of the Lord in the Gospel’ to introduce Jesus’ words in Matthew 12:40; [2] Augustine of Hippo writes *propter illam dominicam sententiam* to introduce Jesus’ words in Matthew 20:16; [3] Lectio 5 of ‘Sermon of Bishop Maximus’ reads *dominicam illam sententiam* to quote Jesus in Matthew 5:19; [4] The *Life of Saint Walarici* reads *dominicam illam sententiam*, quoting Jesus in Matthew 5:14-16; [5] Herveus of Maine states *secundum illam domini sententiam* to introduce Jesus’ words in Matthew 13:11. See Quodvultdeus, *Second Homily on the Creed* 6.5; Augustine, *Admonition and Grace* 7.14; Lectio 5 of ‘Sermon of Bishop Maximus’ in *The Roman Breviary; Life of Saint Walarici* 13.17; Herveus of Maine, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 16.

⁶⁷⁰ Perseus offers these: a way of thinking, opinion, judgment, sentiment, thought, notion, purpose, determination, decision, will, desire.

‘saying’ or ‘statement’ belonging to the Lord.⁶⁷¹ Because ‘Lord’ is the most frequently used title for Jesus in the credal homilies, it stands to reason that Quodvultdeus likely understood it here as such. We find further confirmation of this in the following two excerpts from the *Liber Promissionum*, for they contain the same portion of John 3:18.

In the fourth instance the Lord speaks of regeneration, having revealed through the true resurrection that all of us will rise in freedom, the sins of the Amorites being complete. Therefore [there are] those who do not believe the gospel of God, seeing that ‘*whoever does not believe*’, as the Lord says, ‘*has already been judged*’.

But if it be that in the first Psalm it is written, ‘But the wicked shall not rise again in judgment’, understand that they do not rise to judgment, but according to the punishment by the Lord’s saying: ‘*Whoever does not believe*’, he says, ‘*has already been judged*’.⁶⁷²

Quodvultdeus begins by mentioning the effect of Jesus’ resurrection: ‘all of us’ (Latin, *omnis nostra*) will rise like him. The caveat, of course, is belief in this message, which some reject to their own condemnation. Quodvultdeus goes on to attribute John 3:18b to ‘the Lord’ in line 4. Similarly, in the subsequent passage he interprets this Johannine verse as ‘the Lord’s saying’ (Latin, *domini sententiam*), which clarifies the meaning of Psalm 1:5 (cited in lines 6-7). As in his credal homilies, the title ‘Lord’ most often refers to Jesus, and this triple attestation gives us relative confidence to conclude that Quodvultdeus understood Jesus as speaker. By extension, then, the verses that

⁶⁷¹ Examples from our own survey include: Rufinus’ translation *sententia domini* in the *Rule of Basil* 122.5; Ambrose’s use of *domini sententiam* in *Concerning Repentance* 1.48; Augustine’s use of *propter illam domini sententiam* to introduce John 3:5 in *Letter* 265. Yet another example appears in Quodvultdeus’ *Liber Promissionum* (analyzed below).

⁶⁷² *Liber Promissionum* 1.12.19; *Dimidium temporis* 18.29. Draft translation.

precede 3:18 ought to be interpreted as Jesus' own,⁶⁷³ though we cannot say the same for those verses that follow (3:19-21).

Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393-460).

1. Background Material

Theodoret was born into a wealthy Christian home in the city of Antioch. Like the majority of Antiochenes, he and his family were Syriac-speaking; however, because of their elevated social and economic status a priority was placed on learning Greek. Theodoret (whose name means 'gift of God') received an early initiation into Scripture. His mother was a devout convert to Christianity and took the young Theodoret along with her on regular visits to see monastic holy men, who would then teach him Bible stories.⁶⁷⁴ After completing his formal training in classics and serving for some time as a lector in the local church, he decided to give up his inheritance and withdraw to the monastery at Nicerte.⁶⁷⁵ Here Theodoret pored over patristic commentaries of Scripture and fine-tuned his exegetical skills. He lived the monastic life for a decade or so before being consecrated—reportedly against his wishes—as the new bishop of Cyrus in Syria (c. 423). Apart from a brief period in which he was deposed from office, Theodoret served in this authoritative position for the rest of his life, taking to writing and living simply. On occasion, he was also able to return to his hometown to preach. Though ecclesiastical and

⁶⁷³ A citation of John 3:14 appears in *Liber Promissionum* 2.11.21, introduced with 'the Gospel itself says'.

⁶⁷⁴ According to his *Religious History*, Aphrahat of Persia was one of many that Theodoret encountered during these early and influential visits. Chronologically speaking this is difficult to imagine, as Aphrahat's death is normally assigned to c. 350. See Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 132-133.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Jean-Noël Guinot, 'Theodoret of Cyrus', in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 885-886.

political controversy seemed to follow him in whichever direction he headed,⁶⁷⁶ the leading role he played at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 is evidence of the legacy he left within the Christian tradition.

As an exegete of Scripture Theodoret embodies the literal-historical approach that the school of Antioch had long established. In his exegetical writings he often devotes himself to the ‘letter of the text’, which encompassed punctuation, accentuation, verse arrangement, overall literary structure, the type of discourse used, as well as style and tone.⁶⁷⁷ From time to time, however, he also allowed for allegorical and typological interpretation of the biblical text.⁶⁷⁸ Unfortunately, a great many of Theodoret’s works perished as a result of his condemnation at the so-called Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553, led by the Byzantine emperor Justinian. Of Theodoret’s writings that have come down to us, eight contain citations from the Johannine passages presently under consideration.

Theodoret first cites John 3 in *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity*, a deeply theological tract written sometime between the years 429-431. Interestingly, it only survived because it had circulated under the name of Cyril of Alexandria, one of his staunchest opponents! In the work Theodoret puts into writing his understanding of the Trinity and of Christology, among other concepts. The words of Jesus, especially from John’s Gospel, constitute a good portion of his citations from Scripture. Usually Theodoret furnishes these with the identity of the speaker in each case, or the biblical

⁶⁷⁶ Among these was his support for Nestorius during the earlier part of his career, and his opposition to his older contemporary Cyril of Alexandria. He later anathematized Nestorius as a heretic.

⁶⁷⁷ Jean-Noël Guinot, ‘Theodoret of Cyrus’, in Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 899.

⁶⁷⁸ See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume III (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1966 [1960]), 539; Robert C. Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on the Psalms* (The Fathers of the Church 101-102. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 15-16.

book in which reference is made (e.g., ‘in Acts, Luke again says’, ‘the Lord himself addresses his disciples’, ‘it says in the Psalms’). John 3 is next referenced in *On Divine Providence*, a work of both apologetics and homiletics. Comprising ten discourses, *On Divine Providence* was composed around 437 and, if ever delivered orally, probably found its audience with the philosophically-minded at Antioch rather than at Cyrus.⁶⁷⁹ As in *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity*, Theodoret typically provides some degree of detail concerning the speaker in his scriptural citations (e.g., ‘the Father exclaimed from heaven’, ‘the blessed David exclaims’, ‘hear the Lord’s saying’).

Of Theodoret’s biblical commentaries that have survived, just his *Commentary on the Psalms* and *Commentary on Isaiah* contain references to John 3 that reveal his view on the speaker. In the preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms*, Theodoret shares that he had always wanted to write on all 150 Psalms, but for various reasons had kept getting delayed. His commentary was completed between 441-448, after he had consulted a number of commentaries written by others and found them deficient in one way or another.⁶⁸⁰ Theodoret’s exegesis strikes a balance between interpreting the Psalms in a purely historical sense on the one hand, and wholly ignoring such matters in favor of allegorization on the other. He normally introduces biblical citations with speech markers (e.g., ‘blessed Luke made mention of this’, ‘David said’, ‘the Lord said in the holy Gospels’), but allusions without such detail abound. During this same period (c. 441-448) Theodoret also completed the *Commentary on Isaiah*. In it he treats the biblical text with the same critical methodology as his Psalms commentary; primacy is given to elucidating

⁶⁷⁹ Thomas Halton, *Theodoret of Cyrus: On Divine Providence* (Ancient Christian Writers 49. New York: Newman Press, 1988), 3.

⁶⁸⁰ Theodoret probably refers to those of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Apollinarius of Laodicea, and possibly to the homily collections of Chrysostom and Origen.

the literal sense, but some attention is given to the allegorical and typological interpretation where deemed appropriate.⁶⁸¹ Theodoret is keen on offering historical interpretations of the numerous prophecies found in Isaiah (highlighting his own Christological views), and he normally introduces scriptural verses with details on the speakers (e.g., ‘God said about Abel’, ‘the blessed David cries out’, ‘in the holy Gospels the Lord began to say’). He is also careful to identify when Isaiah is quoting the words of God himself.⁶⁸²

Writing during the same period (c. 447), Theodoret next cited John 3 in his captivating treatise *Eranistes*. With the dual purpose of combating heresy and defending his own Christological teaching, Theodoret structured *Eranistes* as a series of dialogues between two fictional characters, Orthodoxos and Eranistes.⁶⁸³ Orthodoxos represents the ‘defender of the apostolic teachings’ and no doubt is a projection of Theodoret himself. In contrast, Eranistes represents the stereotypical heretic who crudely fabricates his own ‘complex and polymorphous doctrine’ that lies in opposition to the truth of Scripture. Theodoret supplies extensive quotations from many ‘ancient teachers of the Church’, as he calls them.⁶⁸⁴ As the dialogue progresses, both Orthodoxos and Eranistes cite or allude to verses from the Bible very frequently, at times making reference to who speaks (e.g., ‘the narrative about Moses the lawgiver says that’, ‘the Canaanite woman said’, ‘in the prologue of Acts the blessed Luke said’).

⁶⁸¹ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Volume III (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1966 [1960]), 542.

⁶⁸² E.g., after citing Isaiah 1:11-12, Theodoret comments: ‘The prophet, through these words, or rather, God speaking through him, rejects their sacrifices...’ Translated by Vrame (1989).

⁶⁸³ See Gerard H. Ettliger, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Eranistes* (The Fathers of the Church 106. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 2-6.

⁶⁸⁴ Some of those quoted include: Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus, Hilary, Basil of Caesarea and Amphilochius of Iconium.

One of Theodoret's encyclical letters also includes a reference to John 3. Around the year 447, Theodoret wrote *To the Bishops of Cilicia* in order to warn his fellow bishops about false rumors that were spreading about him, as well as to encourage them in the apostolic faith upheld at the Council of Nicea. Of the four scriptural citations present in the brief letter, two come from John's Gospel. Theodoret next cited a portion of John 3 in his *Questions on Leviticus*, part of his larger work on the first eight books of the Bible titled *Questions on the Octateuch*. Completed no later than the year 448, in his expositions Theodoret addresses Christian readers that are concerned about problems posed by critics of Scripture, such as narrative or factual discrepancies.⁶⁸⁵ With reference to the Gospels, Theodoret mostly alludes to verses rather than quoting them directly. Besides Leviticus, the letters of Paul are referred to most often.

Theodoret cited John 3 one last time in his final major literary work, *Compendium of Heretical Mythification*. Theodoret composed it one or two years after the Council of Chalcedon (452/453), at the request of a military commander named Sporacius, who wished to learn more about the controversy surrounding the divine and human natures of Jesus. The first four books essentially present an overview of heresies from Simon Magus to Eutyches, whereas the fifth book—in which Theodoret cites verses from John 3—centers on a systematic analysis of Christian theology.⁶⁸⁶ In his thorough study on the *Compendium of Heretical Mythification*, Glenn Cope contends that Theodoret's true purpose in writing was not to simply produce a heresiological textbook, but to prove to

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. Robert C. Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: The Questions on the Octateuch* (The Library of Early Christianity 1. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), xx-xxii.

⁶⁸⁶ See István Pásztori-Kupán, *Theodoret of Cyrus* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 2006), 198-199.

Sporacius, as well as to the world, that he was orthodox in his theology.⁶⁸⁷ Quotations from the Scriptures are interspersed throughout the work, and Theodoret consciously takes care to provide information on the speakers (e.g., ‘the celebrated Job said thus to the Lord’, ‘the demons shouted’, ‘the Lord himself in the Gospels said’).

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Theodoret’s first Johannine citation is found in the fifteenth section of *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity*, under the heading: ‘The Nature of the Father and the Son is One’. In the excerpt provided below, Theodoret reminds his reading audience that the Son and Father do indeed share the same essence.

We, the worshippers of the Trinity, hereby receive the accurate knowledge of coessentiality, maintaining that the Father cannot be recognized in the Son in any other fashion, unless he shared the same essence, and we adore our Savior, awaiting the fruit of our supplication, the giver of which is the Father himself according to the Lord’s word: ‘If any one’, he says, ‘serves me, my Father will honor him’. Also John the admirable theologian: ‘*Whoever believes in the Son*’, he says, ‘*has eternal life; but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*’.⁶⁸⁸

Theodoret selects two verses from John’s Gospel to highlight the ‘coessentiality’ (Greek, *homoousios*) of the Father and the Son. His first citation, John 12:26b, is identified as a saying of ‘the Lord’ (Greek, *ho kurios*) and interpreted as Jesus’ own words about himself and the Father.⁶⁸⁹ Theodoret then identifies the speaker of John 3:36

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Glenn M. Cope, *An Analysis of the Heresiological Method of Theodoret of Cyrus in the Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium* (PhD dissertation. The Catholic University of America, 1990), 43-45.

⁶⁸⁸ *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity* 15. Translated by Pásztori-Kupán (2006), with minor modifications.

⁶⁸⁹ In addition to the fact that ‘Lord’ as a title is almost exclusively applied to Jesus in this treatise, the first-person references within the Gospel citation demand Jesus as speaker (e.g., ‘me’, ‘my Father’).

as ‘John the admirable theologian’ (Greek, *ho thaumasios Iōannēs ho theologōn*). Within both citations the verb *phēsin* (‘he says’) is interjected. Does Theodoret here have ‘John’ the Gospel-writer in mind, or perhaps the Baptist of the same name? Several clues help us to formulate an answer.

First, if Theodoret did have the Baptist in mind, it would be his first and only reference to him in *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity*. This is contrasted by the fact that the Gospel-writer is mentioned and cited on numerous occasions in the treatise.⁶⁹⁰ While the title ‘admirable’ (Greek, *thaumasios*) does not specify which ‘John’ Theodoret here has in mind (it appears just once in the treatise),⁶⁹¹ his employment of the title ‘theologian’ (Greek, *theologos*) does lend strong support to the Gospel-writer being understood as the speaker. In a literal sense, this title signifies one who ‘speaks the words of God’, and Theodoret applies it sparingly. The title first appears in the seventh section of *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity* and is specifically applied to the Gospel-writer: ‘John the theologian also inserts the word ‘existent’ in several places in the Gospel. He adorns even the prologue with these expressions...’ Here Theodoret’s application of ‘theologian’ is understood in an authorial sense.

In the rest of this treatise, the title ‘theologian’ appears only twice more, both times in the plural and applied to a group of teachers of the true faith (a likely reference to the apostles).⁶⁹² With respect to the Baptist, the majority of references to him amongst

⁶⁹⁰ He is sometimes designated ‘the evangelist’ (Greek, *ho euangelistēs*). See e.g., *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity* 6 (thrice); 7; 8; 27.

⁶⁹¹ This title (also translated ‘marvelous’) does appear several times in Theodoret’s *Commentary on the Psalms* and *Commentary on Isaiah* for righteous characters from the Hebrew Bible, such as Abraham, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Zerubbabel and Joseph.

⁶⁹² *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity* 19; 28. This group is not explicitly given a speaking role, however.

Theodoret's other works identify him simply as 'John' or 'John the Baptist'. While other titles for the Baptist do appear on occasion,⁶⁹³ he is nowhere given the title *theologos*. In contrast, the Gospel-writer is consistently awarded this title in many of Theodoret's other works, including the *Commentary on Isaiah*, *On the Inhumation of the Lord*, and *Commentary on Ezekiel*.⁶⁹⁴ In light of this, the Gospel-writer should most probably be taken as Theodoret's referent. This determination is significant, yet naturally leads us to look further into Theodoret's perception of the Gospel-writer's role: as we have discussed in the cases of Athanasius and Cyril, the verb *phēsin* ('says') can be interpreted more broadly than 'speaking'. We are fortunate that Theodoret quotes this verse again in a later work,⁶⁹⁵ so we may therefore resume the discussion of 3:36 once our analysis of his works is complete.

John 3 is next cited about eight years later in *On Divine Providence*. In the following excerpt from the tenth discourse, Theodoret points out that the incarnation and the cross are evidence of God's loving care for humanity.

Now the blessed Paul recognized this as the greatest proof of the love of God for people and exclaimed, 'But God commends his love towards us because when we were still sinners, Christ died for us'; and again, 'He that did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how has he not also, with him, given us all things?' Also the divinely inspired John agrees that this is so: '*For God*', he says, '*so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son for it, that all who*

⁶⁹³ These include: *meγas* ('great' or 'mighty'), *theios/theiotatos* ('divine'), *thespesios* ('divinely inspired'), *dikaios* ('righteous'), and *makarios* ('blessed'). See e.g., *Questions on Leviticus 22.3*; *Questions on Numbers 9*; *Commentary on the Psalms 25.6*; *Commentary on Isaiah 1.186*; *Commentary on the Psalms 45.4*; *Commentary on the Psalms 85.6*; *Commentary on the Psalms 118*.

⁶⁹⁴ On the Gospel-writer's designation as *theologos* among patristic writers, see the impressively detailed excursus provided in P. Tzamalikos, *An Ancient Commentary on the Book of Revelation: A Critical Edition of the Scholia in Apocalypsin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 214-218.

⁶⁹⁵ *Compendium of Heretical Mythification 5.2*.

believe in him may not perish but have eternal life'. God, then, has not simply a care for people, he has a loving care for them.⁶⁹⁶

Theodoret finds Paul's statements in Romans 5:8 and 8:32 to aptly express the nature of God's love. After providing both citations he adds one more testimony from Scripture: John 3:16. In line 5 this verse is attributed to 'the divinely inspired John' (Greek, *ho thespesios Iōannēs*).⁶⁹⁷ Theodoret's use of the title 'divinely inspired' elsewhere in *On Divine Providence* indicates that this is a personal reference and does not refer to the Gospel itself.⁶⁹⁸ While the main verb 'agrees' (Greek, *sunomologeī*) does not necessitate that the words are spoken,⁶⁹⁹ Theodoret's subsequent interjection of *phēsin* ('he says') within the citation does seem to imply this. As we proposed with respect to Theodoret's earlier citation of John 3:36, it is likely that the understood referent is the Gospel-writer. That being said, it behooves us to refrain from making any definitive statements at this point, since Theodoret cites this verse thrice more.⁷⁰⁰ But before we transition to his next Johannine citation, we may point out at least one possible motivational factor behind Theodoret's mentioning of 'John' as speaker of 3:16.

As observed in lines 1-5 above, Theodoret first cites the apostle Paul's words in Romans, which he labels 'the greatest proof of the love of God'. These verses clearly

⁶⁹⁶ *On Divine Providence* 10.12-13. Translated by Halton (1988), with minor modifications.

⁶⁹⁷ Theodoret's quotation of John 3:16 is slightly adapted, as he adds the prepositional phrase 'for it' (Greek, *huper autou*), referring to the world. This may indicate that he was relying on his memory.

⁶⁹⁸ This is the only time in the treatise that Theodoret applies *thespesios* to John; the apostle Paul is twice given this title, as well as the prophets Isaiah and Daniel (once each). It may also be pointed out that the name 'John' appears on just two other occasions in *On Divine Providence*. The Baptist is later brought up in connection with his role as the baptizer of Jesus, and the apostles Peter and John are referred to together by their willingness to endure persecution in Acts 5.

⁶⁹⁹ Halton's decision to translate *sunomologeī* 'agrees' is accurate, but it could also be taken to mean 'accepts' or 'says the same thing'. Gwalther (1546) translated it into Latin as *assentitur* ('assents').

⁷⁰⁰ *Commentary on Isaiah* 2.448-456; *Eranistes* 3.197; *Compendium of Heretical Mythification* 5.2.

share much in common with John 3:16 in terms of theological content. Given their similarities it is not difficult to imagine a similar scenario with what we proposed in one of John Chrysostom's citations of 3:16: in order to clarify for his listening audience that the source of 3:16 was not Pauline but Johannine, Theodoret may have felt it necessary to include the name 'John' so as to *differentiate* the testimonies of these two prominent apostles. In this way, Theodoret was able to find scriptural support for his own assertions about God's love and to highlight the essential 'agreement' between Paul and John. From this perspective, John can be said to 'agree' with Paul and to 'speak' the content of 3:16, since the words appear within the Gospel bearing his name. It is conceivable, then, that Theodoret may not have intended to identify the *actual* speaker of 3:16 in its narrative context, but was instead underlining John's authorial role as a 'divinely inspired' witness of this truth. Again, since Theodoret cites John 3:16 in three of his later works we can return to this interpretive possibility in the course of our analysis.

The next of Theodoret's citations appears in his *Commentary on the Psalms*. In the following passage, he interprets the meaning of the phrase 'God is in his holy place' in Psalm 68:5.

Since he had said, 'Let God arise', and, 'Make a way for him who ascends above the setting sun', it was right for him to add this, as if to say, 'Let no one think the God of all manages things by relying on change of place'. This is like what was spoken by the Lord: '*No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven*'. And by this he showed the unbounded character of the divine nature, and taught that he had descended, and though living down here and associating with human beings, he was in heaven and was not separated from the Father.⁷⁰¹

⁷⁰¹ *Commentary on the Psalms* 68.4. Translated by Hill (2000), with minor modifications.

In order to explain the omnipresence of God, in lines 2-3 Theodoret offers his own paraphrase of David's words in Psalm 68:2-4 ('as if to say...'). He then comments that this message is similar to 'what was spoken by the Lord' (Greek, *to hupo tou kuriou eirēmenon*), citing John 3:13. Outside of references to 'the Lord' in the context of direct citations from Psalm 68, this title appears most frequently in connection with Jesus.⁷⁰² Just one paragraph earlier, Theodoret used a nearly identical introductory formula to cite Jesus' declaration in Matthew 28:19: 'the words spoken to them by the Lord' (Greek, *tois hupo tou kuriou pros autous eirēmenois*).⁷⁰³ Other contextual clues related to the speaker are also found in lines 6-7 of the excerpt above, in which Theodoret links the speaker of John 3:13 with one who 'taught that he had descended...and [was] living down here' (Greek, *edidaxen katelēluthē kai katō diagōn*). In the final phrase the speaker is also juxtaposed with 'the Father'. Such details make it virtually certain that Theodoret is here employing the title 'Lord' specifically for Jesus.

Our next two excerpts containing portions of John 3 are found in Theodoret's *Commentary on Isaiah*, composed during the same period as the *Commentary on the Psalms*. Below, he addresses a textual matter regarding Isaiah 5:1a, centering his attention on the prophet's identification of 'the beloved' (Greek, *ho agapētos*).

Symmachus, however, translated these words in this way: 'I will now sing to my beloved, my love song addressed to his vineyard'. But the beloved only-begotten of God, called the Word, says, '*For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have*

⁷⁰² Three sections after our excerpt above, for example, Theodoret cites what 'the Lord' replied to the apostle Paul concerning the removal of the thorn in his flesh: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness'. According to the context of 2 Corinthians 12, Paul interprets this response as the words of Jesus himself. See *Commentary on the Psalms* 68.7.

⁷⁰³ See *Commentary on the Psalms* 68.3.

eternal life'. Also the Father himself testified from heaven, saying, 'This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased'.⁷⁰⁴

After providing his readers with a slightly different Greek translation of Isaiah 5:1a made by Symmachus, Theodoret cites John 3:16 and Matthew 3:17. The speaker of John 3:16 is identified quite descriptively: 'the beloved only-begotten of God, called the Word' (Greek, *agapētos ho monogenēs tou theou prosagoreuetai logos*). Such specificity leaves little room for doubt—in Theodoret's mind, no one but Jesus could simultaneously bear the designations 'beloved', 'only-begotten' and 'the Word'. This conclusion, however, appears to conflict with Theodoret's earlier attribution of this verse to 'John' in *On Divine Providence*, written some 5-10 years prior. Fortunately, two additional citations of 3:16 have yet to be analyzed, as well as verses that follow after it. We may therefore turn to our second excerpt from the *Commentary on Isaiah*, containing Theodoret's earliest citation of John 3:17. In this portion of the commentary he has reached the final phrase of Isaiah 35:4, which he interprets as a prophecy of Jesus' first coming.

'He himself will come and save us'. For the first appearance of our Savior has brought salvation to humanity, for in this way also he himself said, '*For God did not send his Son in order to judge the world, but in order to save the world through him*'.⁷⁰⁵

In this brief passage Theodoret calls attention to the fact that his Christian readers are included in the promise of salvation made possible through 'our Savior' (Greek, *sōtēros hēmōn*). This reality prompts Theodoret to cite John 3:17, attributing the words to what 'he himself said' (Greek, *autos ephē*). Though the speaker is not explicitly

⁷⁰⁴ *Commentary on Isaiah* 2.448-456. My translation.

⁷⁰⁵ *Commentary on Isaiah* 10.419-423. My translation.

specified, the last subject was ‘our Savior’, and citing the Savior’s *own* words would make the most sense here from a rhetorical perspective, and in terms of contextual flow. While we cannot say with absolute certainty that Theodoret here regarded 3:17 as Jesus’ words, the use of the pronoun *autos* does at the very least necessitate a speaker that is male (‘he himself’), and an attribution to the Gospel-writer is quite unlikely.

Theodoret makes his the second citation of John 3:16 in *Eranistes*. At this point in the dialogue, the characters Orthodoxos and Eranistes have been ruminating over an age-old question: Is anything impossible for God? Eranistes and Orthodoxos both agree that some things are indeed impossible for him, such as sinning or becoming darkness rather than light. Eranistes, however, interprets this as a weakness of sorts, whereas Orthodoxos argues that it is a sign of unlimited power.

Orthodoxos: Since you acknowledge this in all the other qualities that are in accordance with his nature, such as goodness, righteousness, truth, invisibility, incomprehensibility, infinity, eternity, and whatever else we say pertains to God, please tell me why you say that only immortality and impassibility are mutable? And why do you allow capacity for change in their case and attribute to God a power that is a sign of weakness?

Eranistes: We were taught this from the divine Scripture. For also the divine John cries out, ‘*God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son*’. And the divinely inspired Paul: ‘For if we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son when we were enemies, how much more, once we have been reconciled, shall we be saved in his life’.

Orthodoxos: These things are true, for they are divine words. But remember...⁷⁰⁶

Theodoret here portrays Eranistes, the misguided heretic, as claiming that because Jesus suffered and died, some kind of mutability and weakness must be present. Eranistes answers the two-part question of Orthodoxos with two citations from the teachings of the

⁷⁰⁶ *Eranistes* 3.197. Translated by Ettlinger (2003), with minor modifications.

‘divine Scriptures’ (Greek, *theias graphēs*): John 3:16a and Romans 5:10.⁷⁰⁷ In lines 7-8, Eranistes prefaces his citation of John 3:16a with the words ‘the divine John cries out’ (Greek, *ho theios Iōannēs boa*). Two related clues inform us that ‘John’ cannot be interpreted as a reference to the Gospel itself. First, the masculine title ‘divine’ (Greek, *theios/theiotatos*) is used solely for individuals in this dialogue.⁷⁰⁸ Second, Theodoret only employs the verb *boa* for characters or biblical writers (a written work is never described as ‘proclaiming’ or ‘crying out’ like a person might). Since the Gospel-writer is the most-often cited ‘John’ in *Eranistes*, he appears to be the one Theodoret has in mind.⁷⁰⁹ It is again worth noting that 3:16 is cited alongside a similar saying of Paul’s, as we saw in *On Divine Providence*. Once all of Theodoret’s citations of 3:16 have been analyzed, we will proceed with addressing the issue of the speaker in detail.

At a later point in the *Eranistes* Theodoret provides another citation from John 3. Below, Orthodoxos questions why Eranistes has taken issue with Jesus being compared with a goat, or even with a serpent.

Orthodoxos: Listen to the Lord, then, as he compares the saving passion to the bronze serpent: ‘*Just as Moses*’, he says, ‘*lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life*’. If a bronze serpent fulfilled the type of crucified body, why have we acted unreasonably in comparing the sacrifice of goats to the saving passion?

⁷⁰⁷ At the end of this section, Orthodoxos acknowledges these as ‘divine words’ (Greek, *theia logia*), but goes on to prove in an extended exchange that Jesus’ suffering was bodily and in no way affected his soul.

⁷⁰⁸ Note: The adjective ‘divine’ with respect to Scripture is feminine (*theias*) because it must agree with it in gender.

⁷⁰⁹ It is probably inconsequential that the heretic Eranistes is the one who cites John 3:16; Theodoret’s representative Orthodoxos makes no attempt at a corrective of this speaker identification, but merely acknowledges at the end of the excerpt that ‘these things are true’ (Greek, *alēthē tauta*).

Eranistes: Because John called the Lord a lamb, and Isaiah likewise called him a lamb and a sheep.⁷¹⁰

At the very beginning of this excerpt, Eranistes—and by extension Theodoret’s reading audience—is told to ‘listen’ (Greek, *akouson*) to what was said by ‘the Lord’ (Greek, *ho despotēs*). The speaker of John 3:14-15 is described not only as speaking (*phēsin*), but also as doing the *comparing* himself (Greek, *apeikazontos*). This seems to locate the speaker’s identity to the narrative level (i.e., as a character within John’s Gospel). Orthodoxos’ citation of 3:14-15 also highlights the unity of these two verses in terms of both content and speaker. Throughout the third dialogue, the title *despotēs* is used synonymously with *kurios*; oftentimes, it is also paired with ‘Christ’. Most importantly for our purposes, whenever *despotēs* is employed with reference to a New Testament verse or concept it invariably refers to Jesus.⁷¹¹ According to our analysis, then, Theodoret considered Jesus’ speech to continue at least until 3:14-15, with the identification of 3:16 still in dispute.

Theodoret’s encyclical letter *To the Bishops of Cilicia* contains a second citation of John 3:13. In the following excerpt, Theodoret defends himself against accusations that he divides Jesus ‘into two sons’ (Greek, *eis duo huiou*).

Your piety has heard of the calumnies directed against me. The opponents of the truth allege that I divide our one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, into two ‘sons’, and it is said by some that a ground for their calumny is derived from a handful of men among you who hold these opinions, and who divide God the Word made man into two sons. They ought to listen to those words of the apostle which openly declare ‘one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things’, and

⁷¹⁰ *Eranistes* 3.210.

⁷¹¹ See e.g., *Eranistes* 3.203; 3.206; 3.207; 3.209; 3.210; 3.212; 3.214 (twice); 3.216; 3.220; 3.221 (twice); 3.222 (twice); 3.223; 3.225; 3.244.

again, ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’. They ought to have followed the Lord’s teachings, for the Lord himself in this way says, ‘*And no man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven*’. And again, ‘If you should see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before’.⁷¹²

Theodoret redirects the calumnies directed against him to certain Cilicians who started such nonsense in the first place (lines 3-5). He then implores these men to listen instead to the words of Paul and follow ‘the Lord’s teachings’ (Greek, *tais despotikais didaskaliais*). After citing a portion of 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Ephesians 4:5, in line 8 Theodoret presents ‘the Lord himself’ (Greek, *autos ho kurios*) as the speaker of John 3:13. He also appears to link this speaker with his subsequent citation of John 6:62, which deals with the same theme of the Son of Man’s ascent. That Theodoret intended such an association of the speaker is likely; Jesus’ words in 6:62 are not formally introduced, and the repetition of the title ‘Lord’ at several points in the letter indicates that Jesus is the understood speaker of 3:13 (thus in agreement with his earlier citations).

Theodoret cites the next two verses of John 3 in his treatise *Questions on Leviticus*. Below, he discusses the typology of the two goats recorded in Leviticus 16:8-10. He maintains that these goats—one sacrificed as a sin offering to God and the other released as a ‘scapegoat’—foreshadow the mortal and immortal natures of Jesus. These types are to be embraced, rather than questioned.

No one should imagine that it is inappropriate for goats to prefigure the passion of the Savior, since the mighty John called him a ‘lamb’. The Lord himself likened the company of sinners to goats, for he said, ‘He will set the lambs on his right, and the goats on his left’. But also in the law a goat was offered for sin. Furthermore, the Lord himself called the bronze serpent a type of himself, for he

⁷¹² *To the Bishops of Cilicia* 84. Translated by Jackson (1892), with minor modifications.

says, *'Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life'*.⁷¹³

In the first half of this excerpt Theodoret makes reference to John the Baptist's designation of Jesus as a 'lamb' (John 1:29) and Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:33). He asserts that even though the goat symbolizes sinners, it was in reality offered *on behalf of* sin. Theodoret then arrives at his citation of John 3:14-15, in which he points out that even the serpent is a type of Christ. The speaker of this Johannine quotation is identified as 'the Lord himself' (Greek, *autos ho kurios*). Apart from obvious references to or quotations from the Old Testament throughout the work (i.e., the use of 'Lord God'), Theodoret frequently applies the title 'Lord' (*kurios/despotēs*) to Jesus. Perhaps the best indicator that Theodoret here takes Jesus to be the speaker of 3:14-15 is the clarification found in line 5: according to Theodoret, the Lord himself designated the serpent 'a type of himself' (Greek, *tupon heautou*).

The last of Theodoret's works referencing John 3 is the *Compendium of Heretical Mythification*. The following excerpt comes from a chapter in the fifth volume of the work that Theodoret subtitled 'Concerning the Son'. At the beginning of the chapter he explicitly mentions the heresies of Valentinus, Arius and Eunomius, and in its pages he seeks to distinguish his orthodox views from such 'blasphemous heretics'.

Now if he is the only-begotten, just as he is, then he holds nothing in common with created objects. And that he is the only-begotten, the only-begotten himself teaches, saying, *'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life'*. And a little further, *'Whoever believes in him is not judged, but whoever does not believe is already judged, because he has not believed in the name of the only-*

⁷¹³ *Questions on Leviticus 22.3*. Translated by Hill (2007), with minor modifications.

begotten Son of God. And so the evangelist said, ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’. For the nature of the flesh does not diminish the value of the divine, but also the embracing [of] flesh displays the nobility of paternity. And again, ‘The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’. Also the Baptist cries out, ‘*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*’. And all the apostles called him the Son of God, both genuine and true. And the Father himself, twice speaking from heaven, proved the genuineness of his birth, for he said, ‘This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased’. And why did I speak of the Baptist, and the evangelist, and all the other apostles, and the God of the universe? Because the devil, the father of lies, has not dared call him otherwise, but doubting said before the struggle, ‘If you are the Son of God’.⁷¹⁴

The detailed manner of scriptural citation in this lengthy passage is impressive; a total of seven verses are cited, being attributed to five different speakers. Theodoret begins in lines 1-2 with clarifying the identity of the ‘only-begotten’ (Greek, *monogenē*). He first asserts that he is uncreated, since he shares nothing with created things. To confirm the eternity of the ‘only-begotten’, Theodoret cites John 3:16, which he prefaces with the words ‘the only-begotten himself teaches, saying’ (Greek, *autos ho monogenēs edidaxen eipōn*). This identification, reminiscent of Theodoret’s earlier citation of this verse in the *Commentary on Isaiah*, can only be applied to Jesus. At innumerable points in Theodoret’s writings the title ‘only-begotten’ refers to Jesus, and within this excerpted passage he argues this very point. His citation of John 3:18 in lines 5-7 includes the protracted title ‘only-begotten Son of God’; following this are citations of John 1:14 and 1:18b (lines 7-9, 11-12), which refer to the ‘only-begotten of the Father’

⁷¹⁴ *Compendium of Heretical Mythification* 5.2. Translated by Cope (1990), with minor modifications.

and the ‘only-begotten Son’, respectively. The speaker of 3:16 is also described as ‘teaching’ the content of this verse, implying a narrative framework that well-suits the historical circumstances of the Gospel.

While the identification of Jesus here is indisputable, Theodoret provides a full citation of John 3:18 after 3:16. In between these verses are the words ‘and a little further’ (Greek, *kai met oliga*). The phrase *met oliga* literally means ‘after a little’ and involves time and/or space. Grammatically speaking, it conveys that 3:18 follows shortly after 3:16. This sense is certainly less ambiguous than the more common formula ‘and again’ (Greek, *kai palin*), which offers no inherent connection between citations. Theodoret employs the phrase *met oliga* at eight other points in this treatise. In every one of these cases, the phrase is used to separate biblical verses in fairly close proximity to one another, and the verses consistently comprise the words of a single speaker/writer.⁷¹⁵ While this cannot alone prove that Theodoret is here interpreting John 3:18 as Jesus’ words (as in 3:16), the fact that he attributes the very next citation to the Gospel-writer (Greek, *ho euangelistēs*) is significant. The scenario may have been as follows: after citing John 3:16, Theodoret skipped over 3:17 since it lacked a reference to the ‘only-begotten’; he then cited 3:18, which came ‘a little further’ (*met oliga*). The next verse to enter Theodoret’s mind was John 1:14. But of course Theodoret knew Jesus did not speak these words; so, being very cautious—remember that his orthodoxy was at stake—he chose to clarify the speaker’s identity for readers. The mentioning of the Gospel-writer effectively distanced John 1:14 from 3:18 in terms of both content and speaker.

⁷¹⁵ Cf. *Compendium of Heretical Mythification* 2 prologue; 5.4; 5.14; 5.24; 5.26; 5.27; 5.28 (twice). Verses separated: 1 Timothy 6:3-4 and 1 Timothy 6:10; Psalm 103:2-3 and Psalm 103:5; Psalm 88:30 and Psalm 88:36-38; 1 Corinthians 7:28 and 1 Corinthians 7:32; 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 and 1 Corinthians 7:39; Ephesians 4:17-22 and Ephesians 5:5; Ezekiel 33:7-8 and Ezekiel 33:11; Isaiah 1:6 and Isaiah 1:16-17.

According to this hypothetical (and that is all it is), 3:18 can be reasonably linked to 3:16 as deriving from a common discourse. While absolute certainty on this matter is not possible, I judge this reading to be rather persuasive: it takes into account not only Theodoret's precise use of *met oliga* in the *Compendium of Heretical Mythification*, but also the immediate context of his Johannine citations, which are all quoted with precision (suggesting he was drawing directly from the Gospel text). If this is accepted, 3:18 would belong to the same speaker of 3:16, namely Jesus himself.

Returning to our analysis of the excerpt above, in lines 11-12 Theodoret cites his fourth verse from John's Gospel. While no speaker is identified for John 1:18b ('and again'), we may perhaps assume that Theodoret still has the Gospel-writer in mind. His subsequent citation of 3:36 is explicitly attributed to 'the Baptist' (Greek, *ho Baptistēs*). As we noted in the *Eranistes*, the verb *boa* ('cries out') is used for the speech of biblical characters and authors, denoting a sense of 'proclaiming' or 'shouting'. Theodoret no doubt draws on the Baptist's self-description in John's Gospel as a 'voice crying out (*boōntos*) in the wilderness'.⁷¹⁶ Notably, this attribution appears to stand at odds with his earlier identification of 'John the theologian' as the speaker in his treatise *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity*. This discrepancy will be discussed later in our concluding remarks.

In lines 15-17, Theodoret cites the words of Matthew 3:17, including some narrative context in his attribution to 'the Father himself' (Greek, *autos ho patēr*). This very same verse, we may recall, was cited immediately after John 3:16 in the *Commentary on Isaiah*. Moreover, it was in the *Commentary on Isaiah* that Theodoret first attributed 3:16 to the 'only-begotten', just like we have here in the *Compendium of*

⁷¹⁶ John 1:23. Note: In the Synoptics this title is applied to the Baptist by the Gospel-writers (as a direct citation of Isaiah 40:3). Cf. Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4.

Heretical Mythification, which might suggest literary dependence. Following this, in lines 17-18 Theodoret again mentions the Baptist in his list of biblical authorities appealed to in connection with the true identity of the ‘only-begotten’. Interestingly, even the devil is called upon the witness stand—despite his evil intentions, he inadvertently referred to Jesus as the ‘Son of God’ in Matthew 4:6. Having now completed our analysis of all of Theodoret’s citations of John 3, we may now summarize our findings and concentrate on those issues surrounding his identification of the speakers in 3:16 and 3:36.

With respect to the first Johannine passage, we found that the initial verses (3:13-15) were consistently interpreted as Jesus’ own words. In full agreement with earlier patristic tradition, Theodoret’s position on these three verses is multiply attested and beyond doubt.⁷¹⁷ We then observed that around the year 437, Theodoret made his first citation of John 3:16 in *On Divine Providence*, which he ascribed to ‘the divinely inspired John’. In addition to noting a slight adaptation in his Greek text, we presented one possibility for why Theodoret may have mentioned ‘John’: namely, that he may have been signaling to his listening audience that John 3:16 came from a different source than that of Romans 5:8 and 8:22. Of course, one could argue that if Theodoret really believed Jesus (and not the Gospel-writer) spoke the words, he could have identified him as such. Well as a matter of fact, we discovered that within the following decade he did just that. In the *Commentary on Isaiah* (written c. 441-448) Theodoret attributed John 3:16 to the ‘only-begotten of God’, adding also that he was the ‘beloved’ and ‘called the Word’. During this same period, Theodoret included a partial citation of 3:16 in *Eranistes*. Here

⁷¹⁷ John 3:13 cited twice in *Commentary on the Psalms* and *To the Bishops of Cilicia*; John 3:14-15 is cited twice together in *Eranistes* and *Questions on Leviticus*.

he attributed the words to ‘the divine John’. This reoccurrence of the name ‘John’ was then countered with Theodoret’s final attribution of 3:16 to Jesus (the ‘only-begotten’) in his *Compendium of Heretical Mythification*. Since the evidence from both early and late works is evenly divided, it seems unlikely that Theodoret had a change of opinion while he wrote. Generally he was quite careful to distinguish between the words of Jesus and those of the Gospel-writer, and so the question once again arises as to the use of *phēsin* (‘says’). As noted in our analyses of Athanasius and Cyril, this verb can be interpreted beyond the literal sense of speaking—if Theodoret employed *phēsin* in an authorial sense, there would be no real discrepancy in the identification of the speaker, since John’s role in connection with 3:16 could be seen as a reporter of these words.⁷¹⁸ Theodoret may have even hinted at this with his use of the titles ‘divinely inspired’ and ‘divine’, which emphasize the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in all that is said.

With respect to the second Johannine passage, Theodoret made his first of two citations of John 3:36 in *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity* (c. 429-431). We determined that, in all likelihood, Theodoret was referring to the Gospel-writer when he attributed the words to ‘John the admirable theologian’. Two decades later, Theodoret made his second citation of this verse in his final work *Compendium of Heretical Mythification* (c. 452-453). Here he explicitly attributed 3:36 to the Baptist, thus presenting us with evidence evenly divided. Once again, Theodoret’s employment of the verb *phēsin* in the attribution to ‘John’ is brought to the fore; was he holding the ‘theologian’ responsible for uttering these words, or simply writing them down as author? Theodoret’s only other citation of a

⁷¹⁸ In the *Commentary on Isaiah* Theodoret prefaces a citation of John 1:1a with the words ‘according to the word of the Gospels’ (Greek, *kata tēn tōn euangeliōn phōnēn*), and he interjects *phēsin* within it the verse, indicating he has no problem giving the book form a ‘speaking’ role.

preceding verse is found in his commentary on 1 Corinthians. Unfortunately, his identification of the speaker of John 3:33 as ‘the divinely inspired John’ (Greek, *ho thespesios Iōannēs*) is ambiguous.⁷¹⁹ Theodoret frequently applied the title *thespesios* to both the Gospel-writer and the Baptist.⁷²⁰ In the end, the best course seems to err on the side of caution—the contradictory evidence simply prevents us from determining his position on the second Johannine passage. It may be pointed out, however, that he never shows an awareness of offering readers an alternative identification or challenging the ‘traditional’ identification as speaker of 3:36.

Leo I, the Great (d. 461).

1. Background Material

Almost no details concerning Leo’s early life prior to becoming bishop of Rome are known. His writings are evidence of a first-rate education and display his mastery of Latin rhetoric. Leo’s knowledge of theological controversies taking place in the East suggests that he may have traveled there or made contacts as a younger man, perhaps as a deacon. Due to his genuine faith he embraced ecumenism through his sermons and letters, believing that the apostle Peter was speaking through him as Pope (*redivivus*).⁷²¹ In a dogmatic letter addressed to the bishops who would assemble for the Council of Chalcedon, for example, Leo’s view on the personal unity yet two distinct natures of

⁷¹⁹ See *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 9.2.

⁷²⁰ Theodoret applies the title *thespesios* to the Baptist twice in the *Commentary on the Psalms* and four times in the *Commentary on Isaiah*. Theodoret ascribed this same title to the Gospel-writer once in the *Commentary on the Psalms* and twice in *Eranistes*. Cf. *Commentary on the Psalms* 45.4; 119.52; *Commentary on Isaiah* 1.186; 12.32, 36; 17.169; *Commentary on the Psalms* 109.4; *Eranistes* 2.134; epilogue 10.

⁷²¹ See Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1287.

Christ was accepted as fully consistent with orthodoxy.⁷²² Leo was also responsible for successfully persuading Attila the Hun, whose army had just sacked the Italian city of Aquileia, not to plunder and destroy the weakened imperial capital.

Leo took his priestly duty of preaching very seriously, and in one of his sermons he quotes from John 3. In his fifty-eighth sermon, the seventh in a series subtitled ‘On the Passion’, Leo cites Scripture on occasion as he discusses the moments leading up to the betrayal of Jesus. Typically, biblical verses are introduced with the identity of the speaker provided (e.g., ‘in the prophet’s words’, ‘the Son of God says’).

2. Text(s) and Analysis

In the following passage taken from *Sermon 58* (written c. 440), Leo explains that Jesus was in no way resisting his upcoming suffering when he prayed, ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me’. Rather, Leo insists that he acted in full submission to God.

Wherein it is not to be thought that the Lord Jesus wished to escape the passion and the death, the sacraments of which he had already committed to his disciples’ keeping, seeing that he himself forbids Peter, when he was burning with devoted faith and love, to use the sword, saying, ‘The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?’, and seeing that that is certain which according to John’s Gospel the Lord says, ‘*For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life*’.⁷²³

In the first lines of this excerpt, Leo provides a clear narrative framework for his citation of John 18:11b: the ‘Lord Jesus’ uttered to these words to Peter in response to his violent use of the sword. Leo then pinpoints John’s Gospel as the source of his next

⁷²² Cf. *Tomus ad Flavianum*.

⁷²³ *Sermon 58* 4. Translated by Feltoe (1895), with minor modifications.

citation, introducing John 3:16 with the words ‘according to John’s Gospel the Lord says’ (Latin, *secundum evangelium Ioannis dominus ait*). Throughout *Sermon 58* the title ‘Lord’ is regularly employed as a short form of ‘Lord Jesus’ (as in line 1), and Leo’s mentioning of John’s Gospel points to interpreting this ‘Lord’ as a character within it (not as a general title for God). Leo also appears to understand the speaker of both John 18:11 and 3:16 to be one and the same: Jesus.

Peter Chrysologus (c. 380-450).

1. Background Material

Not much of Peter’s early life is known, though some of his later sermons offer us a few details. He mentions that he was born in the town of Imola, Italy, and that the bishop of his hometown, Cornelius by name, had been like a father to him. The bishop personally saw to his education in the Christian tradition, and was responsible for granting Peter his first opportunity to serve in ministry.⁷²⁴ As Peter matured in both learning and faith in God, he developed a high regard for the Scriptures and the authority of the church of Rome.⁷²⁵ Around the year 426 he was consecrated bishop of Ravenna, an Italian city situated along the Adriatic coast. Probably due to Peter’s favorable relations with the bishop of Rome and the empress Galla Placidia, within just a few years Ravenna

⁷²⁴ See William B. Palardy, *The Church and the Synagogue in the Sermons of Saint Peter Chrysologus* (PhD dissertation. The Catholic University of America, 1992), 18-19.

⁷²⁵ If the record of the ninth-century ecclesiastical historian Agnellus of Ravenna is to be believed, we also have some information about Peter’s physical appearance—reportedly, he was tall, lean and wore a long beard. See Agnellus, *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna* 24.

would attain metropolitan status, effectively elevating Peter's imperial standing and regional authority (e.g., the jurisdiction to consecrate bishops of other provinces).

Peter was an able expositor of Scripture and a popular sermon-writer. Throughout his career he produced nearly two hundred sermons, a majority of which were written after he had become bishop. With rhetorical flair and clarity, Peter made full use of the preaching platform. In his brief sermons,⁷²⁶ he often encourages his congregation in the pursuit of Christian virtue and offers his own explanations of the doctrines of the faith according to the Scriptures. He also engages his listeners frequently via stylistic effects and direct addresses (e.g., brethren, beloved, children). It is for these reasons that after his passing he was given the honorific title 'golden-worded' (Latin, *chrysologus*). Two verses from John 3 are cited amongst Peter's extant sermons, first in *Sermon 55* and then in *Sermon 72A*. Though the dates Peter preached these sermons are unknown, it is likely that they were composed around the time leading up to or during Lent. *Sermon 55* is based on Jesus' parabolic teaching in Luke 11:11-13. After reciting the Gospel text, Peter proceeds to comment on each phrase of Scripture in turn, making practical as well as allegorical insights on parenting and the love of God as Father. The base text of *Sermon 72A* is Jesus' prediction of the crucifixion recorded in Matthew 20:18-19. In this sermon Peter dwells on each Gospel phrase and reflects on the fact that Jesus' 'dishonorable death' actually resulted in the restoration of life to all. In both sermons, scriptural allusions appear most frequently. When quoting the words of Jesus, Peter is most often found to employ the indefinite 'he says'.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

⁷²⁶ His sermons lasted an average length of fifteen minutes, quite short according to patristic standards.

Peter first cites a portion of John 3 in *Sermon 55*. In the following excerpt, he draws on the images of the fish (Latin, *piscis*) and the serpent (Latin, *serpens*) to interpret Jesus' parable allegorically.

He added another image: 'Or will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?' Christ was also a fish lifted up out of the Jordan riverbed, who, after he had been placed on the charcoals of his passion, he then after the resurrection provided living food for his own, that is, for his disciples. But for the Jews this fish is changed into a serpent, as the Lord says, '*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up*'.⁷²⁷

After citing Luke 11:11b, Peter provides his listening audience with a comparison of two biblical symbols, both intimately connected to Jesus. In Peter's interpretation, the fish symbolizes the main events of Jesus' life: baptism, ministry, passion and resurrection. In lines 2-4, he alludes to Jesus' breakfast with his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, understanding the Christ-fish as a sacrifice to bestow eternal life ('living food'). Peter then adds that Jesus is perceived as a serpent as well, according to the account that the 'Jews' are familiar with in Numbers 21. Peter attributes his citation of John 3:14 to what 'the Lord says' (Latin, *dicente domino*). Due to the brevity of this sermon, determining whether Peter here understands 'the Lord' in a specific or general sense is not without its difficulties.

The title 'Lord' appears only two other times in *Sermon 55*. In the first instance, Peter identifies 'the Lord' as the speaker of a conflation between Isaiah 8:14a and Isaiah 28:16.⁷²⁸ Peter is correct in noting that in both contexts the prophet Isaiah is listening to 'the Lord' speak, but clearly this does not refer to Jesus. Peter's second use of this title

⁷²⁷ *Sermon 55.5*. Translated by Palardy (2004).

⁷²⁸ The original source of this conflation is almost certainly the apostle Paul in Romans 9:33.

occurs two paragraphs after the excerpted passage above, near the end of the sermon. In a summary statement, Peter tells his audience, ‘In commending steadfast devotion, the Lord has offered and shown us three examples...’ Peter here refers to the three parts of Jesus’ parable that correlate to the sermon’s base text of Luke 11.⁷²⁹ In this second instance Peter is certainly applying the title to Jesus. Within the sermons arranged around *Sermon 55*, Peter explicitly gives ‘the Lord’ a speaking role thirteen other times.⁷³⁰ All except one are citations of Jesus’ words in the Gospels. At *Sermon 41.3*, Peter introduces James 2:13a with the same citation formula as in our excerpt: ‘the Lord says’ (Latin, *dicente domino*). What we can conclude in light of these findings is the following: while Peter certainly applied the title ‘Lord’ to Jesus most frequently, his position on the speaker in John 3:14 remains uncertain due to the existence of these two other ‘Lord’ citations outside of Jesus’ statements in the Gospels. We must therefore move on to the next of Peter’s Johannine citations, found in *Sermon 72A*. Below, he explains that even during the time that Jesus lived on earth he was still present in heaven, insisting that God is ‘never absent’ (Latin, *nusquam deest*).

‘After three days he will rise’. The departure is not quite as sad, when the return is so speedy. ‘After three days’. This leaving and returning was such that it would be clear that he was not ever absent there. When God goes, he is here; since he is here, he is never absent. Christ went, but he never left the apostles; the Lord went to death, but he never departed from life; he descended into hell, but he was not absent from heaven, as he himself attests when he says, ‘*No one has ascended to*

⁷²⁹ [1] ‘If one among you asks for bread, will he give him a stone?’; [2] ‘Or will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?’; [3] ‘If he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?’.

⁷³⁰ E.g., *Sermon 39.1*; *Sermon 41.3*; *Sermon 49.3*, 5; *Sermon 51.3*, 5; *Sermon 52.1*; *Sermon 54.5*; *Sermon 62.5*; *Sermon 63.3-4*; *Sermon 77.7*, 9.

heaven except the one who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven'.⁷³¹

Peter here points out that Jesus was meant to rise from the dead in precisely three days in order to teach his disciples a lesson about his omnipresence. According to Peter, his 'speedy return' (Latin, *velocissimus regressus*) is proof of this. In lines 3-6, he offers a series of assertions about the impossibility of Jesus ever being 'absent'. This culminates with his citation of John 3:13, prefaced with the words 'he himself attests when he says' (Latin, *ipso probante cum dicit*). Peter's use of the Latin term *probante* is obviously purposeful, as it carries with it a notion of *proving* or *approving* something true or right. Just prior to this introductory formula, Peter identifies the subject as 'God', 'Christ', 'the Lord' and then adds: 'he descended into hell, but he was not absent from heaven'. It is therefore highly probable that Peter here has Jesus in mind in his citation of 3:13, and is making a direct appeal to his authoritative testimony. Though Peter cites a portion of 3:31 in a later sermon, as with his citation of 3:14 in *Sermon 55* there is simply not enough detail to determine his position on the speaker's identity.

Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390-455).

1. Background Material

Prosper was educated according to the Roman system still in use within Aquitaine (southwestern region of France). Though details are scant on his upbringing, his writings reveal a solid grounding in Scripture and the secular classics; by the age of seven he would have learned Latin and some Greek, and then by age eighteen completed an

⁷³¹ *Sermon 72A.4*. Translated by Palardy (2005).

advanced course of rhetoric. Along with many Aquitanians, Prosper's life took a dramatic turn around the year 406 when he was forcefully taken captive by invading Goths.⁷³² The circumstances of his release are not known, but about a decade later he published a Christian poem titled *De Providentia Dei* in the city of Marseilles. Prosper's association with nearby monasteries suggests that he embraced the monastic life for some time and continued to study Scripture and the Latin Fathers. After the death of Augustine (whom he greatly admired), Prosper traveled to Rome and defended the theology of the deceased bishop during the semi-Pelagian controversy. Then around the year 450 he composed *The Call of All Nations*, a work that was intended to prove that God's will was indeed for the salvation of each and every person. It is in this theological treatise that we have Prosper's sole citations of John 3. Generally, Prosper is careful in the work to distinguish between biblical speakers, and normally introduces verses with some degree of detail (e.g., 'David sings', 'the apostles Paul and Barnabas said to the Lycaonians', 'we hear from the mouth of the Lord himself'). On occasion, scriptural citations and allusions are incorporated into his own sentences without comment.

2. Text(s) and Analysis

Prosper first quotes from John 3 in the ninth chapter of Book 1 in *The Call of All Nations*. In the passage below, he discusses God's 'call' to the whole world, but reminds his readers that some still choose not to answer it.

Thus the whole world is spoken of as though the whole of it had been liberated, and all mankind as though all men had been chosen. So, too, in the texts concerning the reprobate the divine author speaks in such a way that what he says of a certain part of mankind he seems to say of the whole of it. This is just as

⁷³² See further in Alexander Y. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 49-54.

what John the Baptist says: *‘The one who comes from heaven is above all. And what he has seen and heard, that he testifies; and no one receives his testimony’*. Or this saying of the apostle: *‘All seek the things that are their own, not the things that are of Jesus Christ’*.⁷³³

Prosper finds in this excerpt two Scriptures that are particularly supportive of his reasoning: John 3:31b-32 and Philippians 2:21. He explicitly states that the Johannine verses comprise ‘what John the Baptist says’ (Latin, *quod ait Ioannes Baptista*). We might have expected the Gospel-writer to be referenced in light of his allusion to a ‘divine author’ in line 3, but Prosper leaves no room for doubt with the inclusion of John’s surname ‘Baptist’. Later in Book 1, he again cites these verses and also adds 3:33.

And then further: *‘Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light’*. John the Baptist, too, in the Gospel of John proclaims with prophetic insight, saying, *‘The one who comes from heaven is above all. What he has seen and heard, he testifies; and no man receives his testimony. The one who receives his testimony has set to his seal that God is true’*.⁷³⁴

Prosper here repeats his attribution of John 3:31b-32 to the Baptist, extending his speech, which is characterized as ‘prophetic insight’ (Latin, *propheticum spiritu*), to one more verse (3:33). By also specifying that the words come from John’s Gospel, Prosper communicates that he has the historical situation of John 3 in mind. While it is certain that Prosper regarded 3:31a to likewise belong on the Baptist’s lips (according to narrative context), nothing can be said definitively concerning the verses that follow after (3:34-36), or about those from the first Johannine passage, since they are never cited.

⁷³³ *The Call of All Nations* 1.9. Translated by de Letter (1952), with minor modifications.

⁷³⁴ *The Call of All Nations* 1.20.

III. CONCLUSION

Having completed our survey of the reception of John 3 in the patristic age, we may now summarize our findings from this earliest traceable period of interpretation. We analyzed the writings of thirty-eight individual authors, beginning with Irenaeus in the closing decades of the second century and concluding with Prosper in the middle of the fifth.⁷³⁵ Of those authors surveyed, a total of nineteen wrote in Latin, sixteen in Greek, two in Syriac and one in Gothic, with several fluent in more than one language.⁷³⁶ These authors lived and wrote in areas throughout the Mediterranean region, and a number of them spent extended periods of time in multiple locations (due to education, travel, church assignment, persecution, exile, etc.).⁷³⁷ In terms of social status, we observed that most of the authors surveyed were well-educated and held ecclesiastical positions, the most prominent of them being the office of bishop (totaling twenty-two authors).⁷³⁸ Broadly speaking we found a majority of patristic writings to be comprised of sermons,

⁷³⁵ We discovered the most authors citing portions of John 3 in the fourth century (sixteen authors), followed by the fifth (twelve authors), third (eight authors) and second centuries (two authors).

⁷³⁶ Authors that may be described as ‘fluent’ in both Latin and Greek include: Tertullian, Victorinus, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome and John Cassian. Other ‘bilingual’ authors include: Athanasius (Greek, Coptic), Origen and Jerome (working knowledge of Hebrew), Epiphanius, Severian and Theodoret (Greek, Syriac), Theodore (working knowledge of Syriac). Scholars are uncertain which language Irenaeus had to learn in Gaul (either Latin or the native Gallic/Celtic).

⁷³⁷ Foremost among these locations were the provincial capitals of Carthage, Alexandria, Rome and Antioch.

⁷³⁸ Basil, Chrysostom and Augustine produced works as presbyters prior to their consecration as bishops. Quodvultdeus wrote as a deacon before becoming bishop, while Theodore of Mopsuestia wrote as a monk and then bishop. It should also be noted that a number of authors had in their younger years served in the lay office of church reader (Greek, *anagnōstēs*; Latin, *lector*), gaining knowledge and experience in the oral enunciation of Scripture. Those we are certain about include Origen, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Cyril and Theodoret.

biblical commentaries, and treatises on matters of theology, apologetics and Christian practice.⁷³⁹

Summary of Findings

Our survey commenced with Irenaeus of Lyons, the first author known to explicitly identify the speaker of a portion of John 3. In his seminal work titled *Against Heresies* (written in Greek c. 180), we found that Irenaeus attributed John 3:18-21 to Jesus himself. This identification offered us our earliest window into the reception of the passage, roughly 100 years after John's Gospel first began to circulate.⁷⁴⁰ While it remains unclear as to how Irenaeus arrived at the identification of Jesus as speaker,⁷⁴¹ it is highly likely that the bishop was fully intentional about it. We noted in our analysis of *Against Heresies* that Irenaeus took great care to attribute words to the right biblical speakers, especially in light of his frequent criticism of Gnostic and Valentinian methods of exegesis.⁷⁴² Irenaeus also made clear that his work was intended to refute such heretics

⁷³⁹ While the text of John 3 was most often treated in an indirect manner, several authors offered a more systematic (verse-by-verse) approach to the Johannine text in their sermons/commentaries on the Gospel.

⁷⁴⁰ This might at first seem like a substantial gap, yet it must be remembered that extant references to John's Gospel (as a written source) are extremely sparse up through the mid-to-late-second century. Some of the earliest allusions to the Gospel are found in Ignatius of Antioch, the so-called *Epistle to Diognetus*, Justin Martyr and Papyrus Egerton 2. Citations appear with much more frequency during the time of Irenaeus, with figures including Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Melito of Sardis, Athenagoras of Athens, Claudius Apollinarius, and the Valentinians Ptolemy and Heracleon. See further in Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷⁴¹ The immediate context of his citation in the fifth volume of *Against Heresies* contains no clues pointing to the influence of a specific individual (e.g., Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr) or geographical location (e.g., Asia Minor, Rome, Gaul). Irenaeus' identification may have been based on his own reading of the Gospel, a copy of which he consulted often (cf. *Against Heresies* 2.22.3; 4.6.1).

⁷⁴² E.g., *Against Heresies* 1.8.1: 'They disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures, and as much as in them lies, they disjoint the members of the truth. They transfer passages and rearrange them, and making one thing out of another, they deceive many by the badly composed phantasy of the Lord's words that they adapt'. See *Against Heresies* 1.9.1-4; 3.2.1; 3.7.1-2. Cf. Charles E. Hill, 'Irenaeus, the Scribes, and the Scriptures: Papyrological and Theological Observations from P.Oxy. 3.405', in Parvis and Foster (eds.), *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, 119-120.

and bring them back into the church.⁷⁴³ Rhetorical persuasion, therefore, played a significant part in his presentation of John 3 as an authoritative proof-text on the theme of divine judgment. Because Irenaeus' own congregation in Celtic Gaul faced similar advances of heretical thinking, we may also reasonably presume that he drew upon these Johannine verses within his local preaching and teaching.⁷⁴⁴ Perhaps his greatest achievement was the extent of his influence on future generations of interpreters: Irenaeus' articulation of the apostolic faith (*regula fidei*), emphasis on the unity of the Scriptures, and strategic refutation of Gnostic sects helped shape the emerging orthodoxy of the early church, leaving behind an ecclesiastical legacy which resonated with later patristic writers for centuries.⁷⁴⁵

In the course of our analysis we discovered that Irenaeus' citation of John 3:18 contained a particular reading not found in any extant Gospel manuscripts: namely, the substitution 'in me' instead of 'in him'.⁷⁴⁶ As we proceeded with our survey we found this first-person singular pronoun substitution in the writings of Origen, Athanasius, Hilary, Zeno, Didymus, Ambrose, Jerome, Basil and Augustine. Thus out of nineteen authors identifying the speaker of 3:18 in the patristic age, ten of them included this substitution

⁷⁴³ As if heretics were reading, Irenaeus exclaims: 'Learn, foolish ones!' (Greek, *mathete anoētoi*; Latin, *discite insensati*). It may be noted that the verb 'learn' is a cognate of 'disciple' (Greek, *mathētēs*; Latin, *discipulus*); Irenaeus' use echoes the imperative that Jesus himself gave at several points in his teaching (e.g., Matthew 11:29; Mark 13:28). Cf. *Against Heresies* 1.9.3; 4 preface.

⁷⁴⁴ That Irenaeus cited John 3 at least twice more demonstrates his high regard for the chapter's content. See *Against Heresies* 4.37.5 (3:36, no speaker identified); *Fragment* 34 (3:5, 'the Lord declared'). Cf. also an allusion to 3:13 in *Against Heresies* 1.9.3.

⁷⁴⁵ Cf. Irenaeus M. Steenberg's brief outline of the patristic reception of Irenaeus in 'Tracing the Irenaeian Legacy', in Parvis and Foster (eds.), *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, 199-211. Several authors included in our survey are discussed, such as Clement, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, Jerome and Augustine.

⁷⁴⁶ John 3:18 reads: 'Whoever believes *in him* [Irenaeus: *in me*] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God'.

at least once in their writings.⁷⁴⁷ This is all the more remarkable given the total absence of ‘in me’ from the manuscript tradition of John’s Gospel. While the full implications of this phenomenon have yet to be drawn out, suffice it to say that the considerable traction that the reading ‘in me’ had amongst these early interpreters indicates a definite ‘stream of tradition’, one traversing both the Greek East and the Latin West.

We proceeded in our survey with Clement of Alexandria, the learned teacher of Alexandria’s catechetical school from the years 190-202. Although his brief reference to a portion of John 3:36 turned out to most probably be an adaptation of John 6:47, we determined that Clement did believe John 3:18 was spoken by Jesus (‘the Savior’).⁷⁴⁸ His agreement with Irenaeus on this identification is significant, not just in terms of antiquity but because of the dissimilarities in their backgrounds. Unlike Irenaeus, Clement did not grow up in the church but converted from ‘paganism’ during his extensive travels. His thorough training in Greek philosophy and religion also contrasted with Irenaeus’ upbringing at the feet of the renowned bishop, Polycarp of Smyrna. Despite such differences, however, both men were responsible for Christian instruction in their elder years—Clement to catechumens and Irenaeus to his congregation—and their influence extended even further through the circulation of their writings.

While it remains unclear how Clement came to identify Jesus as the speaker of John 3:18, we do know that his interpretation of the Bible was greatly influenced by his

⁷⁴⁷ Note: Augustine’s citation of 3:18 with the reading ‘in me’ occurs within an excerpt of a lost work by Julian of Eclanum (see further discussion below). It may also be pointed out that all of Chrysostom’s citations of 3:18 include a different substitution: ‘in the Son’ (Greek, *eis ton huion*; Syriac, *ba-barā*).

⁷⁴⁸ Like his contemporary Irenaeus, Clement also included a slight adaptation in his citation of 3:18: Irenaeus had substituted ‘in him’ for ‘in me’, while Clement wrote ‘whoever disbelieves’ instead of ‘whoever does not believe’. Such adaptations would not have been objected to according to second-century quotation standards.

teacher Pantaenus, himself a biblical exegete.⁷⁴⁹ Claiming that he was preserving apostolic tradition throughout the *Stromateis*,⁷⁵⁰ Clement intended his informal collection of ‘notes’ (*hypomnēmata*) to serve as a remedy against his own forgetfulness in old age. From this we can infer that his identification of the speaker in 3:18 was probably not made ‘on the spot’, but reflected a long-held position that he had published for posterity’s sake.

The third author we surveyed was Tertullian of Carthage. Writing in Latin at the turn of the third century, Tertullian quoted a total of seven verses from John 3, including our earliest citations of John 3:16-17, 3:31-32 and 3:35-36. In *Against Praxeas* (c. 213) we found that he identified 3:16-17 as Jesus’ words addressed to Nicodemus. In full agreement with Clement and Irenaeus,⁷⁵¹ Tertullian also attributed 3:18 to Jesus, quoting the verse alongside 3:16-17. With respect to his citations of 3:31-32 and 3:35-36 (in *Against Praxeas* and two other works), we discovered that he believed John the Baptist spoke these words in the context of being questioned about Jesus.

Tertullian’s contribution to our understanding of the early reception of John 3 in the Latin West cannot be overstated. The fact that he included details of narrative context

⁷⁴⁹ Commenting on the now-fragmentary *Apology for Origen* written by Pamphilus and Eusebius in the fourth century, Photius (d. 895) relates that Pantaenus’ teachers were followers of the apostles, and that he ‘heard some of the apostles themselves’. Cf. Roelof van den Broek, *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 198.

⁷⁵⁰ *Stromateis* 1.11: ‘Well, they [Pantaenus and Clement’s other teachers] preserving the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul, the sons receiving it from the father (but few were like the fathers), came by God’s will to us also to deposit those ancestral and apostolic seeds. And well I know that they will exult; I do not mean delighted with this tribute, but solely on account of the preservation of the truth, according as they delivered it’. Translated by Wilson (1885).

⁷⁵¹ Tertullian had acquired a copy of Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* by at least the year 207, as evidenced by its use in his treatise *Against the Valentinians*. Whether or not Irenaeus’ earlier citation of John 3 had any influence on Tertullian’s reading of it is unknown; an argument against such direct influence would be the fact that he did not include the reading ‘in me’ in his citation of 3:18.

in his citations of both Johannine passages indicates that he read the text closely, perhaps with a copy of John's Gospel at hand.⁷⁵² His bilingualism also enabled him to consult manuscripts of the biblical text in Old Latin and Greek.⁷⁵³ As a late convert to the faith and an expert in law and rhetoric, Tertullian made constant recourse to the Scriptures against various heresies, and his 'legal' approach to the biblical text resulted in a relatively straightforward interpretation of Scripture (i.e., of the historical/literal sense). While it may be true that his Montanist leanings later in his career drew criticism in subsequent years, his writings still circulated widely and proved highly influential within and without Roman North Africa.⁷⁵⁴

By the middle of the third century we found that the frequency of citations of John 3 was rapidly increasing. Hippolytus and Novatian, both writing in the imperial capital of Rome, provided us with our earliest citations of John 3:13. Hippolytus appealed to the authority of this verse in order to combat the modalistic teaching of Noetus, who had rejected any distinction between the Father and the Son.⁷⁵⁵ Interpreting 3:13 as Jesus' own words, Hippolytus argued that it was not the Father that became flesh but the Son, whom the Father sent from heaven as the Word incarnate. In similar manner, Novatian

⁷⁵² Tertullian's citations of 3:16-18 and 3:35-36 are situated within an extensive treatment of verses from John's Gospel in chronological order. In *Against Praxeas* 21-25, he cites or alludes to portions of John 1 (five times), John 2 (once), John 3 (our verses), John 4 (twice), John 5 (thrice), John 6 (thrice), John 7 (once), John 8 (four times), John 9 (thrice), John 10 (thrice), John 11 (thrice), John 12 (six times), John 13 (twice), John 14 (eight times), John 15 (once), John 16 (once), John 17 (twice), John 20 (twice). This profusion of Johannine references makes it highly improbable that Tertullian was relying on just a good memory (his 'mental text').

⁷⁵³ Evidence that Tertullian made use of a Greek copy of John's Gospel is found in his treatise *On the Veiling of Virgins* (c. 208). Since Tertullian first composed the treatise in Greek (and afterwards translated it into Latin for a wider reading audience), the Johannine verses that he cites and alludes to must derive from the Greek itself. In addition, his discussion of 1 Corinthians 7:39 in *On Monogamy* (c. 217) makes reference to what is found 'in the authentic Greek' (Latin, *in Graeco authentico*).

⁷⁵⁴ Thus earning him the posthumous title 'the father of Latin theology'.

⁷⁵⁵ Hippolytus insisted that the Father and the Son were distinct in 'two persons' (Greek, *duo prosōpa*).

found 3:13 useful in proving Jesus' heavenly origins and in clarifying how he and the Father could be distinguished, yet still be understood as 'one'. Although Novatian was later excommunicated and labeled a heretic, he believed Jesus was the speaker of John 3:13 just like his contemporary Hippolytus.

When viewed from the changing historical situation in Rome at the time, the inclusion of these two prominent teachers in our survey becomes especially significant. The use of Greek, the language of Hippolytus, was declining in the imperial capital. The linguistic shift to Latin, Novatian's mother tongue, was very much in full swing, paving the way for the establishment of Latin as *the* language of literature throughout Western Christendom.⁷⁵⁶ Ironically enough, the writings of Hippolytus and Novatian shared a similar fate: due to this language partition most of the Greek text of Hippolytus' work disappeared, while at the same time the majority of Novatian's Latin writings perished on account of his official condemnation.

Greek was, of course, very much alive throughout the eastern provinces of the empire. Writing in Palestine during this same period was Origen of Alexandria, whose scholarly approach to Scripture provided us with further insight on the reception of John 3 in the third century. We uncovered several Johannine citations within his works (3:13-14, 3:18), all of which were attributed to Jesus. In our analysis of Origen's citation of John 3:13 we noted a new development in the interpretive history of the verse: according

⁷⁵⁶ Pope Julius I (d. 352) seems to have been the last Roman bishop to write primarily in Greek. Authors writing in Latin dominated the literary scene into the Middle Ages and early-modern period.

to Origen, Jesus uttered these words ‘to his own apostles’; this revealed his opinion that Jesus was not alone as he conversed with Nicodemus.⁷⁵⁷

In addition to providing us with our earliest citations of John 3:14, Origen also included the substitution ‘in me’ within his two quotations of 3:18.⁷⁵⁸ The presence of ‘in me’ in the first of these citations was truly remarkable, since Origen had the Greek text of John’s Gospel open before him while producing his multi-volume *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (c. 235). Sensing the ambiguity in the Gospel-writer’s remarks concerning types of ‘believers’ in John 2:23-25,⁷⁵⁹ he cited 3:18 in order to clarify the differences between belief ‘in Jesus’ and belief ‘in his name’.⁷⁶⁰ Writing about ten years later Origen cited 3:18 again in his commentary on Romans, preserved in the Latin translation made by Rufinus of Aquileia.⁷⁶¹ In his discussion of Romans 2:11 (‘For God shows no partiality’), Origen addressed his readers directly by means of a literary device

⁷⁵⁷ Origen probably reasoned that Jesus’ disciples (at the very least John) *must* have been present to hear the words so they could be recorded in the Gospel. The biblical text does not explicitly say that Jesus and Nicodemus were alone, but depicts only these two doing the speaking. Like other authors after him, Origen may have been influenced by the first/second-person plurals in John 3:2, 3:7 and 3:11-12.

⁷⁵⁸ Note: Codex Monacensis Graecus 314 (eleventh/twelfth century) contains twenty-nine previously lost homilies that are probably from Origen’s own hand. In *Homily 1 on Psalm 67* (folio 89r) a partial citation of John 3:18 appears with the adaptation: ‘Whoever believes *in me* is not judged’ (Greek, *ho pisteuōn eis eme ou krinetai*), although no speaker is explicitly identified. Since access to the critical edition only came in the final editing stages of the present thesis, the reader is referred to Lorenzo Perrone (ed.), *Die Neuen Psalmenhomilien: Eine Kritische Edition des Codex Monacensis Graecus 314* (Origenes Werke XIII. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015). Regarding the circulation of Origen’s works anonymously, see the comments of Pamphilus (d. 310) in his *Apology for Origen*, extant in Rufinus’ Latin translation.

⁷⁵⁹ If Origen was working from an Egyptian papyrus manuscript similar to P⁷⁵ (written c. 225), the text of John 3:3-19 (thus including 3:18) would have appeared on the opposite side/page of 2:23-25, the passage he was directly commenting upon!

⁷⁶⁰ The Gospel-writer’s narrative aside in John 2:23-25 explains why Jesus did not ‘trust himself’ to those in Jerusalem who had believed ‘in his name’ on the basis of his miracles. Note however John 1:12, which reads: ‘But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name’.

⁷⁶¹ Rufinus’ abbreviated translation (c. 406) had a commanding influence in the Latin West for centuries. Since the discovery of the Tura papyri containing Greek fragments of Origen’s commentary, it has become clear that Rufinus did in large part preserve the voice of Origen. It remains uncertain whether or not Rufinus shared the Alexandrian’s view of the speaker of John 3:18.

known as the *diatribe*—i.e., the insertion of a hypothetical objection made by potential readers. He prefaced his citation of John 3:18 in the following manner: ‘Now it is possible to oppose us with what the Lord says in the Gospel...’ Origen’s use of this literary device is noteworthy, for it indicates that some of his intended readers were familiar enough with this Johannine verse to ‘oppose’ (Latin, *objici*) Origen’s own interpretation of Romans 2:11. We cannot extrapolate from this, however, that readers of his commentary were also familiar with the substitution ‘in me’ in John 3:18 (it probably only attests to Origen’s own wording). Nevertheless, his tactful comment underlines the perceived biblical competency of his readers, inasmuch as they *could* have recalled this ‘saying of the Lord’ from memory against Origen.

While we are not yet in a position to fully address why Origen and other authors included the substitution ‘in me’ within their citations of John 3:18, two general possibilities may be here outlined as we proceed with our summary of the patristic age. On the one hand, the possibility exists that the substitution was unintentional. Writing a half-century before Origen, Irenaeus was the first to exchange ‘in him’ for ‘in me’, and his citation of John 3:18-21 suggests that he was quoting from memory. While this could be reflective of an accidental conflation of 3:18 with other ‘in me’ sayings in the Gospels,⁷⁶² it could also point to an *oral tradition* in circulation amongst Greek-speaking churches that interpreted the words in a self-referential manner (i.e., Jesus speaking about himself).⁷⁶³ On the other hand, the reading ‘in me’ may have derived from a conscious decision to clarify the salvific claim of 3:18. According to this scenario, the text would

⁷⁶² E.g., John 6:35, 7:38, 11:25, 12:44, 14:1, 16:9; Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 12:8.

⁷⁶³ It is noteworthy that of those patristic authors including the reading ‘in me’, only Zeno of Verona knew no Greek. Augustine had a little knowledge of the language, but his citation of 3:18 appeared within an excerpt of Julian of Eclanum, who was proficient in Greek and even did some translation work into Latin.

have been *purposely* adapted to emphasize the uniqueness of Jesus' saving power.⁷⁶⁴ More on this topic will be discussed later in the chapter, but one challenge to this latter view ought to be noted in the cases of Irenaeus and Origen. Both of these men were engaged in polemic while writing; we have already touched on Irenaeus' battle with various heretics concerning the interpretation of Scripture and its bearing on church tradition/authority. In Origen's case, his impetus for writing his commentary on John's Gospel was his friend Ambrose, a convert from Gnosticism, who had requested that Origen write a commentary to counter the Valentinian exegesis of Heracleon (the first to produce a 'commentary' on John's Gospel c. 160-180).⁷⁶⁵ Eager to provide an 'orthodox' treatment of the Gospel, Origen accepted Ambrose's challenge.⁷⁶⁶ At several points in his own commentary Origen accused Heracleon of altering the Johannine text or neglecting portions of it to fit his own interpretation.⁷⁶⁷ Such criticisms of Heracleon would be admittedly hypocritical, however, if Origen had himself deliberately adapted John 3:18 to

⁷⁶⁴ The prepositional phrase 'in him' may have been perceived as not having a clear enough referent, for a reader might interpret the verse as 'whoever believes in God...' Cf. Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 535.

⁷⁶⁵ What remains of this mysterious work is found exclusively in Origen's commentary, and none of the forty-eight extant fragments make mention of John 3 (although it is to be remembered that Book 11 covering this chapter is no longer extant). Origen referred to Heracleon's writing as 'notes' (Greek, *hupomnēmata*), suggesting a pedagogical function. See further in A. E. Brooke, *The Fragments of Heracleon: Newly Edited from the Mss. with an Introduction and Notes* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1967 [1891]); Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

⁷⁶⁶ Cf. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 5.8.

⁷⁶⁷ E.g., *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 2.100-101: '[Heracleon] thinks these things were made before the Word. And he adopts a rather shameless attitude to the statement, 'And without him nothing was made', because he does not respect the saying, 'Add not to his words, lest he reprove you and you be a liar'. [Heracleon] adds to 'nothing' the words 'of the things in the cosmos and in the creation'. It is clear that his statements are exceedingly distorted and made contrary to manifest facts'. Translated by Heine (1989). See further in Bart D. Ehrman, 'Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel', *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993), 105-118.

instead read ‘in me’.⁷⁶⁸ A similar objection on internal grounds could be made with respect to Irenaeus’ identical adaptation in *Against Heresies*.⁷⁶⁹

Returning to our survey findings, we next analyzed the work of Cyprian of Carthage. Within his Latin *testimonium* titled *To Quirinus* (written in Latin c. 248), he provided us with our earliest citation of John 3:15. Cyprian treated the words as Jesus’ own, quoting the verse alongside 3:14. We noted that he styled his work as a pastoral resource to aid in Scripture memorization and preaching;⁷⁷⁰ his hope was that readers would take advantage of the *testimonium* format to correctly interpret the theological significance of each grouping of biblical verses.⁷⁷¹ Since Cyprian included John 3:14-15 after a series of prophecies from the Hebrew Bible about the suffering Messiah, we can infer that Cyprian saw in these verses an important prophecy of the coming crucifixion. The presentation of the words as Jesus’ own would thus have enabled Cyprian’s readers to better recognize Jesus’ prophethood and divinity.

⁷⁶⁸ Origen is known to have employed a rhetorical tactic against his opponents called the ‘criterion of self-contradiction’ (Greek, *to enantion to machomenon*). It is reasonable to suppose that he would not want this tactic, which would ‘prove that [the] opponent is speaking against himself and talks in a contradictory manner’, to be used against him. Cf. Nicolaus the Sophist, *Progymnasmata* 6.

⁷⁶⁹ Irenaeus claimed that John was the favorite Gospel of the Valentinians, of which they made ‘copious use’. On their interpretation of the prologue of John’s Gospel, he wrote: ‘[T]heir whole system sinks into ruin, a system which they falsely dream into existence, and thus inflict injury on the Scriptures, while they build up their own hypothesis’. Translated by Roberts and Rambaut (1885). Cf. *Against Heresies* 1.9.3; 3.11.7.

⁷⁷⁰ Cyprian’s work (titled *To Quirinus*) did become a popular resource within Latin-speaking Christian circles, particularly for apologetics with Jews (hence the later subtitle *Testimonies Against the Jews*). The introduction of headings (Latin, *capitulis*) over each group of biblical citations, along with a table of contents, aided readers in locating biblical references. See *To Quirinus* 1 preface; Roger Pearse, ‘Ancient Chapter Divisions, Chapter Headings, and Tables of Contents: A Preliminary Survey of the Question’. Unpublished article (2015): 8-9. <https://independent.academia.edu/RogerPearse>

⁷⁷¹ Cyprian frequently criticized heretics and schismatics for suppressing parts of Scripture and for quoting out of context, labeling these individuals ‘corruptors of the Gospel’ and ‘false interpreters’. In theory, his principle for interpretation was to cite biblical verses ‘in full’, against the backdrop of orthodox doctrine.

Modern scholars have asserted that Cyprian probably did not compose *To Quirinus* solely from the biblical text itself (i.e., ‘from scratch’), but made some use of pre-existing collections of Scripture passages. While it is possible that Cyprian was influenced by earlier *testimonia* for attributing John 3:14-15 to Jesus, it must be remembered that Cyprian’s citation of 3:15 is in fact the *earliest* extant citation we have. This suggests that he excerpted 3:14-15 directly from the text of John’s Gospel available to him.⁷⁷² Unlike his Carthaginian predecessor Tertullian,⁷⁷³ however, Cyprian had no knowledge of Greek. He therefore must have relied on an Old Latin version of the Gospel, a copy of which was surely housed within the church he pastored.

The next third-century author we encountered in our survey was Victorinus, the first known bishop of Poetovio (modern-day Ptuj, Slovenia). Writing in Latin around the year 260, Victorinus cited John 3:34-35 within the opening pages of his commentary on the book of Revelation. He attributed these verses to John the Baptist, helpfully including his full name *Iohannes Baptista*.⁷⁷⁴ We observed that Victorinus also claimed these words were originally spoken ‘to his disciples’, a strong indication that he had the historical context of John 3 in mind.⁷⁷⁵ Victorinus was well-versed in the Greek language (according to Jerome, even more so than in Latin), and it is distinctly possible that his

⁷⁷² Cf. H. A. Houghton, ‘The Use of the Latin Fathers for New Testament Textual Criticism’, in Ehrman and Holmes (eds.), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, 378.

⁷⁷³ Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 53: ‘Cyprian was accustomed never to pass a day without reading Tertullian, and he frequently said to [his secretary], ‘Give me the master’, meaning by this, Tertullian’.

⁷⁷⁴ The recension of Victorinus’ commentary made by Jerome (c. 400) also reads *Iohannes Baptista*. It is possible that Jerome agreed with this identification; however, in the absence of other citations of John 3:34-35 in Jerome’s works this can only remain a speculation.

⁷⁷⁵ In John 3:26 the Baptist’s disciples question him about the identity of Jesus, and in the subsequent verse the Baptist begins his response to them. Thus Victorinus believed the Baptist was still speaking at least through 3:35.

reading of John 3 was based on a Greek copy of the Gospel.⁷⁷⁶ His commentary on Revelation contains definite traces of influence from Origen, Irenaeus and Hippolytus. While he is often portrayed as the first ‘Latin exegete’, it seems more appropriate to situate him within the exegetical tradition of the Greek East.⁷⁷⁷

A large interpretative gap exists between Victorinus’ attribution of John 3:34-35 to the Baptist and later authors citing verses from the second Johannine passage. In our survey thus far, a total of six authors have included portions of John 3:31-36 in their writings, yet only Tertullian and Victorinus explicitly identified who they believed the speaker was. As we look ahead, this trend—that most authors citing from 3:31-36 do not identify the speaker—will persist into the late-fourth century.⁷⁷⁸ It is uncertain whether or not Victorinus was influenced by Tertullian, the first author known to interpret these verses in a conversational context. Similarly, it is not known if Victorinus drew upon Origen’s direct treatment of these verses in his Johannine commentary (i.e., from Book 11, which is no longer extant). Jerome often described Victorinus’ interpretation of Scripture as ‘following and expanding’ Origen’s own, and he had been engaged in some level of translation work from Origen’s homilies.⁷⁷⁹ It is equally plausible that Victorinus came to his own conclusion about the speaker by reading the Gospel text for himself.

⁷⁷⁶ Victorinus’ citations from both Testaments show that he consulted the Greek text and made occasional modifications to the Latin version he was working from. In addition to writing on Revelation, he also produced a commentary on Matthew’s Gospel (no longer extant). Cf. Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 639.

⁷⁷⁷ In Victorinus’ time Poetovio had a very cosmopolitan character; it was situated on the northern confines of the Roman Empire near the eastern border of Pannonia. See William C. Weinrich, *Latin Commentaries on Revelation* (Ancient Christian Texts. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), xviii-xix.

⁷⁷⁸ E.g., the next author to cite John 3:34-35 and identify the speaker is Aphrahat (writing in the 330s). Additional explicit citations appear in the homilies/commentaries of John Chrysostom, Augustine and Cyril, among other fourth and fifth-century authors.

⁷⁷⁹ Cf. Jerome, *Letter* 61.2; 84.7.

We proceeded in our survey by analyzing an anonymous work titled *A Treatise on Re-Baptism*. According to internal evidence, the author was probably an ecclesiastical leader connected to the North African church in the 250s. Having been asked to provide his authoritative insight on the controversial issue of the re-baptism of heretics, he sided *against* the prevailing views of Cyprian.⁷⁸⁰ Within his argumentation the anonymous author identified Jesus as the speaker of John 3:16, twice designating him ‘God’ (Latin, *deus*). Since so little is known about the author it remains unclear how he arrived at this identification.⁷⁸¹ If his introductory statement about ‘collecting’ scriptural passages is taken at face value, it is quite likely that he consulted a copy of John’s Gospel in preparation for writing.⁷⁸²

During this period another anonymous author, referred to as ‘Pseudo-Tertullian’, provided us with insight on the views of the Ophites, a long-lost sect of Christianity.⁷⁸³ This group reportedly based their reverence of the serpent (Greek, *ophis*) on certain biblical passages, among them John 3. Though Pseudo-Tertullian regarded their interpretation of John 3:14 as a complete distortion of the truth, he was in full agreement

⁷⁸⁰ Thus proving that for centuries the work’s circulation under the name of Cyprian was indeed erroneous.

⁷⁸¹ With respect to potential influence(s), the only previous writer to identify the speaker of John 3:16 was Tertullian. The possibility that the anonymous author drew influence from him cannot be ruled out, but it is doubtful for the following reason: the author *minimized* the importance of water in baptism, stressing that the reception of the Holy Spirit occurred without it—such a view would have been viewed by Tertullian as heretical. See Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 100-101.

⁷⁸² *A Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1: ‘And therefore we shall, as is needful, collect into one mass whatever passages of the Holy Scriptures are pertinent to this subject. And we shall manifestly harmonize, as far as possible, those which seem to be differing or of various meaning’. Translated by Wallis (1886).

⁷⁸³ According to Jerome (*Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 23), the Ophites and other such groups may have formed ‘while the apostle John was still alive’. Philaster of Brescia (d. 397) treats the Ophites first in his *Book of Diverse Heresies*, indicating that their origins were pre-Christian (Latin, *ante adventum Christi*). Cf. Augustine, *Letter 222*. James H. Charlesworth dates the group’s appearance to the second century A.D. See his *The Good and Evil Serpent: How a Universal Symbol Became Christianized* (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 469-472.

with the Ophitic identification of Jesus as the speaker. Despite the condemnation and ostracism that the sect faced, it is fascinating that the Ophites may still speak to us regarding their interpretation of the speaker of 3:14.⁷⁸⁴ According to Pseudo-Tertullian, their construction of a core doctrine was based in large part on this very verse, spoken by the one who himself symbolized the serpent, Christ.⁷⁸⁵ We also observed in our survey that Epiphanius of Salamis drew upon Pseudo-Tertullian's work in his discussion of the Ophites and their exegesis of 3:14, which we will discuss more fully below.

The last author in our survey to cite a portion of John 3 prior to the Council of Nicea was Eustathius of Antioch. In his Greek homily *On the Medium Against Origen*, we found that he attributed John 3:13 to Jesus. Eustathius also intimated that the Gospel-writer had heard Jesus 'with his own ears'. If properly interpreted as being connected with 3:13, this reference revealed Eustathius' belief that others must have been present during Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus. Interestingly, the first author known to hint at such a theory was Origen, the very person whom Eustathius was writing against in the

⁷⁸⁴ If the Ophites did indeed interpret John 3:14 in this way from the *beginning* of their movement—i.e., no later than the mid-second century (since Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Origen mention them)—their identification of Jesus as speaker would predate even Irenaeus' citation of 3:18-21 (the earliest witness in our survey). Also worth mentioning is Hippolytus' citation of John 3:14 in *Against All Heresies* 5.11. Though the speaker is not identified (hence not treated in our analysis of Hippolytus), it nevertheless sheds light on yet another sect that regarded 3:14 authoritatively. Hippolytus writes that the Peratae believed that the 'perfect serpent which Moses set up delivered those that were bitten. This, he [a Peratic] says, is that which has been declared: 'In the same manner as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so also must the Son of man be lifted up'. According to the likeness of this was made in the desert the brazen serpent, which Moses set up. Of this alone, he [a Peratic] says, the image is in heaven, always conspicuous in light'. Translated by MacMahon (1886). Cf. also the Gnostic allusion to John 3:14-15 in *The Testimony of Truth* 48-49 within Nag Hammadi Codex IX.

⁷⁸⁵ Writing about the Ophites roughly a century prior, Irenaeus explained that the sect differentiated between Christ and Jesus. They believed, according to Irenaeus' account, that Christ descended from the 'seven heavens' and united himself to Jesus, a 'vessel' that was wiser and purer and holier than all men. They also held that Christ left Jesus just before the crucifixion, so that only Jesus died. It is noteworthy that in Pseudo-Tertullian's quotation of John 3:14 on the lips of the Ophites, it is 'Christ himself' who speaks the words. Cf. Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies* 2.1; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.30.11-15.

homily!⁷⁸⁶ We also uncovered additional citations of John 3 in *Against the Ariomaniacs*, a polemical work post-dating Nicea by just a few years. In these Eustathius interpreted 3:13-15 in the context of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

The inclusion of Eustathius in our survey is significant for several reasons. First of all, he represents our earliest witness to the interpretation of John 3 in Syria, a region that could trace its Christian roots all the way back to the mid-30s.⁷⁸⁷ Eustathius wrote *On the Medium Against Origen* in Beroea (present-day Aleppo), prior to the transfer of his bishopric to Antioch. The year 312, around which this homily was written, also witnessed the conversion of the emperor Constantine to the Christian faith. This event, in conjunction with the convening of the Council of Nicea in 325, would have a profound impact on the emerging church, transforming not only the dynamic of church-state relations, but also the shape of theological debates in coming centuries. In a short time, too, Christians in many parts of the Roman Empire sensed a level of religious toleration that contrasted sharply with the long-held views of them as practitioners of an 'illicit cult', deserving of persecution. Imperial benefactions naturally catalyzed the erection of churches, as well as the publication and circulation of Christian literature, including the Scriptures.⁷⁸⁸ Seen through this historical lens, we can appreciate how Eustathius'

⁷⁸⁶ Eustathius refers to Origen's commentaries on Job and John's Gospel in *On the Medium Against Origen* 21, so it is distinctly possible that he drew influence from Origen's direct comments on John 3 that are no longer extant. It may also be noted that the Tura papyri (copied sixth/seventh century) contain extracts of Eustathius' homily alongside portions of Origen's commentary on Romans, in which John 3:13 is cited. The compilers clearly viewed these representatives of Antiochene and Alexandrian exegesis as authorities on biblical interpretation; despite their different approaches (though both did allegorize), Eustathius and Origen shared in the belief that Jesus himself spoke John 3:13-15.

⁷⁸⁷ According to Acts 11, Syria's capital of Antioch was the place where Jesus' disciples were 'first called Christians' (Greek, *chrēmatisai prōtōs christianous*). This happened not long after the stoning of Stephen.

⁷⁸⁸ The earliest evidence of the church directly receiving gifts from the state is found in a letter written by Constantine (c. 313 and preserved in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 10.6). We learn in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* that the emperor ordered fifty professional copies of Scripture to be made for church use.

interpretation fits within the reception of John 3 in pre-Nicene Christianity and the ‘golden age’ of patristic literature in the fourth century.

We next surveyed the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria. His Johannine citations, though numerous, presented us with a host of interpretive issues. Ultimately, we concluded that his position on the speakers in John 3 was not determinable. Our analysis of his citations did yield some positive results, though. In addition to laying some of the groundwork in the study of Athanasius’ interpretation of John’s Gospel, we recovered yet another citation of John 3:18 with the adaptation ‘in me’. This reading was found in *Festal Letter* 24 (2), one of Athanasius’ earliest letters written for the celebration of Easter in 330. The preservation of its text, not in Greek but in Coptic,⁷⁸⁹ demonstrated that the substitution ‘in me’ had also found its way into the Coptic-speaking community of Alexandria and its environs.⁷⁹⁰ Since Athanasius was familiar with the works of both Irenaeus and Origen, this reading could have derived from their adapted citations.

Further portions of John 3 were uncovered in the writings of two individuals living at the ‘margins’ of the Roman-Persian frontier: Aphrahat and Ephrem, both writing in Syriac a few decades apart, believed Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus extended to at least John 3:13.⁷⁹¹ Aphrahat also interpreted John 3:34-35 as the Baptist’s *eyewitness* testimony of the measureless reception of the Holy Spirit—that is, he linked these verses

⁷⁸⁹ Though this *Festal Letter* survives only in Coptic translation, its authenticity is secured by both internal evidence and the existence of a brief citation in Athanasius’ original Greek within the *Christian Topography* by Cosmas Indicopleustes.

⁷⁹⁰ The extent to which the reading ‘in me’ (Coptic, *eroi*) had gained currency amongst Coptic Christians is unknown, since it is only Athanasius’ own citation of John 3:18 that we possess. However, the fact that the Copts were themselves the ones responsible for preserving the letter (via the production/circulation of copies) implies at least some level of interpretive agreement.

⁷⁹¹ We noted that Aphrahat’s ‘heretical’ opponents also attributed John 3:13 to Jesus. Ephrem may have believed that Jesus’ words included 3:14 as well, though this could not be established with certainty.

with what had occurred at Jesus' baptism. This interpretation provided us with a unique window into Aphrahat's mindset, in that we discovered *why* he identified the speaker in this way. According to him, the Baptist was able to speak authoritatively of the Spirit's reception because of his firsthand knowledge: having personally baptized Jesus, he heard the Father's voice from heaven and witnessed the Spirit's descent upon Jesus like a dove.

Aphrahat and Ephrem hold a special place in our survey because their readings of Scripture were considerably less influenced by the mainline Greek and Latin traditions than other patristic authors.⁷⁹² Their native Syriac had close ties with that of Aramaic, the primary language of Jesus and his disciples, and as such their identification of the speakers reflects the interpretive traditions of an independent branch of Christianity. Perhaps unknowingly, Aphrahat and Ephrem were in full agreement with earlier authors in viewing John 3:13 as Jesus' declaration to Nicodemus. In addition, Aphrahat's attribution of 3:34-35 to the Baptist mirrored the views of both Tertullian and Victorinus.

Our survey continued with two Latin writers of the fourth century, Hilary of Poitiers and Zeno of Verona. In their works on the Psalms, both of these bishops revealed their belief that the words of Jesus extended through John 3:19. Even though Hilary wrote only a short time before Zeno, we determined that the similarities between Zeno's treatment of 3:18-19 and Hilary's own indicated that direct influence was virtually certain.⁷⁹³ Both Hilary and Zeno included the distinctive reading 'in me' in their citations

⁷⁹² Sources tell us that Aphrahat's command of Greek was weak, and that Ephrem's was not much better. In one of Ephrem's hymns he actually bestows a blessing upon those who have not 'tasted the bitter poison of the wisdom of the Greeks'. Aphrahat and Ephrem worked from a pre-existing Syriac translation of John's Gospel and/or from Tatian's *Diatessaron*.

⁷⁹³ See R. P. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005 [1988]), 529-530; Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1013. Either a copy of Hilary's *Homilies on the Psalms* made its way to Verona very quickly (a distance of roughly 1,000 kilometers), or Zeno acquired a

of 3:18, and they were the first authors to identify the speaker of 3:19 after Irenaeus, nearly two centuries prior. With respect to Hilary's exegetical influences, Origen certainly stood as the most important interpretive voice.⁷⁹⁴ Hilary had during his years of exile in the East learned Greek so he could study Origen and other Greek fathers (356-360). The fruit of his labor was the treatise *On the Trinity*, in which he attributed John 3:13 and 3:16 to Jesus. Interestingly, Hilary pointed out within his citation of 3:16 that the Gospel-writer 'had heard his Lord' speak these words, a comment quite reminiscent of Origen's earlier claim that 3:13 had been directed 'to his apostles'. Hilary may well have been influenced by Origen based on his inclusion of the adaptation 'in me' in his later *Homilies on the Psalms*, also inspired by the Alexandrian exegete.

We next turned to the Latin exegete 'Ambrosiaster', whose Pauline commentaries and *Quaestiones* survived because of their erroneous attribution to Ambrose of Milan. In his works we found several citations from the first Johannine passage (3:13, 3:16, 3:18), which he consistently interpreted as the words of Jesus. Because of his distrust of contemporary Greek exegesis and its manuscript tradition, Ambrosiaster looked to the authoritative voices of Latin predecessors like Tertullian, Victorinus and Cyprian for exegetical insight; he was convinced that their biblical citations reflected the uncorrupted Greek text, as also represented in Old Latin manuscripts.⁷⁹⁵ His dismissal of Greek

copy through his travels. Cf. Gordon Jeanes, *The Day Has Come! Easter and Baptism in Zeno of Verona* (Alcuin Club Collection 73. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 15-16.

⁷⁹⁴ Jerome later accused Hilary of merely translating and even plagiarizing Origen's work.

⁷⁹⁵ *Commentary on Romans* 5.14: 'At least this [interpretation] is what is prescribed to us on the basis of the Greek manuscripts, as if there was no discrepancy among them...I consider the correct reading to be the one which reason, history and authority all retain (*ratio et historia et auctoritas conservatur*). For the reading of the modern Latin manuscripts is also found in Tertullian, Victorinus and Cyprian'. Translated by Bray (2009). Cf. Amy M. Donaldson, *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings Among Greek and Latin Church Fathers* Volume I (PhD dissertation. University of Notre Dame, 2009), 137-141.

interpretation (as full of heresy) may have been an important factor in the development of his position on the speaker in John 3. The identification of Jesus may have been current among Ambrosiaster's fellow Roman presbyters, or he may have drawn influence from Tertullian, who first attributed 3:16-18 to Jesus.

We discovered further citations of John 3 in a fourth-century Gothic commentary on John's Gospel known as the *Skeireins*. While considerable mystery still surrounds the identity of its author, we discovered that he treated John 3:31-32 as the Baptist's own words about himself compared to Jesus. Though it is unlikely that the *Skeireins* was originally written in Gothic, the fact that it survived only in this language reveals several things. First, it tells us that someone who knew Greek and/or Latin considered the *Skeireins* worth translating. It also shows that a devoted readership existed specifically amongst the Goths,⁷⁹⁶ a Germanic people living in what is now Romania and Ukraine. Moreover, the presence of cadence and pause marks in the text indicates that the work was read aloud, perhaps during services within the church.⁷⁹⁷ Its public reading would have naturally influenced the listening congregation's perception of the Johannine text.⁷⁹⁸

The next author we surveyed was the Cappadocian father Basil of Caesarea. We were ultimately unable to determine his position on the speaker of John 3:36 due to the complex redaction history of his literary corpus. On the positive side, the discrepancies between his citations of this verse showed that some readers in the Middle Ages also

⁷⁹⁶ Since the *Skeireins* codex itself dates from the early-sixth century, the Gothic community may well have viewed the commentary as a standard reading text for well over a hundred years.

⁷⁹⁷ Carla Falluomini points out that the Greek verb *anaginōskō* ('to read') was translated into Gothic as *siggwan* and *ussiggwan*, both meaning 'to sing'. Cf. her *The Gothic Version of the Gospels and Pauline Epistles: Cultural Background, Transmission and Character* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 53.

⁷⁹⁸ The fragmentary state of the manuscript prevented us from determining the identification of the speaker in other Johannine verses (just eight leaves have survived).

struggled with Basil's identification of the speaker.⁷⁹⁹ With respect of his two citations John 3:18, we were similarly unable to determine his position on the speaker. His citations in *Homily on Psalm 7* and *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* did provide us with further examples of the distinctive reading 'in me'. While it is plausible that Basil had been exposed to this reading through the works of Irenaeus and/or Origen,⁸⁰⁰ the presence of other adaptations suggests that he was citing from memory and may not have had the historical context of John 3 in mind.

Our survey then turned to the Alexandrian scholar Didymus the Blind, who cited three verses from the first Johannine passage (3:13, 3:16, 3:18). In our analysis of his Greek lectures and biblical commentaries, we found that Didymus interpreted these verses as Jesus' own words. Didymus also pointed out that Jesus had spoken the content of John 3:13 and 3:16 in a self-referential manner: these words were specifically 'about himself' as the Son of Man/God. In light of the fact that Didymus was completely blind, it is noteworthy that his two citations of 3:18 included the reading 'in me'. By necessity Didymus had to quote from memory, and it stands to reason that some within his scholastic circle were of the same view in terms of the speaker.⁸⁰¹ As an imitator of

⁷⁹⁹ E.g., in *Concerning Baptism* 2.5, one tenth-century scribe omitted the epithet 'Baptist', and another twelfth-century scribe added 'evangelist'. Apart from these two variants, every other manuscript reads 'John the Baptist'.

⁸⁰⁰ In *On the Holy Spirit* 72-73, Basil made reference to Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* (citing from the fifth volume) and discussed Origen's *Homilies on the Psalms*, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* and *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. While Basil revered Irenaeus as one 'living near [the time of] the apostles' (Greek, *ho eggus tōn apostolōn genomenos*), he read Origen often yet critically due to his heterodoxy. Cf. Nikolai A. Lipatov, 'Basil of Caesarea', in McKim (ed.), *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, 168-169.

⁸⁰¹ If the attribution to Jesus were questioned or opposed, we might have expected his stenographer(s) to 'correct' this singular reading. On Didymus and his relationship to his students, see Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

Origen's theology and exegesis, Didymus may have first heard the adaptation 'in me' in the oral study/reading of his works. He may also have simply conflated 3:18 with other 'in me' sayings found in John's Gospel. Since he wrote a complete commentary on the Gospel (of which only fragments remain), it is intriguing to wonder whether he would have commented on the speaker in more detail.

We found another example of the adaptation 'in me' amongst the Latin writings of Ambrose of Milan. Having quoted every verse from the first Johannine passage except 3:20, Ambrose's position on the speaker was crystal clear: Jesus uttered these words about himself, and the Gospel-writer recorded them faithfully in his Gospel.⁸⁰² Ambrose's bilingualism undoubtedly played a part in his identification of the speaker, since it allowed him to not only consult this passage in the original Greek, but also to study the works of Origen, Didymus and Basil, who collectively had a great influence on him.⁸⁰³ Upon comparative analysis of Ambrose's adapted citation of John 3:18 with the works of Hilary of Poitiers and Didymus, we discover a definite interpretive pattern: each of them cited this Johannine verse in the midst of comments on Psalm 1:5a: 'The wicked shall not rise in judgment'.⁸⁰⁴ This could hardly be mere coincidence; rather, it appears to be evidence of literary dependence that may go back to Origen himself, who wrote a whole

⁸⁰² As an example of Ambrose's precise manner of citation, in *Concerning Repentance* 1.48 he prefaced John 3:16 in the following way: 'Let us inquire whether the writings of John in the Gospel agree with your interpretation. For he writes that the Lord said, "God so loved the world..."'

⁸⁰³ Jerome, who had accused Hilary of plagiarizing Origen, criticized Ambrose for plagiarizing all three. In the preface to his translation of Origen's *Homilies on Luke*, Jerome described Ambrose as a black crow that had merely covered himself with the colorful plumage of Greek exegetes. Cf. Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose* (Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 1997), 59; Paul J. Fedwick, 'The Translations of the Works of Basil Before 1400', in Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium*, 470.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. Ambrose, *Commentary on Psalm 1* 51; Hilary, *Homily on Psalm 1* 20-22; Didymus, *Fragments on the Psalms* 6.

commentary on Psalm 1.⁸⁰⁵ While the excerpts from it in Epiphanius' *Panarion* do not make reference to John 3:18,⁸⁰⁶ it is entirely possible that since Epiphanius considered Origen a heretic he deliberately condensed or omitted this Johannine reference altogether.

Turning our attention to Jerome, arguably the most learned father of the fourth century,⁸⁰⁷ we discovered that he also cited John 3:18 with the adaptation 'in me'. Significantly, his citation appeared within his homily on Psalm 1, as he was commenting on 1:5. Jerome therefore may have drawn influence from Didymus, under whom he studied as a pupil, or from Origen directly.⁸⁰⁸ One of the unique details about Jerome's adapted citation of John 3:18 was his introduction of it: 'We read in the Gospel according to John...' (Latin, *legimus in evangelio secundum Ioannem*). In actual fact, we *cannot read* this in John's Gospel, as no extant Gospel manuscripts contain the reading 'in me'.⁸⁰⁹ But perhaps Jerome did not wish to be interpreted this literally; he may have cited from memory and only intended for his audience to be aware that he was quoting biblical material. In our analysis we also found that Jerome made one further citation from John 3 in his *Dialogue Against the Luciferians*. In defense of the Holy Spirit's role in the forgiveness of sins, he interpreted John 3:31 as one of many sayings of the Baptist which pointed to Jesus' superiority. Whether Jerome came to this identification on his own is

⁸⁰⁵ According to Ronald Heine, this may have been his earliest writing. Cf. his 'Reading the Bible with Origen', in Blowers (ed.), *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*, 136.

⁸⁰⁶ See *Panarion* 64.5.9-11.4.

⁸⁰⁷ Comparing Jerome's erudition to Augustine's, Lorenzo Valla (d. 1457) wrote in *Encomion* 22: 'Nor does Jerome yield in any way to Augustine's intellect; he is so much the greater in all areas of learning that Augustine seems to me like the Mediterranean, Jerome the ocean'. Translated by Baker (2014).

⁸⁰⁸ Some scholars have argued that Jerome's Psalm homilies are little more than translations of Origen's own, interspersed with his own comments. Cf. Craig A. Blaising and Carmen S. Hardin (eds.), *Psalms 1-50* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 7. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), xxv.

⁸⁰⁹ Jerome's citation of John 3:18 in *On Psalm 1* contains two 'in me' adaptations: 'Whoever believes *in me* is not judged, but whoever does not believe *in me* is already judged'.

uncertain; the only other Latin interpreter to specify this verse's speaker was Tertullian nearly two centuries prior.

The next author we surveyed was Epiphanius of Salamis. Writing in Greek on the island of Cyprus, we found that he interpreted John 3:13-14 as the words of Jesus. Epiphanius' two citations of 3:14 were particularly significant to our survey, since they appeared within his discussion of the views of the Ophites, a long-lost sect previously treated by Pseudo-Tertullian. While Epiphanius completely opposed their 'literal' exegesis of 3:14 (i.e., elevating the serpent to divine status),⁸¹⁰ he reported their opinion that Jesus spoke these words: 'Do you not see how the Savior said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up?''⁸¹¹ Remarkably, the Ophites here appealed to what seems to have been common knowledge: that Jesus uttered these words. Since Epiphanius claimed to have had some first-hand experience with this sect, it is not impossible that this question was put to him directly. On the other hand,

⁸¹⁰ Epiphanius insisted that the language in 3:14 was metaphorical Jesus was not the serpent but *like* it, in that he similarly bestowed life. He earlier commented that the Ophites 'glorify the serpent as a new divinity', but were deceived by the serpentine devil himself. E.g., *Panarion* 37.1.3: 'And see how far the serpent, the deceiver of the Ophites, has gone in mischief! Just as he deceived Eve and Adam at the beginning, so even he does now by concealing himself—both now and in the Jewish period up until Christ's coming'. Translated by Williams (1997). Cf. James H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent: How a Universal Symbol Became Christianized* (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 469-470.

⁸¹¹ The Ophites also attributed Matthew 10:16 to Jesus, indicating that they didn't reject other Gospels (at least entirely). The acceptance of more than one canonical Gospel among such Christian sects was hardly a commonplace. A few examples may suffice, beginning with Epiphanius. He writes about the Alogi (his own disparaging label for the 'Dumb'), who claimed that various chronological inconsistencies within John's Gospel made its author an outright liar (Greek, *ho Iōannēs pseudetai*), and that they completely rejected the book of Revelation (cf. *Panarion* 51.3; 51.21). According to Tertullian, the followers of Marcion accepted only an excised version of Luke's Gospel on the grounds that the orthodox had corrupted the original teaching of Jesus (cf. *Against Marcion* 4.2-3). The Platonist philosopher Celsus (late-second century) made similar criticisms in his treatise against Christianity, *True Doctrine*. In it he refers to the content of the Gospels as 'fables' (Greek, *muthika*) and points to their plurality as evidence of fabrication (cf. Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.26-27; 8.45).

Epiphanius may have relied entirely on Pseudo-Tertullian for this Johannine quotation; if so, then we can only speculate whether these ‘heretics’ really asserted this identification.

We next surveyed Epiphanius’ Cypriot colleague, Philo of Carpasia. In his *Commentary on Song of Songs* (c. 380s), we discovered that he attributed John 3:16 to Jesus. Interestingly, Philo’s use of the title ‘the only-begotten’ (Greek, *ho monogenēs*) paralleled Epiphanius’ use in one of his citations of 3:13, which might be reflective of the popularity of the title among Christians on the island. As noted in our analysis, since so little is known of Philo’s life and influences, it remains uncertain how he arrived at this identification; however, his emphasis on allegorical interpretation may indicate some dependency on Origen, who composed homilies and a commentary on Song of Songs.

We proceeded in our survey with Gregory of Nyssa, the brother of Basil and youngest of the Cappadocian fathers. He cited John 3:14 in two places within his spiritual biography *The Life of Moses* (c. 390s), interpreting the verse as Jesus’ declaration about himself. While we found many patristic authors citing 3:14 in the context of Numbers 21, Gregory was the first to interpret this verse in connection with Exodus 4, where during the course of Moses’ conversation with God in the burning bush his rod became a serpent. Gregory interpreted this serpent as a type pointing to Jesus’ incarnation, asserting that Jesus had compared himself using this symbol (Greek, *symbolon*) in the Gospel.

Our survey then moved to John Chrysostom, the first author to compose works in both the fourth and fifth centuries. His homilies provided us with an abundance of Johannine citations, most especially via his direct exposition of John 3 in the series *On John*, preached to his congregation in Antioch (c. 391). We determined that Chrysostom regarded verses up through John 3:20 to comprise Jesus’ words to Nicodemus (oddly,

3:21 was never cited). We also found that he consistently cited 3:18 with the adapted form ‘in the Son’ (as opposed to ‘in him’ or ‘in me’), which suggested either his recalling from memory or intentional adaptation. With respect to his position on 3:31-36, we found that he treated the whole passage as John the Baptist’s words to his disciples.

Although Chrysostom faced exile and censure from some ecclesiastical authorities late in life, his homilies had long been circulating throughout the Greek-speaking East.⁸¹² Immediately following his death, many of these homilies were translated into Latin, a process that continued into the Middle Ages. The wide readership that Chrysostom received through the centuries certainly made his position on the speakers in John 3 highly influential. Because his orthodoxy was upheld, he may well have surpassed Origen in terms of reaching average Christians, both through patristic anthologies (*catenae*) and the preaching of his homilies in congregations throughout the Mediterranean world.

The next author we surveyed was Maximus, bishop of Turin (in northern Italy) from about 390-420. In his Latin sermons he attributed John 3:13-14 to Jesus, whom he believed had spoken the words about his eventual crucifixion and ascension to heaven. Because of the internal difficulties surrounding Maximus’ final citation of 3:17, however, we were ultimately unable to determine his position on the speaker.⁸¹³ If his ample use of Ambrose’s *Commentary on Luke* is any indication of direct influence with respect to the speaker in 3:13-14, Maximus may have based his comments on Ambrose’s own.

⁸¹² See Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002 [2000]), 6.

⁸¹³ These difficulties included his imprecise use of the verb *ait* and the fact that he quoted John 3:17 in such an adapted form. Cf. *Sermon* 59.2.

Our survey then turned to the most prolific and influential writer of the Latin West, Augustine of Hippo. After analyzing well over a dozen of his sermons, letters and treatises, we were able to draw several conclusions concerning his position on the speakers in John 3. With respect to the first Johannine passage, Augustine definitely believed Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus up through 3:18. While we were unable to determine his opinion on 3:19-21 with certainty, his treatment of verses following immediately after 3:21 showed that he regarded them as distinct from the Nicodemus pericope.⁸¹⁴ In our analysis of Augustine's *Incomplete Work Against Julian* (c. 428) we also uncovered an excerpt from Julian of Eclanum's lost treatise *To Florus*, in which Julian quoted John 3:18 with the adaptation 'in me'. Whether or not Augustine himself was familiar with the reading 'in me', this citation of his opponent Julian was in all likelihood verbatim. As noted earlier, Augustine had excerpted Julian's words extensively so as to debate him point-by-point, and he had sought to counter earlier accusations that he had tampered with Julian's words. Notably, none of Augustine's own citations of 3:18 included the reading 'in me', which suggests that his direct exegesis of the Gospel text influenced his consistent reading 'in him' instead.⁸¹⁵

With respect to the second Johannine passage, we found that Augustine interpreted 3:31-35 within a comparative context; in his view, John the Baptist had been speaking about himself and Jesus in these verses. Augustine's position on the final verse of the passage proved to be a different matter entirely. In several of his later works he

⁸¹⁴ E.g., *On Merits and Forgiveness of Sin and Infant Baptism* 30: 'Thus far the discourse wholly relates to the subject of our present inquiry; from this point [3:22 onwards] the narrator digresses to something else'.

⁸¹⁵ John's Gospel was before him during some of his preaching: e.g., *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 40.1: 'Concerning the holy Gospel according to John, which you see us holding in our hands, you have already heard much, dear friends'; *Sermon* 294.14: 'And then didn't you hear what the Lord himself said, in this same discourse with Nicodemus, when this same reading was read today?'

attributed 3:36 to Jesus. Our analysis of his citations indicated that Augustine probably cited this verse from memory or another literary source besides the Gospel. Each of them lacked any narrative context, unlike his citations of the preceding verses (3:31-35), and so we concluded (as in the case of Basil) that his actual position on the speaker was not determinable.

The next author we surveyed was the Antiochene interpreter Theodore of Mopsuestia. We found numerous citations of John 3 within his commentaries on Jonah and John's Gospel. Our analysis of these showed that Theodore believed John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 comprised the words of Jesus and the Baptist, respectively. Although Theodore preferred to use the pronoun 'he' when interpreting some verses,⁸¹⁶ he clearly specified that Jesus had been speaking up through 3:21, and that the Baptist 'concluded' his speech with 3:36 (i.e., the final verses of each passage). This marked a significant 'first' in our pre-modern survey, since Theodore identified the speakers of both passages in their entirety.

Our survey then transitioned to Severian of Gabala, whose Greek homilies survived only because of their circulation under the name of his friend-turned-opponent John Chrysostom. Preaching at the turn of the fifth century, Severian quoted a total of five verses from our Johannine passages. We found that he interpreted John 3:14-15 in the context of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, and that he also believed that Jesus had specifically applied the serpent-typology of these verses to himself. Our analysis of Severian's citations of 3:31 and 3:34-35 showed that he considered these words to belong to John the Baptist, who had been speaking about Jesus and his superiority. It seems

⁸¹⁶ Theodore's comments on John 3:16, 3:19 and 3:32-35 do not include explicit reference to the speaker.

unlikely that Severian was aware that he interpreted the speakers of these verses in exactly the same way as Chrysostom; perhaps influencing how they approached the Johannine text were the similarities in their backgrounds (e.g., Syrian origin, rhetorical training, biblical erudition, preaching eloquence).

We next surveyed the work of John Cassian. Following his extensive travels as a monastic he settled in Marseilles, where he composed two works that contained citations of John 3. Within his magnum opus, *The Conferences* (c. 420s), we found a single citation of John 3:13 quoted by an Egyptian monk named Abba Moses. According to Cassian's recollection of his interview with the monk, he attributed this verse to Jesus, adding that he was speaking directly to those Jews skeptical of his heavenly origin. If Abba Moses did indeed have the historical context of the passage in mind, he likely believed that other Pharisees had accompanied Nicodemus during his conversation with Jesus. Within a separate treatise Cassian cited 3:13 thrice more, in full agreement with Abba Moses that Jesus was the speaker. Cassian also noted that Jesus had been speaking about himself. His final citation of 3:17 in the same treatise confirmed Cassian's belief that Jesus continued to speak at least up through this verse.

It is worth questioning whether or not Cassian's quotation of Abba Moses on the speaker's identity of John 3:13 can really be traced back to the Egyptian monk.⁸¹⁷ As we pointed out in the cases of Pseudo-Tertullian and Epiphanius (with respect to the Ophites), we must rely on the probabilities. On the one hand, it is entirely possible that Cassian imposed his own view of Jesus as speaker in the mouth of Abba Moses; some scholars have questioned whether Cassian and Germanus ever actually met the monk

⁸¹⁷ See Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 [1950]), 18-20.

during their years in Skete. Even if they did converse, the fact remains that Cassian's writing of *The Conferences* occurred some 20-40 years later than this, thus depending on his own recollection and/or draft notes. In our analysis of the quotation, we observed that its context centered on the punctuation of Luke 23:43, i.e., whether or not Jesus promised the thief that he would be with him in Paradise that very day. This was apparently a contested issue with certain 'heretics', who believed that Jesus only entered Paradise after his resurrection from the dead, that is, his ascension into heaven. It remains unclear if Abba Moses would have been aware of such matters, given his isolation in the desert among fellow monks. Still, the possibility that Cassian faithfully recorded Abba Moses' attribution cannot be completely ruled out, given his deep admiration for the holy man and interest in sharing his wisdom with Latin-speaking Christians. In fact, it may well have been the monk who influenced Cassian's identification of Jesus as speaker in the first place.

We next turned to the controversial bishop Cyril of Alexandria, the last patristic author in our survey to write a commentary on John's Gospel (c. 425). After analyzing citations from an impressive number of works, we determined that all Johannine verses—very likely including 3:21 as well—were interpreted in the context of the conversations between Jesus and Nicodemus and the Baptist and his disciples, respectively.⁸¹⁸ How Cyril formulated his position on the speakers remains unclear, and it is not known whether other exegetes like Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia or Chrysostom had any

⁸¹⁸ His close exegesis of John 3 in the commentary proved that two of his attributions to 'John' (3:18) and 'the evangelist' (3:31) were not reflective of his position; they may have resulted from carelessness, reliance on a *testimonium*, scribal corruption, or the belief that the Gospel-writer was *reporting* the words.

direct influence on his identification.⁸¹⁹ However, since Cyril composed the *Commentary on John* to combat the views of certain heretics and unbelievers, we can infer that Cyril's study of John 3 was certainly thorough; he intended to equip Alexandrian Christians with a 'doctrinal explanation' (Greek, *dogmatikōteran exēgēsīn*) of the Gospel, serving to bolster argumentation against different heresies.

One of those readers to make extensive use of Cyril's *Commentary on John* was the poet Nonnus of Panopolis, who had earned a name for himself in Alexandria during Cyril's patriarchate. In our analysis of his hexameter paraphrase on John's Gospel, we found that Nonnus regarded 3:13-21 as part of Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus. Among other patristic authors surveyed, his approach to the Johannine text was unique. He took on the role of the Gospel-writer himself, infusing metrical charm and embedded commentary into the Gospel, which would have attracted a mixed audience of educated Christians and 'pagans'.⁸²⁰ Though Nonnus had a tendency toward amplification (the *Paraphrase on John* being about 60% longer than the Gospel text),⁸²¹ we determined that he followed the narrative sequence rather closely and kept his copy of John's Gospel before him as he wrote.

The next author we turned to was Augustine's younger colleague, Quodvultdeus of Carthage. He cited a portion of John 3:18 at three points within his Latin homilies and

⁸¹⁹ See Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (The Early Church Fathers. New York: Routledge, 2000), 96-97.

⁸²⁰ Lee F. Sherry, *The Hexameter Paraphrase of St. John Attributed to Nonnus of Panopolis: Prolegomenon and Translation* (PhD dissertation. Columbia University, 1991), 115: [Nonnus' work] is a rather clever tractate with just enough pagan spice to lure young students into the further study and appreciation of the Gospel...it also shows the non-Christian reader that Christian writing is not destitute of worthy material'.

⁸²¹ By my count, Nonnus' paraphrase of John 3 contains about 1,056 words total (671 in 3:1-21, 385 in 3:22-36). In contrast, the Gospel text contains 658 words total (395 in 3:1-21, 263 in 3:22-36).

the *Liber Promissionum*; each time he attributed the verse to Jesus ('the Lord'). Like many patristic authors before him, Quodvultdeus interpreted 3:18 as an authoritative statement on the dire consequences of faithlessness. Notably, he also cited Psalm 1:5a alongside John 3:18, but did not include the adaptation 'in me'. Its absence indicates that Quodvultdeus' identification of Jesus as speaker was not influenced by Latin writers that included it (e.g., Hilary, Zeno, Ambrose).

Writing as bishop of Rome during this same period was Leo I, who quoted John 3:16 in one of his early Latin sermons (c. 440). In our analysis we determined that Leo regarded Jesus as the speaker. He also correctly identified John's Gospel as the source of this verse, indicating that he probably had the historical context of the passage in mind (even if citing from memory). As pope of Rome, Leo's sermons circulated widely and thus his identification would have influenced many readers in the West.

The last Greek-speaking author in our survey to cite portions of John 3 was the Antiochene bishop, Theodoret of Cyrus. Our analysis revealed that he regarded Jesus as the speaker of John 3:13-15. His multiple citations of 3:16 and 3:36 presented us with conflicting evidence, and in the end we determined that his actual position on the speakers was unknown. Similarly, in our analysis of the Latin sermons of Peter Chrysologus we were only able to positively establish his position on a single verse. In *Sermon 72A* he attributed John 3:13 to Jesus, whom he believed spoke this verse to prove his omniscience.

Our survey concluded with Prosper of Aquitaine, one of the few writers to quote John 3 outside of any clerical office.⁸²² Around the year 450 he wrote *The Call of All*

⁸²² During his stay in Rome Prosper served as secretary to Pope Leo I; he was a recognized poet and staunch defender of Augustinian theology during the semi-Pelagian controversy.

Nations, in which he cited John 3:31-33. Prosper viewed these words as a prophetic declaration made by John the Baptist (*Ioannes Baptista*). By also mentioning that the verses were found in John's Gospel, we noted the likelihood that he had the context of the passage in mind.

Significance of the Study

We have discovered in our reception-historical survey that the task of identifying each author's position on the speakers in John 3 was generally straightforward. With the exception of a handful of authors whose positions remain ambiguous, the *consensus patrum* ('consensus of the fathers') can be summed up as follows: Throughout the patristic age, John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 were collectively interpreted as the words of Jesus and John the Baptist, respectively. Even amongst those authors that seemed to interpret the speakers differently, upon closer analysis we found that their citations were beset with complexities and uncertainties, preventing us from determining their actual positions one way or the other. Thus, while we could not entirely rule out the possibility that certain authors might have attributed some verses to the Gospel-writer, we found no definitive evidence to support such a conclusion. Similarly, the patristic evidence did not support the modern theory that in these passages a 'merging' of voices had taken place.

Our findings are significant due to the wide range of factors involved in each author's identification of the speakers. None of the thirty-eight authors surveyed inhabited the exact same *Sitz im Leben* ('setting in life'), so the historical circumstances they faced differed at virtually every level: e.g., nationality, socio-economic status, family upbringing, language(s) spoken, education, theological training, biblical competency and clerical vocation. Their works also varied considerably in terms literary

genre, purpose and intended audience, and were composed in diverse geographic locations and at different points along the 270 years surveyed.⁸²³ Despite these differences, however, we discovered a remarkably consistent interpretation of treating John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 as *continuations* of the words of Jesus and the Baptist.⁸²⁴ Cumulatively, our findings from the patristic age present compelling evidence that modern commentators and biblical translators must take into serious consideration.

As noted in the introduction, while the identification of the speakers in John 3 continues to be a matter of scholarly dispute, the predominant view among modern commentators is that these Johannine passages probably do not comprise the words of Jesus and the Baptist. This in turn has led many translators of contemporary English versions of the Bible to treat the verses as the Gospel-writer's own commentary, placing them outside quotation marks.⁸²⁵ One of the most recent examples appeared in 2011, with the latest update of the popularly read New International Version (NIV). Its translation committee decided to reverse course from previous editions (1973, 1984) by no longer placing John 3:16-21 and 3:31-36 in quotation marks. This decision, prompted by 'advances in biblical scholarship' and a 'concern for clarity',⁸²⁶ required at least 70% of

⁸²³ Literary genres included: e.g., exegetical commentaries, letters, dialogues, paraphrases, expository sermons, treatises on theology, apologetics and polemics. Geographic locations included: e.g., Egypt, Italy, North Africa, France, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Cyprus.

⁸²⁴ While we found that many authors drew influence from the works of others, there were few instances of direct dependence in terms of speaker identification.

⁸²⁵ See further in Appendix 2.

⁸²⁶ Cf. Committee on Bible Translation, 'Updating the New International Version of the Bible: Notes from the Committee on Bible Translation'. (2010): 1-11. <http://www.thenivbible.com/about-the-niv/about-the-2011-edition/>

the translation committee's approval.⁸²⁷ While the accompanying footnotes after 3:15 and 3:30 acknowledge that 'some interpreters' believe the quotations extend further, the NIV committee's majority view is representative of the current interpretive trend in attributing the words to the Gospel-writer. Yet as we have discovered in our survey of the patristic age, the earliest readers of John's Gospel did not see it this way.

The patristic evidence we have gathered cannot in and of itself definitively prove who the speakers are in John 3, but it does call into question how modern commentators and biblical translators should approach the interpretive issue in the future. Scholarship which aims to be truly critical should no longer disregard the opinions of these earliest interpreters.⁸²⁸ They encountered the Johannine text long before the invention of quotation marks, and for them the identification of the speakers does not appear to have been a matter 'open' for interpretation, but was rather self-evident from the immediate context. We found this to be especially true in the persistent adapted reading 'whoever believes in me' in John 3:18, by which many authors believed that Jesus was speaking about himself. Furthermore, patristic interpreters generally believed these words were *intrinsic* to the conversations of Jesus with Nicodemus and the Baptist with his disciples; for this reason, they would hardly have viewed the words as *parenthetical* material. Yet this is precisely the impression that many present-day readers may come away with in reading the updated NIV and other versions which exclude the passages from quotation

⁸²⁷ This amounts to at least 11 votes from the 15-member translation committee. According to the committee's chair Douglas J. Moo, this 'conservative voting procedure' resulted in about 95% of the original NIV text staying the same. See his 'The New International Version (NIV)', in Köstenberger and Croteau (eds.), *Which Bible Translation Should I Use? A Comparison of 4 Major Recent Versions*, 79-80.

⁸²⁸ It seems that modern speculation over the *historicity* of the passages—i.e., whether Jesus and the Baptist actually uttered the words—has not taken into account the *historical* evidence that does exist from the earliest traceable centuries of interpretation.

marks. In perceiving the words to comprise independent theological discourses, detached from the preceding conversations, translators may well be inserting more interpretation into the biblical text than is truly necessary.

In light of the patristic evidence that the present study has now made more easily accessible, one wonders how these Johannine passages will be treated in the NIV's next revision and in other Bible versions. Arguably, the most historically appropriate course favors including both passages in quotation marks rather than outside them; the inclusion of more informative footnotes also offers distinct advantages to the reader, as pointed out by Richard C. Blight:

Translators of a meaning-based translation, however, must choose the one interpretation they consider to have the best justification...a footnote giving the alternative interpretation will show that the translators have recognized that possibility.⁸²⁹

Explanatory footnotes provide translators with the opportunity to add editorial comments that could/should not be incorporated into the biblical text itself.⁸³⁰ They have the potential to make the text more accessible to readers by offering supplemental information, in effect giving readers more than just one interpretive option. Generally speaking, though, the footnotes provided in modern English versions offer the non-specialist little help in weighing the internal/external evidence due to their brevity. Notwithstanding the demands of publishers and the needs of certain target audiences, these footnotes may as well echo the biblical maxim: 'Let the reader understand'.⁸³¹ Since

⁸²⁹ Richard C. Blight, 'Footnotes for Meaningful Translations of the New Testament'. *Journal of Translation* 1 (2005): 14.

⁸³⁰ Cf. Iver Larsen, 'Acceptability of a Bible Translation and the Use of Footnotes'. Unpublished paper delivered at the SIL Bible Translation Conference (2010). <https://sil.academia.edu/IverLarsen>

⁸³¹ See Matthew 24:15/Mark 13:14.

the present study has advanced the interpretive debate forward to some degree, perhaps the following two footnotes can encapsulate where things currently stand:

[after John 3:21] Modern commentators are not in agreement over where Jesus' discourse concludes (3:12, 3:15, 3:21); quotation marks did not exist in antiquity, but evidence from patristic interpreters indicates that his words were traditionally thought to extend to 3:21.

[after John 3:36] Modern commentators are not in agreement over where John the Baptist's discourse concludes (3:30, 3:36); quotation marks did not exist in antiquity, but evidence from patristic interpreters indicates that his words were traditionally thought to extend to 3:36.

Avenues for Further Research

The present thesis on the patristic reception of John 3 stands as a precursor to surveying citations found in subsequent historical periods. Portions of John 3:13-21 and 3:31-36 were abundantly referred to and cited throughout the Middle Ages and early-modernity, allowing for the fruitful comparison of the identification of the speakers with both patristic and modern interpreters.⁸³² One of the most pressing needs is a thorough reexamination of the position of Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1469-1536); a number of modern commentators refer to him as the first to openly call into question the

⁸³² Some of these authors include: Philoxenus of Mabbug (c. 440-523), Procopius of Gaza (c. 465-526), Caesarius of Arles (c. 470-542), Fulgentius of Ruspe (c. 468-532), Primasius of Hadrumetum (d. after 553), Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), Leander of Seville (c. 544-600), Bede the Venerable (c. 672-735), Defensor of Ligugé (c. early-eighth century), Theodore Abu Qurrah (c. 750-820), Rabanus Maurus (780-856), Gottschalk of Orbais (c. 803-868), Hincmar of Rheims (c. 806-882), Rather of Verona (c. 889-974), Emperor Constantine VII (913-959), Peter Damian (1007-1072), Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109), Theophylact of Ochrid (c. 1055-1125), Peter Abelard (1079-1142), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Peter the Venerable (c. 1092-1156), Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Theodore Prodromos (c. 1110-1170), Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (c. 1217-1274), Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274), Najm al-Din al-Tufi (c. 1272-1316), Gregory Palamas (c. 1296-1359), John Wyclif (c. 1328-1384), Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), Denis the Carthusian (1402-1471), Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1469-1536), Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531), Konrad Pellikan (1478-1556), Martin Luther (1483-1546), Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), John Frith (1503-1533), Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), Caspar Cruciger (1504-1548), Johannes Brenz (1499-1570), John Calvin (1509-1564), Theodore Beza (1516-1605), Paulus de Palacio (d. 1582), Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586), Juan de Maldonado (1533-1583), Cornelius à Lapide (1567-1637), John Lightfoot (1602-1675), Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), William Penn (1644-1718), William Burkitt (1650-1703), John Wesley (1703-1791), John Gill (1697-1771).

identification of the speakers in these passages. However, none of these modern commentators has noted the hesitation with which Erasmus did so, which may suggest that he was less certain about the speakers than is commonly assumed.⁸³³

Another promising avenue of research lies in an exploration of the physical evidence that relates to these Johannine passages, as can be uncovered in manuscripts containing the Gospel text and associated marginalia and iconography. In particular, the lectionary notes found in various manuscripts provide ample evidence of how Christian scribes and readers interpreted these passages through the centuries. For instance, the scribe of Codex Palatinus (Old Latin Gospels, c. fifth century) inserted the following note at the end of John 3:36: ‘And after these things John was handed over’ (Latin, *et post haec traditus est Iohannis*). This brief note, likely drawn from Mark 1:14, indicates that the scribe (or his exemplar) was seeking to clarify for readers the chronological sequence of events leading to the Baptist’s incarceration.⁸³⁴ The placement of this note after John 3:36 suggests that the scribe believed that these were the Baptist’s final words (i.e., the note could just as easily have been inserted after 3:30 or another verse). Interestingly, this same note also appears after 3:36 in the Greek minuscule 2145 and in the margin of the Harklean Syriac version (syr^{hmg}), indicating that these other scribes thought similarly.

To cite more direct examples, the scribes of the Old Latin codices Gatianus (c. 800) and Sangermanensis g2 (c. tenth century) included these lectionary notes immediately before John 3:16: ‘Jesus said’ (Latin, *Iesus dixit*) and ‘at that time Jesus said to his disciples’ (Latin, *in illo tempore dixit Iesus discipulis suis*), respectively. In the

⁸³³ See Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John* 7.521-525; *Annotations on the New Testament*, John 3:16, John 3:34; *Hyperaspistes II* 92, 239.

⁸³⁴ Cf. H. A. Houghton, *Augustine’s Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 215.

Greek lectionary system of readings for Eastertide, John 3:16-21 was read during the liturgy on Tuesday of Renewal Week, followed by John 3:1-15 on Thursday and John 3:22-33 on Saturday. John 3:13-17 was also part of the Greek liturgical calendar, being read annually on the Sunday before the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. A large number of Greek lectionaries preface these passages with introductory phrases such as ‘the Lord said’ (Greek, *eipen ho kurios*) and ‘the Lord said to his disciples’ (Greek, *eipen ho kurios tois heautou mathētais*). Some also include iconography depicting the narrative content of John 3 and contain clues on how scribes and readers may have pictured these verses in their minds. For example, Dionysiou Monastery Codex 587 (c. late-eleventh century) portrays Jesus standing on a pedestal with his hand raised in a gesture of speech towards Nicodemus. For the Christians involved in the manuscript’s production and later usage, the image of Jesus and his conversation partner would naturally have impacted their reading of the corresponding lection, John 3:1-15.⁸³⁵ Because scholars have neglected these aspects of manuscript studies, this type of direct evidence still remains to be discovered. In this respect, it is my hope that the present work will provide stimulus for further critical study of John’s Gospel and its readers in antiquity and beyond.

⁸³⁵ See S. M. Pelakanidis et al (eds.), *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts. Volume I: The Protaton and the Monasteries of Dionysiou, Koutloumousiou, Xeropotamou and Gregoriou* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1974), 166 (fig. 197), 435-436; Tomoyuki Masuda, *The Illustration of the Manuscript Cod. 587 of the Dionysiou Monastery on Mount Athos: A Contribution to the Study of the Byzantine Lectionaries* (PhD dissertation. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1990 [Greek]), fig. 6, viewable online in the National Archive of PhD Theses at: <http://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/>

IV. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Table of Patristic Survey Data

Key:

X = Certainty of Jesus/Baptist speaking

H = High likelihood Jesus/Baptist speaking

O = Certainty of the Gospel-writer speaking

[] = No citation or position unclear

	3:13	3:14	3:15	3:16	3:17	3:18	3:19	3:20	3:21
Irenaeus of Lyons	H	H	H	H	H	X	X	X	X
Clement of Alexandria	H	H	H	H	H	X			
Tertullian of Carthage	H	H	H	X	X	X			
Hippolytus of Rome	X								
Origen of Alexandria	X	X	H	H	H	X			
Cyprian of Carthage	H	X	X						
Novatian of Rome	X								
Victorinus of Poetovio									
Anonymous Writer	H	H	H	X					
Pseudo-Tertullian	H	X							
Eustathius of Antioch	X	X	X						
Athanasius of Alexandria									
Aphrahat of Persia	X								
Hilary of Poitiers	X	H	H	X	X	X	X		
Zeno of Verona	H	H	H	H	H	X	X		
Ephrem the Syrian	X	H							
Ambrosiaster	X	H	H	X	H	X			
<i>Skeireins</i> Gothic Commentary on John									
Basil of Caesarea									
Didymus the Blind	H	H	H	X	H	X			
Ambrose of Milan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	H	X
Jerome	H	H	H	H	H	X			
Epiphanius of Salamis	X	X							
Philo of Carpasia	H	H	H	X					
Gregory of Nyssa	H	X							
John Chrysostom	H	X	H	H	H	X	H	X	

	3:13	3:14	3:15	3:16	3:17	3:18	3:19	3:20	3:21
Maximus of Turin	X	X							
Augustine of Hippo	X	X	X	H	X	X			
Theodore of Mopsuestia	X	X	X	H	X	X	H	X	X
Severian of Gabala	H	X	X						
John Cassian	X	X	H	H	X				
Cyril of Alexandria	X	X	H	X	X	H	X	X	H
Nonnus of Panopolis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quodvultdeus of Carthage	H	X	H	H	H	X			
Theodoret of Cyrus	X	X	X						
Leo I, the Great	H	X	H	X					
Peter Chrysologus	X								
Prosper of Aquitaine									

	3:31	3:32	3:33	3:34	3:35	3:36
Irenaeus of Lyons						
Clement of Alexandria						
Tertullian of Carthage	X	X	H	H	X	X
Hippolytus of Rome						
Origen of Alexandria						
Cyprian of Carthage						
Novatian of Rome						
Victorinus of Poetovio	H	H	H	X	X	
Anonymous Writer						
Pseudo-Tertullian						
Eustathius of Antioch						
Athanasius of Alexandria						
Aphrahat of Persia	H	H	H	X	X	
Hilary of Poitiers						
Zeno of Verona						
Ephrem the Syrian						
Ambrosiaster						
<i>Skeireins</i> Gothic Commentary on John	X	X				
Basil of Caesarea						
Didymus the Blind						
Ambrose of Milan						
Jerome	X					
Epiphanius of Salamis						
Philo of Carpasia						
Gregory of Nyssa						
John Chrysostom	X	X	H	X	X	X

	3:31	3:32	3:33	3:34	3:35	3:36
Maximus of Turin						
Augustine of Hippo	X	X	X	X	X	
Theodore of Mopsuestia	X	H	H	H	H	X
Severian of Gabala	X	H	H	X	X	
John Cassian						
Cyril of Alexandria	H	X	H	X	H	X
Nonnus of Panopolis						
Quodvultdeus of Carthage						
Theodoret of Cyrus						
Leo I, the Great						
Peter Chrysologus						
Prosper of Aquitaine	X	X	X			

Appendix 2: John 3 in Modern English Versions

The following versions were included in this outline and will be abbreviated as follows: Goodspeed New Testament: Goodspeed (1923); Centenary New Testament: CNT (1924); Revised Standard Version: RSV (1946-); New World Translation: NWT (1950-2013); New English Bible: NEB (1961); New American Bible: NAB (1970); New King James Version: NKJV (1982); New International Version: NIV (1973-1984) and NIV (2011); New Jerusalem Bible: NJB (1985); New American Bible, Revised Edition: NABRE (1986); New Revised Standard Version: NRSV (1989); Good News Translation: GNT (1992); New American Standard Bible: NASB (1960-1995); International Children’s Bible: ICB (1986-1999); God’s Word Translation: GW (1995); English Standard Version: ESV (2001); Holman Christian Standard Bible: HCSB (1999-2003); New Living Translation: NLT (1996-2013); Eastern/Greek Orthodox Bible: EOB (2007-2009); New English Translation: NET (2009); Scholars Version: SV (1992-2010); Common English Bible: CEB (2011); Lexham English Bible: LEB (2010-2013);

International Standard Version: ISV (1995-2014); Modern English Version: MEV (2014).

English Versions of John 3:13-15

3:13-15 considered part of Jesus' speech Goodspeed, CNT, RSV, NWT, NEB, NAB, NKJV, NIV, NJB, NABRE, NRSV, NASB, ICB, GW, ESV, HCSB, NLT, EOB, NET, CEB, LEB, ISV, MEV

3:14-15 not considered part of Jesus' speech, with alternative in footnote GNT, SV

English Versions of John 3:16-21

3:16-21 considered part of Jesus' speech CNT, NWT, NEB, NAB, NKJV, NJB, NASB, ICB, NLT, EOB, CEB, MEV

3:16-21 considered part of Jesus' speech, with alternative in footnote NIV (1973-1984), NRSV, ESV, HCSB, ISV

3:16-21 not considered part of Jesus' speech, with alternative in footnote RSV, GNT, SV, NIV (2011), NET, LEB

3:16-21 not considered part of Jesus' speech Goodspeed, NABRE, GW

English Versions of John 3:31-36

3:31-36 considered part of the Baptist's speech CNT, NKJV, NJB, NASB, ICB, GW, NLT, CEB

3:31-36 considered part of the Baptist's speech, with alternative in footnote NAB, NIV (1973-1984)

3:31-36 not considered part of the Baptist's speech, with alternative in footnote RSV, NABRE, NRSV, ESV, NIV (2011), EOB, NET, SV, LEB

3:31-36 not considered part of the Baptist's speech Goodspeed, NWT, NEB, GNT, HCSB, ISV, MEV

Goodspeed (1923)
3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12

3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph
3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph

CNT (1924)

3:13-15 in quotations, new paragraph
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph
3:31-36 in quotations, new paragraph

RSV (1946-)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12
3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:15 ('Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 21')
3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:30 ('Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 36')

NWT (1950-2013)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:9-12
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph
3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph

NEB (1961)

3:13-15 in quotations, new paragraph
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph at 3:16 and 3:18
3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph

NAB (1970)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:11-12
3:16-21 in quotations
3:31-36 in quotations, new section subtitled 'Discourse Concluded', footnote after 3:30 ('It is uncertain whether these words are spoken by the Baptizer, by Jesus, or by the evangelist. Perhaps an originally independent discourse of Jesus has been brought here by way of comment on the two preceding scenes of ch. 3')

NKJV (1982)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph at 3:18
3:31-36 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:27-30

NIV (1973-1984)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:21 ('Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 15')
3:31-36 in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:36 ('Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 30')

NJB (1985)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.

3:16-21 in quotations, same paragraph
3:31-36 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:27-30

NABRE (1986)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12
3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote at beginning of chapter ('This is the first of the Johannine discourses, shifting from dialogue to monologue (Jn 3:11-15) to reflection of the evangelist (Jn 3:16-21)')
3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:30 ('It is uncertain whether these are words by the Baptist, Jesus, or the evangelist. They are reflections on the two preceding scenes')

NRSV (1989)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph, footnotes after 3:15 and 3:21 ('Some interpreters hold that the quotation concludes with verse 15')
3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:30 ('Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 36')

GNT (1992)

3:13-15 new paragraph at 3:14, footnote after 3:13 ('The quotation may continue through verse 21')
3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph at 3:18 (note: translation of verse 18a: 'Those who believe in the Son are not judged')
3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph

NASB (1960-1995)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph
3:31-36 in quotations, new paragraph

ICB (1986-1999)

3:13-15 in quotations, new paragraph at 3:14
3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph (note: translation of 3:19: 'People are judged by this fact: I am the Light from God that has come into the world...')
3:31-36 in quotations, new paragraph

GW (1995)

3:13-15 in quotations, new paragraph at 3:14
3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraphs at 3:16 and 3:19
3:31-36 in quotations, new paragraph (note: translation of 3:31, 3:33: '...I, a person from the earth, know nothing but what is on earth, and that's all I can talk about...I have accepted what that person said, and I have affirmed that God is truthful')

ESV (2001)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.

3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:15 ('Some interpreters hold that the quotation ends at verse 15')

3:31-36 not in quotations new paragraph, footnote after 3:30 ('Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 36')

HCSB (1999-2003)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.

3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:21 ('It is possible that Jesus' words end at v. [15]. Ancient Gk did not have quotation marks')

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph

NLT (1996-2013)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12 (note: 1996 translation of 3:13-15: 'For only I, the Son of Man, have come to earth...so I, the Son of Man, must be lifted up on a pole, so that everyone who believes in me will have eternal life')

3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraphs at 3:16 and 3:18

3:31-36 in quotations, new paragraph (note: 1996 translation of 3:31: '...I am of the earth, and my understanding is limited to the things of earth...'; 2004-2013 translation: '...We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things...')

EOB (2007-2009)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.

3:16-21 in quotations, same paragraph

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:30 ('Verses 31-36 are either a discourse by John the Baptist or more probably a reflection by the evangelist')

NET (2009)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.

3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:15 ('Some interpreters extend the quotation of Jesus' words through v. 21')

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:25 ('...As far as the author is concerned, it serves as a further continuation of the point made to Nicodemus, that is, the necessity of being born 'from above' (3:3). Note that John the Baptist describes Jesus as 'the one who comes from heaven' in 3:31 (Greek, *anōthen*), the same word as in 3:3...'), footnote after 3:30 ('Some interpreters extend the quotation of John the Baptist's words through v. 36')

NIV (2011)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.

3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:15 ('Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 21')

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:30 ('Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 36')

SV (1992-2010)

3:13-15 new paragraph at 3:14, footnote after 3:13 ('Under the constraints of modern punctuation, it is usual to end Jesus' words either here or at v. 21. No such problem faced the ancient writer; Jesus' words merge into those of the evangelist—or perhaps no such distinction is to be made')

3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:30 ('It is unclear who speaks here. See the note on 3:13')

CEB (2011)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12.

3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph at 3:19

3:31-36 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:27-30

LEB (2010-2013)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:9-12.

3:16-21 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:15 ('Some interpreters and Bible translations extend the quotation of Jesus' words through v. 21')

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:36 ('Some interpreters and Bible translations extend the quotation of John the Baptist's words through v. 36')

ISV (1995-2014)

3:13-15 in quotations, new paragraph

3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph, footnote after 3:15 ('The quotation possibly concludes with this verse instead of with verse 21')

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph

MEV (2014)

3:13-15 in quotations, same paragraph as 3:10-12

3:16-21 in quotations, new paragraph

3:31-36 not in quotations, new paragraph

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