

Four Stages of Revelation: The Uniting of Scripture, Jesus' Word and Spirit- Illumined Remembrance in the Fourth Gospel

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Abstract

Reflection on the formation of the NT canon often neglects the internal claims of the NT texts themselves in favor of a focus on their reception. However, while it is clear the canonical Gospels present the teaching of Jesus as authoritative, the intended authority of the written Gospel texts themselves has mostly been dismissed or even ignored by critical biblical scholars. However, this position is now being reconsidered, and the exegesis of particular texts may prove to counter the former assumption. The present article argues that there are four stages of revelation implicit within the Fourth Gospel. The author uses select narratorial insertions to convey the disciples' post-resurrection remembrance, understanding and belief (2:22; 12:16; 20:9) as the uniting of the OT scripture (γραφή) and the revelatory word (λόγος) of Jesus as one divinely inspired and authoritative message revealed by the Holy Spirit (14:25–26). Consequently, the evangelist's very writing of the Gospel transcribes this revelation for his readers (20:31) in order that they may believe and have life. John's Gospel thus presents an internal claim for itself to its readers as "scripture," through which the signs of Jesus, the reality of his life-giving death and resurrection and his very presence can be experienced by later readers and disciples.

Introduction

In relation to the formation of the NT canon, a reformed view insists on the self-attestation or self-authentication of the scriptures.¹ In this view, the designation of the NT books as authoritative was not determined by the decision of a centralized teaching authority in the early church, but rather, the scriptures themselves—the books that eventually attained canonical status—testify to their own revelatory authority and were therefore so received by the church universal in a process overseen by the Holy Spirit (Metzger 2003, 318–19; Kruger 2012, 88–122).² However, it ought not to be thought that this was a novel idea of the reformers. Rather, it may be argued that the evidence of the patristic period reflects a process congruent with the idea self-authentication, in which the NT books eventually recognized as “canonical” imposed themselves on the church universal, apart from the decisions of any one ecclesial body (Metzger 2003, 318; Kruger 2012, 89 n4). This may be especially evident for the four canonical Gospels, which are cited authoritatively very early in the patristic writings (Hill 2010, 226–29; Massaux 1990).³

Yet, the theological idea of “self-authentication” can seem ambiguous, without a clear explication of the precise way in which the scriptures testify to themselves.⁴ The present work is not concerned with the broad scope of the concept of self-authentication, but rather a related concept that contributes to it: the internal claims of the books themselves to their own revelatory authority (Kruger 2012, 90). Whether the NT books make such claims is a question for exegetical analysis.⁵ However, critical biblical scholarship in the modern period has large-

- 1 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.1–5. While Luther’s canonical ideas are more difficult to pin down, his insistence on the canonicity of those books that “teach Christ” implies that for Luther it was the book’s inner theological witness to the Gospel that made it canonical; see Metzger (1987, 243) and Bruce (1988, 243–44).
- 2 B. B. Warfield (1892) describes a process of immediate recognition based on the apostles’ imposition of the writings “as law,” in the same way as the OT books were imposed, such that the “scriptures’ were not a *closed* but an *increasing* ‘canon’” (italics original).
- 3 This is because the earliest Christian writers make no mention or record of an authoritative body that has determined a fixed canonical list, while Evidence rather points to the reception and use of books already received by the broad array of churches. That the fourfold Gospel collection was received and used as authoritative quite early is attested not only by the second-century apologists (see Hill 2010), but also by the manuscript evidence (see Stanton 1997). Specifically, Matthew and John were the two books most prominently applied in patristic writing. For the early and widespread reception of Matthew’s Gospel, see Massaux (1990).
- 4 For a helpful discussion on “self-authentication” as a theological and philosophical subject, see Paul Helm (1973, 101–17).
- 5 It is not enough to say that the texts claim authority for themselves without specifying the kind

ly dismissed this question or presumed a negative answer.⁶ In 2000, D. Moody Smith reconsidered this presumption with regard to the canonical Gospels in his presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature (2000) concluding that the Gospels do indeed make internal claims for their own scriptural authority.⁷

While the response to Smith's proposal has been rather slow (Moloney 2005, 456 n10), other scholars have begun to consider the possibility that the Gospel authors present their works as scripture.⁸ Perhaps the Gospel that has received

and extent of authority they lay claim to. It is clear that Paul lays claim to apostolic authority in his letters to the localized communities to whom he writes. But this is not itself a claim to universal, revelatory authority. Similarly, most Biblical scholarship in the modern period recognizes the Gospels as accounts written to a specific early church community or communities and as such, they exercise some level of authority over those communities. But again, this is quite different from saying they make a claim for a universal revelatory authority on par with scriptural books from the past.

It should also be noted that to say a NT book makes an internal claim for scriptural authority is not exactly the same as saying the writer makes a claim to be included in the NT canon since there was not a NT canon at the time. It would be more appropriate to view such a claim as one of (climactic) inclusion in the corpus of Jewish scriptures (Old Testament) clearly in use by the NT writers. Whether or not that corpus was thought of as officially closed in the first century is beyond the scope of this article.

- 6 The general sentiment of contemporary Biblical scholarship on this matter was succinctly summarized by the statement of Lee Martin McDonald (1995, 142) that “with the exception of the author of the book of Revelation, no conscious or clear effort was made by these authors to produce Christian scriptures.” Also revealing are the statements of D. Moody Smith and Francis J. Moloney, scholars who once were dismissive of this possibility but now hold to it. Moloney (2005, 467) openly suspects that earlier in his career he “may have ridiculed any suggestion that the author of the Gospel of John thought that he was writing sacred scripture.” Now, Moloney holds that very position. Similarly, Smith (2000, 4) states that “the authors of the NT books . . . —we have assumed—do not think of themselves as writing scripture.” However, Smith goes on to overturn this presumption for the canonical Gospels.
- 7 As part of his argument that the Gospels were written as scripture, Smith also appeals to the argument of Richard Bauckham and others (1998) that the Gospels were intended not for localized communities but for “all Christians” (Bauckham 2007a). The Gospels’ character as “scripture” is closely linked with that of their intended audience.
- 8 For the NT writings in general, see Peter Balla (2002, 373–75) and Michael Kruger (2013, 119–54). For the Synoptic Gospels, besides Smith, see the argument of Armin Baum (2008). Hubert Frankemölle (1993) finds that Matthew intended his Gospel “als heilige Schrift in Kontinuität zur Schrift des früheren Bundes” (“as Holy Scripture in continuity with Scripture of the earlier covenant”). For Matthew, see also Scaer (2004, 108–14) and Thellman (2016, 304–9). Other interpreters of particular Gospels make statements that are either explicit or highly suggestive that those Gospels make claims for their own authority or present themselves as continuations of the OT scriptures (Davies and Allison 1988, 1:187; Luz 2005, 15; G. Stanton 1993, 378, 383; France 1998, 128; Wright 1992, 390; Pennington 2007, 345; Hengel 2000, 90; Kurz 1993, 11; Evans 1993, 201). See also my entry (Thellman 2017) in the previous issue of the present publication.

the most attention in this regard is the Gospel of John.⁹ It is clear that this Gospel portrays Jesus as divine revealer (John 3:12–13; 14:24–26; 16:12–15), but I hope to show through the exegesis of select texts that the fourth evangelist also claims revelatory authority for his written composition.¹⁰

Remembering and Believing

Near the beginning of the Gospel, following his report of the incident in the Jerusalem temple where Jesus drove out the sellers and money changers (John 2:14–16), the fourth evangelist narrates to his readers that Jesus' disciples *remembered* (ἐμνήσθησαν) that it was written (γεγραμμένον) “*zeal for your house will consume me*,” (John 2:17; Ps 69:10). Next, Jesus responds to the temple leaders' challenge to his authority by telling them to destroy “this temple” and in three days he would raise it up. The temple leaders are incredulous considering it took forty-six years to that point to build the temple. The narrator then again breaks into the story to explain that Jesus said this regarding his body and to again report on the disciples' *remembering*.¹¹ This time the object of remembering is what Jesus spoke, and this remembering is explicitly stated to have occurred after Jesus'

9 Clearly, the scholar who has argued this point most voluminously is Francis J. Moloney (Moloney 2005, 2009, 2014). Moloney credits D. Moody Smith (2000) with prompting his own turn in this direction, as well as the work of German scholars Obermann (1996), Labahn (2004) and Scholtissek (2004). In addition, M. J. J. Menken (2015) has argued for a claim to scriptural authority in John's Gospel. Other interpreters who have argued or suggested this direction include Kruger (2013, 135–38), Craig Keener (2003, 2:1215), Judith Lieu (2005, 173–74; 2013, 251), Jean Zumstein (2003, 377) and Herman Ridderbos (1997, 671). Gail R. O'Day's literary-critical study of revelation in the fourth Gospel (1986) astutely asserts that the Gospel of John does not simply contain or make dogmatic assertions about the revelation of Jesus within the Gospel, but that the “theological claim” of revelation is expressed by the “narrative mode” of the Gospel itself. That is, that the “locus of revelation is thus seen to lie in the biblical text and in the world created by the words of that text” (O'Day 1986, 47). This is not far from saying that John's Gospel presents itself as revealed scripture. Keener (2003, 1:115–22) concludes that the “writer and readers of the Fourth Gospel undoubtedly assumed its inspiration, and thus ceded the document authority because they affirmed that Jesus stood behind and spoke in the document.” However, Keener is reticent on whether they accorded it the same authority as the written scripture (1:122 n320).

10 Menken (2015) makes a more comprehensive argument for John's scriptural claim, including a more diverse array of texts. The present work will focus on John 2:13–22; 14:24–26; 20:9 and 20:30–31.

11 For the present work, I use “narrator” and “author” synonymously to refer to the “ideal author,” and make no claims about the historical author. See note 20 below.

resurrection (2:21–22). The fourth evangelist continues to explain that the *remembering* at that time (i.e. after the resurrection) spurred the disciples to believe “the scripture (γράφη) and the word (λόγος) that Jesus had spoken” (2:22).

Before further comment on the importance of this final sentence of 2:22, there are two aspects of this text that need to be considered. First, while it seems most natural to understand the disciples’ remembering of the OT text in 2:17 as taking place within narrative time, that is, at the time of the temple cleansing, in the only two other instances in the Gospel where the disciples are said to remember (2:22; 12:16), the remembering occurs after Jesus’ resurrection (or glorification). Moreover, in the farewell discourse, Jesus explains that the *paraclete*, the Holy Spirit, would in the future bring to the disciples remembrance of all he had taught them (14:25–26).¹² So, it is preferable to understand the remembering in 2:17 to have taken place after the resurrection (Lincoln 2005, 138). At the very least, in light of 2:22 (see below), even if initially brought to mind at the time of the event, the text would necessarily have been recalled again by the disciples after the resurrection in connection with the event and Jesus’ words.¹³

The second point of consideration is the referent of the scripture (γραφή) referred to in 2:22. Moloney (2005, 363, 2009, 464) interprets καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ expegetically so that the scripture (γραφή) is synonymous with the message (λόγος) Jesus had spoken and thus translated something like “the scripture, that is, the message Jesus had spoken.” However, this is not the most natural reading since γραφή was commonly understood to mean a written scripture, that is, an OT text. Other interpreters suggest a general reference to all the scriptures, or another specific text having to do with the resurrection.¹⁴ Indeed, the reference to the γραφή in 20:9 is often linked with 2:22 since there is no known scripture that fits the wording of that verse (see discussion below). However, the singular γραφή with the article in John’s usage suggests at least a primary singular text is in view, not all the scriptures,¹⁵ and in 2:22, an OT scrip-

12 Only in 15:20 is the disciples’ remembering oriented towards the present and not the future, where they are exhorted by Jesus to remember a previous word that he taught them.

13 Similarly, Kerr (2002, 82–83) sees the statement in 2:17 as “deliberately vague” and argues that there is a “present and future remembering” (p. 82 n35).

14 A newer proposal (Kubiś 2012) identifies Zach 6:12–13 as the referent both for 2:22 and for 20:9. However, a number of somewhat complex connections would have to be made by the reader to understand this text as the background text to Jesus’ death and resurrection.

15 Aside from these two verses in question (2:22; 20:9), the singular γραφή with the article appears to refer to a singular text in John’s Gospel (7:38, 42; 10:35; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24; 19:28–29; 19:36; 19:37) even though the scripture referent in some of these passages isn’t obvious. However, elsewhere where the term is employed in the narrator’s speech (19:24, 28, 29, 36, 37), the singular text is easily identifiable. Where the Gospel does explicitly refer to all the scriptures

ture (Ps 69:10) is explicitly cited just a few verses earlier in the (2:17) in relation to the narrated event. Further, since the descriptions of the two remembrances use the exact same language, they can be juxtaposed in parallel with the end of 2:22 serving as a summary (Hays 2016, 311):

2:17: ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι γεγραμμένον ἐστὶν . . .

2:22: ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τοῦτο ἔλεγεν . . .

2:22: καὶ ἐπίστευσεν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ . . .

Thus, it is better to understand John 2:22 to refer to *two* things: the written OT text referred to in 2:17 and remembered by the disciples (Ps 69:9) and the words Jesus spoke about the tearing down and raising of the temple, both of which are given in 2:22 equal authoritative status (Keener 2003, 1:530; Lincoln 2005, 141). Similarly, in John 12:15–16, the disciples are reminded by the Holy Spirit—by implication from 14:26—of *two* things: what was written about Jesus in the OT scripture (Zach 9:9), and what happened to Jesus in the narrated event (τότε ἐμνήσθησαν ὅτι ταῦτα ἦν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ γεγραμμένα καὶ ταῦτα ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ), and yet these *two things* are united at the time of remembering. That is, in both 2:22 and 12:16 neither the scripture nor the event can be properly understood alone, but only together, after the resurrection, by the instruction of the Holy Spirit (Keener 2003, 1:531).

But in what way did the disciples “believe” Psalm 69:9 after the resurrection? Clearly, the New Testament writers make heavy Christological use of the Psalms, but this is especially true in the fourth Gospel (Hays 2016, 286–87; Witherington III 2017, 153), and the lament Psalm 69 is second only to Psalm 22 in the number of NT citations and allusions to the Psalms (Witherington III 2017, 151). In addition to the citation in 2:17, Psalm 69 is elsewhere cited in John’s Gospel in 15:25 (Ps 69:4) and 19:28–29 (Ps 69:21). Together, these three texts at the beginning, middle, and end of the Gospel function to portray Jesus as the paradigmatic righteous sufferer, culminating at the crucifixion. But here in chapter two, it is also the link with the temple that makes Psalm 69:10 so appropriate. Hays (2016, 312) reasons that this citation:

discloses, among other things, that *Jesus himself is the speaker of Psalm 69:9*, the praying voice who declares, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” And that insight, in turn, opens the window on a fresh appropriation of the entire psalm—indeed, perhaps the entire Psalter—as a proleptic veiled revelation of the identity of Jesus {Italics original}.¹⁶

(5:39), the plural is employed. Generally, the same pattern is found throughout the NT, although Gal 3:22 may be a clear exception where the singular γραφή with the article refers to scripture as a whole (cf. 2 Tim 3:16 though without the article).

16 As Lindars (1972, 144) argues, the citation is a “fragment” of a larger Psalm that was often

The Psalm 69 quotation not only identifies Jesus as the epitome of the righteous sufferer of the Psalms, but also associates the suffering with the speaker's zeal for the temple, the habitation of God's dwelling on earth. As Longman (1988, 141) states, "as he cleansed the temple, he identified with the Psalmist's zeal which led to his persecution." It is preferable to understand the "consuming" not simply as a sort of inner passion but rather that this zeal for the temple and its holiness would eventually lead him to his death.¹⁷ Thus, Jesus' words in 2:19 are connected to the scripture citation in their reference—as explained by the narrator—by his death; Jesus himself was the "temple" that would be torn down only to be raised again. Jesus himself is now presented as the locus of God's presence, the "*place of mediation between God and human beings*" (Hays 2016, 312). Already before chapter two, the author of the Gospel has twice identified Jesus with the temple as the location of divine presence and the nexus of heaven and earth (1:14; 51), so it is clearly a central concern of the Gospel (Perrin 2010, 53; Hays 2016, 313).¹⁸

There are thus two things that are remembered and consequently believed in 2:22: the scripture (γραφή) of Psalm 69 that speaks both for Jesus' zeal for the temple and anticipates his sacrificial death; and Jesus' spoken message (λόγος)

used as a proof-text for the crucifixion. C. H. Dodd (1952, 97), who asserts of Psalm 69 that, in light of its widespread application, "the intention of the New Testament writers is clearly to apply the whole to the sufferings and ultimate triumph of Christ." Witherington III (2017, 155) rightly tempers this remark by reminding readers that

In John, the Psalms are not just cited or alluded to, they provide back stories, especially aspects of the back story of the righteous sufferer; they are taken over and used to depict the life, and especially the death, of Jesus. Jesus fulfills the role and story of the righteous sufferer, but this does not mean at all that the NT writers think that *everything* that is said in a particular psalm is apropos of Jesus' story. They are *selective* in what they use when it comes to language, back story, citation, allusion, and echo.

That is the widespread use of the Psalm and the holistic pattern of the righteous sufferer the citations point to need not imply that NT writers thought Jesus fulfilled Ps 69:5, nor that Christians should apply in prayer the imprecations in vss. 22–28 (Longman III 1988, 139; Witherington III 2017, 150) since Jesus did not, in fact, respond in this way on the cross. It is better to understand the application as a typological pattern in which Jesus fills out the meaning of the true righteous sufferer to its full potential, while not losing sight of the ways in which the advent of Messiah reconfigured the perspective of God's people towards their enemies.

17 So also many interpreters (Wohlgemut 1993, 89; Ridderbos 1997, 117; Kerr 2002, 85–86; Keener 2003, 1:527; Köstenberger 2004, 107; Lincoln 2005, 138; Brant 2011, 71). The adaptation of the word for 'consume' in John's text from either the Hebrew *qal* perfect *אכלתי* or the Greek aorist *κατέφαγεν* to the future *κατεφάγεται* may serve to show that the "consumption" of Jesus from this zeal will take place on the cross, as of yet future occurrence from the perspective of the temple cleansing within the narrative. These terms can also signify the consummation of temple sacrifices, which adds to the intersection between the temple theme and the death of Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice of the righteous sufferer (cf. John 1:29); see Kerr (2002, 84–86).

18 See also Coloe (2009) for the prominence of the temple theme in John.

that he would tear down and raise up the “temple” in three days. Yet, it is the explanatory comment of the narrator in 2:21 that “he spoke of the temple of his body,” that unites the γραφή of 2:17 and the λόγος of 2:19 into a coherent and meaningful whole that anticipates the climax of the Gospel narrative—the death and resurrection of Jesus—which can be “believed” by the disciples (2:22). How then is the author able to make the statement that effectively unites the authoritative γραφή and the authoritative λόγος of Jesus and gives them their proper meaning? Either the narrator himself has participated in the experience of the disciples’ remembering and believing by means of the illuminating instruction of the Spirit, or he is a recipient of their testimony. Since the Gospel itself indicates that one called the “beloved disciple” is the one who has testified to Jesus’ life and had “written these things” (John 21:20–24), it appears that he is among those who have remembered and believed.

The Holy Spirit and Jesus’ Word (Λόγος)

As one of Jesus’ disciples, the “beloved disciple” (13:22; 19:26; 20:2, 8; 21:7; 21:20–24)¹⁹ is shown within the Gospel to be an eyewitness of the narrated events (19:35; 21:24) (Bauckham 2007b), and thus among the disciples who have remembered and believed. Further, the beloved disciple himself may be understood as the Gospel’s ideal author.²⁰ This is important when one considers both the nature of Jesus’ λόγος and the promised role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating it. In John 14:25, Jesus tells his disciples that his message (λόγος) is not his own, but comes from the one who sent him (14:24). It is of divine origin with divine authority; it is divine revelation. Further, Jesus assures the disciples that upon his departure the Holy Spirit would instruct them in all things and *bring to remembrance* (ὑπομνήσει) all he had taught them (14:26). Thus, the teaching (λόγος) of Jesus, which has already in 2:22 been paralleled with the OT scripture (γραφή), is here affirmed to be of divine origin and authority, to be remembered at the prompting

19 John 18:15 might possibly also be a reference to the same beloved disciple. Also, Bauckham (2007b, 77) understands the beloved disciple to be one of the anonymous pair of disciples who appear in 21:2 (cf. 1:35–42), which is one of his reasons for not identifying this figure with John, son of Zebedee, who is already included in the list of 21:2 as one of the “sons of Zebedee.”

20 It is not the purpose of the present article to consider issues of historical authorship or the historicity of the events narrated. Therefore, for the sake of the present article, I wish only to maintain that, in agreement with Bauckham (2007b), the “beloved disciple” is the “ideal author” of the Gospel (i.e. the “author” as depicted within the text itself), whom the text claims to be an eyewitness among other disciples of Jesus, but whose name remains anonymous.

of the Holy Spirit after Jesus would be raised and departed to the Father (14:27).

As Williams (2013, 104) affirms, “this ‘remembering’ does not simply consist of the recollection of past events; It acts as a bridge to a new perception that is inseparable from the disciple’s post-resurrection perspective.” Further, this remembering, in light of 14:25–26, should be understood as a result of the teaching activity of the Holy Spirit even though the Spirit is not explicitly mentioned in 2:21–22 (O’Day 1991, 161; Williams 2013, 104).²¹ The Spirit illumines the revelation of Jesus (Cartledge 1996, 122; George R. Beasley-Murray 1987, 261; Carson 1991, 505), though it is important to maintain that in this illumination and new perspective there remains a “consistency” with Jesus’ revelatory words (Cartledge 1996, 122). Thus, in 2:13–22, readers may infer that the disciples, including the eye-witness beloved disciple, have been, after the resurrection, reminded by the Holy Spirit of Psalm 69 as well as Jesus’ cryptic words about destroying and raising the temple in three days, and taught a new understanding of the meaning of the event and the accompanying γραφή and λόγος, all of which prompts their *belief*. This new understanding, however, itself is written by the author in the form of the explanatory gloss, “but he was speaking about the temple of his body.”

According to Williams (2013, 105), following John Ashton (2009, 310), John’s Gospel thus reflects a two-stage process of revelation: the initial revelation of Jesus that is not fully comprehended before the resurrection, and the new, clarified perspective after the resurrection, given meaning by the teaching and reminding of the Holy Spirit.²² However, the present study of John 2:13–22 suggests that the fourth evangelist recognizes two additional stages of revelation: one before the spoken revelation of Jesus, and one after the Holy Spirit inspired remembrance of the disciples.

The initial stage of revelation in the author’s worldview must be the OT scriptures themselves. In addition to numerous allusions and a rich use of scriptural symbolism particularly associated with the Jewish festivals, the Fourth Gospel explicitly quotes the OT on fourteen occasions (Köstenberger 2007, 415). These quotations display a discernible pattern in their introductory formulas. Up through the middle of chapter twelve seven quotations are introduced with “scripture (γραφή) says” (7:38; 42), or “it is written (γεγράμμενον)” (2:17; 6:31; 6:45; 10:34; 12:14).²³ Moloney (2009, 358) observes that each of these citations are “associated with a moment of revelation ‘to the Jews’ . . . during Jesus’ public min-

21 There is general agreement on this among commentators.

22 Williams and Ashton in this way link John’s Gospel to the Jewish apocalyptic perspective.

23 Two additional OT quotations in this section do not use an introductory formula (1:23; 12:13), but both of these occur in the voice of characters within the narrative: John the Baptist and the crowd.

istry.” Beginning with 12:38, however, John uses a fulfillment formula to introduce another set of seven texts (12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24; 19:28; 19:36).²⁴ The hinge between the two sections would appear to be the statement in 12:23 that Jesus’ “hour . . . to be glorified” had come (Moloney 2009, 358).

This patterned appropriation of OT texts shows not only that the author valued the OT scriptures and considered them authoritative revelation, but that he understood that the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus endowed these scriptures with their full meaning. However, this full meaning could not be ascertained before Jesus’ hour of glorification (death and resurrection) was completed, nor could it be without the illuminating work of the Spirit. John 2:13–22 exemplifies this multi-stage revelatory process for the entire Gospel, in light of Jesus’ teaching on the role of the Spirit in 14:25–26.

Understanding the Scripture of John 20:9

At this point, three stages of revelation in John 2:13–22 have been identified: The OT scripture, Jesus’ revelatory message, and the Spirit-prompted revelatory remembrance of the disciples. It is important to recall that, in 2:22, *belief* of the first two revelations (scripture and message) takes place at the third revelatory stage. That is not to say of course that the disciples and others do not believe in Jesus prior to the third stage; they, of course, do (2:11; 4:39, 41; 7:31; 9:38; 10:42; 11:27, 45; 17:8),²⁵ but in 2:22 the belief is specifically associated with their Spirit-illuminated remembrance of the scripture and the word of Jesus pertaining to his death and resurrection.

To confirm the fourth stage of revelation and clarify the nature of this understanding and belief, it is necessary first to fast-forward in the Gospel to its resurrection narrative (20:1–9). Upon Mary Magdalene’s report of the empty tomb in John 20:2, the narrator informs readers that Peter and “the other disciple whom Jesus loved” ran to inspect the tomb (20:3–8). In John’s narration of the resurrection, the “other disciple” is said to have believed (20:9), but the narrator’s explanation clarifies that “they had not yet understood the scripture (γραφή) that it was necessary for him to rise from the dead.” In light of 2:13–22; 12:15–16 and 14:25–26, readers perceive here that the Holy Spirit illumination that would enable the

24 In all but one of these citations, John uses πληρῶ, “to fulfill”. The exception is 19:28 where he applies τελειῶ, “to finish, make perfect.” While 12:39 and 19:37 are additional quotations without the formula, they are continuations of the quotations 12:38 and 19:36 and thus fall into the same fulfillment category.

25 However, there are reports of belief that turn out not to be authentic, lasting, or fully committed (8:30–59; 12:42–43).

disciples to remember with understanding has not yet occurred (Smith 1999, 375; Koester 1991, 90–91). The implication is that Peter and the other disciple would come to know or understand the scripture at a point in the future—outside of the narrative— but at that moment within the narrative, they did not. Their lack of knowledge here is thus implicitly linked with the earlier texts about the disciples’ remembrance after the resurrection. Therefore, the reference to γραφή in 20:9 is closely linked with that of 2:22. In addition, just as in 2:22, the referent of γραφή in 20:9 is difficult to ascertain.²⁶

No one particular text can be verbally linked to the statement about the resurrection, although commentators offer an array of OT scriptures that can be construed conceptually to refer to the resurrection, most often Psalm 16:10 (Lincoln 2005, 491; Morris 1995, 737). Most interpreters, however, are ambivalent or prefer to understand 20:9 as a reference to many scriptures (Brant 2011, 268), the scriptures as a whole, or the “general tenor” of the OT scriptures in a way similar to Luke 24:27, 32, and 45, and 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (George R. Beasley-Murray 1987, 373; Ridderbos 1997, 634–35). However, in those passages, the term is in the plural, while in John 20:9, as in 2:22, γραφή is singular.²⁷

Moloney has offered a bold proposal that the γραφή in 20:9 is a self-reference to the John’s Gospel itself (1998, 520, 523, 2005, 2009, 2014). First, Moloney sees Jesus’ teaching as the referent of γραφή both in 2:22 (see above), and in 17:12, so that already in the Gospel γραφή means something else besides the OT scripture. Second, he argues that John’s citations of the OT shows that the scriptures are brought to their completion in the fulfillment of scripture at the cross, signaled by the move in John’s fulfillment quotations from the use of πληρώω (“to fulfill”; 12:38; 15:25; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24) to τελειώω (“to complete”) in 19:28 (2009). Third, he includes a narrative argument for John 20 that links the resurrection report to the self-reference to the Gospel composition in 20:30–31, so that readers also see the reference to γραφή in 20:9 as a reference to the Gospel itself, which Peter and the Beloved disciple could not yet know because it was not yet written (2014, 101–2).

I have already answered the first point in the discussion on γραφή in 2:22 above. The second point is an interesting observation, but it does not follow that γραφή no longer means the OT scripture from that point onward.²⁸ Finally, the links with both 2:22 and 20:30–31 are significant, and I shall address them here. While I agree with Moloney’s overall conclusion about John’s self-presentation

26 Bultmann (1971, 685) and earlier source critics resorted to redactional theories for verse 9.

27 See note 14 above.

28 Indeed, there is one further fulfillment quotation after 19:28 in which John again employs πληρώω (19:36).

as scripture, I disagree on his interpretation of 20:9 and will argue for a different understanding.

First, it is important to recognize the overall context of John's use of γραφή in the Gospel. While commentators link 2:22 with 20:9 because of the concept of post-resurrection remembrance and because the referents to γραφή are not immediately clear, it is also worthwhile to note that these two verses represent the first and last use of γραφή in the Gospel, and they both occur in the narrator's voice. This is important because the narrator employs the term elsewhere only in passages having to do with Jesus' crucifixion (19:24, 28, 36, 37). After John 2:22 and before chapter nineteen, γραφή only occurs in the voice of Jesus (7:38, 42; 10:35; 13:18; 17:12) or the crowd (7:42). This implies that the narrator's concern with γραφή has principally to do with the Jesus' death and resurrection, and this is not surprising considering how strongly the Gospel points to Jesus' "hour" (Bauckham 2015, 63).

I have already shown above that it is best to understand the γραφή in 2:22 as referring to Psalm 69 via the citation in 2:17, and that the citation recalls both Jesus' identity as the ultimate righteous sufferer and, upon Jesus' cryptic saying and the narrator's explanatory gloss, his identity as the true temple whose body would be destroyed and raised up again. Since the narrator only here, in 2:22, specifically refers to the post-resurrection remembering and believing of both γραφή and λόγος, it makes this passage highly significant, and this should not be surprising since Jesus' accompanying words imbue the meaning of the citation with language that anticipates *both* his death and resurrection. I submit, therefore, that the γραφή in question in 20:9 is the same as that referred to in 2:22 (Psalm 69 via John 2:17), but given fuller meaning by Jesus' words that until after the resurrection (but not quite yet in the narrative time of 20:9) were not yet understood by the disciples.

While Psalm 69:9, nor the whole of Psalm 69, *by itself*, does not explicitly refer to resurrection,²⁹ it clearly was applied to explain aspects of Jesus' crucifixion, and the Psalm overall can be read to describe death (see esp. vss. 13–18). But, as a lament Psalm, it also moves quickly from grief to joy (vs. 29) (Longman III 1988, 140) and anticipates salvific deliverance (see esp. vs. 29). As speaker of the Psalm, Jesus is thus understood to be both the paradigmatic righteous sufferer whose sacrificial death made him the "lamb of God" (John 1:29) and the one who would be delivered in the ultimate sense, resurrection from the dead, and he would be raised up as the new temple, the place of God's presence among his people (John 1:14).

29 However, I suggest that Psalm 69 (see esp. vss. 13–18, 29) could nevertheless be read by itself to imply death and at least the anticipation of salvific deliverance.

The reason the two disciples, however, could not yet “know” the scripture in 20:9 is because the post-resurrection remembrance of both the γραφή and λόγος of Jesus had not yet taken place. Only then, by means of the revelation of the Holy Spirit, would both the death and resurrection of Jesus be able to be understood by recourse to Jesus’ cryptic words in 2:21 in combination with the OT scripture of Psalm 69:9. It is probably also true, however, that while ἡ γραφή in 2:22 and 20:9 primarily refers to this particular Psalm in light of the very important event in 2:13–22 and Jesus’ own word linking himself to the temple and anticipating his death and resurrection, other OT scriptures that fit this typological pattern also echo in the background.

The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel

It should be recalled that the fruit of the post-resurrection Holy Spirit-illuminated remembering of the disciples in 2:22 resulted in the *belief* of the OT scripture and Jesus’ revelatory Word. Perhaps apart only from the Beloved disciple,³⁰ the disciples in John 20 believe because they saw the resurrected Jesus (John 20:11–29).³¹ The text thus implies that at some point outside of the narrative, the Spirit’s teaching and reminding gave the disciples the revelatory insight to both specifically understand and believe the meaning and import of the scripture and revelatory word of Jesus together as put forth within the Gospel narrative.

Crucially though, the disciples’ illuminated remembrance of the signs of Jesus is available only through the author’s written work and explanation. The author’s stated that the purpose in John 20:31 reveals that John’s own writing now performs the role of leading readers to belief:

But these (signs) are written (ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται) in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God, and in order that by believing, you may have life in his name.

In this way, John makes a claim for his writing to perform the same function that the authoritative OT γραφή in fusion with the divine λόγος of Jesus upon the illumination of the Spirit performed for the disciples (2:22). In so doing, John’s

30 While much is made of the Beloved disciple’s believing apart from seeing the resurrected Jesus, this does not appear to be an emphasis of the text. Rather, 20:9 explicitly says “he saw, and believed.” While he did not see the raised Jesus, he was in effect an eyewitness of the results of the resurrection.

31 Bauckham (2015, 70) is right to argue that Jesus’ saying in 20:29 does not mean it would have been better for Thomas (and the others) not to have seen. Rather, their seeing and eyewitness testimony makes it possible for readers to indeed believe.

very writing of the third stage of revelation is consequently the fourth stage of revelation in the Gospel, meant for readers who are unable to experience the earthly Jesus or see the risen Jesus for themselves.³² O'Brien (2005, 285) thus calls the Gospel a "substitute experience for the reader," and O'Day (1991, 165) reasons that "one of the central purposes of the Fourth Gospel is to assure its readers in all future generations that they can have the same experience of Jesus as the characters in the narrative." The writing of the Gospel of John thus seeks to make Jesus truly present to all readers through the very words of the text, so that readers participate "in the narrative and revelatory experience communicated by it" (O'Day 1986, 89). John's Gospel does therefore not merely make a claim to authority, but also to mediate through its very words the presence of Jesus, the divine λόγος and the new temple of God, to its readers, for the ultimate purpose of belief and life.

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32 Similarly, Menken (2015, 80) compares John 5:24 to John 20:31 to show how the function of the written Gospel parallels the function of Jesus' divine λόγος within the Gospel to lead listeners/readers to belief.

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Četiri stadija objave: Sjedinjenje Svetog pisma, Isusove Riječi i Duha – prosvijetljeno sjećanje u četvrtom evanđelju

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