

maintain an encratite lifestyle as the way to be in a state of continual purification and sinlessness, a state of readiness for the dangerous ascent to God. Like the Therapeutae, they believed that this condition was essential for successful vision quests that would bring about their immortalization. So they lived like the angels and thought themselves to be citizens of heaven even while dwelling on earth.

## Chapter 5

### FAITH MYSTICISM IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: THE INTERPRETATIVE TRAJECTORY AND SYNTHETIC END POINT

Blessed are those who have not seen  
and yet believe

(John 20.29).

In 1953, C.H. Dodd published his now classic monograph on the Gospel of John, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. In this book, he briefly discusses the central position of 'faith' to Johannine theology.<sup>1</sup> He focuses almost exclusively on 20.23-29, the episode where Thomas recognizes the risen Jesus through a vision and where Jesus tells him to have faith (μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός) (20.27).

Dodd discerned here a relationship between faith and vision. He notes that throughout the Gospel in general, the emphasis is on visions of Jesus accompanied by faith in him. Such conditions brought eternal life. But the Thomas episode, Dodd contends, is a 'transition'. Thomas

1. C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp. 179-86. For other discussion of the concept of 'faith' in the Gospel of John refer to O. Cullmann, 'Eiden kai episteusen': *Aux sources de la tradition chrétienne* (Paris: Mélanges Goguel, 1950), pp. 52-61; M. Bonningues, *La foi dans l'Evangile de Saint Jean* (Brussels: Pensée Catholique, 1955); G. Philips, 'Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel', in F.M. Cross (ed.), *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (London: Mowbray, 1957), pp. 83-96; T. Barrosse, 'The Relationship of Love to Faith in St. John', *TS* 18 (1957), pp. 538-59; A. Decourtray, 'La conception johannique de la foi', *NRT* 81 (1959), pp. 561-76; I. de la Potterie, 'Oida et ginosko, les deux modes de la connaissance dans le quatrième évangile', *Bib* 40 (1959), pp. 709-25; G.F. Hawthorne, 'The Concept of Faith in the Fourth Gospel', *BibSac* 116 (1959), pp. 117-26; W. Grundmann, 'Verständnis und Bewegung des Glaubens im Johannes-Evangelium', *KD* 6 (1960), pp. 131-54; P. Grelot, 'Le problème de la foi dans le quatrième évangile', *BVC* 52 (1963), pp. 61-71; J. Gaffney, 'Believing and Knowing in the Fourth Gospel', *TS* 26 (1965), pp. 215-41.

represents the followers of Jesus who saw him physically, and having faith, were granted life. But, even more blessed are those who did not meet Jesus, but still have faith (that is, the Johannine Christians). Dodd summarizes: 'When Christ was on earth, to have faith was to "see His glory"... Now that He is no longer visible to the bodily eye, faith remains the capacity for seeing His glory.'<sup>2</sup>

Wilhelm Bousset further refined the connection between vision mysticism or, as he defines it, 'deification through the vision of God', and the Johannine usage of 'faith'.<sup>3</sup> He notes that the apostles and eye-witnesses of the life of Jesus experienced the *visio Dei* through Jesus, the 'image of God'.<sup>4</sup> He suggests that the Johannine community is also to experience this vision in the image of Jesus, particularly through worship, sermons, sacramental participation, and, above all, through faith.<sup>5</sup>

Dodd and Bousset certainly recognized the centrality of faith as vision in the Gospel of John. Unfortunately, neither fully developed their interpretations nor saw the connections between John's substitution of faith for vision and his polemic against proleptic visionary flights into heaven. Thus, in this chapter, I will reconstruct the tenets of what I call 'faith mysticism', the new theology or Synthetic End Point that the Johannine author presents in response to the mystical soteriology of the Thomasine Christians.

He does this by disarticulating himself from the Religio-historical and Traditio-religious Horizons. This disarticulation empties a space for his own creative theological thinking about faith and salvation, the development of his own Interpretative Trajectory. At the same time as he disarticulates from these horizons, however, he also articulates within their spheres. Thus he salvages the underpinnings of vision mysticism but transforms these tenets into something of value to him and his community: a salvific mystical experience centered on faith rather than ecstatic vision. As we will see, the Synthetic End Point or 'faith mysticism' is a form of mysticism that is developed by the Johannine author through his division of time into three eras: the pretemporal existence of Jesus when Jesus was with God, the historical presence of

2. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 186.

3. W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (trans. J.E. Steely; New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), pp. 221-32.

4. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 228.

5. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 230.

Jesus when people who saw Jesus were transformed, and the author's own time characterized by the historical absence of Jesus when transformation occurred through faith in Jesus rather than vision.

### 1. The Pretemporal Existence of Jesus

The Prologue makes clear the pretemporal existence of Jesus as the Logos of God who was with God prior to creation and who aided in creation before his incarnation in human form. The most current interpretation of the Prologue by Jarl Fossum correctly challenges the widespread opinion since the works of J. Rendel Harris and Rudolph Bultmann that the Logos in the Prologue is best understood in terms of Sophianology.<sup>6</sup> Fossum contends that Sophia traditions cannot explain the incarnation of the Logos in one individual person,<sup>7</sup> nor the identification of the Logos with God who existed from the beginning. Rather, the Johannine author is utilizing Jewish traditions about the Angel of the Lord who is indistinguishable from the Tetragrammaton. The Name of God was understood in the traditions to be a hypostasis of God's eternal nature and thus equivalent to him. It helped with creating the world and was present in the Angel of the Lord who was known to descend to earth and take on a human form. Thus, according to John, Jesus is the final dwelling place of the Name of God.<sup>8</sup>

The association of this pretemporal existence of Jesus as the Name with the dynamics of vision is vividly expressed in the first few verses. It is stressed that not only was Jesus with God prior to his incarnation (Jn 1.1-18), but he also has seen God while he was with the Father in heaven (Jn 1.18). So John dictates in the introduction to his Gospel that 'no one has ever seen God (θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε)'<sup>9</sup> except the

6. J. Rendel Harris, 'The Origins of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel', *Expositor* 8.12 (1916), pp. 147-60, 161-70, 314-20, 388-400; R. Bultmann, 'Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannes-Evangelium', in H. Schmidt (ed.), *Eucharisterion: Festschrift für Hermann Gunkel* (FRLANT, 37.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), pp. 3-26.

7. There is no evidence for the incarnation of Sophia, only of her transmigration (Wis. 7.27).

8. J. Fossum, 'In the Beginning was the Name: Onomatology as the Key to Johannine Christianity', in *idem*, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (NTOA, 30; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), pp. 109-33.

9. P. Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early*

Son who was in 'the bosom of the Father' (Jn 1.18). John continues to emphasize that no one has 'seen' God except Jesus: 'Not that anyone has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father (οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἑώρακέν τις εἰ μὴ ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα)' (Jn 6.46). In Jn 5.37, the Johannine author even has Jesus polemicize against the Jews: 'his [the Father's] form you have never seen (οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἑώρακατε)'.

There is a striking passage that contains ideas similar to these. This passage is described in the first-century Jewish writing quoted by Origen, the *Prayer of Joseph*. According to this text, Jacob is also 'Israel', an angel of God. Jacob claims that God called him Israel which means 'a man seeing God (ἄνθρωπος ὁρῶν θεόν)', because he was 'the firstborn of every living thing to whom God gives life (ἐγὼ πρωτόγονος παντὸς ζῶντος ζωομένου ὑπὸ θεοῦ)'. Israel then descended to earth and tabernacled among men and was called Jacob: εἶπεν ὅτι κατέβην ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ κατεσκήνωσα ἐν ἀνθρώποις, καὶ ὅτι ἐκλήθην ὀνόματι Ἰακώβ (Origen, *Comm. in Joh.* 2.188-90).<sup>10</sup>

Thus there existed a tradition contemporaneous with John that a special angel of God existed before the rest of creation. This angel was given a special name based on the fact that he had seen God during his cohabitation with God. Later this angel descended to earth in human form.

The Johannine author, therefore, seems to be articulating at the same time as he is disarticulating with this Religio-historical Horizon as he begins to build the figural action in his Gospel. He writes of a pre-existent Logos figure who cohabited with God and was given the *sole* visionary experience of that God. This pretemporal visionary experi-

*Christianity* (BJS, 131; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 177-78, suggests that this theme that 'no one has ever seen God' is an interpretation of the theophany at Sinai in Exod. 33.20 where Moses was not allowed to see the face of God because no one can see God and live; according to John, the only heavenly figure to be able to see God is the Son; this figure may be associated with the angel Israel, 'he who sees God', in Philo (*Conf. Ling.* 1.46; *Leg. All.* 1.43). It should be noted, however, that Moses does see God or God's Glory! Cf. the interpretation of Exod. 33.20 (in light of Num. 12.8) in *Lev. R.* 20.10; see also *Exod. R.* 23.15. In 5.37 apparently looks back to 5.24-25. Thus, Jesus is equivalent to the 'form' or Glory of God. On this, see J. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (WUNT, 36; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985), p. 295 n. 112.

10. C. Blanc, *Origène: Commentaire sur Saint Jean*, I (SC, 120; Paris: Cerf, 1966), pp. 334-37.

ence has made this entity special. He not only is the only one who truly knows the Father because he is the only one who has seen the Father (Jn 1.18), but he also participates in and embodies the deity. The Logos is God (Jn 1.1). Moreover, once this Logos has descended from heaven (Jn 3.13, 31-32; 7.29; 8.23; cf. 17.5)<sup>11</sup> and tabernacled with humans, he, as Jesus, can claim that 'the Father and I are one' (Jn 10.30) and 'believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me' (Jn 14.11). He has been given God's Name and thus is one with God (Jn 17.11).

## 2. The Historical Presence of Jesus

### a. The Kābôd

The key to unlocking the mysterious Christology of John is understanding the author's application of *kābôd* traditions to the historical manifestation of Jesus. This idea is compatible with John Ashton's conclusions found in his article, 'Bridging Ambiguities'. In this article, he demonstrates that Jewish angelology goes a long way to explain the perplexing Christology in John.<sup>12</sup>

It is unfortunate that James Dunn did not make this connection in his otherwise informed article on Christology in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>13</sup> He correctly notes that the Christology of Jesus as the manifestation of God descended from heaven reflects Johannine hostility towards Christian interest in Jewish mystical ascent and vision. The Johannine author, declaring this as too dangerous and too speculative, offers the alternative of the incarnate Logos who brings through himself the vision of the Father.<sup>14</sup> The deficiency in Dunn's argument is his reliance on Wisdom traditions to explain the equation of the Logos with God.<sup>15</sup> Sophia

11. For discussions about this theme, see especially, W. Meeks, 'The Man From Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism', *JBL* 91 (1972), pp. 44-72; for background of this motif, see C. Talbert, 'The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity', *NTS* 22 (1976), pp. 418-39.

12. J. Ashton, 'Bridging Ambiguities', in *idem, Studying John: Approaches to the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 71-89.

13. J. Dunn, 'Let John be John: A Gospel for Its Time', in P. Stuhlmacher (ed.), *Das Evangelium und die Evangelium: Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982* (WUNT, 28; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983), pp. 309-39.

14. Dunn, 'Let John be John', p. 334.

15. Dunn, 'Let John be John', p. 337; Cf. J. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), pp. 168-76.

traditions cannot explain the identification of a pre-existent Logos with God, nor the incarnation of the Logos in one individual as we find in John.

Fossum's interpretation, unlike prior ones such as Dunn's which focused on Sophianology, aligns with the representation of Jesus throughout the Gospel as God's manifestation, his *kābôd* or Glory, a figure from Jewish tradition that often bears God's Name.<sup>16</sup> Frequently in the Gospel of John we hear of 'seeing' the δόξα or Glory of God in Jesus and his words and works.

The Johannine usage of δόξα is distinctive. The Glory of Jesus is visible in his person (Jn 1.14), his signs or wonders (Jn 2.11; 11.40; 17.4), and his crucifixion (Jn 12.23, 28; 13.32; 17.1, 5).<sup>17</sup> In 1.14, for instance, the claim is made: 'we have seen his Glory (τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ), the Glory (δόξα) as of the Only Begotten from the Father'. The background of this vision may be found in Moses' vision of the Glory in Exod. 33.18–34.8.<sup>18</sup> Clearly here we have the personalizing of this term by connecting it to the personal being, the Only Begotten who is the visible manifestation of God (Jn 1.18).<sup>19</sup> Additionally, John implies that Isaiah's vision of 'the Lord' in Isaiah 6 was actually a vision of Jesus as the Glory (Jn 12.41):<sup>20</sup>

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: 'He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn, and I would heal them'. Isaiah said these things because he saw his [Jesus'] Glory and he spoke concerning him [Jesus] (Jn 12.39–41).

16. For discussions on *kābôd* traditions in John, see, Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 206–208, 373–79; C. Rowland, 'John 1.51, Jewish Apocalyptic and Targumic Tradition', *NTS* 30 (1984), pp. 498–507 (505); most recently, C. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU, 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), pp. 271–80.

17. G. Kittel, δόξα, *TDNT* II, pp. 242–45.

18. J. Fossum, 'Glory כבוד δόξα', in K. van der Toorn et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 1486–98.

19. For a discussion of this idea, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, p. 273.

20. It is most likely that John is following the same exegetical tradition found in the Targum of Isaiah here which reads that Isaiah saw the 'יקרא' of the Lord' (6.1) or the 'יקר שכינתו' of the King of the worlds' (6.5). On this, see Fossum, *The Name of the God*, p. 295 n. 112; and Fossum, 'Glory'.

The Gospel claims that God sent his son to earth out of his own love so that the world might be saved through encountering him (Jn 3.16–17). This theme is expanded upon in 17.20–26 where Jesus is identified with the Glory who has been sent to earth out of God's love. By seeing Jesus the Glory, the disciples will experience a mystic union with Jesus, and thus with the Father. Because Jesus is the *kābôd*, the personal manifestation of the Father, he is identified with the Father: 'even as you, Father, are in me, and I, in you' (Jn 17.21). This Glory or divine essence is transferred to the disciple: 'The Glory which you have given to me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one' (Jn 17.22–23). Such a transformation is possible through the mechanism of the visionary experience. Thus Jesus prays for the disciple 'to see my Glory (ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν) which you [the Father] have given to me in your love for me before the foundation of the world' (Jn 17.24). In the capacity of God's *kābôd*, Jesus makes the Father known to the world and makes available the opportunity for union with him (Jn 17.25–26).

Wilhelm Bousset made reference to this concept in his well-known work, *Kyrios Christos*: 'This vision which deifies men occurs in the image of the Son of God who has appeared on earth';<sup>21</sup> thus, 'the apostles and eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus have experienced the vision of God in the image of God, and are now themselves flooded by the utter abundance of the powers of the upper world'.<sup>22</sup>

This notion is quite vividly displayed in narratological form in Jn 6.30–40 where Jesus is asked what sign he does so that 'we may see, and believe you'. The questioners expect him to feed them manna as Moses did their forefathers. Jesus then replies that he is the manna come down from heaven and which gives life. Thus Jesus himself is the sign they seek to see. This is summed up neatly in Jn 6.40 which reads: 'For this is the will of my Father that everyone who sees the Son (πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν τὸν υἱόν) and believes in him should have eternal life (ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον)'.

Consequently, Jesus himself is literally 'the way (ἡ ὁδός)' (Jn 14.6) because he embodies the journey to the Father and mediates the knowledge of God or the vision of God.<sup>23</sup> Rudolph Bultmann explains that

21. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 227.

22. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 228.

23. Cf. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 404–405.

Jesus as 'the way' is the *only* access to God 'not in the sense of a mystagogue, who brings doctrines and celebrations that are the means to the vision of God'. Rather, Jesus is 'the way' in such a manner that he is:

at the same time the goal; for he is also ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή: the ἀλήθεια as the *revealed* reality of God, and the ζωή as the *divine* reality which bestows life on the believer in that it bestows self-understanding in God.<sup>24</sup>

Thus there is no rebirth apart from the Son of Man (Jn 3.3-13) and no one can ascend to heaven and enter the Kingdom of God unless through the Son of Man (Jn 3.13).<sup>25</sup>

In the Johannine tradition, therefore, the deity has been manifested historically. Ascent to heaven and a vision of God are not necessary to be transformed and achieve life because the divinity has come to earth and has brought this mystic experience with him. So John emphasizes that the vision of Jesus on earth substitutes for the vision of the Father in heaven: 'He who has seen me has seen the Father (ὁ ἑώρακώς ἐμὲ ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα)' (Jn 14.9). Moreover, knowing Jesus on earth is knowing the Father in heaven: 'If you had known me, you would have known my Father also (εἰ ἐγνώκατέ με, καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου γνώσεσθε); henceforth you know him and have seen him' (Jn 14.7). And those who see Jesus shall live (Jn 14.19). The revelation of the divinity, in the words of Christopher Rowland, is not to be found 'in the visions of the mystics' but only 'in the earthly life of Jesus Christ'.<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, Rowland draws the provocative conclusion that the incarnation of Jesus as the *kābôd* in John is an attempt to downplay any claims to revelation apart from Jesus.<sup>27</sup> Rowland even sees Jn 1.51 ('You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man') as a verse whose function is to testify to the fact that the vision does not provide an avenue for the mystic

24. R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; eds. R.W.N. Hoare and J.K. Riches; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), pp. 605-606.

25. Refer to discussions in H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel Interpreted in its Relationship to Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (repr.; Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1974 [1929]), pp. 95-97; Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul*, p. 115.

26. Rowland, 'John 1.51', p. 505.

27. Rowland, 'John 1.51', p. 505.

to gaze into heaven, but teaches him that even the angels who are already *in* heaven must come to earth to see the revelation of God which is located in the historical figure Jesus.<sup>28</sup>

One could say, therefore, that the goal, so cherished by the Thomasine Christians, of mystic flights into heaven in order to gaze upon the Glory of God, is challenged by the Johannine author who insists that such visions can only be achieved in the historical encounter with Jesus who was the *kābôd* on earth glorified completely at Golgotha (Jn 12.32).

#### b. *The Body of Jesus as the New Temple*

As we have seen in earlier chapters of this monograph, speculation about a new Temple in the absence of the Jerusalem Temple was quite prevalent in early Jewish mystical thought. This tradition had elevated the Temple to the supernal realm where the adept now journeyed to worship God and experience a spiritual transformation often effected by gaze. Such speculation certainly became part of early Christian texts, particularly Revelation and Hebrews. In these texts, the Temple is a celestial house of God where God is enthroned in the Holy of Holies. It is noteworthy that John of Patmos is able to journey into this Temple in Revelation and join in the heavenly worship (Rev. 4-5), while in Hebrews, the 'priesthood' of Christians are encouraged to 'draw near to the throne of grace' (Heb. 4.16), and to 'enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the veil, that is, through his flesh' (Heb. 10.19), in order to 'offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire' (Heb. 12.28-29). In both these cases, the Temple is identified with the space of heaven and is a 'building' which believers enter.

As I conjectured in the last chapter, Logion 71 may be evidence that the Thomasine Christians felt that the destruction of the earthly Temple was a positive historical development. It is plausible that they held this belief because they too were advocates of a celestial Temple through which they ascended in order to come before God's throne, as Logion

28. Rowland, 'John 1.51', pp. 498-507, esp. 506. J. Fossum has provided recent interpretation of this passage in his article, 'The Son of Man's Alter Ego: John 1.51, Targumic Tradition and Jewish Mysticism', in *idem*, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (NTOA, 30; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), pp. 135-51.

15 suggests: 'When you see one who was not born of woman, prostrate yourselves on your faces and worship him. That one is your Father.'

Because of the importance of the celestial Temple in these traditions, it is not surprising that John responds to them by reworking the ideas into a new Synthetic End Point that supports his position that ascent and visionary experiences are not necessary for salvation. He shifts the emphasis from a celestial Temple to another 'earthly' Temple: he argues that Jesus' body is the new tabernacle of God's presence (1.14).

Raymond Brown was one of the first scholars to notice that σκηνοῦν in Old Testament passages was used to indicate the Tabernacle and Temple, the 'site of God's localized presence on earth'.<sup>29</sup> This theme is found in Exod. 25.8-9 where Israel is commanded to make a σκηνή or Tabernacle so that God could dwell among the Israelites. Later this word was used to indicate the presence of God in the Jerusalem Temple (Joel 3.17; Zech. 2.10; Ezek. 43.7). Brown concludes:

When the Prologue proclaims that the Word made his dwelling among men, we are being told that the flesh of Jesus Christ is the new localization of God's presence on earth, and that Jesus is the replacement of the ancient Tabernacle. The Gospel will present Jesus as the replacement of the Temple (ii 19-22), which is a variation of the same theme.<sup>30</sup>

Jarl Fossum also has drawn attention to this theme in his article, 'In the Beginning was the Name'. He investigates the use of the verb σκηνόω and its nominal forms and concludes that Jn 1.14 implies that 'Jesus is the new sanctuary, the dwelling-place of the Name of God'.<sup>31</sup> He states that the idea that 'Jesus is the new sanctum' is clearly spelled out in Jn 2.19-21:

Jesus answered them and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'. Then the Jews said, 'In forty days and six years was this temple built, and you will raise it in three days?' But he spoke of the temple of his body.

Furthermore, in ch. 7, Jesus teaches at the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, a festival that included daily water libations poured out on the altar in front of the Temple. The water libations were connected to Old Testament prophecies that in the age to come, a fountain of sal-

29. R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB, 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), I, pp. 32-33.

30. R. Brown, *John*, p. 33.

31. Fossum, 'In the Beginning was the Name', pp. 121-25.

vation would spring forth from the Temple (Isa. 12.3; Ezek. 47.1-2; Joel 3.18; Zech. 14.8). Thus, when Jn 7.37-38 writes that Jesus cries, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me. And let him drink who has faith in me. As Scripture says: "Out of his body shall flow rivers of living waters"', he is identifying Jesus as the source of the living waters, the new Temple.<sup>32</sup>

One of Fossum's students, Mark Kinzer, has developed these ideas further in a paper that he presented at the 1998 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Convention.<sup>33</sup> He argues that the portrayal of Jesus as the Temple of God by John 'serves as the integrating center for his cultic Christology'.<sup>34</sup> In addition to examining Jn 1.14; 2.20 and 7.37-39, Kinzer remarks on the story of the Samaritan woman in ch. 4. She is given 'living water' or the spirit (cf. Jn 7.37-39), by Jesus (Jn 4.10, 14). Jesus then contrasts worship in this spirit with the worship that was going on at both the Jerusalem and Gerizim Temples: 'The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth...' (Jn 4.21, 23). Kinzer states that these verses imply that 'a new and different kind of Temple is being established'.<sup>35</sup>

Kinzer expands Jesus' connection with the Feast of Tabernacles by pointing out that chs. 7-8 tell about Jesus and his critics, during the Feast, disputing over the two key themes of the festival: water and light. John identifies Jesus with 'the light of the world' (Jn 8.12) and has Jesus give out 'living water' (Jn 7.37-39). According to Kinzer, these themes are continued in ch. 9 with the healing of the blind man. The healing takes place at the starting point for the procession of the water-drawing ceremony during the festival: the pool of Siloam. Through this healing, Jesus is portrayed as the light of the world (Jn 9.5).<sup>36</sup> Additionally, he examines ch. 10, a scene that occurs during the Feast of Dedication. This feast commemorates the rededication of the Temple after it had been desecrated by Antiochus. In the discourse, Jesus refers to himself as the one 'consecrated and sent into the world' (Jn 10.36).

32. Fossum, 'In the Beginning was the Name', pp. 130-31.

33. M. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology in the Gospel of John' (SBLSP; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 447-64.

34. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology', p. 447.

35. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology', p. 449.

36. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology', p. 449.

Kinzer concludes, 'He is thus the new and true Temple, consecrated by God himself'.<sup>37</sup>

He feels that Jesus as the Temple is intimately linked in John with several other Johannine themes: (1) Jesus as Sophia, the divine presence in the Temple (cf. Ps. 132; Sir. 24.8-12); (2) Jesus as the bearer of God's Name, the cultic term for the divine presence in the Temple; (3) Jesus as the vision of God, who traditionally was 'seen' during worship at the Temple (cf. Ps. 27.4; 63.2; 84.7); (4) Jesus as the Temple that linked heaven and earth; and (5) Jesus the giver of the Spirit during baptism, the true purification that allows the believer to worship at the Temple.<sup>38</sup> At the finale of his study, Kinzer concludes that 'whereas John focuses on the person of Jesus as the new Temple, other related traditions are oriented to the heavenly Temple, the eschatological Temple, and/or a particular community as earthly Temple'.<sup>39</sup> This sets John in the center of the mystical Temple traditions.

Most recently, Jonathan Draper has turned to this theme in an article which he promises will soon become a monograph.<sup>40</sup> He begins with Jn 1.14, stating that 'Jesus' incarnation is actually his "tenting" among us so that the divine glory usually understood to be present in the temple building may instead be experience by those with eyes to see in him'. Draper understands this ideology to be a 're-interpretation of the symbol of the temple in terms of *merkābā* mysticism'.<sup>41</sup> He then examines, on a surface level, several Johannine passages which he links to key Merkavah themes: 1.47-51; 2.12-22; 2.23-3.21; 4.1-42; 7.37-39; 10.3-5, 34-36; 12.28-30, 37-41; 14.1-6; and 15.1-10. Later in this chapter, I will examine some of the difficulties with his interpretation of these particular passages.

It seems that there is solid evidence that demonstrates that the Johannine author understood Jesus, during his lifetime, to be the true dwelling place of God's presence, the replacement for the corrupt Temple in Jerusalem which Jesus violently condemned (Jn 2.13-22). His physical body was the Temple of Yahweh from which poured the waters of life. Furthermore, Jesus' physical body was indwelt by Jesus' spiritual

37. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology', p. 450.

38. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology', pp. 451-58.

39. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology', p. 458.

40. J.A. Draper, 'Temple, Tabernacle, and Mystical Experience in John', *Neot* 32 (1997), pp. 263-88.

41. Draper, 'Temple, Tabernacle', p. 266.

body, the *kābôd* or manifestation of God. Therefore, the people around Jesus could encounter the true presence of God who had taken up residence in the new Temple, the body of Jesus. This new locale meant that by making a pilgrimage to Jesus, people during his lifetime were journeying to the real Temple and would 'see' God there.

### 3. The Historical Absence of Jesus

This theology was functional for those who actually saw the 'historical' Jesus while he walked on earth. But what about after his death? How does the person who did not live during Jesus' lifetime gain eternal life, especially when the Johannine author has closed the open heaven and has crucified the new Temple?

#### a. The Paraclete

In ch. 16 we hear echoes of this very concern. Jesus prophesies that shortly his followers will not be able to see him, but soon, they will be able to see him again: 'A little while, and you will see me no more; again, a little while, and you will see me (μικρὸν καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με, καὶ ἄλιν μικρὸν καὶ ὄψεσθέ με)' (Jn 16.16).

The farewell discourse in ch. 14 where the coming of the Paraclete is discussed, is the antecedent to this statement. Here Jesus explains that he will come to his followers in the form of the Paraclete: 'And I will ask the Father, and he will give you *another* Paraclete (ἄλλον παράκλητον) to be with you forever... I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you' (Jn 14.16, 18). Jesus reassures them that 'it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you' (Jn 16.7). He tells them repeatedly that he will not leave his followers desolate, that 'I will come to you' (Jn 14.18).

The Paraclete, along with being 'another' Jesus is also identified with the 'Spirit of Truth (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας)' or the 'Holy Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον)' who is invisible to the world but who is known to his followers (Jn 14.25-26; 15.26):

This is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him, nor knows him. You know him, because he abides in you, and he will be in you (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ ὁ κόσμος οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν, ὅτι οὐ θεωρεῖ αὐτὸ οὐδὲ γινώσκει. ὑμεῖς γινώσκετε αὐτό, ὅτι παρ' ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται) (Jn 14.17).

The world may not be able to see Jesus, but his followers will because he will make himself manifest to them as the Paraclete and in the form of divine love (Jn 14.22-23).

Although much scholarship has been generated in the attempt to establish the origins and meaning of the Johannine Paraclete,<sup>42</sup> particularly scrutinizing the Jewish traditions of intercessory angels,<sup>43</sup> the most recent work by Charles Gieschen points to the probability of an 'angelomorphic' Paraclete. He demonstrates that the phenomenon of two Johannine Paracletes, Jesus and the Spirit, is probably tied directly to Jewish and Christian traditions about a pair of God's principle angels.<sup>44</sup> He bases his work on the research of Gilles Quispel who previously proposed that a parallel to John's two Paracletes is found in the contemporaneous Jewish-Christian literature of Elchasai and the *Ascension of Isaiah*.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, it is likely that John's representation of the Paraclete as another Jesus has its foundation in such traditions. But the concern of the Johannine author surfaces in his insistence that the community, in Jesus' absence, will not be left alone without the opportunity of the mystical encounter with the divine. This need for the ideology of the Paraclete has been analyzed by Jonathan Draper from a sociological perspective. He has determined that the Paraclete is developed in John due to the community's concern over 'the departure of Jesus'.<sup>46</sup> The death of the 'charismatic founder' of the religious movement raises the questions of

42. For a history of research on this subject, refer to G. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); J. Ashton, 'Paraclete', *ABD*, V, pp. 152-54.

43. On this, see H. Windisch, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel* (trans. J. Cox; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968). In addition, N. Johannson, *Parakletoi: Vorstellungen von Fürsprechern für die Menschen vor Gott in der alttestamentlichen Religion, im Spätjudentum, und Urchristentum* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1940); J. Behm, 'παράκλητος', *TDNT*, V, pp. 800-14; and O. Betz, *Der Paraklet* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963).

44. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 286-93.

45. G. Quispel, 'John and Jewish Christianity', *Gnostic Studies* 2 (Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 34.2: Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 210-29 (220-24); Quispel is informed by the research of G. Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (BHT, 21; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1956), pp. 62-93; see also, G. Stroumsa, 'Le couple de l'ange et de l'esprit: traditions juives et chrétiennes', *RB* 88 (1981), pp. 42-61.

46. J.A. Draper, 'The Sociological Function of the Spirit/Paraclete in the Farewell Discourses in the Fourth Gospel', *Neot* 26 (1992), pp. 13-27 (14).

the 'succession of charisma' in the community, produces an increase in cognitive dissonance among members, and leads to a possible dissolution of the community in face of external hostility.<sup>47</sup> The Paraclete functions as the 'boundary maintenance over against a hostile world'. The Paraclete passages are interwoven into the Farewell Discourses in order to differentiate the community that possesses the Paraclete in Jesus' absence from the world, and give the community strength to maintain themselves against the world. Additionally, the possession of the Paraclete as the Spirit of Truth means that the community members can lay exclusive claim to salvation. According to Draper, 'There is no salvation outside the sect'.<sup>48</sup>

Thus John fleshes out the Interpretative Trajectory with his idea of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who replaces Jesus in his absence. Although a theophany of this being is not realistic because he does not have a visible form, the community will 'know' him nonetheless. He will be manifested as the divine love of Jesus for his followers, a love that is mutually shared between the members of John's community. According to the Johannine author, this display of love becomes the new Torah just as Jeremiah predicted: 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts' (Jn 13.33). Furthermore, the true disciples of Jesus are identified by this mutual love:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn 13.34-35).

This means that Jesus' command to love one another is the evidence that Jesus as the Paraclete dwells within the Johannine community:

He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him... If a person loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (Jn 14.21-24).

So, even though the followers will no longer be able to 'see' Jesus, they will be able to 'know' the Paraclete. And the Paraclete, through this encounter with the believers, will mediate God. Proleptic visionary ascents are not necessary because the Paraclete has come down to earth in Jesus' absence.

47. Draper, 'Sociological Function of the Spirit', p. 14.

48. Draper, 'Sociological Function of the Spirit', pp. 22-23.



b. *The Eschatological Temple*

Since the Temple has been identified with Jesus' body, the Johannine author recognizes that the Temple must be reconstituted after Jesus' crucifixion. Instead of creating an ideology that the community of believers was the newest Temple as other Christians argued (cf. 1 Cor.; 2 Cor.; Eph.; 1 Pet.), John interprets Jesus' resurrection as the recreation of the Temple in the heavenly realm. Therefore, Jesus claims in John to be able to raise up the destroyed Temple in 'three days' (Jn 2.19-21). Moreover, he tells his disciples in ch. 14 that in his Father's 'house (oikía)' there are many rooms (14.2). He is going there 'to prepare a place' for his followers. In the future, he will come to earth again, to collect his own and take them to himself (14.3). It seems that the Johannine author understands Jesus' resurrected body to be the new heavenly Temple which believers will be able to enter at the end of time.

Jonathan Draper has made similar observations in his article. He states, 'In John's Gospel, the concept of Jesus as the tented wilderness presence of God with his people on earth, is supplemented it seems with the idea of Jesus constituting or building the heavenly temple on his return to the Father'.<sup>49</sup> Although I think that this is a very solid conclusion, Draper goes on to state that 'in so doing, he opens the way for his disciples to gain mystic experience of the heavenly throne room by means of ascent and descent obtained through the worship of the community'.<sup>50</sup> This latter statement is problematic in that it does not recognize the eschatological nature of Jn 14.2-3. The Johannine author is *not* stating that ascent and visionary experience in God's new Temple is available to the believers *now*—but that this will be a future event which the community members can only long and hope for now. Thus, as we have seen, throughout the Gospel there are claims that no one can see God except Jesus, or ascend into heaven, or follow Jesus there until the prepared time. It should also be remembered that this is the direction of the Johannine trajectory in 1 Jn 3.2: 'Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

Thus, Draper's interpretation of Jn 3.13 has difficulties: 'Jesus comes from above to enable those below to ascend and experience the worship

49. Draper, 'Temple, Tabernacle', p. 278.

50. Draper, 'Temple, Tabernacle', pp. 278-79.

of the heavenly temple.<sup>51</sup> He recognizes that previous scholars are correct to note here 'a polemic against the claims of mystics to ascend into heaven by their own work' but feels that we also have in 3.13 a passage which points out that 'access to the Father is open through Jesus, who takes his disciples to himself and provides birth "from above"' (Jn 14.3-6). He continues that 'it is no accident that the gospel so often uses the concept of seeing and believing (e.g. 1.39, 46; 9.1-41; though note 20.29). The vision of God is the goal of worship in the new Temple'.<sup>52</sup> Kinzer also seems to be reading the Gospel in this direction when he states:

Like other Temple traditions of the time, John's Gospel promotes a visionary and mystical brand of Judaism, and roots the visionary and mystical knowledge it promotes in a type of Temple worship which is only indirectly tied to the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately, neither scholar has made the distinction, which I contend is vital, between John's understanding of how Jesus functioned during his lifetime (as the new earthly Temple indwelt by the *kābôd*, to which people could journey in order to 'see' God), and how Jesus functioned after his death (as the heavenly Temple which the believers can only ascend to and enter when Jesus comes to take them there at the eschaton). This takes me to one final note: neither Draper nor Kinzer has tried to explain how Jn 20.29 fits into John's ideology. So it is to that task that I now turn.

c. *Faith*

The Johannine author also responds to the concern of Jesus' historical absence by repetitively linking the concept of *faith in Jesus* to the visionary experience. In this way he articulates with the Religio-historical Horizon by preserving the trappings of vision mysticism while simultaneously he disarticulates with this horizon by transforming the visionary experience into a faith experience. Thus, faith and vision are made to be correlative concepts.<sup>54</sup>

This theme surfaces in 6.36 when John suggests that vision alone will accomplish nothing unless it is accompanied by belief. So these words

51. Draper, 'Temple, Tabernacle', p. 281.

52. Draper, 'Temple, Tabernacle', pp. 281-82.

53. Kinzer, 'Temple Christology', p. 458.

54. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, pp. 230-32.

are attributed to Jesus: 'But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe (ἐώρακάτε [με] καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε).' Closely following in v. 40, Jesus claims that the will of God is that 'everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life (πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον).' John combines vision and faith in 12.44-45 where belief in Jesus and a vision of Jesus are equivalent to belief in God and a vision in God: 'He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees him who sent me (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ πιστεύει εἰς ἐμὲ ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸν πέμψαντά με, καὶ ὁ θεωρῶν ἐμὲ θεωρεῖ τὸν πέμψαντά με).' Faith, in the Gospel of John, according to Bousset, 'is nothing other than this looking upon the likeness of Jesus in his divine Doxa'.<sup>55</sup>

Noteworthy as well is the story of the serpent in the wilderness in Jn 3.14-15. According to Num. 21.8, those who *look* at the serpent will live. So Moses is instructed by God to 'make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he *sees* it, shall live (וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה כְּכָל־הַנְּשִׁיךְ וַיִּרְאֵהוּ אֱתָן וַיָּחַי; πᾶς ὁ δεδηγμένος ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ζήσεται [LXX])'. In John's reference to this story, we find that he has intentionally altered the image: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever *believes* in him (ὁ πιστεύων ἐν αὐτῷ) may have eternal life.' By making such an alteration, John is making the statement that faith has replaced vision.

Additionally, whenever the vision of Jesus is mentioned, the Johannine author insists that this vision unaccompanied by faith in Jesus as the manifestation of God is of no avail. Thus John the Baptist 'sees' at the same time as he acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 1.34). Sight accompanied by belief is the foundation of Nathanael's call (Jn 1.45-51): he saw and believed that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 1.49). Martha is told in 11.40 that if she will believe, she will see God's Glory: ἐὰν πιστεύσῃς ὄψῃ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ. Even the Beloved Disciple in 19.35 claims that he bears witness because he saw and he shares this discovery so that others may believe too: 'He who saw it has borne witness. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth that you also may believe (ὁ ἐώρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, καὶ ἐκεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθὴ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύ[σ]ητε).'

The story of the blind man summarizes John's point well. The blind man in ch. 9 is asked by Jesus, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'

55. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 230.

(Jn 9.35). The blind man wants to know who the Son of Man is so that he can believe (Jn 9.36). Jesus responds: 'You have seen him (ἐώρακας αὐτὸν), and it is he who speaks to you' (Jn 9.37). Then the blind man confesses, 'Lord, I believe' (Jn 9.38). Jesus says that one of his purposes for coming into the world is so that 'those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind (οἱ μὴ βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ οἱ βλέποντες τυφλοὶ γένωνται)' (Jn 9.39). Thus John reinforces the idea that sight without belief is blindness and will not bring salvation. But sight accompanied by faith will ensure redemption.

When it comes down to it, however, the vision itself is not the necessary ingredient for eternal life, according to the Johannine author. This is the effect of the climactic story about Thomas in ch. 20 when Jesus blesses those who believe without having seen Jesus (Jn 20.29): 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.' C.K. Barrett concludes that this is so that the successors of the eyewitnesses 'equally may believe, and that their faith places them on the same level of blessedness with the eyewitnesses, or even above it'.<sup>56</sup> Thus the original Gospel ended: 'and that believing you may have life in his name' (Jn 20.31).

It is arguable that the Johannine author creates the Synthetic End Point, faith mysticism, in response to vision mysticism promoted by the Thomasine Christians. He brilliantly utilizes the mechanism of visionary transformation but replaces the visionary experience with one of faith. In this way, his audience is secure in his articulation with the Religio-historical and Traditio-religious Horizons, but can accept his disarticulation and endeavor to offer a creative solution or End Point to this discourse.

According to John, therefore, one need not worry about visions now that Jesus has ascended to the Father and the eyewitnesses have died, because it is one's faith in Jesus that truly brings life. In a sense the deifying function of a vision of Jesus as God's manifestation has been replaced by faith in Jesus as God's historical manifestation: vision mysticism has become 'faith mysticism'. Or as C.H. Dodd so aptly said: 'Faith, then, is a form of vision'.<sup>57</sup>

56. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: SPCK, 1956), p. 478.

57. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 186.

d. *Sacramental Experience*

In John, however, faith is more than cognitive belief. It is encounter with God's presence. As we have discovered, for those who saw Jesus during his career, it was encounter with the *kābôd*, Jesus manifesting God on earth and embodying the new Temple. After the death and ascent of Jesus, it was encounter with the Spirit. For the believers, the historical distance between Jesus of Nazareth and the experience of the Johannine community was bridged by the Paraclete who gave them direct and immediate contact with Jesus. Such an understanding is reflected in the remarks of the author of 1 Jn 4.13: 'by this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit (*Ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν*)'.

But how did the believers enter into this contact? I support the position that the encounter with the Spirit, according to the Gospel of John, is available through the sacramental experience: initially through baptism and continually through the Lord's Supper.<sup>58</sup> Even though several scholars have criticized Oscar Cullmann's celebrated piece, *Early Christian Worship*, in which he makes a case for the sacramental background of John, his thesis that 'the Gospel of John regards as one of its chief concerns to set forth the connexion between contemporary Christian worship and the historical life of Jesus' remains steadfast.<sup>59</sup> He concludes that the Gospel of John treats the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'expressions of the whole worship life of the early community' and correspondingly John presents the relation between the

58. Scholars argue both sides of this issue. For a full bibliography, refer to H. Klos, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970); R. Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975), pp. 249-59; E. Malatesta, *St. John's Gospel 1920-1965* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1967); H. Thyen, 'Aus der Literatur zum Johannesevangelium', *TRu* 44 (1979), pp. 97-134; cf. W. Michaelis, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium* (Bern: BEG-Verlag, 1946); W. Howard, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation* (London: Epworth Press, 1955), pp. 195-212; R. Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament* (trans. K. Grobel; 2 vols.; London: SCM Press, 1955), II, pp. 3-14; R. Brown, 'The Johannine Sacramentary Reconsidered', in *New Testament Essays* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965), pp. 51-76.

59. O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (SBT, 10; Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953), p. 37.

Lord and the community 'present especially in these two sacraments'.<sup>60</sup>

There are opponents to the argument that, in the Gospel of John, we discover expressions of sacramental imagery.<sup>61</sup> These scholars point to the absence of the baptismal commission of Matthew 28 and the lack of the words of institution. The obvious problem with this non-sacramental stance is that it is hard to imagine any early Christian community not being aware of baptism and the Eucharist. The Gospel of John clearly knows of baptism, even Jesus' own (1.29-34). In Jn 3.26 and 4.1, we are told that baptism was part of Jesus' ministry as well! The argument that John does not contain a reference to the baptismal commission is an argument from silence and must take into account that, in addition, neither Mark nor Luke mentions the commission. Also, I would contest that John did know about a tradition concerning words of institution, and that this tradition is reflected in ch. 6.

Certainly this is not the place to repeat the detailed arguments of past scholars on the subject of sacramentalism in the Gospel of John. But I do want to briefly point out some of the cultic nuances in chs. 3, 4, and 6 and how the ideology of faith mysticism has been interwoven with them.

In Jn 3.5, Jesus speaks of being reborn 'of water and spirit (*ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος*)' in order to enter the Kingdom of God.<sup>62</sup> There must be a baptismal reference behind this statement, especially since the story framing this dialogue regards the baptismal activities of Jesus and John the Baptist (Jn 3.22-36). It is plausible that 3.5 reflects the idea that the baptismal experience brings the initiate into the presence of the Spirit. This experience is one of birth into the sacred: 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (*τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεῦμα ἐστίν*)

60. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, p. 58.

61. For instance, see E. Schweizer, 'Das Johanneische Zeugnis vom Herrenmahl', *EvT* 12 (1953), pp. 341-63; Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, p. 471; Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament*, II, pp. 58-59; G. Bornkamrt, 'Die eucharistische Rede im Johannesevangelium', *ZNW* 47 (1956), pp. 161-69; H. Koester, 'Geschichte und Kultus im Johannesevangelium und bei Ignatius von Antiochien', *ZTK* 54 (1957), pp. 56-59. E. Lohse, 'Wort und Sakrament im Johannesevangelium', *NTS* 7 (1960-61), pp. 110-25; Klos, *Die Sakramente*, pp. 11-21; Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist*, p. 259.

62. Some have argued that ὕδατος καὶ was penned by a later ecclesiastical redactor: Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, p. 138 n. 3; Lohse, 'Wort und Sakrament', pp. 110-25; F.-M. Braun, 'Le don de Dieu et l'initiation Chrétienne', *NRT* 86 (1964), pp. 1025-48.

(cf. Jn 3.5-8). The heavenly mystical encounter has been brought to earth first through Jesus' descent and historical presence, and then after his ascent through the sacramental encounter with the Spirit. Thus Jesus stresses to Nicodemus that only the Son of Man has descended from and ascended into heaven (Jn 3.13) so that eternal life can be given to the believer (Jn 3.15). Through baptism, Jesus as Spirit becomes present to the faithful.

This is supported by the story of the Samaritan woman at the well in the following chapter. Jesus speaks of giving to the faithful, 'the living water (ὕδωρ ζῶν)' which will well up to eternal life (Jn 4.10-14). Further, we find embedded in the story a metaphor for divine transformation when Jesus states that the believer will never thirst again: οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (Jn 4.14). It is plausible that these words allude to baptism, reminding the reader that this sacrament effects the initial encounter with the divine presence and the consequent transformation.

This initial encounter with the divine presence is perpetuated by participating in the Eucharist meal. In ch. 6, eucharistic references are behind Jesus' claim to be the 'bread of life (ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς)' who has 'come down from heaven (ὁ καταβάς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)' (Jn 6.35, 41, 51). This bread is his 'flesh (ἡ σὰρξ μου)' and, if the faithful consume it, they will live forever (Jn 6.51). This reference is expanded to include Jesus' blood (αὐτοῦ τὸ αἶμα) which must be drunk by the faithful in order to have life everlasting (Jn 6.53-55). Participating in this ritual brings about mystical encounter and identification with Jesus as well as eternal life seemingly because the incorporation of the sacred food serves to immortalize the person—the person literally has incorporated Jesus.<sup>63</sup> 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἶμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ)' (Jn 6.56).

How has this been effected? Through the ascent of Jesus to heaven (Jn 6.62) and the release and descent of the Spirit (Jn 6.63). The text makes clear that it is not speaking of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the body of the 'historical' Jesus, but of an action made effective through the presence of Jesus' Spirit in the elements (Jn 6.63).

63. On this idea, refer to A. Lieber, *God Incorporated: Feasting on the Divine Presence in Ancient Judaism* (PhD dissertation, Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 204-212.

Thus the faithful can encounter Jesus through their participation in the Eucharist even though Jesus is no longer physically alive.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is historically plausible that the Johannine author created a 'faith mysticism' as a polemical response to the mystical ascent soteriology such as that found in the *Gospel of Thomas*. According to the Johannine polemic, salvation could not be wrought by personally ascending into heaven in order to see the deity and thus become deified. Rather Jesus was the Temple and the historical embodiment of God on earth. Yet even so, a historical vision of Jesus alone was not enough to effect salvation; it had to be accompanied by faith in Jesus as God's manifestation. Faith, however, was the vital ingredient and, in Jesus' historical absence, functioned as if it were a vision, bringing the believer eternal life. This was effected for the Johannine Christians largely through the sacramental experiences, particularly Baptism and the Eucharist.

Moreover, Jesus' new manifestation, although invisible to the worldly eye, will now be in the experience of the Paraclete and the sharing in divine love. It seems that it is only at the end of the world that the believer will be able actually to see Jesus himself when Jesus returns in order to guide his followers to the heavenly Temple that he has prepared for them. This is aptly stated in 1 Jn 3.2: 'it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him (ὁψόμεθα αὐτόν)'. As Wilhelm Bousset noted: 'Deification through vision of God is postponed to the blessed future.'<sup>64</sup> But, in the Gospel of John, the vision and ascent to heaven at the eschaton clearly is overshadowed by the movement of the divinity down from heaven in the form of the Paraclete who will take up its home in the meantime with the faithful.<sup>65</sup>

It is noteworthy that the eschatological interpretation of the vision of God is developed in the later Johannine writing, 1 John. The community at this point in its history, believes that the eschaton is imminent: 'Children, it is the last hour' (1 Jn 2.18). So it is very important for Christians in the community who hope to have an eschatological vision of Jesus and experience divine transformation to 'purify'

64. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 222.

65. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, p. 465.

themselves even as Jesus is pure (1 Jn 3.3). This common mystical theme, however, is not understood in terms of ascetic or encratic behavior as we saw in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Rather, purification is effected through the indwelling of the Spirit which enables believers to follow Jesus' commandment to love one another (1 Jn 4.13, 19-21).

Since believers cannot see God now, in order to be perfected, purification must be achieved through the Spirit that 'abides' in them:

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit (1 Jn 4.12-13).

Thus the Spirit aids the believer in keeping Jesus' commandment to love. In this way, the loving action of the believer toward his or her neighbor mirrors the loving action of the believer toward the unseen God:

If anyone says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also (1 Jn 4.20-21).

Through the believer's actions of love, God is revealed to others, and the believer is purified.

In addition, though, this text makes it clear that faith in the testimony of the community about Jesus' historical presence as God-Manifest is essential (1 Jn 1.1-3). Believers must have faith in the witness of those who saw Jesus during his lifetime (1 Jn 4.14). Now that Jesus is absent, it is only necessary to 'confess' Jesus as 'Son of God', the one who originally manifested God's love to humans (1 Jn 4.15-16). Moreover, like the *Gospel of John*, the victory over this world is faith expressed in terms of the sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist, which insure the indwelling of the Spirit (1 Jn 5.6-8). All in all, 1 John preserves evidence that tenets of Johannine faith mysticism continued to be taught and developed in the early second century.

## Chapter 6

### VISION MYSTICISM IN EARLY SYRIAN CHRISTIAN TEXTS: THE DISCOURSE CONTINUES

John, do not be faithless,  
but believing...  
(Acts of John 90).

This monograph has been an attempt to apply a new methodology to two contemporaneous Christian texts: the Gospels of John and *Thomas*. This application has been successful in identifying a link between the two communities responsible for these documents. This link is a discourse over the 'correct' soteriological system.

The Johannine author has textualized this discourse in his Gospel by articulating the Point of Discourse on a symbolic level, presenting the actor Thomas as the representative of the Thomasine community. Jesus' responses to Thomas express the Johannine community's views. Thus the actual historical discourse has become a theoretical construct in the Johannine narrative. As such, it only partially mirrors the reality of the discourse and intentionally presents Thomas in a negative manner.

Because of this, it is necessary to turn to the *Gospel of Thomas* in order to balance the historical scales and fill the empty space of the opponent's Traditio-religious Horizon. This document verifies the earlier conclusion that John had identified Thomas with a mystical form of Christianity concerned with ascent and visions. Indeed, according to *Thomas* itself, salvation hinges on one's faithfulness to the encratic lifestyle which provided the necessary state of purity before ascent into the dangerous zone of the sacred. The goal of the flight into heaven was a vision of the divine, either of one's heavenly double or God. This experience was mystically transforming. It translated the person from the realm of mortality and death to that of immortality and life. One entered God's Kingdom and united with the divine.

The Johannine author responds negatively to the soteriological system of the Thomasine Christians. He insists that no one has ever

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