

**The Gift of Living Water:
A study of the relationship between water symbolism and the Spirit
in the Gospel of John**

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MTh Christian Theology**

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Abbreviations

BCE	Before the Christian Era
CE	The Christian Era
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
FG	Fourth Gospel
JB	John the Baptist
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
LXX	Septuagint

Abstract

As an essential element for life, water functions as a key Johannine symbol to reveal progressively that Jesus is the Word Incarnate which brings about transformation and divine revelation. This dissertation examines the extent to which John deliberately develops an increasingly intimate relationship between water symbolism and the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel. Through a narratological-exegetical approach, this study scrutinises John's integration of water symbolism into the whole Gospel from the Prologue to the climactic moment of revelation at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37-39), where Jesus offers the gift of 'living' water, identified as the Spirit. After brief consideration of scholarship concerning authorship, dating and the contemporary cultural context, key textual moments are explored beginning with pre-Tabernacles encounters (John 1-4), climaxing at the Tabernacles Festival's pivotal revelations (John 7) and thence the Spirit's role post-Tabernacles (John 9-21). John's masterful literary style incorporating effective use of symbolism, irony, dualisms, *double entendres* and eschatological allusions supports his high Christology, which demonstrably distinguishes the Fourth Gospel from the Synoptics. The study affirms Jesus as the ultimate vehicle for spiritual transformation and sustenance as the giver of the 'living' water, paralleling Ezekiel's river vision (Ezek 36:23-28), providing the bridge between humanity and the divine.

Chapter 1

Introduction

'So...this...is...a...River!'
'**THE** River,' corrected the Rat....
'It's my world...What it hasn't got is not worth having,
and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing'.¹

Water is essential for creating and sustaining life. More than simply a physical necessity, water, especially flowing water, is a powerful vehicle symbolically. The origins and significance of John's soteriology and pneumatology including his use of symbolism have long been the focus of scholarly debate.² In John's hands, water, as a key symbol in his diverse narrative stylistic toolbox, draws his readers into ever-deeper reflection on the person and activity of Jesus as the Incarnate Word.³

This dissertation sets out to argue without preconceptions that the Gospel's author⁴ deliberately and successfully develops a progressively intimate, implicit and explicit relationship between water symbolism and spirit to substantiate his intentioned narrative goal (20:31).⁵ Like Ezekiel's eschatological river vision (Ezek 36:23-28), John's narrative flows and reaches its peak with Jesus' climactic offer of living water of life to the thirsty (Jn 7:37-39).

¹ Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (Scribner, 1908), 9-10.

² For example, Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*, Second edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 3-24; Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003; Ford, *The Gospel of John*; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, Nachdr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996); Ian Galloway, *Called to Be Friends: Unlocking the Heart of John's Gospel* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2021); *inter alia*.

³ W E Sproston, "'Is Not This Jesus, the Son of Joseph'" (Jn 6:42): Johannine Christology as a Challenge to Faith', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 7, no. 24 (1985): 89, 92.

⁴ Wes Howard-Brook, 'John's Gospel's Call to Be Reborn of God', in *The New Testament. Introducing the Way of Discipleship*, ed. Wes Howard-Brook and Sharon H. Ringe (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 80 footnote 1. John' is the name used throughout this dissertation as the 'assumed' writer, albeit the actual identity of the writer(s) remains uncertain. To avoid confusion, the Baptist is referred to as 'John the Baptist' or JB.

⁵ 'Spirit' is capitalised if the reference is specific to the third person of the Trinity.

This Introduction (chapter 1) addresses issues of authorship and dating insofar as they concern this study,⁶ together with an understanding of symbolism and the essential nature of water in first century CE culture. The narrative is stamped with John's 'own form of thought and kerygmatic intention'⁷ and lends itself to the narratological-exegetical approach adopted for this study. The Fourth Gospel (FG) will be treated as a unified narrative,⁸ tempered by John's specific context and theology which selects and interprets content differently from the Synoptic authors.⁹

Most events are unique to the FG specifically to support the author's high Christology. The Synoptics focus on parable, pithy sayings and God-focused moral living, whereas the FG prefers discourses, explanations and distinct Johannine vocabulary, contrasts revelatory divine statements about Jesus.¹⁰ Jesus becomes known 'von rückwärts aus', i.e. from a post-resurrection perspective, narrating Jesus' life retrospectively, in recognition of how the Scriptures witness to him.¹¹ It prompts questions of authorship, dating and the perceived audience.

D.A. Carson analyses the broad range of potential compilation dates and, especially in light of the discovery of Egerton 2, the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 (cf. 11:48) and John 21:23.¹² Whilst many scholars see the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) as a supportive guide,¹³ the second half of the first century CE is strongly suggested as a date of writing, with the contemporary Johannine community as one intended readership.¹⁴

Where authorship is concerned, much debate continues. Tom Thatcher considers the relationship between the 'Fourth Evangelist' and 'The Beloved Disciple' as author. He

⁶ Cf. Charles K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2. ed., (2nd impr.) (London: SPCK, 1982), 3-21; *inter alia*.

⁷ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John, Volume 1 Commentary on Chapters 1-4*, trans. Kevin Smyth, Fourth Impression, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1990), 45.

⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 6; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 1.38.

⁹ Cf. Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition, The New Testament Library (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 2-8; Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel, John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 5; *inter alia*.

¹⁰ Thompson, *John, A Commentary*, 3-4.

¹¹ Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 9 note 30, 11.

¹² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Casgliad Coleg Yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 82; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 38.

¹³ E.g. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, xxx.

¹⁴ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 18-19.

concludes that the latter is an unlikely candidate, but the latter's eyewitness *testimony* grounds the *content* of the narrative.¹⁵ Andreas Köstenberger's later commentary critiques numerous scholarly arguments, concluding the apostle John as the most likely author.¹⁶ Generally agreed redactional amendments clouds certainty concerning authorship. This, however, detracts from the fact that the writing is 'a story of history interpreted by faith' which combines insights from a 'historical' author and those of 'implied' author(s) to deliver its theological understanding to an 'implied' reader.¹⁷ Identifying the 'real' author thus becomes irrelevant to a reading of the FG for the purposes of this dissertation. More important are the *influences* which relate to its date of composition and thus how the relationship between water symbolism and the Spirit is revealed and understood in the contextual reality of John's first audiences.

John deliberately uses water symbolism in each of John 1-7 to reveal its relationship with spirit and thereby engages theologically to unveil the person and salvific mission of Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God, Messiah. It is no surprise, therefore, to find more words of Jesus about the Spirit in the FG than in the Synoptics combined.¹⁸ Jesus' revelatory statement at the Festival of Tabernacles (7:37-39) becomes the climax of the progressively drawn relationship between water symbolism and the Spirit.

This dissertation proceeds sequentially through the narrative, opening in chapter 2 with pre-Tabernacles evidence (1:1-18; 1:19-51; 3:1-12; 4).

Chapter 3 examines the central role of the Festival of Tabernacles and Jesus' gift of 'living' water identified as the Spirit (7:1-52), the climax of water-spirit revelations. Thereafter, with water symbolism ceding to the Spirit's role, chapter 4 follows post-Tabernacles events and discourses which accompany Jesus' promised continued presence in the guise of 'another' Advocate and Paraclete (5:1-47; 9:1-47; 13:17; 19:34-37; 20:19-23; 21:1-14).

¹⁵ Tom Thatcher, 'The Beloved Disciple, the Fourth Evangelist, and the Authorship of the Fourth Gospel', in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 84, 95-98.

¹⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John's Gospel* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 10-23.

¹⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 232.

¹⁸ John Christopher Thomas, 'The Spirit in the Gospel According to John, 1 John, and 2 John: "Rivers of Living Water"', *Pneuma* 43, no. 3-4 (13 December 2021): 443.

Chapter 5 draws to a conclusion the threads of the evidence presented and proffers a suggestion for future inquiry. Given the essential nature of water which forms one of the core symbolic *leitmotifs* of John's narrative, this study moves to a brief clarification *à propos* how water and symbolism function within the narrative.

a) Symbolism

The abundant use of symbolism is one of Johannine foremost literary features. Symbols bring a unitive purpose, consistently and concentrically centred on Jesus.¹⁹ They imbue everyday worldly material and vocabulary with symbolic or metaphorical meaning to convey objective, often spiritual, concepts and ideas.²⁰ Water is considered alongside light and bread as high-frequency 'core' symbols.²¹ The water-spirit relationship benefits stylistically from rich use of riddles, mysteries, symbols and metaphors, frequently overlapping,²² misunderstandings and dualism, irony and metaphor, images, activities and sometimes representative figures.²³ All the major motifs are directly associated with the concept of revelation either as *vehicles* of revelation or the *revelatory act itself*,²⁴ for example, *living* ('fresh') water (Jn 4) and *bread of life* (Jn 6)²⁵. These point towards Jesus as the source and provider of eternal life, their purpose being to 'span the chasm between what is "from above" and what is "from below" without collapsing the distinction'.²⁶ This water-spirit imagery is rightfully grounded in the narrator's culture, background, context and scriptural understanding. In the course of the narrative, the relationship between water and spirit is seen to lead incrementally towards Jesus' climactic revelation in John 7:37-39, that he is the source and giver of the 'living' water to all those who believe in him.

¹⁹ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 4.

²⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 199; see also Eliade, *Images and Symbols : Studies in Religious Symbolism*, 12; Colin Kruse, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Nottingham: Inter Varsity Press UK, 2008), 49; Sandra M. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel', in *L'Evangile de Jean: sources, rédaction, théologie*, ed. M. de Jonge, *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium* 44 (Gembloux Leuven: J. Duculot University press, 1977), 372.

²¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 189; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Oxford university press, 1993), 515-516.

²² John Ashton, *Discovering John: Essays by John Ashton*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Catrin H. Williams (Cambridge, United Kingdom: James Clarke & Co, 2021), 101-112.

²³ See Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 4-8 and footnotes 8-20.

²⁴ Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 515.

²⁵ *My emphasis*: cf. also Ashton, *Discovering John*, 101.

²⁶ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 4.

b) Water

Water is an essential element of the creative process and necessary for physical survival and fertile productivity of the land.²⁷ Contextually, provision of water was much more central to 1st-century Mediterranean life than in modern Western culture. The DSS provides important cultural messages concerning the use of water for ritual ablutions, Temple worship and the sacred meal.²⁸ Indeed, '[t]rue purification comes from the 'spirit of holiness' and true cleansing from 'humble submission' of the soul to all God's precepts.'²⁹

Morten Jensen's study agrees, but evidences Galilean concerns about water *scarcity* related to socio-political and religious conditions rather than climatic issues,³⁰ simply one of 'the brutal facts of life'.³¹ Finding water and creating wells and cisterns for accessing and storing fresh water were vital to survival in Hebraic arid desert areas.³² Wells and rivers naturally became places of refreshment and subsequently places of significant social encounter.³³ Unsurprisingly, John often uses water symbolism to provide his readers with an appropriate medium for revealing Jesus' divine identity, his birth and life's purpose. From the large range of mentions of water and spirit in the gospel narrative, recent research limits confident spiritual associations with water symbolism to the following passages: John 3:5; 4:1-42; 6:35; 7:37-39 and 19:31-37.³⁴ These texts, together with supporting ancillary texts and Hebrew scriptural links, provide the focus of this dissertation.

²⁷ Cf. Philip Ball, 'Water as an Active Constituent in Cell Biology', *Chemical Reviews*, 1 January 2008, sections 6, 7, https://www.academia.edu/1401710/Water_as_an_active_constituent_in_cell_biology; E. Jéquier and F. Constant, 'Water as an Essential Nutrient: The Physiological Basis of Hydration', *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 64, no. 2 (1 February 2010): 115, 122, <https://doi.org/10.1038/ejcn.2009.111>; Xingxing Kuang et al., 'The Changing Nature of Groundwater in the Global Water Cycle', *Science* 383, no. 6686 (n.d.): eadf0630, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adf0630>; Tia Ghose, 'Why Is Water So Essential for Life?', *livescience.com*, 29 September 2015, <https://www.livescience.com/52332-why-is-water-needed-for-life.html>; Harish Gupta et al., 'Water Is Life and Either Needs to Be Valued and Preserved', *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 9, no. 11 (2020), https://journals.lww.com/jfmpc/fulltext/2020/09110/water_is_life_and_either_needs_to_be_valued_and.74.aspx;interalia.

²⁸ For example, 4Q414; CD x, 12-13; 1QS v, 13-14; QS iii, 6-9.

²⁹ Géza Vermès, ed., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Rev. ed, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2011), 81-82.

³⁰ Morten H. Jensen, 'Climate, Droughts, Wars, and Famines in Galilee as a Background for Understanding the Historical Jesus', *JBL* 131, no. 2 (2012): 308.

³¹ Jensen, 'Climate, Droughts, Wars', 323-324.

³² Cf. Hagar's plight in Genesis 21:14-20.

³³ For further commentary on wells as social meeting places, see chapter 2 p.23-24 below.

³⁴ Seung-In Song, *Water as an Image of the Spirit in the Johannine Literature*, Studies in Biblical Literature, vol. 171 (New York: Peter Lang, 2019), 95-118, 146-147.

Chapter 2

Water and Spirit in John's Gospel Before the Feast of Tabernacles

(Jn 1-6)

a) The Prologue (1:1-18)

Water and spirit already inhabit the language of the Prologue. An interesting dynamic exists between the Prologue and the narrative itself, for John reveals the profound complexity of his theological understanding of God and how he is revealed in Jesus.³⁵ John provides an anticipatory taste of what awaits his readers. The key themes are presented in conceptual language and imagery quite different from the main text. There are no *direct* references to water symbolism, nor the Spirit, nor ascribing a Christological title to Jesus. Yet these *underlie* the Prologue's theological language.

The theologically *conceptual* λόγος language becomes the narrative's λόγος, the day-to-day *spoken* word of Jesus, the realised embodiment of God. Here, the λογος σὰρξ, by its nature, *introduces* John's readers to the presence of the Spirit (1:1-4, 14), aligning it with the ordered creation of the cosmos.³⁶ As God's breath, his *ruach*, πνεῦμα, brings order to the watery chaos in Genesis 1, so now water is arguably the symbolic medium through which John relates God's saving order through the λόγος σὰρξ: those coming into the 'light' (1:4, 9) by 'receiving' and believing in Jesus will receive the blessing of becoming children of God through the Spirit (1:12-13) and 'children of light' (12:36), with close idiomatic relationships with the DSS.³⁷

John turns the complex theology of the Incarnation into familiar language and imagery: family, new life and birthing. John states clearly that the 'children of God through the Spirit' (1:12-13) are the result of the λόγος σὰρξ emerging from a mother's womb (1:14), which occurs not of blood or through fleshly desire or through man's intervention, but by the 'agency of the Spirit' purely because they have believed in God's name (1:13).³⁸ In

³⁵ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 85.

³⁶ Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition, The New Testament Library (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 25.

³⁷ Note Jesus' frequent references to his disciples as 'children' in the Johannine epistles (1Jn 2:1, 12, 13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; 3Jn 4); cf. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 403.

³⁸ Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 31.

Johannine terms, 1:11-14 is important for it speaks of divine birth, God's divinity embodied and revealed through his Son. John here typically teases his readers with hints that will be explained later, in this case with Nicodemus in John 3.³⁹ Water, spirit, new birth combine with light coming into a dark world, the new *Shekinah* (Exod 25:8; 29:45-46), Israel's glory and the Gentiles' light of revelation (Lk 2:29-32), as later revealed in John's narrative. Already, in the water and birth of the λόγος σὰρξ, ideas of an inaugurated eschatology are revealed (cf. also 4:10), in anticipation of a future eschatology revealed in conversation with Nicodemus (3:3, 5-8).

The Prologue thus whets the appetite of John's readers for a voyage of revelation flowing symbolically via water and spirit towards the narrator's goal. For the λόγος σὰρξ, as John writes, has made the invisible Father known (1:18) to all who receive his words; the journey towards belief 'represents the Spirit of God "laboring" to admit believers into the reign/realm of God'.⁴⁰ Jesus, as the one 'born from above', 'pre-empted the coming of the Spirit, and affirms God as the one who gives life, with Jesus as the source and giver of 'living water'.⁴¹ And John the Baptist initiates this narrative by signposting Jesus publicly.

b) Jesus and John the Baptist (1:19-51)

God's intimate relationship with Jesus and his divine mission is envisioned in the Spirit resting on Jesus in the account of the Baptist's testimony. Jesus' baptism provides the first mention of the physical *presence* and *activity* of the Spirit through the water of baptism.⁴² Water here is locative; the pneumatological import of the baptism in water *and* spirit of Jesus provides the central focus, which Jesus will reveal as a necessary factor in divine re-birth (3:5), surpassing, though including, the cleansing and purifying symbolism of John's water baptism.⁴³

³⁹ Cf. among others, Alicia D. Myers, 'Jesus the Son of God in John's Gospel: The Life-Making Logos', in *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John: A Christological Spectrum*, ed. Craig R. Koester, Library of New Testament Studies 589 (London New York Oxford New Delhi Sydney: T&T Clark, 2020), 149.

⁴⁰ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 71.

⁴¹ van Deventer and Domeris, 'Spiritual Birth, Living Water and New Creation Mapping Life Giving Metaphors in the Fourth Gospel', 149-150.

⁴² Cf. parallels with the Qumran Community Rule in 1QS iii, 6-9; iv, 20-23; v, 13-14; 4QS x, 11-14; Vermès, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 22, 47, 101-103; 'The Holy Spirit in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Part 1 – Next Step Bible Study', 25 May 2021.

⁴³ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 66.

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels⁴⁴, there is no baptism narrative in John's Gospel. Instead, the narrator cleverly engineers 'John the Baptizer-in-water' to verify Jesus' baptism through his eyewitness account.⁴⁵ The Baptist prepares readers by pointedly announcing the eagerly awaited 'Coming One' (ὁ ἔρχομαι) (1:27). In this baptismal episode, the narrative flow of the 'Who are you?' (1:1:19) with the expectation of a Messiah (1:20) to JB's enigmatic, anticipatory, words (1:26-27) and finally JB's pointing out the 'Lamb of God' (1:29) combine two significant revelations. First, John's baptism manifests Jesus to the nation of Israel. The 'hidden' Messiah is brought into public view.⁴⁶ Secondly, the Baptist identifies Jesus as both the 'Lamb of God' who takes away the sin of the world (1:29) and Son of God (1:34). John reveals his soteriology: reflecting God's provision of the sacrificial lamb following Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son (Gen 22:4), the sacrificial lamb is now revealed in God's own Son.⁴⁷ Moreover, Jesus is 'Bearer of the Spirit' (Jn 1:32),⁴⁸ for the Baptist witnesses the Spirit descend symbolically as a dove and remain (ἔμεινεν)⁴⁹ on Jesus (1:33). That Jesus will baptise with the Spirit (1:33) suggests strongly a close relationship between water and spirit.⁵⁰ Water-spirit baptismal ideas stem from Noahic sources and covenant (Gen 8:8-22) combined with the soteriological prophecies of Isaiah 11:1-4a.⁵¹ The double mention of the Spirit's remaining on Jesus (Jn 1:32-34) emphasises John's Christological stance, which suggests permanency of the anointing and the bond between Father and Son, between Jesus and his disciples.⁵²

The JB's baptism of water cedes priority to Jesus' gift of baptism in water *and* spirit that now becomes the focus for a series of episodes offering salvation and life through faith and trust in Jesus. The first involves the religious teacher Nicodemus as he comes to seek wisdom from Jesus.

⁴⁴ Matthew 3:11-17; Mark 1:4-11; Luke 3:15-22

⁴⁵ Cf. also Peter's eyewitness verification in 1 Pt 1:17-18.

⁴⁶ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 108.

⁴⁷ Ford, *The Gospel of John*, 46 and footnote 4.

⁴⁸ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 66.

⁴⁹ The same word used repeatedly in Jesus' discourse promising the Spirit if the disciples *remain* with him and love one another (Jn 14-15)

⁵⁰ Song, *Water as an Image of the Spirit in the Johannine Literature*, 67-68.

⁵¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 56-57.

⁵² Howard-Brook, 'John's Gospel's Call', 84-85; Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 113-114; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 54, 56-59.

c) Jesus and Nicodemus (3:1-21)

The central theme of John 3 is initiation onto the new order of things (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ): eternal life.⁵³ As a precursor to the first key Christological discourse, Nicodemus' meeting with Jesus, John cleverly contextualises Jesus' radical new identity and work within contemporary Jewish practice and belief (1:19, 29, 36, 48-51; 2:1-11, 19-23).⁵⁴ John weaves mention of water imagery increasingly associated with the Spirit through the scene-setting of earlier chapters: JB's witness and the call of the first disciples (1:19-51) and the water-into-wine transformation at the wedding in Cana (2:1-11). This transformation forms, in usual Johannine fashion, the pattern of revelation+illustrative event/discourse or illustrative event/discourse+revelation. Here, the water-into-wine transformation at a wedding illustrates how Jesus' baptism in water and spirit becomes the symbol of the new spirit-fed life, with Eucharistic overtones. Immediately following, is the very *public* cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem *prior to* Passover (2:13-22), declaring the body of the resurrected Jesus as the location of true worship in the Spirit of God,⁵⁵ the contemporary prophecy of God's punishment for Israel's sin in Amos 8. These chapters evoke richness of the messianic banquet (Isa 25:6; 55:1-2) and Wisdom's generous hospitality (Prov. 9:1-6; Sir 15:3; 24:19-22).⁵⁶

The transition to Nicodemus' debate with Jesus begins in John 2:23-25, where, John explains, Jesus cannot 'entrust himself' to even the new believers because he 'knew all men (m.pl.)' (διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν γινώσκειν πάντας) (Jn 2:24).

Nicodemus visits Jesus at night, acknowledging Him as a teacher from God (3:2). Jesus explains the necessity of spiritual rebirth, of being born again, ἄνωθεν, through water and spirit to see God's kingdom (3:3). Noting Nicodemus' misunderstanding, Jesus shifts to a deeper theological plane, emphasising the heavenly origin of His teaching (3:11-12). Jesus presages his crucifixion by referring to Moses lifting the serpent in the wilderness (3:13-14). Through God's salvific love for the world, he offers eternal life to believers (3:16). The

⁵³ Dorothy A. Lee, 'The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 95 (Sheffield, Sheffield academic press, 1994), 43.

⁵⁴ Craig L Blomberg, 'The Globalization of Biblical Interpretation: A Test Case John 3-4', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 4.

⁵⁵ Cf. 4:John 21-26

⁵⁶ Lee, 'The symbolic narratives of the Fourth Gospel', 37.

light/darkness dualistic contrast then symbolically highlights how those who live in truth come to the light, while evildoers shun it (19-21).

In chapter 3, Nicodemus' *private* dialogue with Jesus provides the first narrated instance where the relationship between the two key motifs of water and spirit is united, the new life that Jesus inaugurates by his presence. That Nicodemus' meeting happens *during* the Passover is potentially John's subtle way of suggesting symbolically the time of the old order of things will soon cede to the new and true worship (4:23-24). Clearly, Nicodemus wishes some clarification. Of what, the reader is left to conjecture. For those, like Nicodemus, living under the restrictions of Pharisaic rule whose rewards revolve around obedience to regulations, Jesus' spiritual abandonment to the vagaries of a symbolic wind is incomprehensibly puzzling and threatening. Nicodemus is perchance being drawn out of some spiritual darkness towards the light of Jesus (cf. 1:1-5),⁵⁷ seeking to rationalise his own theological understanding.⁵⁸

The overarching theme here is the necessity and process of entry into the new life offered by Jesus.⁵⁹ The intimate spirit/water relationship shifts symbolically through a graduated dialogue to rationalise Nicodemus' traditional theology beyond the cleansing purificatory actions of water (cf. 1:25-27, 33). The sacramental nature of cleansing is not enacted in John, unlike the Synoptics, but crucial to the interpretation is the role of the Spirit in the process of rebirth, which includes necessarily, as Koester indicates, baptism *and* spiritual cleansing within this rebirthing 'granted "from heaven" (3:26-27; cf. 6:44, 65).'⁶⁰ The spirit adopts symbolically the role of midwife with Jesus as the giver and the Spirit as the facilitator of new life. Readers become alert to what John hinted at about the nature of divine birth in 1:11-14 and how this might come about.

Scholarly commentary suggests the presence of kerygmatic material relating to links between 3:3-5, 3:15-21, 3:22 and 3:25-30 and concerning the transitional nature of the Baptist's traditional baptismal ministry to that of Jesus.⁶¹ With the water-into-wine

⁵⁷ Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011), 74.

⁵⁸ Colin Kruse, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Nottingham: Inter Varsity Press UK, 2008), 106.

⁵⁹ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 68.

⁶⁰ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 183-5.

⁶¹ For example, Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich. u.a: Eerdmans, 1987), 163-164, esp. note 55; Thomas, 'The Spirit in the Gospel According to John, 1 John, and 2 John: "Rivers of Living Water"', 446.

transformation at Cana in mind, a transition from traditional rituals towards Eucharistic worship might be signalled.⁶²

If John leaves uncertainty in readers' minds through his abundant use of *double entendres*, misunderstandings and the dialogical use of characters as a foil, it is deliberately to encourage the reader to grapple with the central tenet of John's Christology, the necessity of being born afresh through water *and* spirit as the unique route to receiving eternal life (3:5-6, 14, 18, 31-35).

The *double entendre* of 3:3-7 is evident in a chiastic view of 3:1-21 (Appendix 1). It starts and ends with God and centres on being born from above in water and spirit (3:5-7). Nicodemus' confusion emerges initially from the dual meanings of ἄνωθεν (3:3, 7), 'from above' or 'again'. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus believed all Jews would enter God's kingdom eschatologically through resurrection on the last day, unless guilty of apostasy. Simply being born a Jew was enough. Jesus' announcement (3:3: 5) to Nicodemus must have stunned him. Logically, though, in common with its meaning elsewhere in John (3:31; 19:11, 23), ἄνωθεν means 'from above'. For Jesus elucidates what John has already stated about becoming 'children of God' (1:12-13) and inheritors of the kingdom for those born of God 'from above'.⁶³ With readers aware of the previous declarations in the Temple, the effects of the spiritual re-birth 'from above' become the personal internal presence of Jesus' spirit, which will move according to the will of the spirit like the wind (3:8).

'From above' means a spiritual (re-)birth, which Jesus now explains in detail. To 'see' the kingdom (synonymous with 'entering' the kingdom) requires both being born 'again' and born in water and spirit (3:5). Humans simply cannot give birth to spiritual beings (3:6). Jesus shifts the symbolism of water into imagery of wind and its unknowable movements in an intentionally spatial and metaphorical sense (3:8). The Spirit will work in people 'born from above' in this way too. For the Spirit's descending 'from above' (1:32) suggests strongly that this is also the origin of the Spirit.⁶⁴ The importance of both announcements (3:3, 5) is emphasised by Jesus' double 'Amen' which reinforces the authority and truth of his words and the essential requirement to be born of water and spirit.

⁶² For example, Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John, Volume 1 Chapters 1-4*, 369-371.

⁶³ Kruse, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction and Commentary*, 107-108; also Thompson, *John*, 79.

⁶⁴ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 150.

Thus, the relationship between water and spirit becomes firmly cemented. But the conundrum of ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος (3:5) is still to be resolved. Is καὶ epexegetical, i.e. ‘water-that-is-spirit’ or implying two separate births, water then spirit? This has inspired much debate. By assuming it as two separate births, the water symbolically refers to either JB’s water baptism⁶⁵ or the seminal or natural birthing-process fluid, subsequently requiring a second spiritual rebirth, without which entry into the kingdom of heaven cannot occur.⁶⁶ The more acceptable reading is to take ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος as a hendiadys, that is, the two words as a combined concept of spiritual rebirth ἄνωθεν. ‘Born of water’ means ‘by means of water’; ‘born of spirit’ is rebirth *that entails reception of the Spirit*. This parallels most effectively with the prophetic words of Ezekiel (36:23-28) with God’s promise to the exiles in Babylon to cleanse and give them a new Spirit. His people will be restored, captured vividly in the imagery of the dry bones coming to life (37:14), but the prophecy extends now as an invitation to all people (Isa 44:3-4; Joel 2:28), with God pouring out the Spirit as water that brings life to a dry and thirsty land.⁶⁷

Much of the confusion surrounding interpretation of this thread of the water-spirit relationship in the spiritual rebirthing revolves around the perceived structure of the chapter. 3:31-36 seems a natural conclusion to Jesus’ continuing conversation, rather than a Johannine commentary. The significance of emphasis on a pneumatological interpretation is additionally apparent in the shift of σύ (you) from singular to plural (3:11, 12). Jesus not only generalises his discussion to include all who believe, extending beyond the close Judean community⁶⁸ and to the non-Jewish Gentile world and all future readers⁶⁹, in light of the related conversation with the Samaritan woman (4:1-42), but will leave to their own fate all, including non-believing Ἰουδαῖος, who refuse to accept this new life (3:33-36). In the end, in a further potential break in the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, whether 3:12-21 are part of the original text or later redactional commentary after 3:1-11 is moot for the purposes of this study. Closure at verse 11 does, though, see Nicodemus himself fade from

⁶⁵ A view taken by George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *John*, ed. Bruce Manning Metzger et al., Second edition, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville Dallas Mexico Rio de Janeiro: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 48-49; Raymond Edward Brown, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1970), 1.139-144; Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel, John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 111-113.

⁶⁶ Thompson, *John*, 80.

⁶⁷ Thompson, *John*, 80-81; see also Lee, ‘The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel’, 51.

⁶⁸ Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 376.

⁶⁹ Murray J. Harris, *John*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament / Andreas J. Köstenberger, Robert W. Yarbrough General Editors (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Academic, 2015), 71.

view, limited to only two further appearances with some potential for further development of accepting Jesus (7:50-52; 19:39-40).⁷⁰

It must be remembered that the symbolism of water is a key image in the ‘fundamental process of salvation’, which is used as an image of, and later identified with, the Spirit (7:37-39).⁷¹ John’s use of βασιλεία (3:5) relates the eternal life in rebirthing from above to be ‘the eschatological realisation of God’s reign’, that is, a presently realised eschatology with a future full eschatological moment at the end of time.⁷² Moreover, Qumran texts give credence to the belief that ‘kingdom of God’ (3:5) implies an inaugurated eschatology in Jesus’ words.⁷³

The importance of 3:5 lies in its theological message and focus on God’s salvific purpose regarding the world and the human race (3:14-18). John explains the need for God’s intervention (3:16-17) stems from people’s preferring darkness to light ‘because their deeds were evil’ (3:19). Why? Because they ‘loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God’ (12:43).⁷⁴ If one takes together the Baptist’s witness of descent of the dove and its resting on Jesus, the Baptist’s vocal recognition of Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:32-34, 36) and Jesus’ pronouncement of the uniqueness of the ascent/descent of the ‘Son of Man’, the nature of Jesus’ death signalled through the reference to Moses ‘lifting up’ of the snake to save those who look up at it (3:14-15) alludes to the salvific purpose of Jesus’ death for all who believe in him. Deeming the *ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχόμενος* (3:31) as parallel to *ὁ ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενος* (3:5)⁷⁵ emphasises the water-spirit relationship beyond the earthly sphere into the universal time/space dimension of the cosmos. Astute readers of John’s narrative would be mindful of the events as described in Numbers 21:1-9 (and perhaps Wisdom 16:6-7, 12-13) to interpret the *double entendre* implicit in the ‘Son of Man [being] lifted up’ (Jn 3:14) signalling Jesus’ death. The true light continuing to shine in the darkness is possible only through Jesus’ death. The perfect tense of 1:4-5 implies Jesus’ exaltation has already taken place.⁷⁶ It establishes the function of birth from above in water and spirit as essential for the spirit’s continuing presence and activity; in his ‘lifting up’ in

⁷⁰ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 115-116; Brown, *The Anchor Bible*, 1.145.

⁷¹ Lee, ‘The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel’, 44; *et alia*.

⁷² Lee, ‘The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel’, 45.

⁷³ Ashton, *Discovering John*, 118-119.

⁷⁴ Howard-Brook, ‘John’s Gospel’s Call’, 93.

⁷⁵ Harris, *John*, 72.

⁷⁶ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 152-153.

death and resurrection, the incarnate Jesus exerts power over all things through God's love (3:34-36).

How far Nicodemus' relationship with Jesus' teaching and the gift of salvation he offers is unstated. The course of these exchanges present the initial soteriological and pneumatological foundation developed throughout John's narrative. Jesus next engages in an altogether different encounter on his diverted journey home with a Samaritan woman at a well with a contrasting outcome.

d) Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4)

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well continues to draw his readers into ever-deepening waters of John's theological argument. In preceding chapters, John evidences the positive response to Jesus, among some negative ones, in resultant new believers (1:43-51; 2:11, 23). It shifts from emphasising the *necessity of rebirth through water and spirit* for access to eternal life to the *thirst for this new life*.⁷⁷ Flowing/'living' water contrasts with the static/'stale' water of cisterns, so it is sought for drinking, cleansing and healing purposes. It acquires ritual and spiritual overtones in Jewish thinking.⁷⁸

But it is Jesus' physical thirst which provides the spark here for rich theological discussion and a spiritual outcome which far exceeds Jesus' previous encounter with Nicodemus. In Jerusalem, Jesus met with inadequacy and lack of faith among Jesus' own people: the superficial faith of the crowds in Jerusalem (2:23-25), the 'bewildered élite', personified in Nicodemus (3:1-1) and Pharisaic suspicions (4:1-3).⁷⁹ John deliberately presents a more positive faith response now among *non-Jews* (4:5-42).⁸⁰

That Jesus *must* go via Samaria (4:4) was perchance a divinely-purposed encounter, for elsewhere in John's narrative 'must' (δεῖ ἔδει) implies an imperative to do God's will.⁸¹

⁷⁷ The essential nature of water for sustaining physical life has already been noted (see chapter 2).

⁷⁸ E.g. Lev 12; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:4, 8.

⁷⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 111-112.

⁸⁰ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John, Volume 1 Chapters 1-4*, trans. Kevin Smyth, Fourth Impression, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1990), 419; Gary M. Burge, *John: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Publ. House, 2000), 111-112; Cornelis Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publ, 2007), 168.

⁸¹ Janeth Norfleete Day, *The Woman at the Well: Interpretation of John 4:1-42 in Retrospect and Prospect*, Brill Book Archive Part 1, (Leiden Boston: BRILL, 2002), 133; see also Harris, *John*, 89; Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 36*, 59.

John reminds his readers that Jesus' momentary resting place, the well at Sychar in the shadow of Mt Gerizim, is 'near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph' (4:5).⁸² That Joseph's bones were brought up from Egypt and buried here heightens the well's special spiritual significance. It is part of Jesus' heritage⁸³ and anticipates some revelatory encounter. On arrival, the disciples *go off* into town to buy food to satisfy their physical hunger, leaving Jesus sitting alone, exhausted/'spent' (κεκοπιακῶ) and *thirsty*, by the well (4:6, 8). The light/darkness dualism of Nicodemus' encounter contrasting with the bright light of the midday sun of this meeting at Jacob's well signals immediately a positive encounter,⁸⁴ for John has pre-empted this moment in the Prologue (1:5), and Jesus has signalled how darkness is associated with evil deeds by which evildoers will be judged (3:19). Whilst John emphatically focuses on Jesus' *divinity*, here it is Jesus' *humanity* and his human need for rest and drink which sparks off the conversation. In other words, Jesus himself and his needs become a symbol which lends meaning to the theological conversation which ensues.⁸⁵

Acknowledging the traditional animosity between Jews and Samaritans, the Samaritan woman who comes to draw water from the well is astonished by Jesus' request for water to drink (4:7-9). As with Nicodemus, Jesus uses her natural, respectful question in response as a prompt for an invitation to something greater: 'living' water that lasts into eternal life (4:10). Jesus' words seem somewhat ironic and tentative here, suggesting, with his readers' foreknowledge, his divine identity to this new auditor. John 4:12-15 differs *functionally* very little from, and shares an identical focus with other predicative ἐγώ εἰμι self-revelations, which frequently require explanation for his hearers to grasp effectively (cf. 6:36-51). Yet John omits an I-AM designation. One wonders why. It is its *purpose* which differentiates it from other identificatory ἐγώ εἰμι statements. Of course, established research clearly shows that straightforward identity statements, such as the ἐγώ εἰμι spoken during the storm on the lake (6:20), are discounted as divine self-revelation. Yet Jesus is, after all, the *source* and *giver* of the 'living' water of life, just as he is the source and

⁸² Cf. Genesis 33:19; 48:22.

⁸³ Lawrence R. Farley, *The Gospel of Luke: Good News for the Poor*, The Orthodox Bible Study Companion (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2010), 94.

⁸⁴ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 151.

⁸⁵ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 39; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 105.

giver of the Bread of Life (6:35, 48, 5).⁸⁶ *En gros*, this appears more as an issue of universality and transcendence, given the inadequacy of human values to describe Jesus' divine attributes.⁸⁷

The woman's acceptance remains on a literal plane of understanding, simply to avoid coming every day to the well (4:11-15). Her religious knowledge is sound and compares Jesus with Jacob. Taken aback by Jesus' unaccountable knowledge of her personal history, she is convinced of Jesus' divine identity as a prophet (4:16-19), seeing his prophetic description of future authentic worship, 'in spirit and truth' (4:20-26). She introduces the notion of the coming Messiah, which Jesus identifies as himself (4:25-26). Her response is to leave (ἀφῆκεν) her bucket behind, rush back and report her encounter to her community, leading many to believe in Jesus (4:28-30, 39). Jesus remains with them for two days and continues teaching them, which brings many more to believe in him (4:40-41).

The focus of this scene is the gift of life; the intimate relationship between 'living' water and spirit is the key to its acquisition. For John, this well provides the appropriate setting to push more deeply into his Christological exposition by revealing Jesus as the giver of this gift through the medium of the essential functional nature of physical water for survival and sustenance.⁸⁸

Wells in Hebrew scriptures occur frequently as the setting for social encounters and arranging betrothals; the young women of a household were responsible for drawing water at the village well, which were understood as places where men and women could meet 'with propriety'.⁸⁹ There is a repeated pattern in many Biblical encounters: a man journeys to a foreign land, encounters a girl(s), someone draws water, a girl runs home to announce the visitor's arrival, the visitor is invited to a meal,⁹⁰ resulting in betrothal. For example, Abraham's servant's searched for a suitable bride for his son Isaac (Gen 24:10-28). Here, the encounter carries with it God's grace, *hesed*, in the servant's prayer for kindness towards his master, Abraham, and success, both at the well (24:12-16) and with Rebekah's father

⁸⁶ Catrin H. Williams, "'I Am' Sayings', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 397.

⁸⁷ George W. MacRae, 'The Ego-Proclamation in Gnostic Sources', in *The Trial of Jesus : Cambridge Studies in Honour of C. F. D. Moule*, ed. Ernst Bammel, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2nd Series ; 13 (London: SCM Press, 1970), 133.

⁸⁸ As already mentioned Chapter 1 above, p. 12.

⁸⁹ Julie Danan, 'Torah Study: Well as Meeting Place', *Wellsprings of Wisdom* (blog), 14 October 2016, <https://wellspringsofwisdom.com/meet-life-partner-well/>.

⁹⁰ Ronald T Hyman, 'MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS OF WELLS IN THE TANAKH', *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2006).

(24:42-44). Human response is unpredictable; it is God's grace which fuels response, for the servant uses the same language to Laban as he does to God (24:50-51).⁹¹ So also at wells (φρέαρ), Jacob met his future wife, Rachel (29:1-28); Moses encountered his future wife, Zipporah (Exod 2:16-22).⁹² Moreover, it was at a spring/well (φρέαρ) (Gen 16:7-16) that the slave-girl Hagar, fleeing Sarai's harsh treatment, had a spiritual encounter with the LORD who blessed her. Hagar's role is to be part of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, but the name she is charged with giving her son, Ishmael, 'God hears', suggests God's continuing presence as a special bond of religious unity with Abraham's other descendants, the Ishmaelites, i.e. the Arabs (21:21; 25:12),⁹³ and thus with his people throughout history, even in their times of ill-treatment.

The narrator has already hinted at the sacramental link between JB's baptism of water being superseded by Jesus' baptism of water *and* spirit (1:30-34) and the necessity for birth *ἄνωθεν* (3:3). Both Jews and Samaritans understand 'living'/flowing water of a stream or freshly-supplied well in a ritual purification or healing sense, as opposed to 'entombed'/stagnant cistern water. But the expectation of God washing them from the uncleanness of idolatry (Ezek 36:25) was missing from Samaritan scriptures, as Samaritans believed the teaching of traditional Mosaic scripture and did not accept the *Nevi'im*. Yet water in the Torah often stands for the Spirit and 'God, as the fountain of life, is contrasted with matter'.⁹⁴ This fresh understanding that Jesus' words bring thus equates to baptism in spirit without the need for water. Fulfilling her spiritual thirst is now more important than her physical needs. She has already literally interpreted Jesus' offer, stating that Jesus has no bucket to collect this 'living' water he offers, nor does she know whence this water is available (4:11). That the well is deep highlights significant 'depth' of inner meaning in Jesus' offer. The anticipatory inference becomes clear: that dropping her bucket, her means of collecting physical, flowing water, symbolically sees the Samaritan woman abandoning her old ways (4:28). Her pressing need is to relate Jesus words to others by immediately running back to the village (4:28).

⁹¹ Andrew Reid, *Salvation Begins: Reading Genesis Today* (Sydney Australia: out of print, 2000), 171-172. Logos.

⁹² There is a repeated pattern in many Biblical encounters: a man journeys to a foreign land, encounters a girl(s), someone draws water, a girl runs home to announce the visitor's arrival, the visitor is invited to a meal.

⁹³ Robert North, 'Abraham', in *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁹⁴ Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 195-196.

When Jesus gives her the invitation to receive the gift of ‘living’ water for ever (10-15), this further instance of misunderstanding, as with Nicodemus, sharpens focus on Jesus’ clarification: how can she understand, for Jesus is leading her towards truths to which she only attaches material meaning?⁹⁵ At the woman’s questioning whether Jesus is greater than their revered ancestor Jacob at whose well they speak (4:12),⁹⁶ Jesus elucidates further, giving the choices resulting from receiving or rejecting the offer (Jn 4:13-14). The irony within the woman’s sarcastic words shines through, for she speaks the truth; Jesus *is* far greater than their father Jacob!⁹⁷ The woman reasonably accepts Jesus’ invitation but remains on a literal plane, thankful for relief from both from the daily physical labour and probably the local slur which means she has to come at the hottest part of the day.

The Samaritan woman’s misunderstanding is reinforced by her use of the common word φρέαρ (‘well/cistern’) (4:11, 12). Symbolically, ‘living’ water, as opposed to stagnant cistern water, portrays spiritual water which never becomes stagnant, and is always fresh.⁹⁸ The encounter at the well (πηγή) confirms the Spirit’s indwelling as a fountain/spring (πηγή) of living water ‘gushing up to life eternal’ from within themselves (4:14)⁹⁹ and inspires a yearning after true worship (4:23-24). The Word-made-Flesh embodies this true worship in spirit and truth, accessible only to those who have experienced the spirit through ‘tasting’ ‘living’ water. True worship is centred and mediated by Jesus.¹⁰⁰ Jesus declares its availability now *and* at his ‘hour’ yet to come (4:23). As if pressing matters home further, John uses the same word ἀφῆκεν for the woman *leaving* her bucket (4:28) as for Jesus *leaving* Judea (4:3), implying ‘abandoning’, symbolically leaving the darkness-filled former ways behind. She believes *now*, however strangely her interpretation of Jesus’ ‘prophetic’ words about her past life (4:28-30, 42). She, like many of her villagers, no longer needs traditional water baptism for she has the ‘living water’ of faith and belief to slake her spiritual thirst and guide her ways.¹⁰¹ Isaiah’s unknown prophecy of salvation through God’s

⁹⁵ William Temple, *Readings in St. John’s Gospel* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1940), 1.61.

⁹⁶ Cf. Gen 33:18-20, which implies reasonably provision of a source of fresh water, hence a well.

⁹⁷ Thomas, ‘The Spirit in the Gospel According to John, 1 John, and 2 John: “Rivers of Living Water”’, 450.

⁹⁸ Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 98.

⁹⁹ Πηγή used only twice in John’s Gospel, once by the narrator to describe the well (4:6) and once by Jesus referring to a fountain/spring (4:14). The Samaritan woman uses the common word φρέαρ. Notably Mark uses πηγή to describe the woman’s flow of blood Jesus healed (Mk 5:29).

¹⁰⁰ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 177-178.

¹⁰¹ Several Jewish scripture references symbolise the Spirit’s outpouring on an individual, e.g. Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:10, (cf. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 191); cited in: van Deventer and Domeris,

strength and protection is recognised and realised in Jesus' words. The nation can draw life-giving, salvific water from 'wells of salvation' (Isa 12:2-3).

Jesus' instruction to fetch her husband enables a shift in perception which prompts a further Christological declaration. Not only is Jesus the giver of 'living' water for eternity, which readers will remember has already been identified with rebirth in water and spirit (John 3), but now Jesus prophetically identifies himself as the *embodiment of worship* in spirit and truth, which surpasses Samaritan temple worship at Mt Gerizim (despite Samaritan worship out of *ignorance*) as well as the Jewish temple worship at Jerusalem (despite the Jews' *confident belief* that theirs is the true worship [cf. Psalm 122:1-5]) (4:21-23). They can each continue in their own ways of worship, but what brings them together is worship in and through the person of Jesus (4:23-26). Social position does not determine belief or unbelief. Everyone must make their personal decision.¹⁰² Jesus is 'the new "sacred" site'.¹⁰³ And the ironic contrast here between both Nicodemus and 'the Jews' he represents and the Gentile woman and 'the positive Samaritan reception' subtly epitomises Jesus' own people rejecting him at the Cross.¹⁰⁴ This is stunning news for the woman, but is prone to incite the fury of the Jews, which is seen welling up during the ensuing narrative and encapsulates the gift of living water of the Spirit offers.

That said, is the Samaritan woman looking for a fresh relationship? For there is some conjecture that the Samaritan woman¹⁰⁵ might perceive Jesus as seeking a similar assignation, or even a bride?¹⁰⁶ A more fitting interpretation is that Jesus is 'wooing' the Samaritan people into a renewed and uniting covenant Jerusalem. It suggests resolution to the Samaritans' broken covenant with God so graphically symbolised in Hosea's contrasting imagery of marriage and broken marriage.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, political and theological overtones lie within Jesus' words, for, as the one sent from God, Jesus surpasses the

'Spiritual Birth Living Water and New Creation: Mapping Life Giving Metaphors in the Fourth Gospel', 149 note 18.

¹⁰² Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 76.

¹⁰³ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 584-585.

¹⁰⁵ In her bold response the woman appears affronted about her presumed poor moral character seemingly underlying Jesus' instruction to fetch her husband (4:16-19).

¹⁰⁶ Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 941; see also similarities proffered (but irrelevant for this study) by Rhonda G. Crutcher, *That He Might Be Revealed: Water Imagery and the Identity of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 88-89.

¹⁰⁷ Ashton, *Discovering John*, 94-95; Sherri Brown, 'Water Imagery and the Power and Presence of God in the Gospel of John', *Theology Today* 72, no. 3 (October 2015): 295.

political 'saviour of the world', Caesar, as now the Samaritans can no longer 'claim either Jacob or Caesar as 'father', but God alone.'¹⁰⁸ Ironically, John provides this anticipatory glimpse of how the Jewish high priests reject *their* king, Jesus, rooting themselves in obeisance to the world's emperor at Jesus' crucifixion, however sycophantic that may be (19:15).

More positively, 'wooing' parallels can be perceived between Abraham's servant and the Samaritan woman running home, bringing others to meet Jesus and inviting him to stay (Gen 24:30-32; Jn 4:40) and the stewards' refusal to eat before completion of his mission (Gen 24:33; Jn 4:31-34).¹⁰⁹ But, unlike Eliezer, Jacob and Moses before, here, unknowingly, Jesus is the true 'Bridegroom' she has been awaiting, the Messiah (4:25), where the transformative nature of 'living' water *is* salvation. At this final Johannine visit to a well, its 'living'/flowing water and spirit combine to summarise the way opportunity and blessing can be redemptive and life-changing.¹¹⁰

Redemption and salvation must have been present proleptically in Jesus' presence and throughout his ministry.¹¹¹ Discerning readers of John's narrative would be aware of the prophetic eschatological warnings and promises of scripture, Wisdom literature and the Torah.¹¹² Indeed, Jesus now supersedes both Torah and Wisdom; he is 'Wisdom incarnate' and is the source of salvation in the 'living' water.¹¹³ For the Jews, God is perceived as the source of *future* eschatological salvation as judge and deliverer.¹¹⁴ John symbolically diverts eschatological time from the future into the *present*¹¹⁵ through Jesus' offer of 'living' water. Jesus feeds and satisfies the need of those who are spiritually hungry and thirsty through his presence and words of divine wisdom. It is 'the eschatological *now* of the incarnation' for her.¹¹⁶ 'Living' water available now for the Samaritan woman. Jesus will give that water now, if she accepts it. Worship in spirit and truth thus brings the eschaton into present time

¹⁰⁸ Howard-Brook, 'John's Gospel's Call', 90-91.

¹⁰⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 586.

¹¹⁰ Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 940.

¹¹¹ Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, 191-192.

¹¹² For example, Isaiah 12:2; 55:1-3; Jeremiah 2:13; Joel 3:18; Proverbs 16:22; 184, *et al*, as well in the Torah.

¹¹³ Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, 185-186.

¹¹⁴ Catrin H. Williams, 'Faith, Eternal Life, and the Spirit in the Gospel of John', in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 353.

¹¹⁵ Barrett, *Essays on John*, 73.

¹¹⁶ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 76.

for anyone who experiences the spirit (since this is proleptically present in Jesus' ministry and presence). Jesus emphasises this: 'the reaper is already receiving his wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life' (4:36). The woman is part of that harvest (4:39-42). The Samaritan woman's reception of 'living' water evidences this present reality by abandoning her water bucket and witnessing to her own people (Jn 4:28-30), albeit the determining factor is Jesus' 'prophetic' knowledge of her past life.¹¹⁷ Here, the two paradoxes of this encounter, that believing in Jesus both in his presence now and/or after his death, and slaking the thirst of a continuous belief-response necessitating continued 'gushing forth' of living water to engage in discipleship and mission, are comfortably resolved.¹¹⁸

e) Summary of key points in John Chapters 3-4

John deliberately counterbalances Nicodemus with the Samaritan woman to alert the reader to potential outcomes from Jesus' divine invitation. Nicodemus 'towers over' her culturally, morally, in status and gender, yet symbolically, he comes to Jesus by night, the unnamed Samaritan woman in full daylight at midday. John provides a dramatic reversal of spiritual understanding and outcomes in the course of their conversations.¹¹⁹ Nicodemus would believe that those who adhere to the light of God revealed in the Torah would receive life in the world to come (4 Ezra 14:20-22, 35).¹²⁰ The reader is left unsure how far Nicodemus departs still pondering in the darkness, whilst the anonymous Samaritan, overjoyed with discovering the Messiah, believes and immediately spreads the good news. The gradual progression in understanding of the true identity of Jesus and his pneumatological mission leading to belief is evidenced in her encounter. Jesus *has* living water (4:11), claims to *give* it (4:14) and invites listeners to come and *drink* it (and, by implication, *share it*) (4:14-15), later reiterated and expanded¹²¹ (7:37; 15:26; 16:7).¹²²

¹¹⁷ Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, 191.

¹¹⁸ Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, 142-143.

¹¹⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John's Gospel* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 57.

¹²⁰ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 151.

¹²¹ Chris Keith, 'Jesus the Galilean in the Gospel of John: The Significance of Earthly Origins in the Fourth Gospel', in *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John: A Christological Spectrum*, ed. Craig R. Koester, Paperback edition first published (London ; New York ; Oxford ; New Delhi ; Sydney: T&T Clark, 2020), 47.

¹²² Song, *Water as an Image of the Spirit in the Johannine Literature*, 66.

Secondly, John 1-3 progressively advances water symbolism into a clear metaphor for the Spirit in the guise of 'living water' in John 4. John continually pushes understanding from literal meaning towards a spiritual, salvific understanding.

Thirdly, true worship is worship in spirit and truth, no longer constrained by place, time or building, for God is spirit; Jesus is 'the giver of the Spirit and embodiment of the truth', therefore worship in spirit and truth is indeed 'worship centred on and mediated by Jesus'.¹²³

Fourthly, frequent use of clever stylistic devices keeps the characters and the reader reflecting on the true meaning of key words, such as the *double entendre* of 'from above'/'again' ἄνωθεν (3:3, 7) and 'and' in ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος (3:5), 'well/cistern/spring/fountain' in πηγή/φρέαρ (4:4, 11, 12, 14), even ὕδωρ/ὕδωρ ζῶν, 'water'/'living' water' (e.g. 4:7, 11-14).

Fifthly, connections with Jewish scriptures abound, for example, the key prophetic words of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Joel¹²⁴ all point to God's provision of thirst-quenching-water and abundant fruitful life into eternity.

The clear import of John chapters 3-4 is that Jesus' message and his gift of living water and spirit are available for all, religious and non-religious, moral and immoral, powerful and powerless, educated and uneducated, Jew and Gentile, male and female, influential and marginalised.¹²⁵ Jesus' offer provides truth-enabling freedom (Jn 8:31-32), perhaps reflecting the ordinances concerning the release of slave in Deuteronomy 15:12-17. The motifs explored of belief/unbelief, above/below, testimony, the Spirit and eternal life, all encapsulated in these two encounters, cannot be separated from the climactic moment when Jesus draws worshippers out of the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles with his loud invitation to anyone who thirsts to come and drink and believe in him, promising living water welling up eternally from his κοιλία (7:38).¹²⁶ DA Carson sums up the intended contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman:¹²⁷

He was a man, a Jew, a ruler;
she was a woman, a Samaritan, a moral outcast.

¹²³ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 177-178.

¹²⁴ Isaiah 12:2; 41:17-18; 43:16-19; 55:1-3; Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; Ezekiel 43:2; 47:1-12 and Joel 3:18

¹²⁵ Köstenberger, *Signs of the Messiah*, 60; cf. also Galatians 3:25-29

¹²⁶ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 187.

¹²⁷ Cited in Blomberg, 'The Globalization of Biblical Interpretation: A Test Case John 3-4', 15.

And both needed Jesus.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Casgliad Coleg Yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 216.

Chapter 3

Water and Spirit at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-52)

Germane to the context of the Feast of Tabernacles, John notes Jesus' adherence to Jewish traditions by frequently setting key events at festival times,¹²⁹ or the Sabbath. Through the obvious opportunity these provide for the Jewish authorities to challenge Jesus, it enables John to draw together the significance of revelations pertaining to Jesus' identity and divinely-inspired words from surrounding chapters.

The first seven chapters each include water symbolism's relationship with spirit, although their import can easily be neglected. John leads his readers through his increasingly theological exposition in anticipation of Jesus' climactic revelations in 7:37-39 as the narrative 'stream' meanders, deepens and widens.

Contextually, Jews were expected to travel to Jerusalem for three key obligatory Jewish festivals (Pentecost, Passover and Tabernacles). Tabernacles was the most popular, even referred to simply as 'the feast of the LORD' (Lev 23:39; Judg 21:19). Francis Moloney shows how over time this celebration of the in-gathering of the harvest (see Exod 23:16; 34:22) was historicised, associating it with God's guidance and provision during the Hebrew's wilderness time (cf. Deut 16:13, 16; Lev 23:34; Neh 8:13-19) and later given eschatological import.¹³⁰ The historical and symbolic significance of each of the Festival's ceremonies and rituals provides clues to how Jews might contextualise their interpretations of Jesus' presence, teaching and most especially his revelation and spiritual invitation on the last day of the Festival.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Marianne Meye Thompson, *John*, 17.

¹³⁰ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John: Text and Context*, Biblical Interpretation Series 72 (Leiden: Brill academic, 2005), 194-196.

¹³¹ See also *inter alia* Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 67-68; Lawrence R. Farley, *The Gospel of John: Beholding the Glory*, Orthodox Bible Study Companion (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2006), 127-128; Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John. 2: Commentary on the Gospel of John*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 339-340; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2013); Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 77; (Lee's commentary proffers a more pneumatological interpretation of the Libation ritual)

a) The Water Libation Ceremony

The Water Libation ritual was a joyful celebration with singing and dancing as water drawn from the Pool of Siloam was borne to the Temple and poured, mixed with wine into vessels on the altar and overflowed onto the altar itself.¹³² For the Jews it was associated with intercession for the gift of rain (Zech 14:6-9, 12, 17) and possibly some messianic expectation. Indeed, the Water Gate through which the procession proceeds has been given eschatological significance as being the gate in Ezekiel 47:1-5 through which the waters of life pouring down from the Temple would flow. Moreover, just prior to the pouring of water at the altar, thanks are given to God for his goodness towards his people, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever' and a petition to bless them with success, 'LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success! (Ps 118:1, 25).¹³³

b) The Ceremony of Light

The four giant menorahs in the court of women are lit nightly, with celebration and dancing. They illuminate the whole of Jerusalem, as prophesied by Zechariah (Zech 14:1-7) and anticipate the wilderness pillar of fire by night returning at the end of time (see Isa 4:5). It is the next verses of Zechariah 14:8-9¹³⁴ to which Jesus give new life and fresh meaning on the last day of the festival (Jn 7:37-39). It is easy to read an eschatologising inference into God's intervention through the Word made Flesh and the actions and invitations of Jesus.¹³⁵

c) The Rite of Facing the Temple

As the sun rises each morning of the festival, the priests turn their back to the sun and look westwards to the Temple, in contrast to the Judeans in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 8:16) who did the opposite and had rejected God. The festival ritual conjures up the Lord becoming king over all the earth, for the Lord, as in the *Shema*, will be one and his name

¹³² The significance of the Pool of Siloam within the pericope of John 6-8 is discussed in Chapter 4 below p. 44-46.

¹³³ Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 67-68; Crutcher, *That He Might Be Revealed*, 134-136; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 197.

¹³⁴ 'On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one'.

¹³⁵ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 197.

one (Zech 14:9), signifying 'Israel's recognition of its one true God to whom all praise and allegiance was due'.¹³⁶

Against this contrasting background of water-symbolic ritualism and God's spiritual presence and provision, John intensifies interest in Jesus by narrating in detail the increasing opposition and danger that Jesus meets. John seems keen to show Jesus' adherence to Jewish traditions through his presence at Festivals, but these and Sabbath gatherings he attends often become settings for key events and subsequent friction. Narratively, Jesus is criticised and questioned about his timing, authority, teaching, origins and even his identity (Jn 7:7, 11, 15, 20, 25-27, 30-32) by the Jews (increasingly identified from ordinary Jews present as the largely orthodox leadership group), the crowds (those present at the Festival), and the 'people of Jerusalem' (those present at the festival who live in Jerusalem). In each section, opinions are divided and leave readers to discern their own opinions. Opinion in all sections is divided over the radical nature of Jesus' teaching. Some believe in him, others oppose him. John causes readers from within their own context to develop their own conclusions as once more he uses misunderstanding, *double entendres* and dialogue partners' statements and questions to act as foils.

Everything about Jesus is questioned or criticised, but for Jesus' everything is heaven-focused. He is generally hated by the world because he testifies against its evils (7:7). Jesus' education and teaching are not his own, but come from the one who sent him, namely his Father and are for the sake of God's glory, not to bolster his own reputation, for God's teaching is true (7:16-18). Jesus keeps the law of Moses, including using the Sabbath as it is intended, not as interpreted by humans (7:19-24). Jesus' earthly origins are known to the crowds, but they do not know or recognise his *divine* origin, resulting in a failed attempt to arrest him, for 'his *hour* (ὥρα, 'right chronological' time) had not yet come' (7:28-30).¹³⁷ Yet allusions to him as the expected Messiah reverberate in some people's minds (7:25-27, 31). Likewise, Jesus alludes to his departure, that is, his death and return to heaven to which they do not have access, whilst they think in earthly diasporic terms (7:33-36). Jesus' argument and answers speak the truth his readers are focused towards loudly through all the bustle of noise.

¹³⁶ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 198.

¹³⁷ John uses *καρπός* only twice (7:6, 8), meaning 'appointed time for self-revelation'. Elsewhere he uses *ὥρα*. Cf. Farley, *The Gospel of John*, 129.

d) Jesus begins teaching

Jesus' appearance and teaching part-way through the Festival already draws attention to the radical nature of his teaching, which, although his words are not known, the many questions and accusations imply some contrast with traditional views and rituals (especially breaching Sabbath law (7:19-24) and thereby Jewish interpretation of Mosaic law). He leaves matters until the eighth day, a day of rest and celebration now that all the festival's symbolic trappings have been removed. Now is the climactic moment Jesus chooses for his dramatic revelation that contrasts with all that has preceded, in words which echo the scriptures from Ezekiel, Isaiah and Joel proclaimed in the ritualism of the festival.¹³⁸ The eschatological implication behind Isaiah 12:3 legitimately suggests the water libation rituals prefigure the outpouring of the Spirit, 'because thence they draw the Holy Spirit'.¹³⁹

His words are very clear and emphatic and expressed specifically to the Jews and their necessity to believe through drinking from Jesus' 'living' water.¹⁴⁰ This truly is 'The Lord in controversy'.¹⁴¹ John states he is standing, εἰστήκει, not in the usual rabbinic seated position.¹⁴²

'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."' (7:37-38 NRSVA)

The words have clear reference to the water libations. Jesus points people away from their misappropriation as focusing falsely on ritual and celebration and towards a fresh understanding of their festival celebrations. There is no compulsion, but Jesus 'call[s] the man who has a great desire and is on fire with longing'. As John Chrysostom writes, 'I draw no one to Me by compulsion or force, but I call the man who has a great desire and is on fire

¹³⁸ Volker Rabens, 'The Spirit and Living Water in John's Gospel', in *Holy Spirit: Unfinished Agenda*, ed. Johnson T. K. Lim (Singapore: Genesis Books : Word N Works, Singapore, 2015), 58.

¹³⁹ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, Repr, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans [u.a.], 1992), 301.

¹⁴⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel According to S. John Cyril of Alexandria*, vol. 1 S. John I-VIII (Oxford; London: James Parker & Co.; Rivingtons, 1874), Logos, 542-543.

¹⁴¹ Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, 1.105-6, 129-130.

¹⁴² Farley, *The Gospel of John*, 139.

with longing'.¹⁴³ *He* is the true spiritual water which is a gift from God offered by his Son (cf. 5:19-20; 6:38; 7:16-18). In so doing, Jesus is asserting his identity as 'the cornerstone of the new temple of God'.¹⁴⁴

Jesus' invitation to the thirsty refers to the same scriptural *leitmotif* of water as 'living' life-giving water (3:3, 5; 4:10, 13-14) and is the same offered in the prophetic messianic scriptures (Isa 44:3; 58:11; Ezek 47:1-12; Joel 3:18).¹⁴⁵ The festival has been marked by water and light; Jesus pronounces that *he* is the 'provider of life-giving water and the light of the world'.¹⁴⁶ 'Living water' is the source of spiritual blessing and growth of understanding through the light.¹⁴⁷ His pronouncement shockingly surpasses and supersedes traditional understanding of God's provision to the Jews. Jesus' gift of the life-giving water identified as the Spirit in 7:37-39 conjoins Jesus' identity as the life-guiding light of the world John 8:12.

At his disciples' incomprehension concerning where Jesus is going (14:1-6), John once again gives an anticipatory glimpse of further Christological revelation. The symbolic water-spirit relationship of 7:37-39 and light of 8:12 prepares for Jesus' self-revelatory statement that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the unique route to the Father (14:6) and then his promise of the Spirit to guide believers after his glorification and exaltation (14:15-30).

e) Interpretative issues concerning punctuation

Beyond these insights, three significant problems about 7:37-39 require discussion: a) the question of punctuation, b) its consequent repercussions on meaning, and c) the scriptural source of 9:38, all three of which have regularly exercised the minds of biblical scholars and commentators.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 48-88*. Translated by Thomas Aquinas Goggin, vol. 41, The Fathers of the Church (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1959), Logos, 33-34.

¹⁴⁴ *What Does the Pool of Siloam in John 9:7 Have to Do with the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7:37-39?*, 2022, 1m42-1m53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4_GO511YSo.

¹⁴⁵ Farley, *The Gospel of John*, 140.

¹⁴⁶ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 85.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. DSS 4Q504 v, 1-21; 4Q541 fr. 24, 7; Paul N. Anderson, 'John and Qumran: Discovery and Interpretation over Sixty Years', in *John, Qumran, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Sixty Years of Discovery and Debate: Early Judaism and Its Literature*, ed. Mary Coloe, PVMB, and John Thatcher, vol. Early Judaism and its Literature 32 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 41.

¹⁴⁸ See Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 87-93; Crutcher, *That He Might Be Revealed*, 136-142; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 194; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 198-200; Raymond E. Brown,

No consensus exists to resolve the correct interpretation of the punctuation issues, for the two readings each have their merits. An appropriate understanding relies on John's *deliberate* ambiguity to cause his readers to reflect and come to their own conclusion.¹⁴⁹ The two most prominent readings comprise an Eastern Church insertion of a full-stop in 7:37b after 'and drink' (καὶ πινέτω),¹⁵⁰ and a Western Church insertion of the full-stop in 7:38 after 'in me' (εἰς ἐμέ).¹⁵¹ Herein lies the nicety of interpretation.

Contextually, Melanie Baffes maintains reasonably that 9:37-39 are part of a larger discourse whose function is to highlight Jesus' relationship with God, his disciples and other readers. Readers are expected to identify with the disciples in their gradual shift from non-belief to awareness of Jesus' divine identity.¹⁵² This is consistent with John's declared narrative aim (20:29-31). In both interpretations, the question revolves around who 'his', (αὐτοῦ) refers to in 7:38.

Taking the Eastern-favoured view first, a literal translation would be rendered:

^{37b}If someone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

³⁸He who believes in me, as the scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his belly/heart/womb (κοιλίας).

Here, once the gift of living water has been received from Jesus, 'rivers of living water' will flow from *the believer's* heart. In other words, the Spirit will empower the believer to be the channel for God's salvific message to be communicated.¹⁵³ This engages traditional syntactical use of a 'hanging nominative', which positions an emphasised word or phrase at the front of the clause. Thus 'his' in 7:38c refers back to the believer in 7:38a.¹⁵⁴ A 'thirst'/'drink' parallelism exists here: the thirsty man comes to Jesus; the believer drinks from Jesus. Water flowing from Jesus' side (19:34) is consistent with this outflow of living water from Jesus. Most emphatically, the water is pronounced as the Spirit (7:39) and it is

William Foxwell Albright, and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible. Vol. 29: The Gospel According to John ; Vol 1. (I - XII) / Introd., Transl., and Notes by Raymond E. Brown*, Reprinted, vol. 29 (London: Chapman, 1984), 320-324.

¹⁴⁹ Melanie Baffes, 'Christology and Discipleship in John 7:37-38', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 41, no. 3 (1 August 2011): 144.

¹⁵⁰ Much favoured by Barrett, Lindars, Morris, Schweizer, *inter alia*, and Nestlé-Aland, KJV, NASB, NIV, and derivatives.

¹⁵¹ Preferred by, Brown, Bultmann, Dodd, Jeremias, Schnackenberg, *inter alia*, and the Jerusalem Bible, NEB, NRSV and derivatives.

¹⁵² Baffes, 'Christology and Discipleship in John 7:37-38', 146.

¹⁵³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Gospel of According to S. John*, 542-545.

¹⁵⁴ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John. 2*, 364-365.

Jesus who gives the Spirit in Johannine understanding (19:30, 20:22).¹⁵⁵ Brown suggests that the Eastern Church preferred this interpretation so as not to see the Spirit flowing from the Son, in view of the *filioque* controversy.¹⁵⁶

The Western, traditionally-accepted, interpretation renders a translation as:

^{37b}If someone thirsts, let him come to me. And let him
drink

³⁸who believes in me. As the scripture says, rivers of living
water will flow from his belly/heart/womb (κοιλίας).

It is Christological in interpretation. The 'his' in verse 38 here refers to Jesus rather than the believer. Jesus is the source of the living water. The living water (i.e. the Spirit) flows to the believer from Jesus. An argument in favour of this punctuation format cites 4:14 and 6:35. In both places, it is Jesus who offers the gift of living water to slake physical and, by interpretation, spiritual thirst eternally.¹⁵⁷ 7:37b-38 are Jesus' words, with John's commentary on the Spirit beginning in 7:39. The argument continues that it would be contorted text for Jesus to refer to himself in the third person rather than the natural first person. Hence the believer is more naturally the antecedent of αὐτοῦ.¹⁵⁸

How should the text, then, be interpreted because of different positioning of the full stop? The present study maintains a balanced view based on context and content.¹⁵⁹ There is merit in both views. Strong evidence exists to support John's Christological argument that 'living' water (the Spirit and the Wisdom of 'another' Advocate/Paraclete) are for Jesus to impart. This Western Church view is logically correct: John relates the Spirit to water symbolically throughout the first 7 chapters of his narrative culminating in 7:37-39. John's argument continues in the Farewell Discourses about provision of the Spirit (Jn 13-17). It is ironic, therefore, that the Eastern Church fails to support this view and proffers an understanding that the 'living' water flows out of the believer, not Jesus, because of deeply-felt *filioque* objections. Volker Rabens argues sensibly that specific mentions in the flow of

¹⁵⁵ Crutcher, *That He Might Be Revealed*, 138-139.

¹⁵⁶ Brown, Albright, and Freedman, *The Anchor Bible. Vol. 29*, 321, 329; Baffes, 'Christology and Discipleship in John 7:37-38', 147.

¹⁵⁷ Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 90.

¹⁵⁸ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John, Vol 2*, 152-157; Crutcher, *That He Might Be Revealed*, 139.

¹⁵⁹ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John, Vol 2*, 154.

John's narrative¹⁶⁰ point to a conclusion that 'it is no surprise that the living water flowing from Jesus will keep on moving within and out of the believer', however one interprets the attribution of αὐτοῦ.¹⁶¹ The undeniable message is that 'living' water is the unique medium through which Jesus' eternally-continuing presence through the Spirit and Wisdom is transferred. For, as D.A. Carson intimates, the significance of 7:37-39 would be unknown until the Spirit's enlightenment post-resurrection, a matter of major interpretative importance for the Johannine community.¹⁶² Yet the gift spans both interpretations comfortably: Jesus reveals here living water through his presence 'now' and also 'in the Gospel author's time', the Wisdom and Spirit after Jesus' glorification.¹⁶³ Believers' spiritual thirst is thus slaked; they now become a 'Spirit-empowered source of life' for others.¹⁶⁴ Whichever interpretation is used, it is clear that Jesus is the one who gives the Spirit¹⁶⁵ through the strong relationship existing between the Spirit and water symbolism, as has already been evidenced.¹⁶⁶ The believer thus becomes a conduit, both receiving Jesus' gift of the living water of the Spirit and being the imparter of that gift to others.¹⁶⁷ Jesus' true identity, however, remains momentarily a mystery.¹⁶⁸ John thus astutely links the flow of his evidence of the relationship between water and Spirit through his narrative: this invitation to *anyone* (7:37-39) is the generalised offer made *personally* to the Samaritan woman three chapters earlier (4:10-11). It links with the blood and water poured out from Jesus' side as he gives up his Spirit and breathes his last (19:34), affirmed with a verificatory eyewitness comment (19:35), and the resurrected Jesus breathing of the Spirit on the disciples (20:21-22).¹⁶⁹ As with Jesus' divine self-identification as the source and giver of eternally thirst-quenching 'living' water to the Samaritan woman, so here a potential subcategory of

¹⁶⁰ The Spirit remaining on Jesus at his baptism (1:32-34) is repeated and deepened both with Nicodemus (3:34) and intensified here (7:37-39). These echo what Jesus has already referenced in the message behind his revelation as the Bread of Life, the heavenly manna in John 6:48-5 (cf. Exodus 16:4; Psalm 78:24), and God bringing water out of the rockface to slake the desperate thirst of the Israelites (Exod 17:3-6). Cf. Rabens, 'The Spirit and Living Water', 58.

¹⁶¹ Rabens, 'The Spirit and Living Water', 58.

¹⁶² D. A. Carson et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4. ed (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1041; cf. also Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 176.

¹⁶³ Baffes, 'Christology and Discipleship in John 7:37-38', 146.

¹⁶⁴ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 105.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. the strong parallel with DSS 1QH iv, 26.

¹⁶⁶ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 2, 364.

¹⁶⁷ Crutcher, *That He Might Be Revealed*, 142.

¹⁶⁸ Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 463.

¹⁶⁹ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 463.

functional and *unspoken* divine self-revelatory I-AM statement: 'I AM the giver of living water', can be inferred here.¹⁷⁰

f) 'As the scripture has said' Where?

The issue of the positioning of the full stop in 7:37-38 may be a distractor from the true import of the verses, namely, that this invitation to receive Jesus' gift of living 'water-which-is-spirit' is available to all who come to him and drink, and that this is a gift embodying an eternal quality. The typically Johannine parallelism between 'being thirsty' and 'drinking' sits comfortably with 'coming to' Jesus and 'believing in' him as the source of this living water, especially as it links with equal significance to Jesus as the Bread of life and the idea of this heavenly manna satisfying spiritual hunger (6:31, 35, 37, 58).

With its setting following immediately after the water libation rituals, Jesus' open invitation supersedes traditional Jewish theology founded in their scriptures. A further question arises: what is the source of 'as the scripture has said' (7:38b)? Commentators intimate it is a composite citation of more than one text conflated by John. There is no doubt that the words 'out of his belly' and 'rivers of living water' (7:38) have a semblance of scripture.¹⁷¹

The obvious scriptural reference point, specifically related to the prime function of the festival of Tabernacles is Exodus 17:1-7, where the freed Israelites, dying of thirst, quarrel with Moses, demanding 'Give us water to drink'. God tells Moses to use his staff to strike a rock at Horeb (17:5-7; Num 20:2-13). Parallels with this text are not found, except in its retelling in Psalm LXX 78(77):15-20 and in Isaiah 48:21, although these cannot be considered as a *primary* source of the quotation, since only individual words, rather than a sequence of words or phrases are present.¹⁷² It gives reason, however, for the crowd to suggest Jesus is 'the prophet', perhaps the Messiah (Jn 7:40-42).¹⁷³ Ezekiel's and Zechariah's

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Chapter 2 above p.22-23.

¹⁷¹ Catrin H. Williams, 'Composite Citations in the Gospel of John', in *Composite Citations in Antiquity. 2: New Testament Uses*, ed. Sean A. Adams and Seth Ehorn, 1st publ, Library of New Testament Studies 593 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 101.

¹⁷² Williams, 'Composite Citations in the Gospel of John', 102.

¹⁷³ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 195; Williams, 'Composite Citations in the Gospel of John', 101-102.

visions have already been noted within the context of 'living' water as possible sources of 7:38.¹⁷⁴

Through Ezekiel God speaks of sprinkling clean water on people to cleanse them from idolatrous worship and then placing a new heart and new spirit within them (Ezek 36:25-26); water will flow out of the Temple becoming broader, deeper and bringing fertility to the shoreline where the leaves and fruit are everlasting because the water that nourishes them 'flows from the sanctuary' to feed and heal the people; abundant fish will populate the water. This is God's promised salvific provision (47:1-12). Likewise, Zechariah's vision shows continuous daylight and living waters flowing out of Jerusalem as 'the LORD becomes king over all the earth', for 'the LORD will be one and his name one' (Zech 14:6-9). Joel prophesies that 'a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Wadi Shittim' (Joel 3:18). It may be that the birthing imagery of *κοιλίας* in John 7:38 coupled with the 'living' water flowing out of the temple (Ezek 47:1-2) presents Jesus' body as the eschatological rock/new temple (see Jn 3:4-5 for birthing imagery in water and spirit). Deuteronomy 32:18 provides a description of God as 'the Rock that bore you...the God who gave you life', and finally God's future salvation seen as water/rivers given to those 'whom I have formed for myself' (Isa 43:21), 'formed out of the womb' (44:2 LXX: ἐκ κοιλίας).¹⁷⁵ These provide ample scope for scriptural associations with John 7:38, but no easily identifiable specific source. It may therefore be John's intention, as elsewhere, to remain ambiguous here, not in use of vocabulary, but here syntactically.

g) The Spirit's relationship with water symbolism

As already mentioned, John may have deliberately left matters uncertain, for many of the stylistic devices encountered in John 7 appear elsewhere in his narrative, some of which have been discussed in this study's earlier chapters. Presumably, John felt it necessary to provide clarificatory commentary on the two matters of the revelation of 'living' water and its identification with the Spirit (7:37-38) and then how the reception of the Spirit and the flowing rivers of living water should occur within the believer (7:39). It is assumed in John's relating of events with Nicodemus and at Jacob's well that the gift of living water *and* Spirit was to be received as soon as the invitation was accepted. With

¹⁷⁴ See above chapter 3 'Jesus and Nicodemus' and 'Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well'.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, 'Composite Citations in the Gospel of John', 102-103.

Nicodemus, it was more of a discourse, suited to Nicodemus' status as a religious teacher, with an *implicit* invitation (3:1-15); with the Samaritan woman, a *direct* invitation was given, which was received and resulted in belief and the fountain of living water gushing out of her evangelistically (4:10, 13-15, 28-29). At this Feast of Tabernacles, the invitation is a *public* declaration. Contrary to Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, 7:39 seems to indicate that the gift of the Spirit is imparted *after* Jesus' glorification, not immediately. John here provides reassurance for those in the future who have not encountered Jesus directly that the Spirit is available to them. Indeed, a large proportion of the remainder of the narrative is devoted to Jesus' teaching and discourses on the promised Advocate and Paraclete *of the future*.

The questioning festival clamour, sometimes aggressive, surrounding Jesus brings out other important features of Jesus' identity associated with water and the Spirit, now that it has been identified with living water. The typically 'earthly, literal, superficial' understanding of the crowd¹⁷⁶ draws out how Jesus' teaching is consistent with the Law of Moses, yet derived from God not humanly interpreted law. For, as Koester indicates, water was often associated in Jewish tradition with both wisdom and the law: 'teaching of the wise is a fountain of life' (Prov 13:14); 'the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream' (18:4); in the wake of Isaiah 11:1-12:2, the joys of drawing water 'from the wells of salvation' (12:3) will result in new teaching,¹⁷⁷ for Jesus *becomes* the realisation of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 11:1-3; cf. Lk 4:18-21). Wisdom's fountain of life (Prov 13:14) is seen in the 'rivers of living water' flowing from the believer's *κοιλία* (Jn 7:38, cf. Ps 39:9 LXX).¹⁷⁸

Further clamour surrounds Jesus' provenance, in a typical example of Johannine use of misunderstanding. Some in the crowd suggest Jesus may be the Messiah. How can this be, as Messiah's origin was to be unknown, and they know Jesus is from Galilee? The provenance is indeed unknown to them as they do not know the God who sent him (7:38). The words of Proverbs 18:4 'The words of the mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream' thus become realised in Jesus' invitation to all who thirst to come and drink of him (John 7:37-38a).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 92, 130.

¹⁷⁷ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 193.

¹⁷⁸ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 194.

¹⁷⁹ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 195.

John's Gospel is to be seen as a cohesive whole. The three 'core' symbols of water, bread and light¹⁸⁰ combine in chapters 6-8 to produce a compelling statement about Jesus' identity, mission and the gifts he offers, so that people may become truly children of God and gain access to eternal life (1:12-13; 20:31). The central focus is maintained on Jesus' offer to anyone who thirsts to come and drink living water, identified now as the Spirit, and to become themselves rivers of flowing water (7:37-39). Key to this cohesive linking are the two self-revelatory statements 'I am the bread of life' (6:35) and 'I am the light of the world' (8:12). Both intensify Jesus' divine identity; both result from or lead to physical signs to confirm their veracity; both have supplementary words which relate to water and/or the Spirit. There is an undeniable reference here, whether deliberate on Jesus' part or not, with Sirach 24, and Wisdom's invitation to 'come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits...those who eat of me will hunger no more, and those who drink of me will thirst no more. Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame, and those who work with me will not sin' (Sir 24:19, 21-22). There exists a eucharistic echo here, whether intentioned or otherwise.

In John 6, crowds gather around Jesus to be healed. Jesus satisfies their physical hunger miraculously with five small loaves and two fish, with twelve baskets of leftover crumbs (6:1-13). The Jewish Passover is near (6:4), an intentional insertion by John giving some soteriological and eucharistic implication to Jesus' actions. Jesus elaborates: he is the 'living bread that came down from heaven' (6:51). This offer of spiritual food to satisfy spiritual hunger eternally (Jn 6:57-58) supersedes the manna of the desert that satisfied physical hunger only for a time (Exod 16:1-36). The words Jesus speaks, however hard to accept, are spirit and life (6:63). Jesus adds supplementary words linking bread of life with living water: anyone who comes to him will never hunger, anyone who believes in him will never thirst (6:35), in other words, *eternal life*.¹⁸¹ The process of belief for John seems first to accept Jesus' invitation to come and then come to believe, satisfying all a person's needs. Water symbolism and spirit combine *implicitly* herein in anticipation of Jesus' *explicit* statement in 7:37-39.

¹⁸⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 189.

¹⁸¹ John Christopher Thomas, 'The Spirit in the Gospel According to John, 1 John, and 2 John', *Pneuma* 43, no. 3-4 (13 December 2021), 455.

Likewise, immediately following the Pharisaic threats to arrest Jesus and use their authority to judge the crowds as a result of Jesus' apparent deception (7:45-52), Jesus intervenes, accusing the Pharisees of judging by human, not God's, standards (8:15). It is God, not Jesus himself, who testifies to the validity of his words. Jesus states, 'I am the light of the world', adding that whoever follows him never walks in darkness. That person will have 'the light of life'. This is illumination and guidance by the Spirit, but similarly, his detractors would neither know his heavenly destination through his glorification, nor partake of the 'living' water of the Spirit offered to all who thirst. It is the Johannine equivalent of the Synoptic testing of Jesus in the desert following his baptism. '*If you are the Son of God...*', says the devil (Lk 4:3-4). In John, Jesus replies '*I am the true Bread of Life*' (Jn 6:35), setting human fallibility against Johannine high Christological certainty for his readers. Biblical understanding of 'living' water embraces Jesus as the source of divine wisdom, Messiahship and as the giver of God's own Spirit, all of which become 'redefined' in Jesus' glorification on the cross.¹⁸² Thus, within the pericope of John 6-8, whoever accepts Jesus' invitation to come to him will receive *living bread* to sustain them spiritually for ever, *living water* to slake their spiritual thirst forever and guidance and illumination of *the light of life* eternally. John's complete Christology seems fused together at this point in his narrative.

¹⁸² Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 198-199.

Chapter 4

Water symbolism gives way to the Spirit (John 8-21)

Jesus' challenging conversations in chapter 7 continues at 8:12: 'Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life".' John gathers together from chapters 6-8 the definitive statements identifying water, spirit, bread and light as the resultant benefits of receiving the gift of living water from both his and believers' κοιλία. John repeats that Jesus is departing for somewhere the Jews cannot come (7:33-34; 8:21-24). It draws readers back to his words to Nicodemus about the nature and salvific purpose of his death (3:11-15). John paints a theological picture which separates his Jewish accusers from eternal life by their own admission (8:39-47) and from the truth that would make them free (8:31-38). Both are reiterated later at Pilate's insistence that the notice nailed to the cross (19:19) proclaims Jesus 'King of the Jews' whilst, only shortly before in irony difficult to miss, the chief priests declared they have no king but Caesar (19:15).¹⁸³

John 7:37-39 evokes the eschatological vision of the river flowing out from the sanctuary of the Temple birthing and nourishing new life as it broadens and deepens out into the world (Ezek 43:1-5; 47:1-12). The water *leitmotif* hereon becomes embedded in how the gift of living water characterises life in the coming age, ushered in through Jesus' Spirit in the form of 'another' Advocate-Paraclete (Jn 14:16-31).

In the context of this water-spirit relationship, discussion of five key occurrences now ensues: the healing of the blind man at the Siloam Pool (9:1-47), Jesus washing the disciples' feet (13:1-17), blood and water issuing from Jesus' side (19:34-37), the continuing work of the water-spirit relationship as Jesus breathes his spirit onto the disciples (20:19-23) and Jesus breakfasting with the disciples on the beach (21:1-13).

a) Two Healings at the Pools of Bethesda and Siloam (5:1-47; 9:1-47)

The healing at Siloam (9:1-47) illustrates the *positive response* to accepting the gift of life and rebirth freely offered by Jesus. With the earlier healing at Bethesda and *its negativity* to the gift that Jesus offers, it forms a contrastive *inclusio* around festivals which

¹⁸³ Cf. also above chapter 2 at Jacob's well p. 24-26.

Jesus attended. These provided settings justifying Jesus' divine authority and his right use of the Sabbath for God's work, as against worldly misappropriation (5:2-29). At Bethesda, with its 'troubled' waters, the focus is not on Jesus, but on the apparent healing properties caused by the mysterious and sporadic, unpredictable bubbling of the water with its seemingly magical qualities. Signs of its being a pagan healing centre appear to exist and contextualise this event.¹⁸⁴ The strict rules concerning how physical imperfection precludes anyone from entering the Qumran community¹⁸⁵ (cf. 4Q266, fr. 8 1, 6-9)¹⁸⁶ reflects Jewish general attitudes towards any disability.¹⁸⁷ John focuses readers' attention here towards the repeated use of ὑγιής, 'healthy/well' (5:6, 9, 11, 14, 15). All are associated directly with Jesus' divine healing powers, with potential for re-birth and new life 'from above', and to which Jesus draws attention during the Feast of Tabernacles (7:23). Moreover, the pool's proximity to the Sheep Gate entry of the healthy/spotless lambs' *en route* to the Temple for sacrifice is not to be ignored. But Jesus bypasses the water completely, physically and symbolically, healing the man without recourse to the 'magic' water. The healed man leaves healed but unbelieving.¹⁸⁸ John emphasises this unresponsiveness by passing the blame for breaking the Sabbath onto his healer, whose identity he did not know (5:9b-13). The Pharisees' persecution of Jesus begins in earnest now (7:15-16).¹⁸⁹ Further contrast between Jesus and the Jews becomes apparent, for Jesus has *compassion* for the needs of the man; the Jews *lack interest* in his needs. Jesus' words 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.' (5:14 NKJV) can easily infer the dangers of moral lameness both of the man and the Jews.¹⁹⁰

The Siloam healing involves healing a man blind since his physical birth, but whose eyes are opened by washing in this 'living' water (9:1-41). In contrast, it brings physical and spiritual transformation, life and spiritual rebirth through water and spirit. This man becomes a true 'child of God'. DSS reflects this as God's gift of Wisdom and understanding

¹⁸⁴ *Pool of Bethesda (1 Minute)*, on *Jerusalem Model*, 2022, 0m28s-1m01s, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Knit-NAWS3s>.

¹⁸⁵ 'no madman, or lunatic shall enter, no simpleton, or fool, no blindman, or maimed, or lame, or deaf man, and no minor, none of these shall enter into the Community, for the Angels of Holiness are [in their midst].

¹⁸⁶ All DSS direct quotations and textual references are from Vermès, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*.

¹⁸⁷ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*. 2, 218.

¹⁸⁸ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 191-192.

¹⁸⁹ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 52.

¹⁹⁰ Carson et al., *New Bible Commentary*, 1036.

for those who enter the Community.¹⁹¹ Here, the symbolic water-spirit relationship is graphically illustrated, with barely concealed allusions to the prophecies of Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14, to which the Pharisees fail to perceive personal transformative connection through their spiritual blindness (9:40-41) and through their failure to accept Jesus' words and gift.¹⁹² A clear parallel exists between the *flowing* water feeding the Pool of Siloam and with Jacob's well (4:6-15) fed by an underground *stream*. The use of the physical dirt (representing the world's ways) mixed with Jesus' saliva (symbolising Jesus' free gift of living water) brings both physical and spiritual sight into the man's dark sightless world, cleansed and washed in the 'living'/fresh waters of the pool. It dispels traditional understanding that somehow his blindness resulted from sin (9:2-3).

Bringing light into the darkness of the world is the core purpose of Jesus' salvific earthly ministry, the theme flowing throughout John's narrative (1:4-5, 9, 14; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46). Here, the light-darkness *leitmotif* is introduced into the relationship between the symbolism of water and spirit,¹⁹³ indeed, embracing all five senses.¹⁹⁴ The juxtaposition of ἡμᾶς δεῖ¹⁹⁵ ('we must') do the works of God', with Jesus' imminent 'hour'/death and metaphorically 'day' turning to 'night'(9:4), prompts urgency and the need for *the disciples* to act before no-one can do even God's work.¹⁹⁶ The spiritual opening of the man's eyes brings belief in Jesus' declaration as the 'Son of Man' (9:35-37). It echoes the Samaritan woman's response to Jesus' similar self-identification (4:26). Furthermore, the man's resultant expulsion by the Pharisees (9:35) reflects the initiation of Jewish persecution of Jesus at Bethesda (5:16).

The *inclusio* created thus forms a contrastive dualism. Non-seeing/seeing, seeing/being blind and physical/spiritual sight/blindness feature as antithetic features in this *inclusio*.¹⁹⁷ The outcomes of Jesus' *private* discussions with Nicodemus (3:10) and the Samaritan woman (4:28-30) find echoes in the intensified *public* declarations at the Feast of Tabernacles. The positive *public* responses to Jesus' invitation to receive his gift of the

¹⁹¹ DSS 4Q266 fr. 2 ii, 4-5.

¹⁹² *What Does the Pool of Siloam in John 9*; see also DSS 4Q266 fr. 2 ii, 5-18

¹⁹³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 103.

¹⁹⁴ Dorothy Lee, 'The Gospel of John and the Five Senses.', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 1 (2010): 115–27.

¹⁹⁵ Often used by John to express necessity: 3:7, 14, 30; 4:24; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9.

¹⁹⁶ Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 543-544.

¹⁹⁷ Carson et al., *New Bible Commentary*, 1046-1047.

eternal and salvific living water of the Spirit (7:37-39) are matched with the equally vocal negative declarations. The open affirmations of belief of certain quarters contrast with the open hostility of the Jews and Pharisees and sum up the 'utilitarian unrighteousness of Israel'.¹⁹⁸ They increasingly find mention in the events of Jesus' final weeks until Jesus' arrest.¹⁹⁹ It suggests that John deliberately recounted the Nicodemus and Samaritan woman conversations as foretastes of events to come.

b) Jesus washes the disciples' feet (13:1-17)

John has already established the truth of a physical resurrection and an eternal quality to Jesus, with confessions that he is both Christ and the Son of God (11:23-27).²⁰⁰ With his imminent entry into Jerusalem for the approaching Passover, Jesus' hour of glorification has arrived and, with it, judgement on the world (12:12:1, 12-18, 23-26, 44-50). Jesus makes the 'the most significant transition' from *public* (12:44-50) to *private* ministry in the Upper Room and the significance of washing the disciples' feet.²⁰¹

Footwashing is part of Jewish hospitality,²⁰² most especially part of priestly preparations for entering the holy place according to Mosaic law (Exod 30:19-21).²⁰³ With no-one else to do it, Jesus washes all the disciples' feet, which John describes in excruciating detail as if to teach what true sacrifice and discipleship mean (13:12-17).²⁰⁴ The symbolism arouses deep discomfort, for no contemporary parallel exists for one of superior washing the feet of one lower in station. This 'shameful' act highlighted here sees one of divine cosmic authority voluntarily adopting the role of a slave.²⁰⁵ Jesus knew what was in Judas' heart (2:24-25), yet washes even *his* feet. Peter, on the other hand, demands washing his whole being. In this moment, the living water of the Spirit is at work in Peter's heart and Jesus' words. Echoes of the Baptist's immersive baptismal cleansing come to mind (1:26), but Peter is already cleansed from his spiritual sin, by association with Jesus (6:68-69).²⁰⁶ He

¹⁹⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, 2. print (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 57.

¹⁹⁹ Cf., for example, 10:22-39; 11:45-53; 12:9-19; 13:21-30; 15:18-24; 18:1-13.

²⁰⁰ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 2, 572.

²⁰¹ Francis J. Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 7.

²⁰² Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24, 1Sam 25:41; Lk 7:44.

²⁰³ Thompson, *John*, 281-282.

²⁰⁴ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 132.

²⁰⁵ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 367; Burge, 'Gospel of John', 121.

²⁰⁶ Thompson, *John*, 287-288; Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 441-442; Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 36*, 229; Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 567-568; Rudolf Karl

requires a lesson in servanthood not rebirth in the spirit.²⁰⁷ For, within the divine perspective, the harvest is ready (12:24).²⁰⁸

Footwashing involves 'laying down' and 'taking up', not simply taking off/putting on, his robe. Jesus symbolically lays down/takes up his own life (10:17-18; 13:1-4, 12), something his disciples realise only after his resurrection (13:7). This is the ultimate act of love to the end, εἰς τέλος (13:1; 15:12-14),²⁰⁹ anticipating the τετέλεσται of the cross.²¹⁰ Jesus has already addressed this moment with Martha: there will be resurrection of the body and eternal life, not just spiritual resurrection. Jesus reveals himself as the permanent source of resurrection and life, both Messiah and Son of God (11:23-27).²¹¹

This is love in action, not legalism, guilt or religious obligation.²¹² Moreover, as washing the disciples' feet is a prerequisite for them to have a share in Jesus (13:8), implying eschatological inheritance (cf. 1:12),²¹³ so also they must share in Jesus' body and blood to have life (6:51-58), physically and spiritually.²¹⁴ Jesus as a servant whose suffering brings redemption is the model he invites the disciples to emulate.²¹⁵ For, whilst redemption is available for all people, its effect is limited to those who respond with love, faith and obedience.²¹⁶ As anticipated in the Prologue, the contrast is set between the Logos' 'own' (Israel) and those who accepted him (1:11-12).²¹⁷ This act of washing signifies completion of their purification, seals Jesus' covenant with the disciples, but accomplished only through

Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. George Raymond Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 469; Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis N. Davey (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), 43-439; Francis J. Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21*, 15 n. 44.

²⁰⁷ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 132.

²⁰⁸ Koester, *Portraits of Jesus*, 65-66.

²⁰⁹ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 131.

²¹⁰ Thompson, *John*, 284.

²¹¹ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 2, 572.

²¹² Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 134.

²¹³ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 368.

²¹⁴ Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 137; Cornelis Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publ, 2007), 139-142; Udo Schnelle, 'The Person of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John', in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 326; Jan van der Vatt, 'Ethics in the Gospel and Letters of John', in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 376-377.

²¹⁵ Michael Nazir-Ali, *The Unique and Universal Christ: Jesus in a Plural World* (Milton Keynes UK: Paternoster, 2008), 37.

²¹⁶ Nazir-Ali, *The Unique and Universal Christ: Jesus in a Plural World*, 54.

²¹⁷ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 368.

Jesus' death. It acts as a prelude to the passion, a 'mini-Prologue'.²¹⁸ This final meal with his disciples is full of eucharistic-infused symbolism.²¹⁹ Jesus offers 'new free bread', not that of Pharisees or empire 'which does not nourish',²²⁰ whereupon Jesus passes *his* body in the shape of this new bread into the hands of his betrayer, Judas (13:12-27).

c) Blood and water issues from Jesus' side (19:34-37)

After the climactic moment of 7:37-39, a second, even more climactic moment in the water-spirit relationship occurs at the cross. The *giver* of the 'living' water of life and the Spirit, namely, himself, having prepared his disciples for the coming Advocate-Paraclete to be his presence after his death, now *gives up* his spirit and human life as Jesus' pierced, crucified, body releases water and blood physically and symbolically (19:34-37). The focus in John remains on Jesus; no mention of darkness returning, nor curtain of the Temple being rent, materially or symbolically.²²¹ References to the flow of 'living' water and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:14) and the Tabernacles declaration (7:37-39) are poignantly implied.²²² The cross is his throne (19:19-23).²²³ As Koester succinctly states, 'The Jesus who thirsted was the fountain of living water'.²²⁴ The 'I thirst' *up-lifted* on his 'throne' (19:28) contrasts with his thirst *seated* at Jacob's well (4:7) and his invitation to the thirsty at the Tabernacles (7:37-39); life-sustaining water contrasts with the sour wine at the cross as Jesus gives up his spirit (19:29-30). The 'I thirst' is addressed to God, but misunderstood by an anonymous person.²²⁵ Walter Brueggemann suggests the wine-soaked hyssop ghoulishly delays his death so the Jews can see if Elijah will come to rescue him.²²⁶ But at this moment of death, Jesus 'hands over' the gift of the Holy Spirit, his initial salvific tasks of teaching, healing and gifting 'living' water and rebirth now fulfilled, τετέλεσται.²²⁷ It evokes theological metaphors of 'the wind of God', God's Spirit, which dispels attack from all empires and people, creating

²¹⁸ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 78; Schnelle, 'The Person of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John', 315.

²¹⁹ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 365; Jean Zumstein, 'The Purpose of the Ministry and Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John', in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith M. Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 340.

²²⁰ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 107.

²²¹ Mt 27:51; Mk 15:33, 38; Lk 23:44-45.

²²² Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 77, 149.

²²³ Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor*, 144.

²²⁴ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 203.

²²⁵ Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 963.

²²⁶ Géza Vermès, *Jesus: Nativity, Passion, Resurrection* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 238.

²²⁷ Thompson, *John*, 410-402.

new life in the dry bones, filling them with life-giving waters of resurrection and salvific restoration (Ezek 37:1-14) through the waters flowing from the Temple (Ezek 47:1-12).²²⁸ The Spirit (Jn 19:30) is placed in the hands of the worshipping community. The water (19:34) *and* wine supplants water baptism; baptism in water *and* spirit supplants the Seder with the Eucharist.²²⁹ Ironically, the ‘defilement’ of the cross (Deut 21:22-23) requiring removal of Jesus’ body before sunset²³⁰ has become a symbol of cleansing, purifying new life.²³¹

Contra Seung-In Song,²³² the water-blood issue from Jesus’ body symbolises life coming *after* his death. Water as the symbol of purification and healing in sacramental baptism and footwashing, the water/wine transformation at Cana (2:1-12) and water implicitly sustaining the Vine (15:1-11) relate intimately together in the Spirit through the symbolic refreshment and sustenance of the flesh and blood of the Eucharist.²³³ Jesus’ covenantal gift of the outpouring of the water of life from his κοιλία is fulfilled and ‘usher[s] in the new eternal age’ (Ezek 36:25-27),²³⁴ albeit the Incarnate Word has already heralded this new age for all who accepted the gift of the Water of Life in this world and believed.²³⁵ Later redaction thankfully clarifies the Gospel’s theological meaning within its intricate web of symbolism and fact to affirm the atoning nature of Jesus’ death.²³⁶

d) Jesus breathes his Spirit onto the disciples (20:19-23)

For John’s readers, the reality of the resurrection is probably the hardest leap of faith. John has prepared them for this moment through Jesus’ conversations, discourses and promises. Water has symbolically tracked this development, increasingly relating to the Spirit. John narrates two sequential moments at the tomb: first, the discovery of the *physical reality* of empty tomb with neatly placed wrapping linens, upon which the ‘other

²²⁸ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 66-67.

²²⁹ Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor*, 147-148.

²³⁰ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*. 2, 816.

²³¹ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 201; von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*. 2, 818-819.

²³² Seung-In Song, *Water as an Image of the Spirit in the Johannine Literature*, *Studies in Biblical Literature*, vol. 171 (New York: Peter Lang, 2019), 113-121.

²³³ Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 82.

²³⁴ Catrin H. Williams, ‘Faith, Eternal Life, and the Spirit in the Gospel of John’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 355.

²³⁵ Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, 242-243; Ruben Zimmermann, ‘Eschatology and Time in the Gospel of John’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 301; *inter alia*.

²³⁶ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*. 2, 824-825.

disciple' immediately believes, despite scriptural prophecies (20:1-9); secondly, the touching scene when the resurrected Jesus greets Mary *in person*. The unenclosed spaces of empty tomb and garden shift to the securely enclosed Upper Room, where Jesus appears *in person* to the disciples and later to Thomas as well (20:19-29). For Thomas, belief comes only when he is invited to place his hand into the actual wound where the water and blood flowed as Jesus gave up his spirit (20:26-28). Flowing water and blood are not present, but the disciples' 'taking up' of Jesus' spirit (20:22, 28) and new life in 'living' water is signalled once more here. It confirms the Spirit's continuing presence for all who come after Jesus' ascension, indeed probably many of John's initial readers, for Jesus' gift of living water (7:37-39) was *unavailable until* his glorification.

Now he who baptises and purifies with the Spirit and takes away the sins of the world as the Lamb of God (1:29) breathes the purifying, living water from within *himself* into *the disciples*.²³⁷ For them, outpoured water and blood are in intimate relationship with the *ruach*, πνεῦμα, as Jesus commissions them to do God's work. Darkness has been replaced with resurrected light (cf. 9:4). Perchance it is no accident that John uses the same verb ἐνεφύσησεν ('breathed') here as God 'breathing' on the face of Adam (Gen 2:7 LXX) and 'breathing' on the dry bones in Ezekiel 37:9.²³⁸ The τετέλεσται at the cross starts Jesus' new work through the promised Advocate-Paraclete. Out of the loss comes the gain: the completion of Jesus' revelation and the 'project' handed on.²³⁹

The promised Paraclete will reveal 'everything' that Jesus has imparted to them by linking the Paraclete with the Spirit of Truth which now introduces 'the time of eschatological blessing' post-glorification.²⁴⁰ Has this shaped John's Gospel in its 'von rückwärts aus' narration?²⁴¹ As the flow of John's narrative broadens and deepens, like Ezekiel's visionary river, the reader's focus narrows incrementally to Jesus and its continuity through the Spirit. In Jesus' invitation to Thomas to touch his scars physically and put his hand into his side, followed by Thomas' declaration of belief, 'My Lord and my

²³⁷ Ford, *The Gospel of John*, 157.

²³⁸ Thompson, *John*, 421.

²³⁹ Jean Zumstein, 'The Purpose of the Ministry and Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John', in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith M. Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 343.

²⁴⁰ Paul A. Rainbow, *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, the Epistles and the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 237.

²⁴¹ Cf. above Chapter 1 Introduction p.9.

God!’ (20:28), John has clearly concluded his evidence that Jesus truly is ‘the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing in him you may have eternal life in his name’.²⁴² Through his Incarnation as Revealer of God’s salvific word, Jesus has created the final chasm between belief and unbelief, pitting light, truth, spirit, freedom and life of God’s economy against the world’s darkness, falsehood, flesh, servitude and death. Now, the disciples become representative revealers of the true Incarnate Word as Jesus sends them out into the world.²⁴³

d) Water and the Spirit at Breakfast on the Beach (21:1-14)

John’s narrative began in the water of baptism with the Spirit ‘coming down’ and remaining on Jesus; it now closes also in water and spirit, but at the beginning of the new mission of Jesus’ Spirit-filled disciples. John 21 disrupts a ‘tidy sense of closure’ to his narrative²⁴⁴ with this second of two terminal ‘waves’,²⁴⁵ yet it appears a necessary and appropriate epilogue, defining the future roles of both Peter and the Beloved Disciple, a martyr’s death and faithful witness respectively.²⁴⁶

The chapter ‘glows’ with symbolic overtones.²⁴⁷ Water is symbolically identified with cleansing, purification, the entrance to eternal life and the Spirit through Jesus’ gift of living water, all of which are present in this pericope. It provides an apt soteriological and pneumatological ending, evidenced progressively throughout John’s narrative. Consideration needs to be given to the extent of the symbolism found here. Since early post-Gospel times, theologians have attempted to fathom the symbolism of the 153 fish caught (21:11), comprehensively outlined by Beasley-Murray, concluding it an insoluble conundrum and accepting it simply as an exceedingly abundant number.²⁴⁸ Perhaps this speaks of the generosity of God’s provision, as already seen in the vast gallons of best wine at Cana (2:1-11), the twelve baskets of remains following the miracle of feeding the great

²⁴² Williams, ‘Faith, Eternal Life, and the Spirit in the Gospel of John’, 358.

²⁴³ Zumstein, ‘The Purpose of the Ministry and Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John’, 2021, 334-335.

²⁴⁴ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, ‘The Archive of Excess: John 21 and the Problem of Narrative Closure’, in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, Dwight Moody Smith, and C. Clifton Black, 1. ed (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 240; see also Barrett, *Essays on John*, 159.

²⁴⁵ Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, 110.

²⁴⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 96.

²⁴⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 197.

²⁴⁸ Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 36*, 401-404.

crowd (6:12-14), or the offer of living water for eternity (4:13-14; 7:37-39). But there is more to this catch than the number.²⁴⁹ The number is indicative of what elsewhere is called the ripe harvest ready for the workers to reap, i.e. draw into the kingdom and eternal life (4:34-38; cf. also Mt 9:37-38).

The water here functions locatively: the repeated φανερώω (21:1) emphasises another epiphanic post-resurrection moment: only following Jesus' sign comes Peter's recognition, Ὁ Κύριός ἐστιν (21:7). The symbolism behind 'drawing' (ἐὔλκυσεν) the net concerns human impossibility to come to Jesus without being 'drawn' by God's power.²⁵⁰ It echoes Jesus' statement to the crowd following the feeding of the five thousand, that 'no-one can come to me unless *drawn* by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day' (Jn 6:44), or Jesus himself *drawing* people to himself at his lifting up (12:32). It is uniquely the death and resurrection of Jesus which will achieve this. That the disciples were unable to catch fish that day of their own, but required the direction of Jesus to cast their net into the water on the 'right'²⁵¹, fruitful, side, signals their inability to follow Jesus productively and provide the living water of the Spirit they have been commissioned to pour out on others (20:22-23; cf. 7:37-39) without the guidance of Jesus' Spirit-Paraclete dwelling and remaining in their hearts (1:14; 15:5-10).²⁵²

Reliance on Jesus and his Holy Spirit takes on further significance in light of the feeding of the five thousand. As Jesus reveals himself as the true bread that came down from heaven, the Bread of Life, that 'whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty' (6:35), there is distinct similarity in the words John uses when he feeds the crowds with 'as much as they wanted' (6:11) and the provision he makes to his small group gathered on the beach for breakfast. Compare:

'Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted'. (6:11)

with:

²⁴⁹ Thompson, *John*, 438-439.

²⁵⁰ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 134.

²⁵¹ Overtones of Godly righteousness, power, authority, blessing and favour, as opposed to unrighteousness of the left. Cf. Mt 25:33 or Mt 6:3.

²⁵² Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 135.

‘Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and
did the same with the fish.’ (21:13)

Jesus has provided for his disciples in the past. Now, in this third post-resurrection epiphany, he gives clear indication of providing for them in the future after his ascension.²⁵³

Taken together with 6:35, this suggests a Eucharistic interpretation of both actions, given all the symbolic relationship between water, bread, wine and Spirit developed through the narrative, now come to completion at this meal.

²⁵³ Thompson, *John*, 439-440.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

This dissertation set out to probe without preconceptions the relatively unresearched relationship between water symbolism and the Spirit in John's Gospel. The resultant evidence presented has demonstrated clearly that this intimate relationship is not incidental but a deliberate and successful narrative strategy aimed at revealing Jesus' divine identity and encouraging belief (John 20:31). The narratological exegetical approach adopted has proved to be appropriate for this task, by tracing the deepening interplay between water and Spirit, showing how John employs water, an essential element for creation and survival, as one of three core symbols to articulate his Christological vision.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how John's Prologue presented a theological summary of his Gospel narrative wherein lies implicit evidence of this relational link (1:1-18). John intertwines water symbolism with increasingly emphasised divine revelation and the message of salvation which requires spiritual rebirth and cleansing. There followed a systematic development of this water-spirit *leitmotif* starting with Jesus' baptism (1:19-51), where the Spirit descended like a dove, affirming his divine identity. Using a typically Johannine revelation+illustration pattern, the transformation of water into wine at Cana is graphically suggestive, albeit implicitly, of the transformation of traditional Jewish ritual into the sumptuous nuptial joys of new spirit-fed life (2:1-11).²⁵⁴ John 3 and 4 presented two discourses which solidify the water-spirit relationship further in discourses first with Nicodemus concerning the necessity for being (re)born in water and Spirit (3:1-21), then Jesus offering 'living' water to the Samaritan woman (4). In John 5, presented in discourse+illustration model, mention of Jesus healing a paralysed man contrasted *stagnant* lifeless water with the everlasting salvific power of *flowing/living* water (5:1-47). After feeding the large crowd with physical hunger-satisfying bread and fish, Jesus revealed himself as the true Bread of Life satisfying spiritual hunger and slaking spiritual thirst eternally (6:35, 40).

Chapter 3 showed John deliberately choosing the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-52) to maximise the impact of Jesus' momentous self-revelatory pronouncements. It provided a dramatic background for the climactic shift in the implications of the water symbolism

²⁵⁴ Reference is made only in passing, since no direct water/Spirit relationship is evident. See Chapter 2 p.16.

leitmotif, and the central point of revelation of the water-spirit relationship. Jesus openly drew worshippers' focus from the ritualism of the festival celebration to believe in him and accept his gift of life-giving water, which he identified as the Spirit, flowing out of his κοιλία and into them, for them in turn to pour out this living water on others (7:37-39). Jesus openly offered 'living water' to all (7:37-38). But this Spirit would be available only after Jesus' glorification. There was speculation that he might be the Messiah amidst the attempts to arrest him, but mention of Nicodemus' words to the Pharisees draws readers back to the already-established necessity for rebirth in water and spirit from above (3:3, 5).

Chapter 4 argued a shift in emphasis away from development of the intimate water-Spirit relationship so as to concentrate on preparing the disciples for the Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to remain in Jesus and experience his continuing presence through his indwelling Spirit in the guise of 'another' Advocate-Paraclete, which will guide and sustain them in their belief and Godly mission (Jn 13-21). The water-Spirit relationship reappeared at specific moments to make significant Christological statements about Jesus in John's efforts to carry reads on the his final proofs about Jesus' identity (9:1-47; 13:1-17; 19:34-37; 20:19-23; 21:1-14). In this way, water symbolism and its relationship with the Spirit flows through the Gospel as '**THE** river'²⁵⁵ of life.

It is unsurprising that the author's intention in chronicling the life and activities of Jesus is revealed only at the close of the Gospel. It is as though he presumes readers will reflect that his narrative has truly brought them to the expected conclusion, and that they now come to believe in Jesus (20:31). From the evidence presented, a number of observations can be made to support this:

- a) Underlying the FG are clear authorial decisions made to maximise his argument. He makes deliberate choices regarding content, seen in the high proportion of items which differ from Synoptic accounts. This is especially true of the way water/spirit-related events and discourses pervade the first seven chapters of the narrative. Where inclusions are in common with the Synoptics, material is used differently to support John's Christological argument.
- b) The theological argument is presented through water-Spirit relationship layer upon layer, broadening and deepening, sometimes analeptically or proleptically,

²⁵⁵ Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, 9-10.

finally reaching climatic revelations as the fusion of living water with the Spirit, the gift which Jesus offers to everyone (7:37-39).

- c) Eyewitness account is a powerful tool which the author uses effectively to encourage acceptance of evidence (1:29-34),²⁵⁶ or to stress his role as a firsthand reliable witness to the events (e.g. 19:35).²⁵⁷ It is used from the first narrative event emphatically to introduce the divine identity of Jesus, the λογος σάρξ.
- d) John's 'enigmatic' style²⁵⁸ helps to express his high Christological views effectively. For example:
 - a. the double meaning of ἄνωθεν (3:3, 7), to focus on both being born again, and born from above;
 - b. the contrastive differentiation of stagnant/still water with flowing/'living' water, which contrasts the need to slake physical thirst with the vital importance of slaking spiritual thirst (4:10; 6:35; 7:37-39);
 - c. the noise of the crowd providing the context for Jesus' probably shouted invitation to all who are thirsty (7:11-36, 40-44);
 - d. the contextual placing of that invitation not just during, but at close of, the feast of Tabernacles to divert attention away from the traditional ritualised ways towards the new personal ways focused entirely on the movement of the Spirit, both internally and externally (7:14, 37);
 - e. the use of prolepsis and analepsis to emphasise points like the wind's comparison with the activity of the Spirit (3:8);
 - f. explanations, discourses and illustrations which point the reader away from observing the ritualism of the old ways and, without necessarily any explicit announcement, ceding to the new ways, for example, the changing of water of purification at a wedding into abundant wine of the highest quality (2:1-11);
 - g. the choice to site many of the key events and encounters at festival times, or the Sabbath and special events suggest how Jesus, the True

²⁵⁶ Cf. also 1 Pt 1:16.

²⁵⁷ Lawrence R. Farley, *The Gospel of John : Beholding the Glory*, Orthodox Bible Study Companion (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2006), 9-10.

²⁵⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 1.48.

Bread of Life, the Giver of the Water of Life, the one who is the true worship is highly significant, for each event increasingly represents how the Living Water of Life that Jesus offers supersedes the traditional ritual of the people he encounters.

Indeed, throughout, the symbolic use of the essential nature of water itself elevates it onto a higher, Spirit-focused, God-focused plane of meaning. All of these provide the emphatic, progressive focus for the progression narratologically of the water-spirit relationship.

This dissertation has evidenced how John has been successful in drawing his readers convincingly along the water-spirit flow ever more deeply into a 'relationship of knowledge, trust and love'²⁵⁹ with Jesus and his Father. Using the core symbolic relationship between water and the Spirit, John has convincingly navigated his way to express his Christology and doctrine of salvation. Ultimately, the relationship between the symbolism of water and the Spirit flows like the water pouring forth from the Temple in Ezekiel's vision. John evidences clearly, in his choice of events, the delivery of his discourses, the many stylistic devices that he uses that Jesus is the son of God, the Messiah, and that by believing in him, all who accept gift of living, flowing water which flows out of his κοιλία, will indeed have life in his name (20:31). Lee reminds readers that symbols point to divine love and glory, the location and means of personal transformation from darkness into the all-embracing light of God's love.²⁶⁰ The intimate relationship of water symbolism and the Spirit has proved to be one key medium through which John has conclusively proved his narrative intention. Fulfilling Ezekiel's prophetic waters flowing out of the Temple is fulfilled in the Spirit which brings fulness of life (10:10). For, 'what it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing'.²⁶¹

Research into John's symbolic use of water has restricted the categorisation of its symbolic designation significantly.²⁶² However, this present study into water symbolism and its intimate relationship with the Spirit suggests that consideration a Johannine subcategory

²⁵⁹ David Ford, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 438.

²⁶⁰ Dorothy A. Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 237.

²⁶¹ Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, 9-10.

²⁶² Cf. for example, Song, *Water as an Image of the Spirit in the Johannine Literature*; Crutcher, *That He Might Be Revealed*.

of unspoken 'I am' statements to supplement the already extensive scholarship on ἐγώ εἰμι statements. The Fourth Gospel is indeed 'a Gospel of abundance';²⁶³ the beauty of John's narrative is that there is always more to reveal.

²⁶³ Ford, *The Gospel of John*, 1.

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Appendix 1: Chiasm John 3:1-21

Chiastic Structure of John 3:1-21:²⁶⁴

- A:(3:1-2) 'a teacher who has come from **God**' (3:2)
- B:(3:3) 'no-one can see the **kingdom of God**' (3:3)
- C:(3:4) **Nicodemus misunderstands** and remains on a material level: re-entering the womb for a second physical birth (3:4)
- D:(3:5) entry to the **kingdom of God** requires 'being **born of water and Spirit**' (3:5)
- E:(3:6-7) 'You (pl, generalising this statement) must be born **from above**' (3:7)
- D¹: Like the wind, 'so it is with everyone **born of the Spirit**' (3:8)
- C¹:(3:9) **Nicodemus again misunderstands**: 'How can these things be?' (3:9)
- B¹:(3:10-15) 'no-one has ascended into **heaven**' (3:13)
- A: (3:16-21) 'For **God** so loved the world...that the world might be saved through [his Son] (3:16, 17)²⁶⁵

Chiastic Structure of John 3:1-10:

- A: 3:1-2: Nicodemus calls Jesus a 'teacher sent by God'
- B: 3:3-4: Jesus speaks of birth '*anōthen*' and Nicodemus asks 'How?'
- C: 3:5-6: Jesus speaks of birth 'of water and spirit'
- B¹: 3:7-9: Jesus speaks of birth '*anōthen*' and Nicodemus asks 'How?'
- A¹: 3:10: Jesus calls Nicodemus a 'teacher of Israel'²⁶⁶

Appendix 2: Chiasm John 7:14-52

- a) A cautious approach to chiastic structuring is taken, for no indication is given that John intentionally used this structure here.

²⁶⁴ The caution suggested by Jo-Ann Brant is noted: Brant, *John*, 27.

²⁶⁵ 'Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Each Pericope of the Gospel of John', accessed 15 December 2024, http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/43_John_pericope_e.html.

²⁶⁶ Howard-Brook, '*John's Gospel's Call*', 87.

b) This chiastic arrangement, therefore, is suggested purely because it provides a balanced view of the section concerning Jesus' public teaching of Jesus and the discussions surrounding it.

A: 7:14-18: **JESUS:** Jesus Teaches in the Temple: heavenly origin of his teaching

B: 7:19-24: **CROWD:** Accusation of Breaking the Law: Sabbath and right judgement

C: 7:25-31: **CROWD:** Confusion About Jesus' Origin: Is Jesus the Messiah? Jesus states his heavenly origins

D: 7:32-36: **PHARISEES:** Pharisees Seek to Arrest Jesus: failed attempt, Jesus causes further confusion by announcing his imminent departure

E: 7:37-39: **JESUS:** Jesus' Invitation: Living Water (*Central Focus*)

D¹: 7:40-44: **CROWD** Confusion About Jesus' Origin: Is Jesus the Messiah? Crowd only know of Jesus' earthly origins

C¹: 7:45-49: **PHARISEES:** Failure to Arrest Jesus: Confusion about Jesus' authority

B¹: 7:50-52: **PHARISEES:** Nicodemus Accused: Nicodemus defends Jesus; accusations that he too might have fallen under this Galilean's influence

A¹: 7:52: **PHARISEES:** Religious Leaders Reject Jesus: no prophet can come from Galilee