Jesus the Messiah: Liberation for All Israel

Helmut Schütz, Gießen, Germany June 9, 2021

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In her book “Cast Out of the Covenant” Adele Reinhartz understands the Gospel of John as a missionary writing for Gentiles, whom Jesus calls as children of God into the covenant with God, from which the Jews are cast out. With reference to Ton Veerkamp I disagree: Originally, John struggled for Israel's liberation from the enslaving Roman world order!

Contents

3 The Rhetoric of Expropriation

3.1 Is God's Covenant with Israel Abrogated in John's Gospel?

3.1.1 John as Messianic Critic of the World Order in Prophetic Firmness

3.1.2 Jesus' Denial of Legitimate Jewish Claims to the Covenant with God

3.1.2.1 If the *Ioudaioi* Were Children of Abraham, They Would Not Kill God's Son

3.1.2.2 To be Enslaved under the *hamartia* Means to Be a Slave of Rome

3.1.2.3 Whoever Submits to Rome Has the *diabolos* as His Father

3.2 The Significance of the Torah or the Tanakh for the Gospel of John

3.2.1 The Concept of *logos* in John's Gospel and Its Relation to *sophia*

3.2.2 Does Jesus Fulfill the Torah or Push it Aside as God's Decisive Revelation?

3.3 The Temple as the Place Where God Has His NAME Dwell

3.3.1 Places of Worship after the Destruction of Sanctuaries

3.3.2 "Bowing down to the FATHER inspired and according to fidelity"

3.4 The Withered Vine: Intra-Jewish Criticism or Ousted Metaphor?

3.5 The Jewish Features of John's Gospel as Part of His Anti-Judaism?

4 Rhetoric of Vituperation

4.1. Neutral Use of the Term *Ioudaioi*

4.1.1 Need Jewish Festivals and Customs to be Explained to a Non-Jewish Audience?

4.1.2 Distinguishing the *Ioudaioi* from Inhabitants of Galilee or Samaria

4.1.3 Does the Emphasis on Jesus' Jewishness Underscore his Ousting of Judaism?

4.2 Salvation Is of/from the Jews

4.2.1 Salvation Is from the Jews—Brought About by the Jewish Messiah

4.2.2 Attempts to Come to Terms with 4:22, between Hostility and Benevolence toward the Jews

4.3 Wavering Jews

4.3.1 *Ioudaioi* with the Choice to Decide for or against Jesus

0 Introduction

Dear Ms. Reinhartz, after having read your book “Cast Out of the Covenant. Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John,”[1] I am thankful for the insight you gave me in interpreting the Gospel of John.

1 Adele Reinhartz, Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John (Lanham: Lexington Books-Fortress Academic, 2018).
All page numbers given in round brackets **(…)** in the following text without further reference refer to the respective following quotations of your book.
Where I refer to page numbers of quoted works by other authors I put them in square brackets **[…]**.
Ancient Greek and Hebrew letters are rendered with their English equivalents (as I did in another book, see Transliteration), as well as Greek letters in the text I quoted from you.

I am aware that the Gospel of John since the 2nd century has been read as you characterize it: as an anti-Jewish document regarding Judaism as disinherited by Christianity. And I myself, as a youngster, was one of the Gentile Christian recipients of the Gospel like Alexandra[2], being fond of a Jesus who loves me, takes not only my sins but also my anxiousness away (16:33!), and saves my soul from being condemned to hell.

Later on, in my service as a pastor of the Evangelic Church in Hessen and Nassau, I didn't cease to have trouble dealing with the anti-Jewish passages of the Gospel. But when in the mid-1st decade of the 21st century I came into contact with the Amsterdam School of interpreting the Bible as a thoroughly Jewish document—in the double context of the whole Scriptures and the socio-political environment as well—and read Ton Veerkamp's political interpretation of John's Gospel,[3] I experienced something like your experience with Louis Martyn[4]: I could empathize with Jews or God-fearers fearers sympathetic of Jewish thought who after the Jewish War sat in a house of study with people like John and struggled with other Jews about the question of whether Jesus is the Messiah who can free Israel from enslavement under the Roman world order and thus bring Israel's covenant with God to final fulfillment.

Since I have not read even a fraction of the (ix) "secondary literature on John's Gospel" that you yourself survey, I cannot, of course, claim to be able to respond to all your arguments in a comprehensively competent manner. However, I am interested in introducing Ton Veerkamp's approach to the discussion, which so far the academic world dealing with John's Gospel does not even dignify a consideration or refutation.[5] Is it because of his status as a retired student pastor with left-wing political views and having no academic degree?

Gladly I seize your idea to imagine an implied reader of the Gospel of John. As I said above, Alexandra's reading would have similar to mine in my youth, and I think her reading fits to a Greek interpretation of the Gospel of John that was very soon the one and only possible reading of a Gentile Christian dominated church that could no

2 See section 0.4.3.2 A woman named Alexandra as a contemporary compliant listener to John.

3 Ton Veerkamp, Solidarity Against the World Order. A Political Reading of the Gospel of John about Jesus Messiah of all Israel, Gießen (Germany) 2021. Quotations from this work are cited with the abbreviation **Veerkamp** and the page number of its PDF version. In addition, they are substantiated by a link to the respective section in the online version (with the indication of the relevant paragraph(s), counting the entire Bible text preceding the section as the 1st paragraph).

4 See Chapter 6 The Rhetorical Situation according to the Expulsion Theory, especially Section 6.4.1 The Fresh Wind of a Lively Style in the Interpretation of John.

5 The only authors coming somewhat near to Ton Veerkamp's reading are A. J. Simonis (see my review of your book *The Word in the World. The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel*, Atlanta/Georgia 1992, in section 3.1.2 Adrianus Johannes Simonis) and Terence Donaldson (see section 7.4.1 The Jews as Addressees of a Missionary Gospel of John).

more take seriously the Jewish roots of John. But the thoroughly Jewish character of the Gospel suggests that the first readers of John—as also D. A. Carson[6] assumes—were prevalently Jews. So I like to imagine a Jewish woman named **Miriam**[7] who is hearing the Gospel of John not as a cosmological spiritual tale of being rescued from eternal death but as a tale of liberation from the worldwide oppression called *Pax Romana* or *kosmos*, „world order," but actually being a great world dis-order.

0.1 Remarks on Terminology

I am delighted (xiii) that you preface your book with a discussion of various terms the use of which in your previous books I had been critical,[8] since, as I said, the Gospel of John does not yet, in my view, presuppose the emergence of Christianity as a religion separate from Judaism. Thus, I very much welcome the fact that scholars searching for "new perspectives on the groups and events that shaped the early centuries of the common era" also examine "the limitations and assumptions behind familiar terminology" and strive for a "new vocabulary," on which, however, no agreement has yet been reached.

Interestingly (n. 2), you want to completely renounce the term "religion" in your book:

> In this book, however, and in my work on early Judaism and New Testament, I do not use the term, as I do not find it a helpful category for grappling with ancient texts, beliefs, practices, and societies.

This renunciation coincides with Ton Veerkamp's insight that in John's Gospel, as already in the Grand Narrative of Israel,[9] it is less about religion than about politics, since the God of Israel bears a NAME[10] that represents a program of the liberation of the people from any enslavement or exploitation under foreign powers or their own elites. And the Messiah Jesus, according to John, embodies exactly this liberating NAME of the God of Israel, whom he calls the FATHER.

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6 See section 7.4.1 The Jews as Addressees of a Missionary Gospel of John.

7 See section 0.4.3.3 A Woman Named Miriam as a Listener to the Jewish Messianist John. Where I let her have the floor, I mark the writing in **green**.

8 See my book reviews Otherworldly Word or Overcoming the World Order? and The Beloved Disciple befriending Adele Reinhartz.

9 See the Introduction of the post Ton Veerkamp: „The World Different" containing a summary of Ton Veerkamp's book *Die Welt anders. Politische Geschichte der Großen Erzählung* © Institut für Kritische Theologie Berlin e. V. according to the edition published in Berlin © Argument Verlag 2013.

10 I use the all-capitalized word "NAME" (analogous to the Hebrew designation *HaShem* = "the name") to paraphrase the tetragram *YHWH*, which is not pronounced because of the inaccessibility of God. In the same sense, I also all-capitalize the word "FATHER" where John uses the Greek word *patēr* for the God of Israel as the Father of Jesus the Messiah.

0.1.1 "Christians" and "Christianity"

Since in the meantime (xiii) "New Testament scolarship … has embraced the Jewishness of Jesus and the movement that was created by his followers," it is surprising that just "in Johannine studies … the term 'Johannine Christianity'" is still used "to refer to what we find distinctive about the Fourth Gospel presentation of Jesus as Christ and Son of God, in comparison with other New Testament documents." Rightly you consider it "problematic … to retroject the modern distinctions between Judaism and Christianity (synagogues and churches) back into the first century." In addition (xiv), the designation "Christians" also "implies a level of unity and institutionalization among 'Christians' that, all the evidence suggests, did not exist in the first century nor for some time thereafter (if, indeed, it ever existed)."

But how should we correctly name those who trusted in Jesus at the time of the authoring of John's Gospel? Referring to Mikael Tellbe[11] and Paula Fredriksen,[12] you consider alternatives such as "Christ-confessors," "Christ-believers," or "Christ-followers." The very use of the word "Christ" instead of "Messiah," however, is misleading, since it inevitably evokes in modern people associations of a dogmatic Christology and doctrine of the Trinity shaped by the councils of later times. Though "the cumbersome nature" of phrases like "followers of Jesus Messiah" or "people who trust in Jesus Messiah" is even greater, they are more appropriate in my eyes.

It is even more difficult to find an alternative for the term "Christianity":

> And if Christianity did not yet exist, how do we talk about that nebulous but nevertheless palpable sense of affiliation that Christ-believers had, not only with the other believers in their vicinity, but with the broader collectivity with which they shared some practices, beliefs, and institutions? One option is to resort to the generic term "community."

There are myriad ambiguities associated with this term, the most important of which in our context is probably whether, for example, the notion of a Johannine community is, as Stanley K. Stowers[13] has noted, associated with "romantic ideas of communal creativity and communal authorship that cannot be substantiated from the ancient evidence."

> Such claims may mean that the theology of an author or document originated within a particular group, and served to differentiate that group—that com-

11 (xvi, n. 4) Mikael Tellbe, *Christ-believers in Ephesus: A Textual Analysis of Early Christian Identity Formation in a Local Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

12 (xvi, n. 5) Paula Fredriksen, "How Later Contexts Affect Pauline Content, or: Retrospect Is the Mother of Anachronism," in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History*, ed. Peter J. Tomson and Joshua Schwartz, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 17-51.

13 (xvii, n. 7) Stanley K. Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 23, no. 3-4 (2011): 238.

> munity—from others. Or they may mean that the Gospel author is addressing the circumstances of a particular community [240-41].

This question will be discussed in detail later. As to the "idea of a Johannine community," you have already been "a critic of the expulsion hypothesis according to which the Gospel was written for a Johannine community that had experienced a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue."[14] Meanwhile, you no longer believe

> that a Johannine community already existed at the time that the Fourth Gospel reached its present form. In working on the present book ... I have become convinced that while a community of sorts may have formed around the book itself, there is no evidence for its existence prior to the Gospel.

Therefore, you want "to use the term 'community' without, I hope, any of the more complex nuances that Stowers criticizes" but to refer it "primarily to the contemporaries of the Gospel writer(s) who encountered and responded positively to the Fourth Gospel," namely "interchangeably with other terms such as 'group,' 'audience,' and 'hearers.'"

0.1.2 "Jews," "Judaism," and *Ioudaioi*

Also (xv), you now use the terms "Jews" and "Judaism" with greater caution than before, since "'Judaism' … refers to an essentializing abstraction that could not have existed in the first century."

> Nevertheless, I will at times (sparingly) use this term to refer to a "big tent" comprised of ideas, practices, groups, and individuals that are associated with those whom the Gospel, the writings of Josephus, inscriptions, and other texts and objects call *hoi Ioudaioi*.

You do not want to replace the term "Jews" with "Judeans" everywhere, partly because it "could not in the past, and still cannot in the present, be limited to its religious sense." This, too, will have to be discussed in detail later.

0.1.3 "Pagans" and "Gentiles"

Moreover, the term "paganism" has since been questioned as pejorative. Shouldn't we say "polytheists" rather than "pagans"? However, not every person in antiquity who was not a Jew or Christian would consider himself a polytheist.

In this context, I do not understand your lack of reference to the Jewish distinction between the people of Israel and the *goyim*. This term can also be meant pejoratively, insofar as, for example, Israel's separation from the *goyim* is intended to keep free from the influence of the foreign gods opposed to the God of Israel. But con-

14 (xvii, n. 9) See Adele Reinhartz, "The Johannine Community and Its Jewish Neighbors: A Reappraisal," in *What Is John?* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 111-38.

versely, the influence of Israel's God can also be a blessing to the *goyim* (see, for example, Genesis 12:3, Jeremiah 4:2, Sirach 44:20). In the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 13:10, Matthew 28:19, Luke 24:47) and in Paul (9:24) the *goyim* are included in the addressees of the Messiah's message and in this respect are placed on an equal footing with the Jews. Only the later ecclesiastical condemnation of all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, who do not confess Jesus as the Son of God leads to the term "heathendom," which is pejorative in Christian usage. But although Jews are not considered heathens, since they allegedly killed their own Messiah, they are considered even more damnable—a disastrous and condemnable development!

In John's Gospel, of all places, the term *goyim* does not occur at all, and the word *ethnos* (Hebrew *goy*) is used only to refer to the people of the Jews or to the autonomy granted to Judea by the Romans (11:48, 50, 51, 52; 18:35). What is meant by *goyim* in the Jewish Scriptures, however, is in the background of the whole Gospel in terms of the Roman world order, under which as a worldwide slave house the nations and especially Israel are to suffer.

0.2 The Gospel of John as a Deadly Spider's Web?

By choosing Mary Howitt's poem (xix) about "The Spider and the Fly"[15] as a starting point for your consideration of the Gospel of John, you make it clear how much you, as a Jew, feel lured into a deadly trap by this book. For over forty years you have not been able to escape its attraction.

> The present book is my final attempt to unravel this most difficult element—and this most troubling Gospel—from a rhetorical, historical, and ethical perspective.

Quite different from the other two books I know from you, you now state how much the Gospel of John is Jewish (xix-xx):

> Here is the problem. The Gospel's narrative, language, and worldview situate it squarely within the same orbit as other first-century Jewish texts written in Greek. With the exception of Pontius Pilate, the main characters are Jewish; with the exception of the Samaritan episode (John 4:1-42), the action takes place in Galilee and Judea, areas populated primarily by Jews. The Gospel's theology is not at all unique within the "common Judaism" of the first century. Jesus—the Gospel's Jewish protagonist—behaves in Jewish ways: he goes on pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple for the festivals; he quotes liberally from the Torah and Prophets; he argues from and with scripture in ways that resemble the midrashic arguments that later appear in rabbinic literature, and

15 (xxxiii, n. 1) This poem, including its minor variations, is in the public domain. For the full poem, Mary Howitt, The Spider and the Fly. A Fable (accessed June 09, 2021).

> he debates the same issues that concern other Jews in the Second Temple period.

On the latter point, you note as an example (xxxiv, n. 9) Jesus' assertion in 5:17,

> that God the Father works on the Sabbath. This would seem to contradict Genesis 2:2, which states that God rested on the seventh day, but the question of whether God worked on the Sabbath was very much a live issue in the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. See Philo of Alexandria, *Cher*. 8 6-890; *Leg All*. 1. 5-6; Exod Rabbah 11:10; 30:9.

On this subject, Ton Veerkamp presents the inner-Jewish argumentation of the Johannine Messianists as follows:[16]

> In this connection "My FATHER works until now" can only mean that creation is *not accomplished*. John can read the first sentence of the Scriptures only presently, "In the beginning (*in principle*!) God creates heaven and earth, and the earth *is* tohubohu . . ." Therefore God does not yet "rest," and still less "solemnly"; there is no reason yet to celebrate Shabbat; rather, it is a matter of "doing works" (*erga-zesthai*). The theme is taken up in the introduction to the bread speech (6:28). The theme also appears in the story about the man born blind (9:4). Shabbat is only, when all works are done, when all men are healed, and they are finally what they are: the image of God. Until now men are anything but the image of God; they are not what they are—the image of God—and they are what they are not: mutilated, broken people; there is nothing to celebrate. At least that is what these Messianists think.

To the consistently Jewish character of the Gospel, you counter (xx) that nowhere "with the exception of John 4:9" Jesus or his disciples are referred to as *Ioudaioi.* However, this may be taken for granted, as indeed the Samaritan woman and Pilate do. More seriously does weigh the representation of the

> escalation of the Jews' opposition to and enmity towards Jesus, from antagonistic interrogation (John 2:18-21), to persecution (5:16), attempts to stone (8:59; 10:31-33) and even kill him (5:18; 7:1), culminating in their successful plot to have him crucified by Pilate (11:49-52; 18:1-19: 16).

An irreconcilable contradiction therefore exists in your eyes between the following statements of John's gospel:

> Although the Gospel of John's Jesus declares that "salvation is from the Jews" (4:22), he also states that the Jews have the devil as their father (8:44).

Everything depends on the context in which these sharp disputes are placed. Is it about an enmity between the followers of two religions whose paths must part be-

16 Veerkamp 138 (The Shabbat, par. 8).

cause one of them is trampling on the fundamental convictions of the other? Or is it originally an inner-Jewish debate about how to position oneself as a Jew of the 1st century vis-à-vis the Roman world order? If the *diabolos* does not mean a demonic devil, but the emperor as the leader of an anti-divine social order that transformed the living space of the peoples, including the Jews, into a worldwide slave house, then the antagonism between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews is to be understood as a heated dispute about political options, comparable to prophetic polemics.

0.2.1 Jewish and Anti-Jewish?

Your own reflections (xx) on the question "How can a Gospel that is so Jewish also be so anti-Jewish?" take a different approach. The simple explanation of the soon-to-be-formed ancient church, as you demonstrate in quotations from Cyril of Alexandria, was that the

> Gospel's Jewishness reflects Jesus's own origins within "the synagogue of the Jews"; its anti-Jewishness reflects the divine judgement against the Jews on account of their refusal to recognize Jesus as God's son.

To modern exegetes, this is "neither obvious nor acceptable," rather "our historical-critical sensibilities steer us away from cosmic explanations and towards the concrete circumstances and audiences for which the Gospel was written."

You briefly ask, referring to Daniel Boyarin,[17] whether "the *Ioudaioi* against whom John's Jesus railed were not the entire Jewish people but rather a subgroup." This would be in line with Ton Veerkamp, but you do not go further on this track.

Other explanations of the "Gospel's vituperative language" you touch upon only in passing, whether, like Luke Timothy Johnson,[18] one speaks of "merely a convention of ancient polemics" or, like J. Louis Martyn,[19] of "simply a natural response to a traumatic experience—expulsion from the synagogue—that the intended audience suffered at Jewish hands" or (xxi), like Raimo Hakola,[20] "of the differentiation that necessarily and inevitably accompanies the development of a new social identity."

17 (xxxiv, n. 13) Daniel Boyarin, "The IOUDAIOI of John and the Prehistory of Judaism," in *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson et al. (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 216-39.

18 (xxxiv, n. 14) Luke Timothy Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 3 (September 1, 1989): 419-41.

19 (xxxiv, n. 15) J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

20 (xxxiv, n. 16) Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, the Jews, and Jewishness* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=280605; Raimo Hakola, *Reconsidering Johannine Christianity: A Social Identity Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

Thus, as a Jewish woman, you are

> glad that my colleagues reject Cyril's belief that God has abandoned the "synagogue of the Jews." As a scholar, however, I believe Cyril was onto something, not theologically but as a reader of John's Gospel.

So you express the suspicion that already "the Gospel's implied author, like Cyril, was convinced that God's favor had turned away from the Jews to the Gentiles."

> At the same time as the Fourth Gospel tells its version of Jesus's life story, it also narrates the story of God's repudiation of the Jews and the adoption of the Christ-confessors as God's covenant people. Although Jesus came to his own people—the Jews—they did not accept him (1:11).

The first thing contrary to this is that John's Gospel does not speak of a Gentile mission like the other Gospels or Paul and only mentions "some Greeks" in a very reserved way (12:20). The goal of Jesus the Messiah in John's Gospel is the gathering of all Israel, including the lost ten tribes of Samaria and the Diaspora. The fierceness of the struggle with the *Ioudaioi* is directed both against the collaboration of the high priests with the Roman *diabolos* and against the terror and plundering of the rebellious Zealots in the Judean War, and finally against Rabbinic Judaism, which is emerging at the time of John and—by rejecting the Messiah Jesus—in John's eyes also plays into the hands of Rome.

Indeed, what you describe below captures the attitude of Christianity just a few decades after the completion of John's Gospel:

> Others did accept him, however (1:12), and, in doing so, replaced the Jews as God's own people. As God's people, they now had exclusive access to the valued tokens of Jewishness: the Jews' calendar (Sabbath and festivals), their scriptures, their Temple, and, most important, their God, or, more precisely, the special relationship with God through which all blessings flow. In this latter story, the Gospel's Jewish elements do not reflect an *approbation* of Jewishness that would in turn disarm its anti-Jewish statements. Rather, the Gospel argues that Jewish concepts and symbols no longer belong to the Jews, but solely to those who believe Jesus to be the Messiah.

John himself, while deeply disappointed that the majority of Rabbinic Judaism does not accept the Messiah Jesus, holds on to the hope that all Israel—that is, Judeans, Galileans, Samaritans, Diaspora Jews plus individual God-fearers from the *goyim*—could be brought together in the Messianic community and overcome the Roman world order through *agapē*. I admit it is a deceptive hope that must soon perish, first because the alienation between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews is ever-increasing, and even more so because the Jewish-Christian element within nascent Christianity is increasingly falling behind and the cultivation of Jewish rituals and the celebration of Jewish festivals by Gentile Christians is being rejected. To do justice to the Gospel of John itself, however, we must not yet reproject this development into its genesis.

You conclude against those "who describe the Fourth Gospel as both Jewish and anti-Jewish" to "see the Gospel as thoroughly anti-Jewish."

> This anti-Jewishness is evident not only in the Gospel's hostile comments about the Jews as children of the devil and in its portrayal of the Jews and their leaders as hounding Jesus unto death, but also in the very elements that were constitutive of first-century Jewish identity. The Fourth Gospel appropriates Jewishness at the same time as it repudiates Jews. In doing so, it also promotes a parting of the ways between those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and those who do not, that is, the *Ioudaioi*.

By this, you do not mean (xxi, n. 17) to hold John's Gospel responsible "for the history of Christian anti-Semitism" or even for "the attitudes and events that paved the way for the Holocaust."

> Rather, I consider the Gospel to be anti-Jewish insofar as those who hear or read it in a compliant or uncritical way—accepting its worldview as their own—are likely to come away with negative views of Jews. Such compliant readings may well have reinforced anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic views and behaviors but it strains credulity to imagine that the Gospel's author(s) had such consequences in mind in portraying the Jews as they did.

So you also assume that John himself could not yet imagine how his attacks against Rabbinic Judaism would one day play out. To that extent, I agree with you that John's Gospel as traditionally read can promote an anti-Jewish attitude. This is precisely why I argue for considering that John himself originally intended to fight an intra-Jewish dispute on a very different level, as a Jew with other Jews.

0.2.2 Adele Reinhartz's Three Rhetorical Goals Regarding the Gospel of John

For the second time, you compare John's Gospel to a spider's web, this time drawing on "the myth of Arachne," to point out (xxi-xxii) that the "motifs of appropriation and repudiation are woven deeply into its narration, its worldview, and the messages it conveys to its audience." It is true enough that John tries to persuade his audience by rhetorical means, namely "by means of stories, metaphors, and exhortations to view history and the cosmos, Jesus and the Jews, as he did." And if the aim of his rhetoric is ethically questionable, you are also right in comparing it to the approach of a spider. But this is precisely what needs to be examined in detail.

You yourself also represent rhetorical goals, three in all. You want to convince me as a reader that

1. the Gospel offers its audience rebirth into a new family, the family of God, using a range of strategies that together constitute a *rhetoric of affiliation.*
2. … participation in the family of God required not only affiliation with others who did the same, but also separation from the *Ioudaioi.* Through a *rhetoric*

of disaffiliation, ... the Gospel rhetorically transfers the benefits of Jewishness-covenantal relationship with God-from the *Ioudaioi* to the "children of God."

3. … the Gospel was [not] written to comfort a Jewish-Christian group after its traumatic expulsion from the synagogue... [but is to be (xiii)] explained just as well—or even better—by situating the Gospel in the context of the late first-century Gentile mission in Asia Minor.

I announce in advance my objection in all respects.

Originally, the rhetoric of John's Gospel has a different emphasis than establishing a new religion: Positively, it promotes trust in the Messiah Jesus who will gather all Israel and overcome the Roman world order so that the age to come can begin. Those who do not trust in the Messiah Jesus are sharply criticized because, in John's eyes, they have politically submitted to the enemy, the *diabolos*, namely Rome.

I, too, think that John's Gospel should not be ascribed a *purely* consolatory function due to traumatic experiences of exclusion, since its main impulse is militantly directed against the Roman world order as a worldwide house of slavery. However, it *also* has a comforting function in view of the consequences of the Judean War, the ongoing situation of oppression, and the inner-Jewish conflicts.

However, to consider Gentile mission as the original intention of John's Gospel is inconceivable to me. Gentiles are not mentioned at all, Greeks only in passing. The use of the Greek language here is rather disguised Hebrew than Hellenistic high-level speech. Above all, many references to the Jewish Scriptures presuppose a close familiarity with them. We need only think of the allusions to the matriarchs Rebekah and Rachel in the character of the Samaritan woman, or of the background of Jesus' Messianic signs, the Messianic wedding or the 38-year paralysis of Israel, or of the contexts on the basis of which Jesus' Messianic titles are to be understood, the Son of Man of Daniel 7 or the Only Begotten Son of Genesis 22.

Of course, the Gospel of John will soon be spiritualized and used for the mission to the Gentiles, when it will increasingly be read by Gentile Christians who cannot read and understand it other than from a Hellenistic background. From this time on, the first two points also apply. So I can agree with your book insofar as it is a critique of the traditional Gentile Christian reading of John's Gospel.

0.3 Rhetorical Analysis: The Fourth Gospel Was Less Read than Heard

So what does it mean (xxiii) that you attribute "rhetorical—persuasive—intentions" to John's Gospel? First of all, it is because "all known societies, in all eras, used speech for persuasive purposes; rhetoric is a universal phenomenon."

Further, you go on to note that in "the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman cultures within which the New Testament texts were written, ... audiences were not only trained to absorb and learn from rhetorical discourse, but were also delighted by—and suscep-

tible to—rhetorical strategies." Whereas your earlier books tended to speak of ancient *readers* of John's Gospel, you now speak of the fact that

> the author(s) of the Gospel themselves must also have been adept at shaping the Gospel in ways that "sounded, resonated, and impressed . . . [itself] upon the mind and memory through the ear rather than the eye."[21]

Reasonably you say that this "does not mean that they had a rigorous classical education." No thought you give to the possibility that listening to the Hebrew texts of the sacred scrolls in the synagogue and interpreting them might also have trained the audience of John's Gospel, drawing attention substantively to allusions to these same Jewish Scriptures.

0.3.1 Discerning an Implied Author and a Fully Compliant Audience

Among your (xxiv) basic assumptions of a rhetorical analysis that you wish to undertake for John's Gospel is that

> I—or any reader—cannot know the intent of the *real* author or editor, but I can discern an intent of the *implied* author whom we have unavoidably constructed from our own reading of the text. Similarly, I cannot know how real audiences perceived John's Gospel, but I can imagine how the implied author might have hoped they would respond.

Although you know that "few real readers … are fully compliant..., for the purpose of discerning the potential impact of the Gospel's rhetorical intent and strategies, it is the unreservedly compliant audience that I will construct."

0.3.2 Types of Aristotelian Rhetoric: Deliberative, Judicial, and Epideictic

In John's Gospel, all "three types of rhetoric" distinguished by Aristotle occur: "deliberative, judicial, and epideictic." Which of these predominates is unimportant in your eyes.

As I understand it, Johannine rhetoric, where it is judicial, refers on the one hand to the condemnation of the aberration of the world order and on the other hand to the Messiahship of Jesus legitimized by witnesses. Deliberative rhetoric clearly prevails, inviting the hearers of the Gospel to trust in Jesus the Messiah, proven with active *agapē*, helping to overcome the world order.

0.3.3 Elements of Rhetoric: Invention, Arrangement, and Style

In your eyes (xxv), John's Gospel uses all "three principal elements of classical rhetoric—invention, arrangement, and style—in its attempt to persuade its audi-

21 (xxxv, n. 26 and 29) Carol Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

ence that faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God is the foundation for eternal life." I leave aside here the way in which the terms "Christ," "Son of God," and "eternal life" are to be defined, and only briefly address what you say about the first two elements of Aristotelian rhetoric.

"*Invention* can be based on either external or internal ('artistic') proofs," the latter consisting in "ethos, pathos, logos," i.e., the "credibility of the author or speaker, ... the ability of the orator or writer to play upon the emotions of the audience, ... the argumentation used to demonstrate one point or another." For New Testament rhetoric, George A. Kennedy[22] distinguishes "three common forms of external proof: scriptural quotations, evidence of miracles, and the naming of witnesses." It is important to me that, in the scriptural sense, *sēmeia*, "signs," are not to be understood simply as supernatural miracles, but as acts of power by the God of Israel, *sēmeia kai terata* (Deuteronomy 6:22), through which the working of his liberating NAME is revealed. In this respect, it is questionable whether John can be understood from Aristotelian rhetoric alone.

The "arrangement," that is, the structure of John's Gospel, in your eyes, "resembles epideictic oratory, as it opens with the Prologue (1:1-18), closes with an epilogue (21:1-25), and in between presents a series of *semeia* (signs) and discourses that develop particular topics." This approach, however, strikes me as overly formal; it ignores the fact that John hardly intended his Gospel to be an encomium to Jesus, but rather a Messianic political pamphlet, and that the epilogue was added for very specific purposes of content, namely, to give expression to the connection of the Johannine grouping to the larger Messianic movement. The Jewish festival calendar as the salient structuring device of John's Gospel cannot, of course, be grasped in Aristotelian categories at all.

In fact (xxvi), you also assume that "the Gospel draws not only on the elements of classical rhetoric but also on a range of other, specifically crafted, rhetorical strategies." These strategies are thus found "not only in the discourses attributed to Jesus but also in the ways in which the Gospel tells the story and depicts its characters."

As the goal of Johannine rhetoric, you recognize not only to convince people of faith in Jesus but also "to move them to action." What actions of his listeners might John have intended? You have a clear answer:

> These actions can be categorized broadly as affiliation with other believers and disaffiliation, or separation from, those who do not believe.

This answer is worrying me, seems all too simplistic.

22 (xxxv, n. 22, and xxxvi, n. 44) George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 14-15.

Even if I think of my former way of believing in Jesus, which assumed that people who did not do so might be eternally damned, I never interpreted John's Gospel as a call to surround myself only with my own kind and to avoid all contact with non-believers. On the contrary, I felt called to bring the faith to the non-believers, to convince them of the faith.

Even more so, if I assume that John pursues a Messianic-political goal, namely the overcoming of the world order by trusting in the Messiah, then the action that this Messiah expects from those who trust in him cannot, in the end, be simply belonging to the Messianic community and keeping away from the Jews. The latter is nowhere demanded in the Gospel, rather it is deplored when the disciples "for fear of the Jews" hide behind locked doors. As a fulfillment of the Torah, Jesus demands of his disciples the practice of *agapē*, a solidarity that he himself exemplifies in the slave service of foot washing. In the conversation with the Samaritan woman, the Messiah demonstrates in an equally exemplary way that reconciliation is possible between the Judeans and Samaritans who are enemies to each other. In that Jesus, ascending to the FATHER, hands over to his disciples (20:22-23) the inspiration of sanctification by giving them the order to "forgive someone's aberrations" or to "let remain with them hardening," it is about far more than a faith that one cultivates in belonging to one's own religious community, but about an ethically responsible discussion with other people about the goals of political action—inspired by the liberating Torah of the God of Israel interpreted from *agapē*, solidarity.

0.4 The Method of the Present Rhetorical Analysis of the Gospel of John

Drawing on "an orderly procedure for analyzing the rhetoric of a given New Testament document," presented by George Kennedy, you will now describe your method of rhetorical criticism of the Gospel of John. In doing so (xxvii), you intend to "modify Kennedy's step-by-step approach in order to address my own three principal aims,"

> by examining the Gospel's rhetorical aims and the rhetorical strategies deployed to potentially achieve those aims. On the basis of this rhetorical analysis, I will extrapolate—imaginatively construct—a rhetorical situation for which those aims, arguments and strategies might plausibly have a persuasive impact.

0.4.1 How Can the Rhetorical Situation Be Reconstructed Historically?

Again (xxvii), you paraphrase the two "persuasive purposes" of John's Gospel imputed by you in the most concise form, namely "to construct a new and idealized identity for its audience, and to urge their estrangement from the *Ioudaioi.*" Looking at the Gospel from "a rhetorical-critical perspective," one must ask about the "particular audience" to which "the Gospel writer" intended to address himself. "What were

their issues, questions, concerns? What might they have wanted from the Gospel, and why?"

You are aware that extrapolating an "audience and historical situation" from the analysis of a text like the Gospel of John is "a circular approach." In addition to "rhetorical analysis" itself, the reconstruction of the "rhetorical situation"

> depends upon our assumptions regarding the Gospel's provenance, the concrete situations in which it would have been encountered by auditors or readers, and the Gospel's relationship to a history external to itself, that is, to events prior to or contemporaneous with the time of writing.

You rightly point out "that the identity and concrete situation of the audience can be imagined in different, often mutually exclusive ways," which means that you would have to be open to the possibility that differently constructed hypotheses might also apply, such as the alternative I present here referring to Ton Veerkamp's interpretation.

0.4.2 True Confessions and Guiding Principles

I am grateful (xxviii) for your frank words about "1) the situatedness of interpretation; 2) the need for humility; and 3) the fundamental role of the imagination."

0.4.2.1 Situatedness

You describe your own situation "as a Jewish scholar for whom the New Testament is fascinating and important, but neither canonical, nor divinely inspired" on the one hand, and "as the daughter of Holocaust survivors who lived their post-war lives with zest, optimism, and gratitude to Canada as a land of opportunity, social responsibility, and freedom from overt anti-Semitism," on the other.

In contrast, my situation is quite different. I approach the Gospel of John as an evangelical Christian living in Germany and as the son of expellees from the former German eastern territories of Silesia and West Prussia. The German people's responsibility for the Holocaust became clear to me at an early age. As a Protestant pastor, in the course of my life, I became more and more aware that a strong rootedness in one's own faith makes it possible to approach other religious traditions with respect and appreciation, too. When I came into contact with the biblical theology of Ton Veerkamp and his associates, I realized to what extent the New Testament is rooted in the Jewish Scriptures and how much its original meaning has been completely distorted and deformed by an anti-Jewish interpretation over many centuries.

0.4.2.2 Humility

To your confession of humility, I like to respond with equal humility. I too "believe sincerely that I have something to say about the Gospel of John that would be interesting and even important for other scholars to hear or to read," whereas my humil-

ity has to be far greater than yours since I have far less overview of the scholarly discussion than you or your academic colleagues. From there, I can't help but likewise "to acknowledge that others can legitimately arrive at different conclusions based on the same evidence." But precisely because in "Johannine studies ... there is little to no external evidence to support any historical hypothesis whatsoever—whether that pertains to authorship, audience, purpose, or historical context," I am all the more surprised that viewpoints such as those published by Ton Veerkamp in Germany in the early 2000s have not even been noticed, let alone considered, anywhere in academia. Not even an attempt is discernible to consider them worthy of refutation. So when I humbly make this attempt to contradict you, I do so according to your own assessment that

> when it comes to evidence from the Gospel itself, there is no theory that accounts for all aspects of the Gospel or that cannot be refuted by starting from a different set of principles. We must make room for alternative interpretations and acknowledge the limitations of our own efforts, even as we argue vigorously for our own hypotheses.

0.4.2.3 Imagination

By your appreciation of "imagination" as "essential to every scholarly study," I feel encouraged, for my part as well, to use my imagination as carefully and controlled as possible "to fill in the gaps, to seek causal links among events, and to help ancient people and situations come alive for modern readers."

0.4.3 Concrete Use of Imagination Concerning John's Gospel

Your humorous justification for not writing "historical fiction"—"Where, I ask, would all the footnotes go?"—I sympathize very well. Nevertheless, I am curious to know how you intend to employ "a bit of fictionalizing to aid the historical imagination of myself and my readers."

0.4.3.1 A Man Named John as the Implied Author of the Gospel of John

Specifically, you imagine the implied author(s) of John's Gospel (xxix) "as an individual named John," who in this case is also identical with the narrator, "with the possible exception of chapter 21. ... For that reason, (my construction of) John is the one whose voice, convictions, and rhetorical intentions, are heard in the Fourth Gospel." Although (xxix, n. 62) "arguments have been made for female authorship, on the basis of the Gospel's relatively positive and high profile given to female characters," you do follow the "consensus … that the author or authors were likely male."

I agree with you in imagining

> John as man who is confident in—and passionate about—his belief that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, and utterly committed to persuading others to be the same. … He has absorbed not only the knowledge that is common to

> Jews of his time and place, but also a Jewish way of seeing the world. He believes that the world is created and presided over by the God of Israel, and that God has chosen a people with whom to be in an exclusive covenantal relationship. He differs from at least some of the Jews of his time and place, however, because he understands Jesus as the divinely-given mediator in that relationship.

But then my idea of John goes decidedly different ways than you outline them:

> I do not know whether he knew Hebrew or had spent time in the Galilee, Judea, or Samaria, but I picture him as a Greek-speaking and -writing Jew from Asia Minor immersed both in Jewish scriptures and traditions as well as in Hellenistic modes of thought.

In my eyes, the assumption that John was able to read and understand the Jewish writings also in the original Hebrew proves to be fruitful in order to place many otherwise inexplicable or at least strange details of John's Gospel into a meaningful context. According to Ton Veerkamp, in any case, his Greek allows to shine through Semitic language forms, thought presuppositions, and references back to basic Hebrew words.
Where John originally preached his gospel, I don't know any more than you do, but according to Ton Veerkamp, there is every indication that he was located in a milieu that we might call Jewish-Messianic. However, this does not mean that there was a uniform Early Christianity from the beginning:[23]

> Some people speak of the Messianic movement as a unified liberation movement. That there was a difference between the "Hellenistic community" and the so-called "Jewish Christianity," the Messianists from Israel, had already been noticed in the 19th century. This "Jewish Christianity," however, was a completely heterogeneous entity, and the idylls that were traded under the label "Jesus movement" in the 1970s and 1980s were left-wing kitsch; left--wing because of the alleged kinship with the liberation movements of the 20th century but kitsch nonetheless. The "Jesus movement" was rather a hodgepodge of quarreling groups and grouplets.
>
> The main disciples of Jesus, the Twelve, do not come off particularly well in all the Gospels. They led the Messianic movement into a dead end, with the consequence that it was completely disoriented after 70. The communities that emerged from Paul's activity may have been in a different position, but for the Messianic communities in the Syrian-Palestinian region, the situation was bleak. The communities that stood out in any way by having family members of the Messiah in their ranks were put in their place by the words of Jesus as handed down by Mark and adopted by Luke and Matthew.

23 Veerkamp 375-76 (Scholion 9: Peace among the Messianic Communities, par. 5-9).

> Luke tried to bring them together in the second part of his narrative, the "Acts of the Apostles." Between the Ascension and Pentecost, his narrative has them all persevering, "unanimously (*homothymadon*) in prayer," the Twelve "with the women and Mariam, Jesus' mother, and his brothers," Acts 1:14, all suggestive of the various Messianic groups. Apparently, Luke felt that sectarianism was politically disastrous for Messianism and that all these quarreling communities were obligated to come together in awaiting the inspiration of the Messiah. Therefore, as a result of this gathering together, he invented the idea of a unified (original Christian) "Early Church."
>
> There never was such an Early Church. There were clusters in Jerusalem and in Galilee. And the communities moved apart rather than toward each other. The idea that all nations must become radical Torah-loyal Judeans, as Matthew had in mind, must have been completely absurd to John, probably also to Mark, and even more so to Paul. There were many early churches, and the one around John was one of them. A preliminary stage of a unified Christianity can at best be recognized in Luke.
>
> John was still far away from this striving for unity. It must have been late that the group around John came to realize that they only had a political chance if they submitted to Peter's leadership, that is if they joined the other churches from the Syrian-Palestinian region (John 21).

This would suggest the probability that the Johannine circles rather worked in the Syrian-Palestinian area than in Asia Minor.

It is also interesting to me that John is the only evangelist who refers to the Sea of Galilee as "Tiberias" and always talks about a descent in connection with Capernaum. Andreas Bedenbender[24] has made arguments that Capernaum could have been a cover name for Rome. Ton Veerkamp[25] interprets the distress of the disciples by the troubled waves of the Sea of Tiberias as distress by the Roman world order. In Capernaum, a single verse describes the foundation of the Messianic community[26] in its unity—mother of the Messiah, brothers, disciples—where, however, they stay "not many days," quite different from Israel of the desert wandering that shrinks from confrontation with the threatening powers in the land of freedom. In the synagogue of Capernaum,[27] Jesus gives his most uncompromising Messianic speech, which causes many to turn away from him.

Jerusalem, on the other hand, is always ascended to in John's Gospel. It is the city of the FATHER,[28] but through the priesthood cooperating with Rome and the transfor-

24 Veerkamp 155-56 (note 217 on the translation of John 6:16-17).
25 Veerkamp 155-58 ("I WILL BE THERE," par. 1-9).
26 Veerkamp 73-74 (Messianic Community, par. 1-3).
27 Veerkamp 159-71 (In the Synagogue of Capernaum. The Teaching of the Bread of Life).
28 Veerkamp 128 (The Other Sign in Cana, Galilee: "Your son lives," par. 3).

mation of the sanctuary into a pagan temple, in fact, a department store, it ultimately loses its status as the place where the God of Israel wants to have his liberating NAME dwell.[29]

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, it is then, of all places, the city of Tiberias,[30] built "in the Roman-Greek style with palaces and typical Roman buildings such as the forum, theater, and racecourse," which "soon became the spiritual and religious center of the Jews." Could this image of Rabbinic Judaism communicating with Rome on a conciliatory basis have contributed to John's bitter opposition to *the Jews*?

Positively connoted places or regions always are somewhere on the periphery in relation to these Judean or Rabbinic centers, but are of central importance for the Johannine Jesus: Cana, an insignificant town at the periphery of the Galilean periphery, becomes the scene of the two fundamental Messianic signs. Sychar, in the territory of the Samaritans who were hated by the Judeans, is the place where the Messiah courts the lost ten tribes of Israel as liberator and reconciler; this is also recalled by the mention of a town *Ephraim* as Jesus' place of retreat (11:52). The most positive connotation is the area beyond the Jordan where John the Baptist had ministered and where many trusted in Jesus (10:40-42).

So my imagination can picture John's sphere of activity somewhere in the East Bank, where Messianic and non-Messianic Jews continue to live side by side and gather together in the synagogues even after the year 70, until the disputes with "the Jews" about the position on the world order lead more and more to the discontinuation of relations with the Rabbinic synagogue.

The phrase "beyond the Jordan," however, can also take up the questioning that Deuteronomy presents within the Jewish Torah vis-à-vis the priestly traditions of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers by having Moses deliver an admonishing speech (Deuteronomy 1:1) from "beyond the Jordan" that reminds everyone that the goal of liberation from slavery and the establishment of a discipline of freedom in the Promised Land was never fully achieved, but was always based on the premise of trust in the God of Israel. What is decisive, then, is not where John actually lived, but that for him the geography of Palestine is of fundamental theological-political importance from the Jewish Scriptures.

0.4.3.2 A Woman Named Alexandra as a Contemporary Compliant Listener to John

Excitingly (xxix), you now come up with "a second fictional figure" alongside John, as a contemporary listener hanging on John's lips:

29 Veerkamp 76-79 (A Lesson, par. 3-11).

30 The following quotes I have taken, translated by me, from the German Wikipedia: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberias.

> I call her Alexandra. Alexandra stands in for the compliant audience—a part I cannot play on my own. She is a person who responds wholeheartedly to John's message; in absorbing his story of Jesus, she is stirred to faith and called to action. John's explanations of the festivals and other Jewish practices suggest that she does not know much about Jewish ritual life. Whether Alexandra is already a Christ-follower—or not yet one—I do not know for certain. Nor do I know her age, hair color, sexual orientation, or personal circumstances. I do know—as the one who created her—that she is open to persuasion and that she is attracted, by birth and/or by inclination, to the idea of covenantal relationship with the God of Israel.

Since (xxx)

- the "oral transmission of written texts was widespread and crossed ethnic, cultural, and social boundaries within the broad Greco-Roman world, classical and Hellenistic,"
- this is also documented for New Testament texts (1 Thessalonicher 5:26-27; Offenbarung 1:3 and 22:18-19) and (xxx, n. 66) "the Hebrew/ Aramaic circles within which rabbinic literature arose,"
- and furthermore, it must be assumed "a relatively low level of full literacy (the ability to read and write) among Jews and pagans in Greco-Roman society,"

it is to be concluded that also (xxxi) "the Gospel's contemporaries would have been accustomed to hearing and responding to oral texts."

> Even if we imagine Alexandra as a "lettered" woman who was able to read for herself, the strongly rhetorical nature of the Gospel suggests that she still may well have become familiar with the Gospel by hearing rather than, or in addition to, reading.

On the basis of early church testimony (xxxi, n. 72) from the late 2nd century, for example, from Polycrates, Papias, and Irenaeus, you can thus imagine Alexandra listening to John the orator somewhere "perhaps in Asia Minor, and perhaps in Ephesus," leaving open whether they knew each other personally.

> But if the Gospel had any power at all, it was to foster an encounter not so much between an author and a reader or listener, but between Jesus—some of whose signs are written in "this book" (20:30)—and those who are moved to be reborn, "not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (1:13).

Since in my eyes John is not a Gentile missionary who wants to convert Gentiles to faith in Jesus, Alexandra may well have heard John's Gospel in Ephesus in Asia Minor as a means of mission to the Gentiles. But it is not the original author of the Gospel who speaks to her there, rather she hears a Gentile-Christian distorted version of

the Gospel from preachers of a church that already sees itself as Christian and sharply distinguishes itself from the teachings and rituals of Judaism.

0.4.3.3 A Woman Named Miriam as a Listener to the Jewish Messianist John

Your imaginative fantasy, by which you have invented a fictitious Alexandra, inspired me to form an idea of a listener of John as I understand him. In my eyes, they could have met in the synagogue of a town somewhere "beyond the Jordan." I leave it to her to introduce herself:

I am Miriam, a Jew. I have always been proud of my name, which recalls the sister of Moses and Aaron who sang the song of Israel's liberation at the Reed Sea. Fond of hearing the stories of the Torah and the words of the prophets in the synagogue of our town, especially of all the strong women: Rebekah and Rachel, Deborah and Jaël, not forgetting the midwives Shiphrah and Puah in their resistance against the Pharaoh of Egypt.

But what about today? We live again in Egypt, not literally, but in a worldwide slave house, today it is called *Pax Romana*, what a joke, "Roman Peace," made by legionaries wading through blood and crucifying our countrymen. And they call the world we live in *kosmos*, "decorated and well-ordered," where some show off their bodies in the *gymnasion* and others have to slave for a pittance.

All hopes that an insurrection against Rome could bring about the kingdom of peace, as cherished by the Messianic Zealots, have been crushed. The Judean War left bloody traces everywhere in Palestine, and the Romans have consolidated their power in Judea more firmly than before. They destroyed Jerusalem, demolished the temple, and never again, we will be able to go on pilgrimage to the festivals in Jerusalem. Have the Romans and their gods won against the God of Israel?

One day, some people arrive at our synagogue and cause a disturbance. One of them is John. When he interprets the Scriptures to us, he does it in a way I have never heard before. From the Torah and the Prophets, John proves that Jesus ben Joseph of Nazareth is the Messiah. He tells stories of Jesus, of signs and wonders, and I sense: He speaks of ourselves, of our liberation. He seems to speak directly into our dark situation, into our worries and fears. How far seemed to us the age to come, a world of justice and peace! John says, only from the Messiah, from his *agapē*, solidarity, Israel is to become free from the oppression under the Roman world order.

Speaking of the *diabolos*, John makes some people wince. If this is brought to the attention of the Roman authorities, it can end badly for him, because each of us knows that he means the emperor, the adversary of the God of Israel. After all, it was the Romans who crucified Jesus, as they have so many other insurgents, but John says, "This was not a defeat, this was a victory over the world order. By his death on the cross, he exposed the system of the *Pax Romana*, it is nothing but a bunch of cheats

and murderers, and the *agapē*, the loving solidarity of the God of Israel, which he handed over to us in his death, is stronger than all their hatred and violence.

It fills me with a special joy that it was also a Miriam who became the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah: Mary Magdalene. John also seems to think very highly of other women. Is it surprising that I hang on his lips when he tells of the woman at Jacob's well, in whom I recognize our ancestral mothers Rebekah and Rachel, of Martha's conversation with Jesus about the resurrection, of Mary anointing his feet before he does the same with his disciples?

Unfortunately, it was the same then as it is still with us: Although Jesus also values female disciples and they often see through more than his male disciples, we, as women, are at most tolerated as silent listeners in the men's circle. The men, however, love to discuss things with John; sometimes, as John tells us about him, Jesus seems to respond directly to what the men ask. Everything John says he writes down, in the end, it becomes a book, a Gospel, elsewhere they say there are already similar ones. I can't hear enough of John telling about Jesus, over and over again.

Did John still experience Jesus himself? He leaves it in suspense. Mysteriously he speaks of the disciple to whom Jesus was deeply attached, to whom he entrusted his mother. Does he mean himself? Or does he simply like to put himself into this time, as if he had been there?

0.4.4 Outline of Chapters

To accomplish (xxxi) your three rhetorical goals outlined in 0.2.2, you divide your book "into three main sections."

0.4.4.1 Part I: The Rhetoric of Affiliation

The first chapter is about a "Rhetoric of Desire and Fulfillment," that is about

> the varied rhetorical strategies that the Gospel uses to develop two core propositions: that human beings desire eternal life—or, at the very least, freedom from death—and that faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God is the only way to fulfill this desire.

In doing so, you examine primarily the use of "standard categories of Greek rhetoric such as external proof, artistic evidence, and style."

I will take the liberty of questioning your understanding of the concepts used here of eternal life or of the sonship to God of the Messiah Jesus.

In the second chapter, you discuss the "Rhetoric of Transformation," referring to "the actions that the Gospel calls on individuals to take." You do this (xxxii) based on your interpretation of the "cosmological context ... of Jesus's sojourn in the world," which compels believers in Christ to "corporate affiliation," that is, to join a community of people "who are undergoing or have undergone the same transformation."

I contrast this understanding with my understanding of the Messianic community as the gathering place of all Israel, which is what John has in mind in my eyes.

0.4.4.2 Part II: The Rhetoric of Disaffiliation

The third chapter presents the "Rhetoric of Expropriation" through which, in your eyes, John structures his Gospel "around the Jewish Sabbath, the Jewish festivals, and Jewish institutions of synagogue and Temple,"

> not to include John's audience within a broader Jewish corporate entity but, perhaps ironically, to exclude that broader entity from the divine covenant. In appropriating the scriptures, the Temple, and covenantal language for its audience, the Gospel rhetorically expropriates, casts out, expels the Jews from that covenant. The Jewishness of the Gospel is not an antidote to its anti-Jewishness, but part and parcel thereof.

Here I strongly disagree by emphasizing the Jewish self-understanding of John the Messianist and at the same time highlighting the political character of his confrontation with *the Jews*, which in its sharpness is reminiscent of the biblical prophets.

In chapter 4, you unfold a "Rhetoric of Repudiation" that is meant to encourage "separation from the *loudaioi*" by portraying "the *Ioudaioi* as unbelievers and 'the children of Satan.'"

Indeed, this Johannine rhetoric is difficult to bear. Nevertheless, I disagree with the tendency of your interpretation to impute the later generally anti-Jewish understanding of these words as already John's intention. Their sharpness, due to the political circumstances of the dispute in the 1st century, I do not want to excuse but try to make understandable.

Chapter 5 serves as your opportunity to think through the question of "the historical referents of *loudaioi* as used in the Fourth Gospel" and "how best to translate this term into English." In doing so, you assume that not only "for the church fathers," but already for John

> *Ioudaioi* was not primarily a historical designation but rather a hermeneutical, rhetorical, and theological category used for the purposes of self-identification, boundary-drawing, and polemics. Nevertheless, in identifying the enemies of Christ and his followers as *Ioudaioi*, the Gospel potentially creates distrust and separation from the flesh-and-blood *Ioudaioi*—Jews who did not believe in Christ—whom its audience may have known.

For the church fathers and the interpretation of John's gospel, which was based on them for centuries, I agree with you. But John did not yet need to assure himself of the identity of a new religion by distinguishing it from an enemy stereotype. Rather, his sharp inner-Jewish polemics had concrete political backgrounds and addressees, about which one has to get clarity in each individual case.

0.4.4.3 Part III: Imagining the Rhetorical Situation

In the third part (xxxiii) of your book, you leave the rhetoric of the Gospel itself "to imagine the 'real' identities of both the historical audience and the *Ioudaioi* over against whom the Gospel defines the children of God."

In chapter 6, you critically address the "Expulsion Theory" developed by J. L. Martyn, according to which "the Gospel reflects the traumatic expulsion of the 'Johannine community' from the synagogue."

In response, in chapter 7 you unfold a "Propulsion Theory" as an "alternative to the expulsion hypothesis." From the premise that, according to Jim A. Kuypers and Andrew King,[31] the "very practice of rhetoric presupposes a particular audience in a specific historical, geographical, and social location," you attempt "to reconstruct that audience in the absence of any external evidence, that is, on the basis of the rhetoric alone." Against "a majority of scholars," you decide that John did not aim his rhetoric at a "Jewish audience" but instead

> most directly to a Gentile audience interested in, but not yet fully committed to, the idea of becoming children of God by participating in a group dedicated to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. If so, the Gospel can be viewed as a participant in the Gentile mission of the first century.

Here our paths diverge diametrically because I categorically exclude an originally pagan audience of the evangelist John. For Gentile mission, the Gospel could only be used in its spiritualized, otherworldly reinterpretation, which came about a few decades after its writing, when Christianity emerged as an independent religion and was dominated by believers in Christ of Gentile descent.

1 The Rhetoric of Desire and Fulfillment

At the beginning of your first chapter (3), you quote John's assertion "that belief in Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, is the way to eternal life." And you assume that this assertion "is based on an unstated assumption: that the dread of death—and desire for eternal life—are universal human traits common to all cultures and all eras."

But in your own remark (18, n. 1), you concede that such a desire is nowadays just hardly directed to the hereafter, but to a this-worldly prolongation of life by medicine and that not all people share this desire. I would like to add that Far Eastern religions seem to consider the infinite return of life rather a curse.

Inexplicable to me is that you do not even consider whether John, as a Hebrew-Jewish thinking Messianic Jew, really expects an eternal life hereafter or rather a fulfilled life in the this-worldly era of freedom, justice, and peace that is to come.

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31 (xl, n. 75) Jim A. Kuypers and Andrew King, "What Is Rhetoric?" in *Rhetorical Criticism: Perspectives in Action*, ed. Jim A Kuypers (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 8.

At least you are aware that John "draws more directly on the book of Genesis than on the traditions of Greek philosophy." But you leave open what it means specifically that (3-4)

> John's Prologue brings a narrative world into being, and sets that story world into the context of divine creation. The Prologue situates the Word in the process by which God created all things, set light against darkness (Gen 1:3-4), and breathed life into humankind (Gen 2:7).

I know from your book *The Word in the World* that you interpret the opposition of light and darkness within otherworldly cosmology reminiscent of the Gnostic dualism between an evil this-worldly creation and a good heavenly otherworld. The background of Genesis 1, however, is a political theology of liberation, of the kind that is propounded in Isaiah 45:7-8, 12-13, 18-19 by the God of Israel, who reveals himself (Isaiah 45:21) as *ʾel-tzadiq we-moshiaʿ*, "a just God and a liberator."

Also, I doubt that it really already corresponds to the original, Jewish interpretation of Genesis 1-3 that "unending life is the ideal, God-given state of humankind," at least if such life is understood as life in otherworldly heaven. As Christians, we have indeed interpreted what we call the Fall story in this sense. But was it not originally meant that a Paradise life is given the quality of *zōē aiōnios* by being lived both in trusting God and (Genesis 2:25) in mutual trust until one is (Genesis 25:8) "old and full of days, and gathered to his people"?

1.1 What is the Rhetoric of Desire Directed at in John's Gospel?

Under the heading "rhetoric of desire", you elaborate (5) how John "manipulates the prior desires of the reader" or a listener like Alexandra (6):

> John not only draws her attention to Jesus's capacity to offer life to those who believe, but also causes her to recognize her own latent desire.

Again, I agree with you regarding the traditional Christian interpretation: whoever believes in Jesus gets eternal life in heaven, whoever does not goes to hell. However, this interpretation presupposes that John would already have understood *zōē aiōnios* in this otherworldly sense.

1.1.1 Miriam's Hope for the Life of the Age to Come

Miriam would contradict this:

Nowhere does Jesus promise us a life in heaven, in the hereafter. That is something for the *goyim* over in Tiberias, who go to the theaters and discuss philosophy and mysteries on the forum.

Jesus takes seriously (5) the royal official in Capernaum (who, by the way, as an official of Herod Antipas, need not be a *goy*, a "Gentile") who is afraid for the life of his child, and in this, I perceive his concern for every daughter and son of the people of

Israel, who in turn are the firstborn son of the FATHER (Exodus 4:22), so many of whom were murdered in the Judean War.

Where Jesus (11:4) prepares to demonstrate his honor by raising his friend Lazarus from death, everything depends on recognizing that this friend symbolically stands for Israel. We only have to remember that the name Lazarus goes back to the priestly name Eleazar in the Scriptures, then we realize: Lazarus stands for an Israel that is as good as dead due to the degenerated priesthood collaborating with Rome, unable to move freely, to live under just circumstances, basically already a corpse that has passed over into decay. This Israel is and remains the friend of the Messiah, this Israel he calls from the tomb with the words (11:44): "Untie him and let him go!"

Where the Samaritan woman (4-5) responds to Jesus' offer (4:14-15) of a "spring of water gushing up to eternal life" with the words, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water," she is not literally concerned with eternal life at all, but with putting an end to her daily drudgery of constantly having to carry water so far.

It is (5) Simon Peter (6:68) who speaks explicitly about *zōē aiōnios*, "life of the age to come." But this expression has nothing to do with an afterlife. By the way, in this we also agree with the Rabbis who do not trust in the Messiah Jesus, Ton Veerkamp has described this very nicely with the following words:[32]

> *Zōē aiōnios* is usually translated as "eternal life." What is meant is life in the coming eon, the epoch established by the Messiah's struggle. In Rabbinical Judaism it is called *ʿolam ha-baʾ* in contrast to *ʿolam ha-ze*, this ruling epoch. John calls it *ho kosmos* (*houtos*). The contrast between *ho kosmos* (*houtos*) and *zōē aiōnios* is nothing else than the Rabbinic difference. So it has nothing to do with Gnostic dualism.

1.1.2 How Does the Son of Man Have Dawn the Age to Come?

As to Nicodemus (5), you mention Jesus explaining to him that, as Veerkamp says,[33]

> "Life of the age to come" is inseparably linked to the figure and work of the one whom our translations call the "Son of Man" ("the Human", *bar enosh*).

Literally, you quote the corresponding verse 3:15, "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." But do you realize what is in this short sentence? It can only really be understood from the Jewish Scriptures:[34]

32 Veerkamp 81 (note 124 on the translation of John 3:15).
33 Veerkamp 160 (The Work that God Demands, par. 6).
34 Veerkamp 86-88 ("You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not understand this?", par. 21-26, 28-30).

Jesus here instructs the teacher of Israel in the Scriptures of Israel, with Midrashim. Midrash is a form of exegesis, but an exegesis with the practical intention of connecting the word with the ever-changing circumstances of life. Thus the narration of the text to be read aloud (which the Jews call *miqraʾ*) takes on a new form in Midrash.

John answers with the Scriptures, linking Daniel 7 with Numbers 21, but he alienates Daniel 7:10 ff. There it says: "The court sits down, books are opened." It is then reported how the (tenth) horn of the monster, the image of the tyrant Antiochus IV, is destroyed. He who ascended into heaven, who thus stands before the "advanced in days," is now he who descended from heaven. This is new in the Gospel of John. In John, the so-called "Son of Man" has turned into an earthly figure, he just "became flesh, is happening as flesh," it says in the prologue. In Daniel, the elevation of the Human is the endowment of "governmental power, dignity, and kingship." The vision does not say *how* this will happen. It only hints that this *bar enosh* is identical with "the people of the saints of the Highest," Israel. John describes the "how." In principle, the elevation or rise of the *bar enosh*, the Human, will happen as descent, as "incarnation," as concrete political existence that ends and must end at the Roman cross. As the situation is now, the elevation of the Human, i.e. of Israel, can only be interpreted through defeat. The alienation of Daniel 7 is the actualization of the vision: ascent is descent, descent is ascent. To illustrate this, John brings another midrash, this time on Numbers 21:4-9,

> The spirit of the people became fainthearted on the way.
> The people spoke against God and against Moses:
> "Why did you bring us up from Egypt . . .?"

The God sent snakes that bit the people. Many died. The people confesses that it had gone astray and urges Moses to pray. He prays. Then it says,

> And the NAME said to Moses,
> "Make yourself a poisonous snake,
> put it on a pole.
> It shall be:
> Whoever is bitten and sees it,
> will live."
> Moses made a snake of copper,
> he put it on the pole.
> And it was:
> If a snake bit a man,
> and he looked upon the snake of copper,
> he would live.

> The cause of the catastrophe with the snakes was the grumbling of the people against the leadership that led them out of the slave house. If the people rescind liberation and gamble away their freedom, the result is ruin. The symptoms of doom are the poisonous snakes, whose bite is fatal. The forfeited freedom is the poisonous snake. It is pinned to a pole, made harmless. To look at the image of the attached snake is to understand that unfreedom is no longer an enticement. Whoever imagines this, whoever becomes aware of what forfeited freedom is, will be healed. ...
>
> … What else is "God" than the one who names himself in Israel only as "the one leading out of the slave house"? He has no other NAME. Israel, so much means John to know, is today in the slave house of Rome. To the *bar enosh*, the Human, executed and "pinned" to the torture instrument cross by the Romans—by those who keep Israel in their worldwide slave house—Israel has to look up to become aware of what is really happening to him. The "image of the copper snake," the "cross," is drastic political training. Of the Christian idylls of the cross no man has yet become better, let alone "whole, unhurt," or "safe and sound" [as you might render the German word "heil"—which, as an adjective, is derived from the nouns "Heil" = "salvation, (soul's) health, well-being" and "Heiland" = "Savior, Redeemer"].
>
> John alienates Daniel's *bar enosh* into a human child tortured to death and perishing miserably. The high representative of Rome presents the humiliated and ridiculous Jesus ben Joseph from Nazareth to the people: "There, the human—*bar enosh*—this is what man looks like when he falls into our hands." At first, he seems to be the absolute contrast to Daniel's powerful figure *bar enosh*. But precisely the defeat of the Messiah is to John the starting point for the liberation of the world from the order that weighs upon it. The linkage of Daniel 7 with Numbers 21 is the end of all political illusions suggested by the Zealot adventure.
>
> The alienation of Daniel 7 solves one question in order to invoke the next unsolved—unsolvable?—question: How can such a liberated world be created? The Christians, followers of the Messianists of the same batch as John, make of the cross a truly *narrow escape* from earthly life into heaven after death. "*Apple pie in the sky, Life for you after you die*," so the radical black leader in the USA, Malcolm X, mocked the paralyzing world of pietist spirituals, in a fight against Christianity, which turns the cross and its alleged healing power into a pure placebo. We have no answer to the question of how defeat can turn into victory. But we must ask it.

What Alexandra and you read from John's Gospel corresponds exactly to this parody of a Christian afterlife devotion. But is it conceivable that a few decades earlier there were still listeners of John like Miriam who would have been capable of inter-

preting such allusions of John to the Son of Man of Daniel 7 and the serpent of Numbers 21 in the Messianic-political way outlined by Ton Veerkamp?

It might seem similarly impossible as an answer to the question posed at the beginning of Veerkamp's last section: Can anything else emerge from the Messiah's defeat on the cross of the Romans than the victory of a triumphant Christian church that has so shamefully betrayed the *agapē* commandment of its Lord Jesus Christ in its hostility to the Jews? Nevertheless, I dare to answer both questions cautiously in the affirmative—the latter only combined with the untiring effort to stand up against every Christian hostility to the Jews of our days.

1.1.3 Jesus as the Second Isaac Being Crucified in Solidarity with Israel

At the point where I broke off Ton Veerkamp's quote, he still follows with a detailed analysis of verses 3:16-17, which he translates as follows:[35]

> 3:16 For GOD so solidarized with the world
> that he gave the Son, the only-begotten,
> so that everyone trusting in him may not be destroyed,
> but has life in the age to come.
> 3:17 For God did not send the Son into the world
> to judge the world,
> but that the world might be liberated through him.

As to these verses, I again have Miriam clarify her deepest hopes for Jesus the Messiah:

I love verses 16 and 17 in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus because so much hope speaks from them in their reference to the Scriptures.

Where John speaks of the Only Begotten Son, we as Jews remember the only beloved son of Abraham, whom he was to sacrifice as his own son and who was given back to him as the Son of God. What Abraham was not forced to do, namely to kill Isaac, God is forced to do today out of solidarity with the world. Jesus is the Only Begotten, the second Isaac, in his body, he suffers the fate of our people Israel, the firstborn son of God. Was not Jesus crucified as the children of Israel were crucified by the hundreds in the Judean War? And how great must be God's solidarity with the world in giving up his Messiah—the one Isaac—to death on a Roman cross in place of all our people Israel! I know it is difficult to understand how from this shall dawn the life of the age to come, but I imagine it like this, as impossible as that sounds: If he out of love, out of solidarity, gives his life to the murderers, then he is stronger than the murderers, then his solidarity remains as a legacy for all of us, through which we can overcome a world order of hatred.

35 Veerkamp 81-82 and 88-91 ("You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not understand this?", par. 1 and 31-44).

Ton Veerkamp expressed it this way at the end of his analysis of these verses, making clear at the same time how an interpretation in your sense can come about:[36]

> While Genesis 22 was already an imposition to all listeners of the word, John 3:16 is all the more unbearable. The central political thesis of the Gospel of John is: Only through the defeat of this One and Only, the liberation of the *world* from the *order* that weighs upon it is possible. This thesis is perpendicular to everything that was—and is—conceivable as a political strategy. The strategy of John is world revolution, even if it is not on the agenda. This is precisely what is unpolitical about him, and this is what tempts the generations after him to internalize, to spiritualize, to depoliticize his Messianism.
>
> World revolution is certainly not world damnation. John is a child of his time; he knows the world condemnation of Gnosis. World condemnation is rejected here. We are dealing here with an anti-Gnostic text. The *world* is not to be judged, but to be liberated from the world *order*.

You do not address such Scriptural subtleties as Ton Veerkamp points them out and which would be crucial for a woman like Miriam. Instead (5), you emphasize that on the one hand—according to the three passages 5:24; 7:37; 9:31—"Jesus offers the gift of eternal life to all" but on the other hand of "Jewish audiences, Jesus presumes not only their desire but also their refusal to believe." The very passages you cite as evidence for this, however, make it clear that there can be no question of a fundamental bias on Jesus' part against *the Jews*. It is true that 5:39-40 deal with the already hardened fronts in the dispute between the Rabbinic Jews, who refer to Moses alone, and the Messianic confession of Jesus, but in 6:33 Jews are definitely interested in Jesus' message, who, however, react to his offensive demand "that they drink his blood and eat his body (6:53-58)" in 6:66 with their withdrawal.

1.2 The Rhetoric of Fulfillment: What Evidence Does John Cite?

In examining (6) the rhetorical strategies John uses to prove "that the desire for eternal life can be fulfilled only by believing that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God," you leave out the strategy of arrangement:

> Arrangement, referring to the overall structure of a rhetorical discourse, is not used strategically in this Gospel, given that the sequence of stories and discourses is constructed not topically, as in expository writing, but chronologically, as in much narrative writing.

But wasn't it precisely the chronological sequence of the scenes narrated by John that was called into question by some scholars to such an extent that they thought, like Bultmann, for example, to have to radically rearrange the Gospel? In contrast to

36 Veerkamp 91 ("You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not understand this?", par. 43-44).

you, Ton Veerkamp notes a structure of the Gospel that is very significant in terms of content, and which, for example in chapters 5 to 12, is completely oriented to the Jewish festivals:[37]

> Our text is about a place/time structure that is not structured by the chronometer and the map, but by the festivals.
>
> The undefined festival of 5:1 is the festival of festivals: the restoration of Israel's freedom of movement, say, its autonomy, the essential content of all festivals. To an autonomous Israel, the Messiah is the nourisher—because *nourishment*!—of Israel. To John, this is new content for the Passover meal.
>
> The starting point is a story about how the prophet Elisha nourished Israel, 2 Kings 4:42 ff. This narrative was popular in many Messianic groups. In John, as well, it has to take place in the periphery of Galilee. In John, it serves to present the Messiah as the life principle of Israel; without the Messiah, the whole autonomy is useless. The work of renewal runs through the series Bread (the new Passover meal)—Light (overcoming blindness, Sukkot)—Life (overcoming decay, Hanukkah).

Only those who perceive this inner structure can also see the golden thread that the entire action of the Messiah is directed toward the liberation and healing of Israel.

In contrast to such a view, you seem to consider the sequence of events narrated in the Gospel to be rather random and (6) are focussing on the other two rhetorical strategies, namely, "how the Gospel uses invention and style to convey that faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God is indeed the key to eternal life."

1.2.1 External Proofs: Miracles, the Scriptures, Witnesses

First, you address the "three principal forms of external proof: miracles, the scriptures, and witnesses," which are used in the New Testament as inventions, means of persuasion. "John includes the first two forms of external proof—miracles and scriptures—as subcategories of the third category, witnesses."

The question, then, is (7): What witnesses are called in John's Gospel who, besides Jesus himself, "testify to Jesus's identity as the Messiah and Son of God, and, whether directly or indirectly, to his role as the one who fulfills the desire for eternal life"? You enumerate a total of seven witnesses: 1. John the Baptist, 2. the works performed by Jesus, *erga*, referred to as *sēmeia*, signs, 3. the Father, that is, the God of Israel, 4. the Scriptures and Moses, 5. his own disciples, 6. the Gospel as a testimony, and 7. the Paraclete.

In this, the testimony of the disciples (7-8) is directed first "to those hearing or reading the Gospel, but not to the other characters within it." Among them (8) "the most

37 Veerkamp 149-50 (Near Passover. The Nourisher of Israel, par. 1-3).

important witness is the Beloved Disciple, whose testimony is said to underlie the book as a whole (19:35, 21:24).” Since their or his voice and all the other witnesses mentioned address “the Gospel’s audiences” only through the Gospel itself, “the Gospel itself is the primary, indeed, the only, witness through which Jesus’s words and deeds are available.”

But were these testimonies really “external proofs”?

> The idea that God, the scriptures, John the Baptist, or any of the other proofs constitute witnesses to Jesus’s identity is clearly John’s own construct and therefore does not seem to be external. John, however, depicts them as external to Jesus—and therefore as evidence that Jesus’s claims are not grounded solely in his self-testimony (5:31).

In fact, there can be no “external proof” in the Aristotelian sense for the truth of what is written in the Bible. For John, it is decisive that he considers everything he writes about the Messiah to be convincingly grounded in the Scriptures. In his eyes, according to 5:36, the works accomplished by Jesus are to be considered the most important of all testimonies to his Messiahship:[38]

> 5:36 But I have a testimony greater than that of Yochanan:
> The works that the FATHER has given me to accomplish them.
> The very works I am doing testify about me
> that the FATHER has sent me.

You write quite formally on the meaning of these works or signs (7, n. 11):

> John generally refers to Jesus’s healing and other miraculous acts as signs, pointing towards their significance for the believer and the Gospel’s audience, whereas Jesus sometimes refers to them in general terms as works, pointing to the evidentiary role they play as witnesses to his filial relationship with God.

But John’s point is not simply about proving that Jesus is indeed the Son of God by means of his supernatural abilities. Rather, the works John mentions refer to the liberating acts of power of the God of Israel, which in turn are attested to by his signs and wonders in the Scriptures. As the Son of the God of Israel, the Messiah Jesus is sent to accomplish His creative deeds of power and, very specifically, to raise from death the decaying Lazarus, the Israel that had come down under the oppressive violence of the Roman world order.

1.2.2 Internal Proof of *Ethos*: How Are Jesus’ Messianic Titles to be Interpreted?

What about (8) the “internal, or artistic proofs”—according to the Aristotelian “three categories: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos”—for the truth of what John proclaims?

38 Veerkamp 143 (The Testimony, par. 1).

While in "Aristotelian rhetoric, ethos is entirely internal to the speech," in the New Testament, according to George Kennedy [15], it is "the authoritativeness of the speaker as such" that matters.

John, according to you (9), tries to prove Jesus credible by a variety of titles attributed to him. I find it significant that you miss the Jewish reference of the *hyios monogenēs*, the Only Begotten Son, to Isaac, and that you interpret the title "Son of God" from a "Greco-Roman divinity." It would at least have to be justified why an author who otherwise resorts to "titles associated with Jewish messianic expectations (Lamb of God, Messiah)" and "apocalyptic salvation (Son of Man)" should at the same time regard Jesus as a pagan Son of God. This is absurd if only because it is Nathanael, portrayed as an Israelite without guile, who addresses Jesus (1:49) in one breath as "Rabbi," "Son of God," and "King of Israel." At the very least, an attempt must be made to interpret the title of Son of God equally from the Jewish Scriptures as all others. Only in 20:28 is it worth remembering that Thomas subversively refers a title like *Dominus ac Deus*, which Roman emperors claimed for themselves, to the Messiah of Israel crucified by Rome: "My Lord and my God!"

Also, the way in which Jesus refers to himself "the phrase *ego eimi* ('I am')," that is, "God's self-declaration in Exodus 3:14," you do not fill substantively from the Scriptures as expressing that Jesus embodies the liberating NAME of this God, but this name of God remains to you "pithy but enigmatic." In this context, the question must also be asked whether it is really simply that "Jesus reveals his identity through numerous metaphors, such as the bread of life, the shepherd, the gate, and, most famously, 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (14:6)," or whether one must heed Ton Veerkamp's comments on the translation of the Greek word *einai* in John's Gospel:[39]

> in classical Greek texts, the verb simply means "to be," so it is the copula of identity. The Hebrew *haya* is rendered with forms of *einai*, but it does not mean "to be," but "to be there for, to happen," at most "to become." The emphatic *egō eimi* that is so characteristic of John's Gospel is not a sentence of judgment along the lines of *subject = predicate*. It gives no information about what Jesus *was* all about, but *that* and *how* he *acted* for others; hence, "I am there for you as . . ., I happen to you as . . ." Sometimes, however, the Greek text may actually mean such verbs "in the Greek way," *einai* as a copula. The translator must therefore scrupulously ask himself what usage is involved.

Again and again, my critique of your approach boils down to asking whether the interpretation of the Johannine Jesus as a Son of God in the Greco-Roman sense who dispossesses the Jews of their sonship to God really already applies to the original Gospel of John, or whether we must not rather interpret all the titles used for Jesus

39 Veerkamp 13 (On the Translation of John, par. 4).

as Messiah and all his Messianic action from the Jewish Scriptures—namely, as the embodiment and fulfillment of the liberating work of Israel's God on his people in the midst of the nations.

1.2.3 Internal Proof of *Pathos*: How Does John Employ Emotional Language?

According to Aristotle, persuasive rhetoric (9) is "a matter not only of reason but also emotion." This is also matched in John's Gospel (10) by the "use of emotive language throughout the narrative." Thus, you consider the "signs stories" as illustrations of "Jesus's ability to resolve all problems."

> The Gospel also evokes emotion when it associates Jesus with his flock's safety from deceit and danger (10:11-16); portrays the joyous celebration of those who witness the triumphal entry (12:13; cf. 12:19); provides hope of a future dwelling place with Jesus in God's house (14:2); and promises the disciples' future joy (15:11; 17:13). Particularly evocative is the imagery in 16:21-22...

1.2.3.1 Does John Take His Metaphors from Everyday Language?

Another point stands out, especially in John's Gospel: "Metaphors are also used emotively." You think of the metaphors of light and darkness, of water and bread, and finally of "Jesus as the gate" (11), which "emphasizes Jesus's role as the access point to relationship with God." All these metaphors are in your eyes

> taken from everyday experience. Productive work is accomplished in the daytime, whereas dangers lurk at night; water and bread are fundamental to physical survival. In using these metaphors to express Jesus's essential role in fulfilling the human desire for eternal life, the Gospel is asserting that faith is connected to eternal life even more profoundly than light, darkness, water, and bread are connected to mundane existence. To fulfill the desire for eternal—in contrast to temporal—life, one must acknowledge the centrality of Jesus as the one who provides for humankind's most essential needs, not for the impermanence of this world, but for the eternal life with God.

Here, by following traditional Gentile-Christian exegesis, you commit a fundamental interpretational error. You are right that the metaphors mentioned can be related to everyday experience, and this was certainly one of the reasons why the Gospel of John could be interpreted so easily in a universally human or cosmic-dualistic way. But if you look more closely, all the metaphors you mentioned in John's Gospel are rooted in the Jewish Scriptures and not simply taken directly from everyday life.

The contrast of light and darkness, Scripturally, is to be seen on the one hand from Genesis 1:4-5 as the creation-appropriate opposite of day and night, but on the other hand, especially in John, from the man-made darkness described in Jeremiah 4:23-26. John refers the bread metaphor quite explicitly to the manna of the wilderness wanderings as the bread from heaven (10:31; Psalm 78:24). The water metaphor must be considered in light of passages such as Isaiah 35:5-7; 43:19-20; 55:1 or

Jeremiah 2:13. And the metaphor of *thyra*, the gate or door, in 10:9 should be interpreted from Numbers 27:17, as I explained in the review of your book *The Word in the World*:[40]

> By being the **door**, Jesus is the entrance to the new sanctuary of the body of his Messianic community in which all Israel and further people who trust in him shall be gathered to come in and go out and find pasture according to Numbers 27:17, that is, to live in peace.

1.2.3.2 What is the Purpose of the Provocative Invitation to Chew the Flesh of the Messiah?

Contrary to a mere everyday rooting (10), however, you also hear in connection with the metaphor of the bread a

> language that to later readers, if not to the initial readers, evoked the language of the Eucharist: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day" (6:54).

Although a "compliant listener like Alexandra" might really think of the Christian Lord's Supper when hearing these words, there are several strong arguments that John was not thinking here of what (1 Corinthians 11:20) Paul called *kyriakon deipnon*: First, instead of an institution of the Lord's Supper, he reports Jesus' slave service in washing the feet of his disciples, and second, in the verse you quote, he does not use the neutral word *phagein*, "to eat," but the coarse word *trogein*, "to chew." Therefore, according to Ton Veerkamp, the Johannine Jesus has something quite different in mind than referring to the Christian Lord's Supper when he explains (6:51) the eating of the bread or flesh that has come from heaven in his person:[41]

> Some do not come along here anymore, others are undecided, are quarreled *(emachonto):* "How can this one give us his meat to eat?" John would have a chance here to explain what "eating meat" could mean.
>
> John not only undauntedly continues what he has said so far, but he tops it all off: eat the flesh of the Human, *my* flesh, even drink his blood, *my* blood. But what exactly is to eat *(phagein)* here? Chew (*trōgein*) his flesh! Drink his blood, then you will get alive into the world age to come, "I will raise him up on the Day of Decision," the fourth time. "Only that is food," says Jesus, only that is really food and drink, that keeps you alive, only that.
>
> The fact that it says "to chew" instead of "to eat" is thus by no means a "stylistic variation," as Wengst[42] says. John does not have the sense of exer-

40 Jewish-Messianic liberation-political reading, par. 6.

41 Veerkamp 170-71 (The Dispute among the Judeans, par. 2-8).

42 Veerkamp cites Klaus Wengst, Das Johannesevangelium. 1. Teilband: Kapitel 1-10 (ThKNT), Stuttgart 2000, 253.

> cise in style here. Here our text is taking a far-reaching turn. Now he wants provocation. Whoever talks like that does not want any understanding. He wants separation, schism. That is the language of the sect.
>
> We are so blunted by our communion services that we no longer feel the provocation. Jesus does not talk about the wafer or a cup of grape juice, with or without alcohol. The provocation is really intended. Meat is allowed to be eaten in Israel, but, "Meat that has its blood in its soul, you must not eat under any circumstances," Genesis 9:4. This so-called Noahide prohibition is repeatedly inculcated: the blood must not be eaten, it must be allowed to flow away before eating the meat; it must be kosher. Chewing human flesh and drinking its blood at the same time for every child of Israel is a disgusting violation of the fundamental commandment based on the unconditional reverence for human life, Genesis 9:5-6. Therefore, the Torah declares blood an absolute taboo.
>
> Certainly, by this expression, John means a complete identification with the political existence of Jesus, unconditional discipleship on the path of the Messiah, "He who chews my flesh, drinks my blood, remains united to me, and I to him." But by formulating this thought in a way that is so repulsive to the Judeans, he obviously does not want them to find any access to this Messiah. This is *scandalous* in the true sense of the word, and John knows it, v.61! Consequently, the group around John ends up in a locked room, "doors locked for fear of the Judeans," 20:19, 26.
>
> Jesus, the one sent from the FATHER, only lives "through the FATHER." That means: he does not only work for the cause of the God of Israel, he rather is the cause itself, that—and only that—is his life. And whoever chews the Messiah lives through the Messiah, for he himself becomes the cause of God, the cause of the Messiah. He can do nothing else.
>
> John summarizes, "This one is the bread coming down from heaven, not like the fathers at that time: they ate and died. He who chews this bread will live until the world age to come." However "sublime" this theology may be to some, it seems divisive and is therefore worthy of criticism. The provocative, divisive teaching which Jesus presented in the synagogue of Capernaum—and this was probably also the teaching which John presented in the synagogue of his own city—divides his listeners, it divides the Messianic movement. In any case, this sentence marks a turning point. Up to this point in the text, the Messianic community gathered together. From this moment on the disintegration of the community begins. This is a tragedy for him whose political program was the gathering of Israel in one synagogue (11:52).

I quoted Veerkamp at this length to make clear what it means to interpret John appropriately with reference to the Scriptures. It is not a matter of taking John in de-

fense from all criticism. Precisely at this point, even Messianic-political argumentation can overshoot justifiable targets.

How would Miriam react to these provocative words of the Gospel?

It is words from the Gospel of John like these that cause the most turmoil in our synagogue. It comes to word fights, sometimes even to acts of violence. The more passionate the discussion, the more John can get out of hand. Especially to us women, his provocations and his aggressive choice of words often go too far. But although John treats us with great esteem, he does not let us stop him in the heat of the moment. Unfortunately, this also leads to the fact that fewer and fewer people want to listen to him at all. And in the end, he is no longer allowed to speak in the synagogue itself; we have to meet privately in the houses where we live.

Yet I am one of the few who really understand John at all. He does not mean that we should really eat up the Messiah, chew his flesh, drink his blood. But he wants me to rely completely on Jesus, with skin and hair. I should completely absorb his "flesh," his whole existence as Messiah, his liberating commitment for Israel, his commandment of solidarity.

1.2.3.3 What Freedom is Jesus Concerned with and What Does *hamartia*, Sin, Mean?

As a final metaphor (11) for "Jesus's role as the one who fulfills the desire for eternal life," you mention the "freedom" mentioned in 8:31-36, which, according to you, is initially misunderstood by the Jews as freedom from slavery, whereas Jesus speaks of enslavement to sin:

> Jesus clearly contrasts the present life characterized by sin, and therefore slavery, with the future life of true freedom in God's household. This discussion alludes to the Baptist's identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is not only the Jews who sin; every human being does so, and in that sense everyone is a slave to sin until or unless they continue in Jesus's word.

Here again, the question arises whether this passage is already originally about sin in its later Christian sense narrowed to the personal-moral sphere and about the future life of true freedom in the household of God, that is, in heaven. Ton Veerkamp experiments instead with a Jewish liberation-theological interpretation, which assumes that *hamartia* means the transgression of the Torah of the God of Israel, directed toward the goal of autonomy and egalitarianism, freedom and justice:[43]

> Jesus says, "Fidelity (not the Torah!) makes free, aberration (*hamartia*) enslaves. The children of Israel were "seed of Abraham" and yet they were

43 Veerkamp 204 (Fidelity and Freedom, par. 10-11).

> slaves in Egypt. Anyone who in Rome does not necessarily see salvation, but a *modus vivendi*, is mistaken, he is inevitably made unfree by this aberration, he must take political considerations into account. To be "slave of aberration" in the end means to be "slave of Rome."
>
> Jesus explains this with a midrash on Genesis 21:9-12, where Sarah asked Abraham to send away the son of the slave woman (*paidiskē, ʾamah*). The son of Sarah stays in the house. The son of the slave woman, Ishmael, is a slave and may not stay in the father's house. At this point Jesus deviates from the narrative: the son who stays in the house will free the slaves and thus give them a place in the house.

You may consider such reasoning too far-fetched. However, conversely, one may ask whether it is permissible to apply later Christian definitions of moralized sin or spiritualized freedom to a Gospel that was originally about Jewish political objectives.

1.2.4 Internal Proof of *Logos*: Is John Going Around in Circles Argumentatively?

As the most important example (12) for the use of language, the *logos*, "as persuasive argument" you cite "the enthymeme."

> An enthymeme is a deductive proof that commonly takes the form of a claim followed by a reason supporting that claim. For that reason, enthymemes are often signaled by the conjunction "for" (*gar*) or "therefore" (*oun*).
>
> The Gospel frequently uses enthymemes to express Jesus's life-giving capacity.

To do this, you point to three instances (3:16; 3:2; 3:29) that seem convincing to you in terms of content, but then come to other passages where this is not the case:

> In some cases the statement's form may be more important rhetorically than the content of the statement per se.

The four examples you point to in this regard—the biblical quotations highlighted in bold below, which I will discuss in more detail—are, in your eyes, "in and of themselves, self-referential and obscure," and

> their logical structure (two clauses connected by the conjunctions "for," "because," "then") and their use of positively-coded language (spirit, truth, life, God, Son) gives them a persuasive force that is not dependent on the ability to discern their full meaning.
>
> Using the rhetorical techniques pertaining to ethos, pathos, and logos, the Gospel continuously and persistently draws the reader or hearer back to the one essential point: Jesus is the Son of God and the one through whom the desire for eternal life can be fulfilled. The fulfillment is based on faith.

Here I must first confess: You describe very precisely the feeling I often had with John in the past: Why does he go around in circles, why does Jesus keep saying the same thing in different words? It always seemed to be about confirming the one fundamental point, that only Jesus can save us and provide eternal life. The more problematic I found, in the course of time, this claim to absoluteness, even as a Christian pastor, the more unpleasant I found this way of argumentation, which seemed to juggle with empty formulas. But the question is whether John himself already had this kind of religious mission in mind.

You quote Wayne A. Meeks[44] according to whom (20, n. 25) John's "self-referentiality and esoteric language" are indicative that the Gospel "is written within and for a sectarian group." This is what I just addressed, the Johannine group indeed had a sectarian character. But Ton Veerkamp has opened my eyes to the fact that John was not at all concerned with conversion to a mystery religion with a Jesus who saves the souls of those who believe in him to heaven. No, the Johannine group was originally a Jewish sect of Messianic political character.

Let us see (12) if the "enthymemes" you quote actually remain obscure when we look at them from the Jewish Scriptures:

1.2.4.1. "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for [*gar*] he gives the Spirit without measure" (3:34)

Verses 3:31-36, in which this phrase occurs, are indeed not easy to infer. But the very verse you quote contains an expression, *ou gar ek metrou*, "for not according to measure," which on close inspection turns out to be precisely not self-referential, referring to itself, circling around itself. Ton Veerkamp writes about this:[45]

> Then there is a half-sentence that is difficult to understand. "Not measured scarcely, but abundant" is how Wengst interprets the expression, like the other commentaries, "not measured, but in entire fullness."[46] John could have written *perisson* (see 10:10). He does not, he writes: "... not according to measure (*ou gar ek metrou*)." *Metron,* "*measure*", occurs only here in John.
>
> A hint could be Zechariah 5-6. There we have the only passage in the Tanakh where both words "measure, inspiration" (*metron, pneuma*) occur together. With the storm (*ruach*) the crime is carried into the land of exile. The storm itself is then settled. This inspiration drives the prophets to familiarize the deported in the land of exile with the possibility and conditions of a new begin-

44 (20, n. 25) Wayne A. Meeks, "Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, no. 1 (March 1, 1972): 44-72.

45 Veerkamp 103 (Heaven and Earth; Trust and Distrust, par. 8-10).

46 Veerkamp cites Rudolf Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes (KEK), Göttingen 1941, 119.

> ning. Immediately after this, there is the announcement of the construction of the sanctuary and the royal dignity of the great priest Joshua.
>
> John now says that it is *not* according to this bushel measure that the Messiah gives the storm wind of inspiration. It will be different than after the first destruction of the city, very different. There is no reconstruction of the city and the sanctuary. What is coming is that Son who is "above all." The FATHER is in solidarity with the Son, he has given everything into his hands. The connection is admittedly difficult. On the other hand, the paraphrase "*without measure*" is an admission that one does not understand the matter properly.

Of course, such an interpretation is only understandable if the originally intended audience was very familiar with biblical passages such as Zechariah 5. A Jewish audience that was accustomed to hearing the Torah and the Prophets read aloud in the synagogue can certainly be expected to do so.

1.2.4.2. "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for [*hoti*] salvation is from the Jews" (4:22)

Here it is not quite clear to me whether this sentence seems obscure to you because you cannot make sense of why the Johannine Jesus here suddenly claims that *sōtēria*—translated by you as "salvation," by Ton Veerkamp as "liberation,"—should come from the Jews. It should be noted that a conversation is taking place here between members of the mutually hostile Judeans and Samaritans, who, according to the Jewish Scriptures, many centuries earlier, under David and Solomon, once together formed Israel of the twelve tribes.

But what could Jesus mean by saying that "we" know to whom we bow, and "you" do not? Which "we" is meant? In some form, the Johannine Jesus refers to himself and his own as "Judeans" or "Jews" or as a very specific group of "Jews," as Veerkamp explains:[47]

> Now it seems that the woman and all her people are required to recognize the priority of the Judeans. There seems to be no doubt about what is meant by "we" and "you." It is about consciousness (*eidenai*, "to know"), or better, about the contents of consciousness. "We" know what it is all about politically. "Our" consciousness firstly has liberation (*sōteria*) as its content and secondly, that it comes from the *Judeans*. "God" in Israel is the freedom of Israel. But it does not come from the Judeans as such, in general, from *Judaism altogether*, but from a very specific *Judean*, the Messiah Jesus ben Joseph from Nazareth, Galilee. And then from those very particular *Judeans*, the disciples

47 Veerkamp 117-18 (Neither—Nor, Inspiration and Fidelity, par. 5-6).

> of Jesus ben Joseph. "We" means *Jesus and those who follow*. That does not mean *the Christians*, of course! It means those very particular *Jews*.
>
> Because of the devastating conflict, the Samaritans cannot see that from any *Judeans* could come anything like liberation; from them, they think, nothing but destruction would come. That is why they stick to traditions that have no future. Their sanctuary is and remains destroyed, just as the sanctuary in Jerusalem will be destroyed and never be rebuilt as such. To many Judeans, Jesus was not a Judean because he does not orient himself to the past. The Judeans said to him, "Do we not say it correctly that you are a Samaritan and that you are possessed?", 8:48. To the Judeans, Jesus was a mad Samaritan; to the Samaritan woman, he is a Judean. Both peoples reject him—at first. This is the dilemma of the Messianic movement in the land of Samaria, and the reason may have been the Judean origin of the movement.

This does not answer all the questions raised by Ton Veerkamp, concerning the relationship of Judean and Galilean Jews and the Samaritans tracing back to the ten lost tribes of northern Israel. However, it is also clear here that John does not simply revolve around himself, but argues in the field of tension between different groupings of Palestine.

1.2.4.3. "For [*gar*] just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (5:26)

Here you omit the previous verse, which is reasoned by this verse, and also the four following verses, without which its understanding must indeed remain obscure. I quote according to the translation of Ton Veerkamp:[48]

> 5:25 Amen, amen, I say to you,
> an hour is coming
> —and that is now—
> when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of GOD,
> and those who hear will live.
> 5:26 For just as the FATHER himself is living,
> so he gave it to the Son to live himself.
> 5:27 And he gave him authority to lead the trial,
> because he is *bar enos*h, the Human.
> 5:28 Don't be astonished at this;
> because the hour is coming
> when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.
> 5:29 They will go out,
> those who did the good to a resurrection of life,

48 Veerkamp 140 (Interpretation of the Parable: "And this is now", par. 1).

> and those who practiced the foolish to a resurrection of judgment.
> 5:30 I cannot do anything of myself.
> As I hear, I judge;
> and my judgment is reliable;
> because I don't seek my own will,
> but the will of the ONE who sent me.

On the translation of the Greek expression *zōēn echein en heauto*, literally "to have life in oneself," Veerkamp explains:[49]

> "To have" is a verb that does not exist in the Semitic languages. There are several Arabic verbs (such as *intalaka*, "to obtain," *iqtani*, "to acquire," *ahus*, "to grasp") that can be translated as "to have," but the plain "to have" is expressed by a preposition with a personal suffix. There is also no reflexive pronoun in the proper sense. The expression probably paraphrases the Aramaic *chay leh*, "he shall live" (literally: "life for him"). In any case, God does not "have life." He does not get it through others, like all living beings, including humans, but he is his own life and thus the origin of all life. He gave the Son the authority to be the origin of all life. The translation "to have life in himself" is meaningless.

Based on this explanation, it becomes understandable what John wants to express here. Indeed, he wants to say that the God of Israel hands over his own life-giving power to his Messiah Jesus.

If you omit the following verses, however, you do not understand how God will give Jesus the judicial authority of the Son of Man of Daniel 7. Let us listen further to Ton Veerkamp:[50]

> The Father *is* life himself, that is what the strange expression means, which literally says, "has life in himself." By endowing the Son with all power—especially judicial power—he thereby gives him the authority to be life himself, that is, to secure life, to give life.
>
> Jesus here obstructs the possibility of interpreting "symbolically." The dead in their graves will hear the voice. Now, this is not an unusual idea for the opponents, the Perushim; they know the vision of Daniel and they know the idea of judgment over the living and the dead. This very old conception is to exclude that the criminal, buried in dignity, can escape justice by his death. We are talking here about the *authority of the law* that is not limited by death. Those whose works are in line with the Creator, "who do the good," experience the "resurrection of life." Those whose works are the absolute opposite of the

49 Veerkamp 140 (note 197 on the translation of John 5:26).
50 Veerkamp 142 (Interpretation of the Parable: "And this is now", par. 8-10).

> works of creation, which do not make alive, but kill and murder, experience the "resurrection of judgment." And that's why his trial is reliable.
>
> Jesus is nothing but the executor, "As I hear, so I judge." This makes his judgment reliable, as the one who sends him, is the *tzaddiq*, *dikaios,* the reliable or truthful one. No, here there is no arbitrariness ("only those I want"), but the lawful will of the God of Israel, the one who sends him. The work "to make the dead alive in their graves" is the work of the law and the righteous judge. This work is yet to come, the judgment is not yet completed, neither to the living nor to the dead. Only when the righteous judge powerfully asserts himself and his right, will the God of Israel "solemnly rest from all the works that he has done." Only then is Shabbat.

1.2.4.4. "Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me" (8:16)

Again, you refrain from quoting the context in which the Pharisees reproach Jesus (8:13) for not having a witness to being the Messiah or (8:12) "the light of the world." Jesus points out that the FATHER himself, that is, the God of Israel who sent him, bears witness to him. Of course, both sides are talking past each other, because Jesus' argumentation already presupposes that he is recognized as the Messiah sent by the FATHER. Here John is actually arguing within a circle, since (8:17-18) the two witnesses (himself and the FATHER) to whom Jesus refers are not really independent human witnesses as prescribed by the Torah.

But it is interesting to note where John says this conversation takes place, namely (8:20) "These words he spoke in the guarded treasury, teaching in the sanctuary." According to Ton Veerkamp, this is not simply a casual reference to a place without meaning:[51]

> All this now in the guarded treasury, the *gazophylakeion.* It was the place in the sanctuary that served as a collecting basin for the fruits of the extra work of the population. This was where the surplus product was collected, which the regional central authority skimmed off. The political staff, the priesthood, and its many helpers lived on it. In the Messianic movement, the place was badly advertised, Luke 21:1-4 and especially Mark 12:41-44, where the guarded treasury appeared as the peak of religious perversion. The widow gives "her whole life" after we heard how scribes and Perushim "devoured houses of widows." Matthew may have had his reasons for omitting the passage; there can hardly be any doubt that the little story was common in the Messianic movement. The fact that now Jesus presented his teaching just here is understood by his opponents as a direct attack against the sanctuary as the

51 Veerkamp 198 ("Where is your FATHER," par. 7).

> central instance of an order of exploitation. There can be no doubt that the remark in 8:20—the reference to the *gazophylakeion* as the place of the event—had a political point. When we read back from this passage, we understand that these words spoke a true judgment (*krisis alēthinē*) about the community and its central institutions. We then also understand why his opponents must react with the thought of imprisonment and killing. They could see Jesus only as an enemy of the state.

1.2.5 Style: The Pattern of Seeking and Finding in John's Gospel

In examining Johannine style (13) as a means "to support the Gospel's contention that Jesus offers eternal life—the fulfillment of desire—to those who believe," you limit yourself exclusively to

> the pattern of seeking and finding that runs through the Gospel's narrative and discourses. The Gospel presents several examples of characters who seek Jesus as the conduit to eternal life and either find him, by accepting that he is the Messiah, or do not find him, by rejecting this message.

In this context, you rightly point out that Bible translations such as the English NRSV for translating the Greek word *zēteō*, "to seek," often "use several different verbs, including seeking (e.g., 7:18), looking for (e.g., 8:37), wanting (e.g., 4:27), and trying to (e.g., 7:20)," thereby impeding a deeper understanding of the stylistic context of John's argument.

1.2.5.1 God's Conversion to Man and Successful Finding

In the description of "seekers," who, according to you, "fall into the category of true worshippers," you perceive a reciprocity in that—as with the first-called disciples (1:38-39) or with Mary Magdalene (20:15)—they are people "who not only seek but also are sought by God, implying that humankind and God are bound in mutual desire" (cf. 4:23).

Ton Veerkamp in his interpretation of 1:38 sees this being sought by God in connection with the biblical concept of conversion, *strephein, shuv*, in the sense of God's turning back to man. And at the same time, he contrasts what is meant in John's Gospel by the concept of seeking, *zētein*, with the concept of finding, *heuriskein*:[52]

> They don't convert to Jesus by leaving John's group and joining Jesus' group. Instead, Jesus converts to the disciples. The word *strephein, shuv* here always has to do with that "return" or "conversion" which describes God's abiding affection for Israel. "God" is the one whom the people in Israel have to pursue; "God" is what finds its converging point among all loyalties of people. To pursue or *to follow* "God" is to *know*, what it ultimately has to be about in soci-

52 Veerkamp 58-59 (The Third Day. The Messiah, par. 4-7).

ety. The conversion of God is the precondition for the conversion of humans and not vice versa. That is the lesson of the Book of Job, "God" converts from his demonic Hellenistic alienation (Job 1-2) to himself as the liberator of Israel (Job 42:7-17), in other words: "God" stands "again" (*shuv*!) for an order that allows the people of Israel to live within the terms of autonomy and equality instead of being submitted to a tyrannical order. Jesus, the "One like God", turns around ("converts") to them and *views* them as they follow (again the word, that acted as the model for our "theatre").

These two represent all Israel. What Israel has to seek is always what in Israel is called "God"—"with all your heart and with all your soul," at that (Deuteronomy 4:29; 6:5; etc.). All of Israel was in search of the "God" who should put an end to the desperate situation of the people, in search of the Messiah. According to John, all of Israel waited for a real, definitive change. "What are you seeking?" He knows what they seek, they know, what they seek.

The verb "to seek" [*zētein*] is to be heard 34 times in John. Mostly it has as the subject the Judeans, Jesus as the object (21 times), 13 times with the addition or implication of seizing or killing Jesus. What Jesus himself *is seeking* (Jesus as the subject of the verb) is "God's will"—exactly which *not to seek* the Judeans are blamed. Nowhere it says that Jesus *seeks* people, he *finds*. "To seek" is an aim of life, it means something like "to strive." The Judeans *strive* to eliminate Jesus as the Messiah, that's an aim of life of Rabbinical Judaism—apparently, this is John's view, but we don't have to share it. Here Jesus asks what the disciple *are seeking*. There is no direct answer, reported is only what/whom they *find*.

The verb "to find" plays an important role in John's narrative as well. It is about a deliberate action. The verb also can mean "to meet (accidentally)", but here only is *found* what is *sought*. 6 times Jesus is the subject, 4 times the object of "to find." Jesus *finds* humans whom he wants to acquire as disciples (Philipp), whom he has healed and wants to save from further aberration (the paralytic of 5:1 ff.), he *finds* the man blind born and expelled from the synagogue, the dead friend who already was four days in the grave; he *finds*—to the purpose of fulfillment of the Scriptures—the donkey of the prophet Zechariah, he *finds*—to the purpose of purification of Israel—the traders in the sanctuary. 4 times the crowd of Judeans *seeks* Jesus to take him to task, even to kill him. (The *finding* does not succeed, however, as is pointed out 3 times just in 7:34-36.) 3 times, Pilate doesn't *find* a reason for a trial against Jesus. Twice, disciples confirm to have *found* the Messiah, 3 times, disciples *find* other disciples. Fishermen will *find* fish and sheep pasture. In all these cases it is always about the result of deliberate *seeking*.

1.2.5.2 The Inaccessibility of Heaven and God's Coming to Earth

Now, what does the statement in John's Gospel (13) mean that no one, "not even true worshippers, will be able to find Jesus immediately after the crucifixion"? In this question, I think the word "immediately" would also have to be deleted, since it implies that one might well be able to get to where Jesus is at a later time. But does Jesus really mean that? Usually, 14:2-3 is understood to mean that Jesus prepares a place for his own in heaven, but *monē*, as it is mentioned there, is interpreted more closely in verse 14:23 to mean no matter of going over to God in the hereafter but that the Father and Jesus together will make for themselves "a place of permanence" in the Messianic community, similar to the Shechina of God dwelling in Israel according to Jewish notions. To go to where Jesus is is impossible because his ascension to the FATHER simply means his return to the inaccessibility of God, which he accomplishes with his death. Hope, which is nevertheless connected with this ascension, has nothing to do with a hope of going to Jesus and God in heaven, but—figuratively speaking—with the fact that Jesus and God conversely come to us on earth, in the form of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. God's fidelity inspires us with *agapē*, solidarity, in order to actively expect the overcoming of the world order.

1.2.5.3 To Die in One's Sin has to do with the Aberration of This World Order

Those who do not or no longer trust in Jesus (14) are threatened, according to you, that they "will never see eternal life," because several times Jesus says of them that they will die in their sin (8:21, 24). But does John's Gospel already mean what the Christian Church later takes for granted, that people with the wrong profession of faith will remain eternally in God's remoteness or, to put it more banally, will go to hell?

In 8:23 Jesus defines the contrast to "being from above," *ek tōn katō einai*, as living "from this world order," *ek toutou tou kosmou*, determined by the *ʿolam ha-ze* in contrast to the *ʿolam ha-ba*, the age to come. Then *hamartia* is the deviation of this world order from the freedom and justice prescribed in the Torah, and whoever remains dependent on this Roman *kosmos* lacks not only insight into what is causing humanity to go to rack and ruin but also the possibility of trusting in an overcoming of this *kosmos* through the Messiah Jesus and working toward the life of the coming kingdom of peace. This means *apothnēskein en tais hamartiais hymōn*, "to die in or of your aberrations."

That this is not a moral understanding of sin or one based on a lack of religious faith is confirmed by the Johannine Jesus, who in 8:29 strictly relates his own actions to the will of the FATHER who sent him, as Ton Veerkamp translates and explains:[53]

53 Veerkamp 199 and 201 ("I do what is straight in HIS eyes, ever!", par. 1 and 16).

> 8:29 The ONE who sent me is with me;
> he did not leave me alone,
> because I do what is straight in HIS eyes, ever."[54]
>
> What Jesus does and says is nothing else than what the NAME, the FATHER, stands for. He does not pursue his own political programs, his program is the God of Israel—nothing else but that. He, Jesus, is with God, and his God is with him. Jesus says this with that Biblical sentence that is only true for very few kings in the history of Israel: They did "the straight (*yashar*) in the eyes of the NAME." Jesus places himself in the row of the straight ones of Israel. This was convincing, John tells, "When he spoke this, many trusted in him."

1.2.5.4 What Does it Mean to Seek Jesus for the Wrong Reasons?

Back to your argument (14) about seeking Jesus. In one respect you are right in thinking that

> Alexandra and other members of John's audience know that it is not enough merely to seek Jesus; one must seek him for the right reasons. Hence Jesus's rebuke to those who sought him after eating the bread and fish: they seek him (*zēteite me*—"you are looking for me"; 6:26) only because they ate their fill, not because they saw signs.

But also here, you mean that this

> language of seeking and finding, like darkness and light, death and life, describes everyday experience, and in itself does not require us to search for its source.

And again, I point out that only a later Christian reading could consider this language commonplace, since they were no longer familiar with the context of the Jewish Scriptures to the same extent as John and his original audience. Ton Veerkamp refers to Deuteronomy 8:3 in the context of 6:26, after Jesus (6:15) fled from those who wanted to make him king:[55]

> Actually, people want to know what they have with Jesus. This one immediately cuts off their word. In what happened they did not see the sign of the liberation of Israel. The satiation refers to the bread in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 8:3,

54 Veerkamp 199 (note 283 on the translation of John 8;29):
WHAT IS STRAIGHT: *Ta aresta, ha-yashar*: The expression is found above all in Deuteronomy, 6:18; 12:25 etc. The dative *autō* stands in this context for *ha-yashar be-ʿene YHWH*, "what is straight in HIS eyes" (Buber). Jesus does not do the optimum, as the superlative suggests, but what is given to Israel as the way, therefore "straight."

55 Veerkamp 159-60 (The Work that God Demands, par. 2-6).

> He (the NAME) humiliated you, made you starve,
> made you eat the manna,
> that you did not know, that your fathers did not know,
> to make you recognize
> that human does not live by bread alone,
> rather, human lives from all that comes from the mouth of the NAME.

What Jesus will say here is a midrash about this passage. The manna shows Israel that only the NAME ensures life. Israel stays alive not only because it organizes the production of daily life (bread). Experience teaches that under the prevailing production systems most people will not be satisfied even if Jesus would become king instead of Herod Antipas. Only if the Torah organizes the order of production the life of those who need bread is assured. This is imperishable, everything else is perishable, passes away, can be replaced by something better.

Jesus immediately speaks bluntly; he states with great emphasis the misunderstanding concerning the Messiah: they have not seen any "sign." They have seen a miraculous spectacle, but simply no sign, not that which points beyond itself. That is the essence of *sēmeion*, the sign: it points to a completely different and new direction. All that Jesus does is *sēmeion,* it points to what is coming, to "greater works" (14:12).

They only see the bread and only feel the satiation. Bread is digested, satiation passes quickly, "perishable food." Every king, under the same ruling conditions, will be nothing else but a Herod Antipas, even if he would begin his reign with the most sublime intentions. Works, "doing works" (*erga-zesthai*), on the other hand, should be done for what is remaining, not for what is passing. Thus the daily bread is not defamed; humans must work for the daily bread, *ergazesthai*. Despite this work, most people remain stuck in misery. What remains is whatever leads people out of misery and into the age to come *(zōē aiōnios*). What this is, Jesus first explained to Nicodemus (3:14), to the woman from Samaria (4:14), and finally to the Judeans in Jerusalem (5:24 ff.). "Life of the age to come" is inseparably linked to the figure and work of the one whom our translations call the "Son of Man" ("the Human", *bar enosh*).

The way in which this Son of Man creates deliverance from the Roman world order we had already considered above.

1.2.5.5 Erotic Subtexts of Seeking and Finding in John's Gospel?

Although you think that the rhetoric of seeking and finding is everyday language, you wonder if it, nevertheless (14),

> especially in 20:19, may also evoke the Song of Songs, particularly 3:1-5, in which the female lover speaks about her beloved:
>
> Song 3:1 Upon my bed at night
> I sought (*ezētēsa*) him whom my soul loves;
> I sought (*ezētēsa*) him, but found him not;
> I called him, but he gave no answer.
> 2 "I will rise now and go about the city,
> in the streets and in the squares;
> I will seek (*zētēsō*) him whom my soul loves."
> I sought (*ezētēsa*) him, but found him not.
> 3 The sentinels found (*heurosan*) me,
> as they went about in the city.
> "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"
> 4 Scarcely had I passed them,
> when I found (*heuron*) him whom my soul loves.
> I held him, and would not let him go
> until I brought him into my mother's house,
> and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

Already in my commentary on your book *Befriending the Beloved Disciple,*[56] I wrote that I know [145] the interpretation of the Song of Songs as praising "the covenant relationship between GOD and Israel,"

> and something of it is quite reflected in the search of Mary for the disappeared corpse of her teacher Jesus whom she has experienced as the embodiment of the fidelity of God.
>
> Yet, in such a context, Jesus' injunction, "Touch me not!" marks a clear difference then from Song of Songs 3:4, "I held him and did not let him go." Neither Mary can hold her beloved teacher, as if his ascension to the FATHER would be nothing else than an undoing of his death, nor is already his ascension to the FATHER completed, so that already now, on "day one" of the new creation, the Messianic wedding could be celebrated. This is possible in my eyes only when, through the acceptance of the *pneuma*, the inspiration of God's fidelity, by those who trust in the Messiah, and their practice of *agapē*, solidarity, the prevailing world order of injustice and violence will have been overcome.

Not only here (15), but wherever John tells "of encounters between Jesus and women who followed him," you call attention to "[e]rotic subtexts" that can be found in the stories. Are you suggesting to John that the inclusion of so many female characters in his Gospel might have to do with a reduction toward their function as lovers?

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56 The Song of Songs and the Messianic wedding, par. 2-3.

Or would you yourself imagine relationships between men and women to have erotic undertones as a matter of principle?

With regard to Martha, you give no additional indication of this. In the case of her sister Mary, you refer to the nard of Solomon's beloved, which gives off its fragrance while the king sits at table (Song of Songs 1:12); if this reference plays any role at all, it rather confirms that Mary does indeed anoint Jesus as King of the Jews, the Messiah King of Israel, by anointing his feet.

Correctly, you see that "Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman recalls the stories in Genesis and Exodus in which biblical heroes meet the women they will marry at a well." However, the conversation between the two is not about a courtship or a lovers' banter, but a theological-political dispute between the representatives of two hostile sibling peoples on equal terms, with the Samaritan woman in fact embodying the matriarchs of Israel, Rebekah and Rachel.[57]

Finally, the reference "to Jesus as the bridegroom" in 3:29 by John the Baptist is a confirmation that here, too, it is precisely not about eroticism, but about the Messianic wedding that the God of Israel wants to celebrate with his people Israel at the beginning of the age to come. The fact that in the story of the wedding at Cana Jesus is not the bridegroom but is only named as such by John the Baptist—who subsequently reveals himself as his *hestēkōs*, friend or best man, and as the *architriklinikos*[58]—indicates that ultimately the bridegroom of the Messianic wedding is the God of Israel, who, however, allows himself to be fully embodied by the Messiah Jesus.

Since you yourself do not perceive the contacts and conversations of Jesus with women in their Messianic-political depth and also do not interpret the wedding metaphor as the completion of the prophetic longing of the people of Israel for a life in freedom and justice, it seems more plausible to you to trace a dimension of depth[59] in "the connection between the erotic and the spiritual":

> The erotic allusions add depth to the rhetoric of searching and finding, and emotion to the desire for eternal life. They also attribute an all-consuming intensity to the relationship between Jesus and the believer, one whose dimensions extend far beyond the cognitive and even the emotive to include also the sensual.

57 See The woman at Jacob's well as the embodiment of Rebekah and Rachel.

58 See Veerkamp 71-72 (Messianic Wedding, par. 15-17), and 98-100 (The Baptist and the Messiah, par. 13-24).

59 (21, n. 33) For detailed discussion of the connection between the erotic and the spiritual, see David McLain Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[The Internet link provided by Reinhartz is no longer available.]

1.3 The Content of Belief: Jesus, God, and the Cosmos

The alleged erotic allusions you discovered in John's Gospel were hardly perceptible from its Messianic-political interpretation or at least not central in their meaning. However, I can only describe (15) your assertions about the central content of John's Gospel in the following passage as completely absurd. Here you are concerned with the question of what exactly it means

> to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God? John encourages his audience to see this belief in relation to God's desire to save the world (3:16) and as a necessary condition for eternal life.

Your starting point is correct, provided that, as I said, "eternal life" is interpreted in the sense of the liberation of the world from the present world order that weighs upon it—towards the dawn of the life of the age to come:

> John's rhetoric of desire and fulfillment promises eternal life to those who believe in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus, the narrator, and some of the characters refer to him in a variety of ways. He is the lamb of God, the savior of the world, the Son of Man, a prophet, a king of Israel, and the Messiah, a Hebrew term that the narrator correctly translates as "anointed" (1:41). The Gospel also associates Jesus with a number of traits or activities: he takes away the sin of the world (1:29), provides food for the hungry, heals the sick, and raises the dead. And for John, Jesus is preeminently the Son of God, the pre-existent Word, who does God's works in the world.

All these characterizations and actions of Jesus you mention come from the Jewish Scriptures and would have to be interpreted from them. But this does not occur to you. Instead, you seriously develop a theory of the conception of Jesus by God, based on the Aristotelian doctrine of epigenesis, and this, although the evangelist John does not even resort to "infancy narratives" like Matthew and Luke with "a set of material circumstances under which Jesus was indeed conceived as the Son of God and a human mother, Mary."[60]

1.3.1 Is the Role of the Mother of the Messiah in John's Gospel Really Small?

Ton Veerkamp[61] would strongly disagree with your view, casually expressed in this context, that the Gospel of John "gives Jesus's mother a very small role in its drama

60 However, even the virgin birth, according to the Matthean and Lucan traditions, is not traditionally understood by Christians—analogous to Greco-Roman mythology—as the begetting of Jesus by God or his Spirit, but as a creative act of the God of Israel, by whose power Mary is able to conceive the Messiah in her womb. According to Jane Schaberg, The Illegitimacy of Jesus. A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives, New York 1990, all the Gospels reflect traditions of an illegitimate birth of the Messiah. See "Mary, purest Maid" and The Making Of "Mary, Purest Maid".

and does not even mention her by name." In Matthew and Luke, Mary is mentioned just at the beginning as the mother of the infant Jesus and does not play a major role in the progression of events; Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 8:19-21, 11:27-28 are even rather critical of an overestimation of the role of the mother of the Messiah. In John, she is the first person mentioned in the narrative of the wedding at Cana; precisely by not mentioning her name, she—like the Beloved Disciple—has a representative function. She embodies Israel that calls to listen to the word of the Messiah, and under the cross, she plays the main role alongside the Beloved Disciple, in that the latter, as the representative of the Messianic community, takes her as the embodiment of Israel.

1.3.2 Is Jesus the Only Son of God Begotten by Aristotelian Epigenesis?

Now for John's Gospel (21, n. 36), you do not completely rule out a "metaphorical meaning for Jesus's identification as the Son of God" since (16) the

> varied nature of the relationship between a human father and son can certainly be viewed as a metaphor for the complex and intimate relationship between God and Jesus, which otherwise eludes human description and in which the believer is also invited to participate. Yet, I would argue, the Gospel too describes Jesus concretely, materially, and genealogically, as God's son, on the basis of Aristotelian theories of procreation that were popular in the first century Mediterranean world.[62]

Upon what do you base this assumption? First of all, you repeat your conviction, already presented in *The Word in the World*, that the

> Gospel's Prologue proclaims the pre-existence of Jesus as the Word of God, who "in the beginning" was both with God and was God (John 1:1-2). Through this prologue, the Gospel establishes that Jesus's true place is with God in the eternal time and space that is God's realm.

In this regard, it should be noted only in passing that you do not translate precisely; literally, Jesus is not "*with* God" but "*directed toward* God, *onto* God," since here the preposition is *pros* and not *meta*. And in the phrase *theos ēn ho logos*, the definite article to is missing before *theos*. Both indicate that what is meant here is not the

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61 Veerkamp 70-71 (Messianic Wedding, par. 7-12), and 373-74 (Second Scene: Mother and Son, par. 5-8).

62 As to (21-22, n. 37) the details of a literal conception of Jesus by God, you find yourself in an intensive discussion with other scholars, for instance about the "role of motherhood in the Gospel" mentioned by Turid Karlsen Seim or "the enlivening of female matter by the male pneumatic sperm," to which according to Yii-Jan Singh 1:14 could allude to, or the transfer of a "theory of parthenogenesis" from botany to "the Gospel's idea of divine generation," which Clare Rothschild considers possible on the basis of a "detailed analysis of John 3:3-10," especially because of the wind "blowing the seed far and wide" mentioned in 3:8.

identity of the Word with *the God of Israel*, but the perfect directedness of the Word, the Messiah, to the will of that God; the Word *is* not God, but it is *divine.*

Further, you argue:

> But the Johannine Gospel must also bring Jesus into the human realm. Only this way can the good news be accessible to humankind and the narrative proceed. And so we learn, in John 1:14, that "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (1:14a).
>
> At this point, the language shifts; no longer does the Prologue speak about the Word in relationship but of the only-begotten son (*monogenēs*) in relationship with the Father. John 1:1-18 implies that the incarnation—the becoming flesh—itself transformed the nature of the relationship between God and Jesus to that of father and son. In this sense, the Prologue, as the story of Jesus's conception and birth, is this Gospel's infancy narrative, analogous to, if radically different from, the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke.

You are not entirely wrong—in a single respect. The mention of the *monogenēs*, the only begotten Son, is indeed related to Matthew's infancy narrative because both Matthew and John parallel the birth of Jesus with the birth of the only son of Abraham. That John also presents Jesus as the second Isaac and thus as the embodiment of the people of Israel, I already mentioned above.[63]

In Matthew, the first two words *Biblios geneseōs* (compare Matthew 1:1 with Genesis 2:4 and 5:1) already refer to the *tholedoth*, that is, the ten begettings mentioned in Genesis (2:4 of heaven and earth; 5:1 of Adam; 6:9 of Noah; 10:1 of the sons of Noah, 11:10 especially of Shem; 11:27 of Terah; 25:12f. of Ishmael; 25:19 of Isaac; 36:1, 9 of Esau; 37:2 of Jacob), but of all things, there is no begetting of Abraham; he is reckoned as the father of Isaac among the begettings of his son Isaac in 25:19! This corresponds, from the male side, that the begetting of Jesus is based on the trust in God of Joseph, the husband of Mary (Matthew 1,24-25) just as the begetting of Isaac was based on the trust in God of Abraham (Genesis 15:6).

You, on the other hand, do not want to explain John from the Jewish Scriptures but from the pagan philosopher Aristotle and assume that the

> language of the Prologue echoes that of the Aristotelian theory of epigenesis. Aristotle described the act of generation as being set in motion by the male sperm, which is the *logos*, or Word. The *logos* is the motive and final cause of the reproductive process, and the vehicle for the male *pneuma*, or spirit, that determines the form and characteristics of the offspring. Aristotle likens it to the principle [*hē archē*] in fig-juice or rennet that causes milk to coagulate. (GA 729a10-12). The role of the female is to provide the medium of growth

63 See section 1.1.3 above and also 1.3.3 and 2.3.4.1 below.

> for the offspring. The generative process (*hē genesis*) as such has its source and analogue in the upper cosmos (*anōthen*; GA 731b24). In this way, Aristotle's theory of epigenesis does not limit itself to the mechanical and physical aspects of reproduction but also places reproduction in a broader, even cosmic, context.

In purely formal terms, of course, it is true that John uses terms that Aristotle also uses in his Embryology: "*En archē, ho logos*, and various forms of the verb *ginomai*." But these need not be "allusions to epigenesis," identifying "God as the first principle of generation, whose *logos*, or rational principle, was given human life and form and sent into the human world as Jesus, the divine father's only-begotten son."

1.3.3 Does the God of Israel Incarnate in the Flesh of the Messiah, the Second Isaac?

Instead of providing even a shred of evidence that John actually means the terms you mention in a biological-procreative way, you bypass the keyword *eskēnōsen* in 1:14, "has its tent," by which John calls up the tent of meeting from the wilderness wanderings and implies that it is the God of Israel who now makes his NAME dwell in the Messiah Jesus, and you don't mention the terms *doxa* and *charitos kai alētheias* as referring to the Jewish Scriptures. Taken properly, 1:14 represents anything but an Aristotelian embryonic doctrine, rather, this verse summarizes the Gospel of John as a writing to be understood in Jewish Messianic terms, and on this, I quote Ton Veerkamp in detail:[64]

> "The Word has its tent among us", it goes on to say. The translation "it dwelt among us" is more than bland. The tent is the "tent of meeting" from the wilderness, where the NAME dwelt: "The cloud covered the tent (*ʾohel*) of meeting, the brunt/honor of the NAME filled the dwelling (*mishkan*)", Exodus 40:34. The Septuagint has *skēnē*, "tent", for both of these two Hebrew words. The tent was the location of who is signified by the four unspeakable characters *YHWH* and in our text is displayed by the word "NAME." The tent is the place of law-making, the place of determining the order of the society of liberated slaves. After Exodus 40:34-38, the Book of Leviticus follows (Leviticus 1:1): "He called to Moses, the NAME spoke to him from the tent of meeting." In this book, the coordinate system of autonomy and equality is filled out. All at once, the tent of meeting is mobile: "Whenever the cloud was taken up from the dwelling, Israel would set out in all their journeys", Exodus 40:36. Of this mobile place later was made the stable place of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. John says that after the destruction of the sanctuary by the Romans the tent of meeting would have taken the shape of the incarnate Word, the Messiah Jesus.

64 Veerkamp 36-38 (The Word and Human Reality, par. 9-13).

In John, the placeholder for the NAME is the word “FATHER.” Thus in John 1:14, we hear the word FATHER for the first time, not before having heard the word brunt/honor: “We have viewed its honor, an honor as of an only-begotten one by the FATHER, filled with solidarity and fidelity.” All decisive words of Exodus 40:34 we hear in John 1:14. What is hinted at by the enigmatic word *kavod,* “brunt” (the root *kaved* means “to be heavy, bulky”), that we try to translate with “honor”, is substantially filled with “honor as of an only-begotten one (*yachid*, *agapētos*) by the FATHER.” The analogy is the relationship between Isaac and Abraham, first of all in the story of the “binding of Isaac,” Genesis 22. The interlacing of the motive of the “binding of Isaac, the only-begotten one” with the relation between the God of Israel and the Messiah of Israel gives rise to questions, but the Epistle to the Hebrews saw the connection between Genesis 22 and our passage, 11:17.

Monogenēs stands for Hebrew *yachid*. ... John transfers the theological usage of “only” (*yachid*) in the narrative of Isaac as “only son” and thus as the only future of Abraham to the Messiah Jesus. He is the new Isaac, he opens the future of the new Israel.

Conclusively, the honor is rendered with the words *charis/chessed* and *alētheia/ʾemeth*.” “Grace” is shaped authoritarian, by this vocable the NAME could seem like the God of antiquity, as “Lord.” That may coincide with the idea that people then got about the absolute counterpart of their social order that was “word of God” for them. “God” as a function normally plays the role of “*ruler*ship”, but what is called “God” in the Scriptures plays the role of *liberty*. Liberty but does not rule, is not *gracious*, condescendingly. In John, the word *charis* only appears in the preface to the Gospel, twice together with *alētheia*, once by itself. As the word *agapē* in the Gospel indicates both an attitude of God towards humans and the attitudes of humans among each other, here you should think of *chessed* as well. Apparently, the writer of the preface felt compelled to take the word *charis* for the attitude of God toward humans. In the Septuagint, it usually stands for *chen*, “favor” (“grace”). There, it is the attitude of the superior towards the subordinates. On the other hand, in the Scriptures, we never find the expression *chen we-ʾemeth*, but only *chessed we-ʾemeth*. This combination must have been remembered by the writer of the preface. In the time of catastrophes for the Judean people, *chen*, “favor, grace”, only comes into question as *ʾemeth*, “faithfulness, fidelity”, and then is “solidarity.”

To John, the Word as human reality and the only future for the new Israel in new humanity is only concrete if it is thought of as a concrete human. The Word is this very special Jewish human, Jesus ben Joseph of Nazareth, Galilee. There is, so John says, no other word. John 1:14 is the center of the summary of the Gospel.

It is interesting (16) that you even understand *en archē* as designating a principle and not only a temporal beginning, however, unfortunately not as the principle of the Hebrew beginning of the divine creation of a world well ordered by the Torah but as the Hellenistic begetting of a God-man. Likewise, *logos* must also be understood as the liberating and right-creating word, *davar*, of the God of Israel, embodied in the flesh of the Messiah as this one Jew with a very specific political mission.

It is to be assumed, though, that Alexandra, who does not get to hear John's Gospel before the later period that was Gentile Christian dominated, no longer understands anything of these Scriptural references and, therefore (17), regards Jesus as "actually, physically and spiritually, the offspring of God, God's only begotten son." Influenced by Greek philosophy or Gnosis, she may also see the history of this Son of God "within the eternal and cosmic relationship between God and humankind," which has nothing more to do with the fact that Jesus, in the eyes of John, originally is a Son of God of Jewish character, who at the same time embodies Israel as the firstborn Son of God (Exodus 4:22). Only she, but not already a hearer of the original John, can misunderstand the Gospel as a "turning point" that "changed the terms of the agreement—the covenant—between God and humankind."

1.4 What Is the Meaning of "Life"?

To conclude chapter 1, you consider (17) what it might mean in John's Gospel

> to participate in the cosmic relationship between God and humankind. Although not stated explicitly, this participation may well be the "life in his name" that is promised to those who believe. Although the Gospel does not directly define "life," "life in his name," or "eternal life," some attributes of this desirable state can be teased out of Jesus's discourses.

Here you put your finger on a sore spot in your interpretation of John's Gospel. If a term like "life" or "eternal life" is not explicitly defined, we must ask all the more about the framework within which John is operating. Does he speak politically of this-worldly life of the age to come or dualistically of otherworldly life in heaven?

1.4.1. There Is Only One Way to Eternal Life—What does it Consist of?

Above all, you refer to 17:2 in order to reason

> that the desire for eternal life is not limited to those who hear or read the Gospel, but to all humankind. John has no "two covenant" theology. There is only one path to eternal life.

True to this, John does not advocate a "two covenant" theology as Paul is said to have advocated according to Romans 9-11. Paul is convinced that God calls the *goyim*, the Gentile peoples, into the covenant with Israel through the Messiah Jesus (Romans 11:25-26), and when "the full number of the Gentiles has been added,"

also “all Israel will be saved.” John does not unfold such a theology of Gentile mission, though he does not rule out individual Greeks trusting in Jesus.

It is also true that John advocates “only one path to eternal life,” but precisely not, as you think, that this path bypasses the Jews and is offered exclusively to the Gentiles. Rather, to John, the only path toward the age to come is the gathering of all Israel from Judea, Samaria, and the Diaspora into the Messianic community. And since 17:2 refers to the authority over all flesh given to the Son of Man—according to Daniel 7:14—over “all nations and people of so many different tongues,” and this Son of Man in turn—according to Daniel 7:27—embodies the “people of the saints of the Most High,” John remains faithful to God’s covenant with Israel, even though he is convinced that only a worldwide overcoming of the idolatrous power of Rome can also lead to the liberation of Israel in the midst of the nations.

1.4.2 Eternal Life and the Knowledge of God—but of which God?

Very formally you state that “eternal life is connected in some way to knowledge of God.” It is true that listening to Jesus’ word, trusting in him, and knowing of God is in some way identical to life in the age to come. But you do not fill all these terms from the Jewish Scriptures with the concrete Messianic-political meaning appropriate to them, related to hopes for this world.

1.4.3 What does it mean to Hate Your Own Soul under the World Order?

With reference to 12:25, you speak of the fact that

> faith and eternal life overturn the accepted world order and our assumptions about everyday life: “Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (12:25).

Indeed, this verse, which Jesus pronounces in connection with the parable of the grain of wheat (12:24), has to do with the world order, although you do not understand this term, which occurs with you here for the first and only time, in the political sense that Ton Veerkamp and I do. According to Veerkamp, how is the provocatively formulated verse to be interpreted?[65]

> The saying of the grain of wheat that falls into the earth, dies, and only thus bears fruit, is the image for the one who “hates his soul in this world order.” The “dying” of the grain of wheat in this connection is not a natural process, but the following of the Messiah, who will be murdered. This is shown by the word “to hate the soul, to love the soul.”
>
> Often the word *psychē* is translated as “life,” but “soul” has a different coloration of meaning. The soul is the core of life. Solidarity with the God of Is-

65 Veerkamp 269 (The Grain of Wheat, par. 8-10).

> rael, “with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole passion,” Deuteronomy 6:5, occupies the whole person undivided.
>
> “Soul in this world order” describes the existence of a person who adapts to the world order. Exactly this form of existence (“soul”) is to be hated. Here no attitude toward martyrdom is beatified. No one is required to hate his life, no one should be condemned who loves his life. The words “in this world order” are decisive. What according to the measure of this world order is a matter of the heart and soul for men is to be hated by those who want to follow the Messiah, and this because otherwise, they destroy “their soul,” that is, that which is deeply “dear to their heart.”

1.4.4 Eternal Life as Freedom from all Powers of Death

Finally, you emphasize (17) that “eternal life is freedom from death” and substantiate this (18) by referring to 10:10, 28, and 11:25-26. But what is ultimately meant by this in concrete terms? And what does it mean when those who trust in Jesus “are freed not only from death but also from other aspects of the mortal condition: thirst, hunger, and darkness, all of the conditions that create fear and can lead to death”? What is the “water gushing up to eternal life” in 4:14, “the food that endures for eternal life” in 6:27, “the light of life” in 8:12? Are these all just multiple disguises of a single hope—namely, the hope of life after death in the afterlife? We must explore the Jewish Scriptures to understand John in terms of liberation from this-worldly powers of death, such as through words of the prophet Isaiah (35:6) of water springing up in the wilderness, or of the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4:38, 42-44) fighting a famine.

You do not go down this road; rather, from the promise of eternal life to those who trust in Jesus—summarized again at the end of John’s Gospel in 20:31, “to believe in Jesus thereby to enjoy life in his name”—you draw the conclusion that a woman like Alexandra would also wonder how her life would have to change on the basis of such trust—and also her “stance toward, and, potentially, her relationship with, those who reject the claim that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.”

2. The Rhetoric of Transformation

In the second chapter of your book (23), you assume with Cicero and Augustine that “rhetoric’s persuasive strategies not only reorient thought but also propel action.” That is, Alexandra’s assent to John’s Gospel may lead “to a break with family and friends” and to a union “with others engaged in the same process.”

> What John wants from Alexandra, in other words, is a profound transformation of personal and communal identity. John’s success will be measured by the ability of his Gospel to create a new community of those who see them-

> selves in a radically new way as a consequence of their encounter with his story of Jesus.

2.1 The Need for Mediation

Using many examples, you demonstrate (24) that the "transformation John desires requires human mediation," from "the call of the disciples" to "the story of the Samaritan woman" and "Mary Magdalene."

2.1.1 Mary Magdalene's Crucial Message of "Not Yet"

In the latter case, you speak of "one of the Gospel's most enigmatic verses," in which Jesus tells her:

> "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father" (20:17). This is not a rejection, however. Jesus goes on to bid Mary to "go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (20:17). Mary goes to the disciples and announces that she has seen the Lord, and tells them "that he had said these things to her" (20:18).

You ponder not only verse 20:17 but also whether not actually (44, n. 5)

> the disciples themselves should have believed Mary's words and not needed Jesus to come to them. Nevertheless, the narrative needs to recount the disciples' acquisition of the Holy Spirit in order to substantiate their role in carrying on the mission.

Nevertheless (24-25), the "apostolic function performed by Mary by mediating Jesus's words to others" is not to be underestimated. Yet, if Ton Veerkamp is right, you fail to perceive the actual point of her particular message. After all, it is not just a matter of "that she has seen him" but "the beginning of the disciples' deeper knowledge, fulfilling John's comments about matters that they did not or could not understand until Jesus was raised from the dead (e.g., 2:22)," should be built on the very words conveyed by Mary, as Ton Veerkamp translates and explains them (emphasis in bold added):[66]

> "Do not touch me,
> for **I have not yet gone up** to the FATHER.
> But go to my brothers and say to them,
> '**I am going up** to my FATHER and your FATHER,
> to my GOD and your GOD."
>
> . . . At the death on the cross, inexorably begins the honoring of the Messiah, inexorably begins the ascent to the FATHER. ... But this death and resurrection

66 Veerkamp 392 and 394-95 ("Not yet," par. 1 and 10-12).

> are not an accomplishment. The perfect tense John uses for accomplished facts is here determined by not yet: "I have *not yet* ascended" (*oupō anabebē-ka*). The perfect, as we have seen, is John's rendering of an action completed in the past. The "not yet" does not refer to the verb itself, but to the tense, to the perfect; not the *ascent* itself, but the perfect is negated.
>
> With this negative message, Maria from Magdala is sent as the first evangelist to the brothers of Jesus, "Not yet have I ascended to the FATHER," perfect tense, but then with the decisive positive message, "I am ascending," present tense. ...
>
> The present tense is a Semitic present tense, it indicates an action that has been started and that continues into the future. Even if the grave cannot hold Jesus, he, the living one, remains nevertheless a dead one, a living corpse, which you must not touch—both! Therefore, the perfect would be out of place. The movement to the FATHER begins on day one. That is the only thing, but it is everything. There are no guarantees, but on day one the death history of the ruling world order is open again.

2.1.2 Jesus' Appreciation of Thomas in His Justified Doubt

I do not at all share your estimation of the narrative of "Doubting Thomas" as "a negative example that reinforces the need for human mediation" in this form, *a fortiori* that you mean:

> Although Thomas then confessed "My Lord and my God" (20:28), Jesus downplays his confession. Jesus's parting words to Thomas—"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (20:29)—imply that Thomas should have believed the disciples' testimony without needing his own visual and tactile proof. Jesus's rebuke bolsters the extradiegetic audience, none of whom had the option of first-hand proof and therefore needed to rely on the testimony of others. It also sets up the Gospel's self-proclaimed status as a foundation for the faith of its audience, which immediately follows in 20:30-31.

I think that Jesus in no way downplays the confession of Thomas, but takes seriously the justified doubt of those who, in the face of a bleak reality, have trouble trusting in the Messiah. Again, I quote Ton Veerkamp at great length:[67]

> Thomas, the solidary skeptic, the Twin, represents the Messianic community that wants to see but cannot. This community wants to be instructed. To the message of his fellow disciples, "We have seen the Lord," Thomas reacts with great skepticism. He wants a palpable certainty, regarding the trustworthiness

67 Veerkamp 402-03 (To See and to Trust, par. 2-9).

of a martyred and slain Messiah. He seems to be saying, “This is supposed to be your Lord, *Kyrios*, this one marked with death?” So he wants to know if these are real mortal wounds. The Messianic community, which sees no perspective after the catastrophe of Israel, even less a Messianic one, cannot understand that and how the signs of death are supposed to be the real, Messianic signs of the *Lord*.

The man is to be helped now. The Messiah is in the midst of the disciples again, with his greeting of peace right in the middle of the times of war and destruction. Nothing has changed in the situation of the community; its room remains firmly locked. Thomas must feel out the reality. “If I do not see in his hand the striking place of the nails, do not put (*balō*) my fingers into the place where the nails were struck, do not put my hand into his side, I do not at all trust,” he had said. Thomas cannot trust a Messiah who was really dead, even is.

In Paul, the resurrection overrides death, “Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your sting; death, where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55) This would be hollow triumphalism given the bleak situation of Israel after 70. To Paul, the dead were “sown in perishability, raised in imperishability, sown in unworthiness, raised in honor,” 1 Corinthians 15:42-43.

The rising Messiah was not a glorious dead man in John. Thomas said to his fellow disciples: a Messiah still marked by death cannot be, that contradicts all Messianic hopes of Israel. Precisely this dead with this death is the hope of Israel. That is what this text wants to say.

“Take (*phere*, not put, stick, *bale*) your finger, here,” Jesus invites Thomas. He shall do it with the necessary gentleness. The wounds are real wounds, not pious *insignia*, not healed scars. It is not reported whether Thomas complied with the request.

Jesus says to him, “Do not become a faithless one, but a faithful one.” Thomas was never a faithless one but a skeptic one who was yet unreservedly solidary in all his skepticism (14:5), “Let us go with him, let us die with him” (11:16). At least he *wanted* to be in solidarity; when the hour came, he did *not* follow the Messiah to death. The type of skeptical Messianist was apparently so common that John gave him three appearances. The skeptic was not condemned in the community. John allows him of all people to pronounce the actual confession of the community to the Messiah Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” Lord, *Kyrios*, is the title claimed by the rulers of the world order. “God” is the absolute loyalty that the bearers of this title “God” demand. *Dominus ac Deus* is what the Flavian emperor Domitian (81-96) had himself called. This confession is a declaration of war against the empire, not anticipation of orthodox Christology.

> The last word of Jesus—for the time being—is, "Happy those who did not see and trusted." These words are addressed over the head of Thomas to the generation that comes after the eyewitnesses. The eyewitness was the author of the Gospel, 19:35, "He who saw—namely, the blood and the water from the chest of Jesus—bore witness ... that you also might *trust*." This is "the other disciple who had come first to the tomb and saw and *trusted*," 20:8. It is the disciples and Maria from Magdala. All the others did not see.
>
> Jesus' words to Thomas do not imply a disqualification of those who "saw and trusted." Thomas, too, is now among the witnesses who saw and trusted. Jesus' words apply to the generation of Messianists who saw nothing after the *Judean War* and yet trusted. Death is the last word, because without this death, this departure of the Messiah, nothing can go on. The dead, rising from death (present tense!) Messiah is *Dominus ac Deus*. Exactly *this* is not to be seen. *This* must be trusted.

To all people who no longer experienced Jesus himself, John offers his Gospel "as the mediator that brings those living after the Easter event into a direct encounter with Jesus."

2.2 Narrative as Rhetoric: Character Identification

Of the many authors you cite at the beginning of this section, I refer only to social psychologists Melanie Green and Timothy Brock[68] who "acknowledge what many of us experience: the power of narrative to change our lives" and (26)

> argue that attachment to characters, as sources of information or models of specific beliefs or attitudes, can play a critical role in what they term "narrative-based belief change."

While some "theorists suggest that readers identify most strongly with characters whose goals, plans, or experiences resonate with their own," others assume that identification with a text can also be based on the fact that one considers what is portrayed to be desirable.

In the Gospel of John

> the diverse characters within the Gospel model possible responses to Jesus. This modeling has rhetorical implications. Through its modes of characterization, the Gospel steers its audience towards identification with characters who move towards faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

68 (44, n. 6) Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock, "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 5 (2000): 701-721, here 702.

However, there are also (45, n. 14) characters who "invite negative identification. The prime example is Judas, whose betrayal of Jesus is clearly not a model to be emulated."

2.2.1 The Disciples as Models of Identification and Missionaries of Jesus

Since the declared goal of the Johannine Jesus is to win disciples or followers as the Messiah of Israel, it is not by chance (45, n. 17) "a commonplace of Johannine interpretation" that (26),

> As the ones who set aside their previous lives to follow Jesus, the disciples, with the significant exception of Judas, provide the Gospel's hearers with the most direct—if nevertheless imperfect—models of profound transformation. For that reason they constitute the Gospel's most powerful models for identification.

Yet precisely (26-27) "[t]heir imperfections are important as they convey the point that perfect discipleship, and complete faith, are aspirations." It is striking that the Gospel of John

> does not portray them as preaching to others; there is no Johannine equivalent to the sending out of the disciples in Matthew 10. Nevertheless, John 4:31-38 implies that they were meant to engage in such activities. … While this passage defies easy explanation, it implies that the harvesting ("gathering fruit for eternal life") consists of spreading the word so that more and more people will fulfill the desire for eternal life.

2.2.1.1 The Disciples as Harvesters and Jesus in the Line of Israel's Prophets

In your discussion (27) of Jesus' conversation with his disciples when they find him together with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, you do not address two things that Ton Veerkamp finds remarkable about 4:38, first, the question of who are those who have sown what the disciples may now reap, and second, why the vocable *kopian*, "to labor," is used here as in 4:6, "I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." Once again, Veerkamp, drawing on various passages from the Jewish Scriptures, is able to convincingly shed light on the meaning of this Johannine passage:[69]

> They want to ask, "What's going on here?" but start with the obvious, "Rabbi, eat." The *Johannine* strategy of misunderstanding here has something of a humoresque, "I have food to eat that you don't know of," says Jesus, knowing full well that they are misunderstanding him: "Has anyone—even this person—given him to eat?"

69 Veerkamp 122-24 (What Does Eating Mean Here, par. 2-13).

He immediately enlightens them about the fact that eating to the Messiah means doing the will of the one whose messenger he is. He must finish the work of God. The work of God is Israel, all twelve sons of Israel. In what condition Israel, the eyeball of God, is moving, we will learn in the fifth chapter: Israel is a cripple, 5:5. But here it is about the time being ripe, "The harvest is coming", they have to lift up their eyes. In the Scriptures, people lift up their eyes to the God of Israel, Psalms 121:1; 123:1. In the book of Jeremiah, it says, 16:14-15,

> Therefore:
> days are coming
> —announcement of the NAME—,
> when they don't say:
> "As the NAME lives,
> who brought the children of Israel up
> from the land of Egypt",
> rather,
> "As true as the NAME lives,
> who brought the children up from the north country (Babel),
> from all countries (*ʾaratzoth*, *chōrai*),
> into which he had chased them,
> to let them return to the ground,
> which he gave to our fathers."

The disciples have to lift up their eyes, they have to see the countries of the world, all the *chōrai*, *ʾaratzoth*, into which Israel was chased away. These countries are ripe for the harvest, ripe for the return of the whole scattered Israel. This is the one reference. The other is the pilgrimage song, "When the NAME let return, return to Zion", Psalm 126,

> When the NAME let return, return to Zion,
> it is like a dream for us,
> yes, full of laughter our mouth,
> full of rejoicing our tongue.
> Yes, there will be said among the powerful nations,
> "Great things the NAME has done to these."
> Great things he has done for us,
> Joy has happened to us.
> Let us, Eternal one, turn back,
> like the watercourses in the Negev.
> They sow in tears, rejoice at the harvest,
> whoever went out crying, carried a burden of seed,
> whoever comes, comes back rejoicing, brings in sheaves.

Such references are necessary to understand Jesus' political teaching. In John, Jesus is the one who newly endows Israel, as in the Book of Jeremiah the return from Babel is to take the place of the liberation from Egypt. Such "new covenants" existed and exist again and again. In the pilgrimage song, the weeping is identical to the rejoicing. But not here.

Jesus' eating is the work that the God of Israel, the FATHER, has assigned to Jesus, the "bringing together of Israel into one," 11:52. John sees the work as a work of harvest. Harvest is the final action of the work of the year. This time has come, and those who do this work gather the fruits. Here John gives up the figurative speech and speaks of "fruit for life in the age to come." The age to come is that world order where the whole of Israel can be with itself. Then John returns to his image: The one who harvests can only do his work if the one who sows has done his work. The whole is the result of the work of *both*, therefore their joy is shared. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the one who sowed and the one who harvested, explicitly according to the prophet's word, "You sow but you do not harvest," Micah 6:15; those who will rejoice are not those who have wept, here: have toiled, as Joshua said to the children of Israel in his farewell discourse, Joshua 24:13-14,

> I gave you a land for which you have not toiled (*yagaʿtha*, *ekopiasate*!),
> cities that you have not build—you live in them!
> Vineyards and olive groves that you have not planted—you eat of them!
> And now: Have reverence for the NAME and serve him ...

In the Book of Joshua, the difference is that the people have toiled who lived in the country before Israel. These are not meant in John. It can only be meant that the Messianic community ("you") did not sow, did not create the conditions for the harvest, because "others have toiled," have created the conditions for the harvest. Who are these others? They are the prophets of Israel, and in Jesus, the Messianic movement also saw the last and definitive "prophet." Here the circle of the narrative closes:

Jesus sat at the well "having toiled from the stretch of way" *(kekopiakōs),* others "have toiled" (*kekopiakasin*). Jesus sees himself in line with the prophets. One of them said, Isaiah 49:4,

> But I said: "I have toiled in vain" (*yagaʿthi*, *ekopiasa*).
> For chaos and fog, all my strength was used up.
> But my right is in the NAME, my work is in my God."

"Even though he had done such signs before them, they did not trust him," says John as a summary (12:37), with an explicit reference to the Book of Isaiah. John also sees Jesus as one of the great prophets of Israel and thus is in accordance with the other Gospels.

2.2.1.2 The Disciples' Mission into the World Order to Overcome It

Since you miss such connections or consider them irrelevant, you do not even consider whether the mission of the disciples might be directed toward the gathering of Israel. Instead, you assume (27) a mission that turns away from the Jews to turn to the "world"—according to you, the Gentiles—and substantiate this by citing 17:17-18 where "Jesus prays that God sanctify the disciples, whom Jesus has sent into the world just as God has sent his Word into the world." In fact, the question is what the Johannine Jesus means by this sending into the *kosmos*, indeed, what his request is supposed to mean (17:20-21), "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." In a general sense it is true that Jesus here "describes testimony—bringing others to faith through their word—as the essential task of the disciples," but the question is what he specifically means by *kosmos* in his prayer.

For this, too, we have to elaborate further, we have to take seriously that this *kosmos*, which is mentioned 18 times in chapter 17 alone, in John's Gospel, above all, means the Roman world order which the Messiah Jesus overcomes by his death on the cross and his ascension to the FATHER. I quote Ton Veerkamp's translation of verses 17:15-21 and its interpretation:[70]

> 17:15 I do not ask you to take them out of the world order,
> but to protect them from evil.
> 17:16 They are not from the world order,
> just as I am not from the world order.
> 17:17 Sanctify them with your fidelity;
> your word is fidelity.
> 17:18 As you sent me into the world order,
> I sent them into the world order.
> 17:19 For on their behalf I am sanctifying myself,
> so that they too may be sanctified through fidelity!
> 17:20 I am asking not only for these,
> but also for those who are trusting me through their word,
> 17:21 that they all may become one:
> as you, FATHER, are with me, and I with you,
> so that they may be (one) with us,
> so that the world may trust that you sent me.
>
> . . . No Messiah can wish that God takes away this community from the world order because the perspective and the alternative would be an otherworldly one. They would have liked it, and Rome liked it very much, this whole world

70 Veerkamp 334-35 and 339-41 (The Prayer of the Messiah, par. 1 and 20-31).

of mysteries and religions, which promise people a little place in a little heaven. Although the whole thing was a bit too colorful for the conservative patricians of Rome, they did not fight the mystery world of the East, because it was not a serious opposition, but rather a stabilizing factor in the East, which was always inclined to rebellion. But from the disciples of "a certain Chrestos" danger can very well come, especially in the rebellious East of the Empire.

The hatred of Rome cannot be spared by any Messiah to these disciples, he cannot ask the FATHER for it. Temporarily the Messianic community lives *under* the conditions of the world order (*en tō kosmō*). In no case, the Messianic community is determined *by* the world order (*ek tou kosmou*). It shares, as said (15:18-19), with the Messiah the life in the world order, because the Messiah had been sent into this life. Such a life (*under*, but not determined *by*, the conditions of the world order) is a "holy life." This is nothing new, but the endurance of a life that was given up to Israel, Leviticus 18:3-4,

> As they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelled, do not do;
> as they do in the land of Canaan, where I brought you, do not do,
> according to their laws, do not walk your way.
> My law do,
> My statutes keep,
> to walk the way according to these.
> I AM—the NAME, your God.

Here begins the second part of the Book of Leviticus, what the critical research called "holiness law," "For holy am I, the NAME your God" (Leviticus 19:2; 20:26; 21:8) and, "Become saints" (19:2; 20:7; 21:6, 8). "Sanctify them with fidelity" (*hagiason autous en tē alētheia, haqdeshem ve-ʾemeth*) thus has Leviticus 19:2 as its background. God is *meqadishkem*, the sanctifier of you, and the disciples are accordingly *mequdashim ve-ʾemeth*, "sanctified by fidelity." The holiness of Israel here consists in the keeping of the Torah (Leviticus 18-26), by which Israel in the sixth century BCE departed from the normal ancient Near Eastern world of exploitation.

In John, too, the disciples take leave of the normality of the world order. The fidelity of the God of Israel "sanctifies" the group and takes them out of the world order, although they must remain under the world order. The world order no longer sets the norms and is no longer the normality for the group. The group's response is to keep the Messiah's speech: trust in the Messiah, and solidarity among themselves.

This is a different model than what Israel seeks to realize with its Torah. Only a proper translation brings this fact to light. Psalm 119:160 says, *rosh-de-varkha ʾemeth*, "The main thing of your speech is fidelity!" The conclusion that Rabbinical Judaism draws with Psalm 119:142 is quite different from

John's, "Your probation is proven agelong, and Your Torah is fidelity," *toratkha ʾemeth*. To John, the Word (*logos*, *davar*) is the Word of God, and the Messiah Jesus is now the Word. Therefore, Nestle-Aland's reference is correct for 119:160, but not for 119:142. In John, "Word" just isn't identical with "Torah." It is, after all, "your Torah," as he repeatedly says to the Judeans (8:17; 10:34; see 15:25).

The fidelity of the Word of God is the prerequisite for the mission of the Messiah and for the mission with which the Messiah commissions his disciples. Their mission in or under the world order is no other than that of the Messiah, and it will also have the same consequences. The fidelity of God "sanctifies" them, makes them people who do not live from the world order. This is not the new world religion, but it is the infinitely condensed Torah of an isolated sect under completely new conditions, the *new commandment*.[71]

Here John leaves the time level of the narrative and enters the time level of those who generations later will have to struggle with this vision and, above all, for it. For them, the Messiah desires that these all find themselves in that unity of Israel, which is the unity of the God of Israel with the Messiah of Israel. In the following sentences, we hear the word "one" or "unity" (*hen*) five times. John has the Messiah invoke the unity of the Messianic community precisely because it is internally torn. It is tormented by the questions posed by Thomas, Philipp, and Judas [non-Iscariot].

And then there is an almost unbelievable subordinate clause, "That the world order may trust that you have sent me." After all that John has said, for example, about the inspiration of fidelity that the world order cannot accept, this cannot be true. Does the text here become contradictory in itself? Only if this world order gives itself up as *this* order in the process, coherence is maintained. Only if the world is no longer Roman world order, no longer considered the space of the *pax Romana*, but finds itself the living space, *a world of people*, which would be according to the fidelity of God to Israel, if it becomes the *pax Messianica*, then it can trust that the Messiah is the messenger of this God. This is also a biblical vision, Isaiah 66:18,

> And I,
> to take all nations, all language groups out of their doing, out of their planning,
> I have come.
> And they come, and they see my honor.

71 Veerkamp adds the remark: "A disciple of John attempted to describe the indissoluble link between the old and new commandments, 1 John 2:7-8."

> If the world order of all nations in the Roman Empire trusts the Messiah, it is "taken out of its doing and planning." Then it is just no longer the *ruling world order*, *kosmos*. This vision of Israel from the times of the so-called Tritojesaja, where Greece has already made itself felt as a factor (*yawan*, "Ionia"), makes this incredible subordinate clause understandable.
>
> But this depends on the principle, "I with them, you with me, so that they have finally come to unity." Only then, the world order will recognize what is the matter: God sent him and was in solidarity with the disciples because he was in solidarity with the Messiah. A world order capable of recognizing this is then a completely different one. And this is the point here, this is what Isaiah 66 was about. The goal of biblical politics is a different world order, one that can trust the Messiah because it would then have Messianic contours. Would have . . . irrealis! To achieve this, the real existing world order has to be subjected. It is already subjected, we will yet hear that in this prayer.

2.2.2 Two Dialogue Partners of the Messiah Jesus

In your eyes, the disciples are "the only major recurring characters in the Gospel, aside from Jesus himself," though you overlook a differentiation, namely that several times besides the disciples or as a subgroup of them the brothers of Jesus are mentioned, namely as those who tend to Zealot-militant adventures in the struggle with the Roman world order.[72]

No less significant than the disciples and brothers of Jesus, however, are (27-28) "the encounters of individual characters with Jesus," from which "a range of possible responses to Jesus" emerges and which "therefore illustrate the different ways (good and bad) that Alexandra might situate herself within John's narrative."

2.2.2.1 Nicodemus as a Representative of Rabbinic Judaism Ready for Dialogue

From the outset, you view the figure (28) of Nicodemus with similar ambivalence as that of Judas, who was with "the light" and yet betrayed him in darkness (13:30), because although he addresses Jesus (3:2) "as a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews" as a "teacher who has come from God," he is associated with "night (darkness), secrecy, and death." In fact, Nicodemus is viewed critically, but definitely not clearly on the side of the Roman *diabolos* like Judas. The word *nyktos*, "by night," has to do with the background of the oppressive situation of life under the Roman world order, but here it points primarily to the secrecy of the encounter since Nicodemus is one of those Jews who dare not openly confess to him. I do not find an explicit association of death in the whole passage.

72 See Veerkamp 178-80 (Ascent to Jerusalem, par. 2-10).

In terms of content, you address only the part of the conversation with Nicodemus that refers (3:3) to being begotten or born from above (*gennan anōthen*), which Nicodemus (3:4) initially takes "literally as an absurd statement" and still does not understand (3:5-9) when Jesus explains it to him in detail. You consider that "those who have heard or read the Prologue and the first two chapters will know that Jesus is talking not about ordinary existence but eternal life." I realize that you—like most Christians since the 2nd century—think you have accurately captured the meaning of what Jesus means with such an interpretation.

But does it really correspond to the original purpose of the Johannine Jesus? If this should be the case, why does Jesus, besides talking about eternal life, also talk about water and inspiration, about flesh and wind, finally coming to the Son of Man and the serpent of Moses in the wilderness, to the Only Begotten Son and the trial of evil and foolish works? Only if you take seriously that the Messiah Jesus here is debating with a Jewish Rabbi ready for dialogue about the future of Israel under the Roman world order, you can understand what Jesus actually means by the expression *zōē aiōnios*, which you always translate as "eternal life":[73]

> [T]he fact that a human has to be "begotten from above" is required to be able to "see the Kingdom of God." Jesus obviously takes it for granted that every child of Israel wants to "see the Kingdom of God." The expression is odd. John was skeptical toward the talk of the "Kingdom of God" that is common in the other Gospels; therefore he otherwise avoids it altogether. What exactly at it he regarded as questionable, we won't really grasp until Jesus' interrogation by Pilate.
>
> Instead, he uses the expression "life in the age to come" (*zōē aiōnios*). In the dialogue with Nicodemus, he takes up a word that brings forward the longing of Israel. "To see the Kingdom" means: to be able to experience the breakthrough of the Kingdom of God in this world and against this world order. "Who is not anew begotten from above" will not experience this. This condition seems absurd to Nicodemus, he interprets the word *anōthen* as "a second time", a meaning which the word has as well. Promptly, Jesus clears up the misunderstanding. Only the Messianic groups coming from John the Baptist (water) and from Jesus (inspiration) will "enter the Kingdom of God." That means "from above." "To see" means "to enter," "Kingdom of God" means "life of the age to come." John alters the general Jewish terminology; he names the same thing *differently*. He has to do so because the circumstances are *different*.

73 Veerkamp 84-85 ("You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not understand this?", par. 7-17).

"To be begotten from water and inspiration" is the condition for "entering the Kingdom of God." Water stands for the action of John—the "Baptist"—, and inspiration stands for the Messiah Jesus, who immerses "in the inspiration of sanctification", 1:29-34. Both the Messianic movement coming from John and the one that was deepened and intensified by Jesus are the conditions for entering the Kingdom; only he is able to do the latter who draws his orientation and inspiration from these two humans. Nicodemus has not, by all means, to submit to the baptismal rite of the Messianic groups. The group around John apparently thought poorly of it, "Jesus himself did not immerse," he will say later, 4:2.

Now there is a sentence that must be misunderstood by us who became acquainted with a Gnostic-dualistic Christianity. "Flesh" is not "spirit" and vice versa, they are mutually exclusive. That's how Greeks would talk to each other. But here, Judeans are talking to each other, and Judeans like Nicodemus, the rabbi, and John, the Messianist, have nothing to do with Gnosis and dualism.

"Flesh" is this concrete earthly existence, this life which under the actual circumstances of the world order is vulnerable and corruptible. Life "according to the flesh" is a conformist life, susceptible to corruption by the world order. Who is begotten "from the flesh" only can live "fleshly"; who is begotten like this, bred to adapt to the orders of the world according to the principle: so it was, so it is, so it will ever be. This human has no other choice but seeing to how to get through until death takes him.

Admittedly, the Rabbinic option was another one: compromise is not "adaptation," compromise can have to do very much with "inspiration." What John says here is not just insinuation. Compromise can—probably often—lead to adaptation as well. This discussion is eternal; it is the discussion between reform and compromise on the one hand and revolution on the other hand.

But the one who "sees" an alternative, i.e. who realizes that an alternative is necessary and possible, lives differently. What is meant is a life from Messianic inspiration, inspired by the Messiah Jesus. Thus it is no wonder that a new life is beginning then, sort of "being begotten from above, anew." The wordplay with *inspiration* (*spirit*) and *wind/storm* (both are present in the word *pneuma*, Hebrew *ruach*) shows that a human who is gripped by this inspiration can't help allowing himself to be led to where this inspiration will bring him. The one who engages with this revolution does not know either with what he actually engages or where it will lead someday.

Nicodemus repeats his question: "How can this happen?" John can't stop ventilating his anti-Rabbinism: "You want to be *the* (!) teacher (*rabbi*) of Israel, and you do not understand this?" Nicodemus' question is justified. The disclo-

> sure "to be begotten from above" sounds full of promise, the justified question is what is the strategy of Jesus or of the Messianism that acts in his Name? After all, there is no sign of any change in the course of the world order.
>
> At this point the contrast becomes clear. This Messianism has no answer to the questions of Rabbinical Judaism or of those who indeed trusted Jesus (the *pepisteukotes* of 8:31), but cannot really believe in the victory over the Roman Empire and his principal (16:33). The one who demands a policy of compromise and tries to reason it with others—the *teacher of Israel*!—leads astray the people, so John, and serves the cause of Rome, the *satan*, the *diabolos* (8:44).
>
> This Messianism is not able to see how Judaism will change anything with its strategy of negotiating open spaces for a life according to the Torah and thus keeping open the own history and the history of mankind. The Rabbinic answer would be: because Judaism knows that its God, the NAME, is *ʾadon ha-ʿolam*, Lord of the ages and Lord of each world order, that the great powers come and go, but the word and the vision are staying if one holds out. The strategy of Rabbinical Judaism is *hypomonē*, *thiqwe,* holding out, at all events, just the "Principle of Hope."
>
> Messianism does not want to live *differently* under the circumstances of the *actual* word order like the teachers of Israel, the rabbis, want to; it wants a *different* world order—at once and on the spot. But what if the world order not only decides the extinction of Israel but sets it about? Here all questions fall silent because we know what happened and still may happen. "Fertile is the womb from which that crawled," Bertolt Brecht. Here at the latest, the faith in an almighty God who could if he only wanted to is insipid. Now as before—exactly after Auschwitz—the radically different world order is on the agenda. No, this is not theological scholarship that the two of them are discussing here.

At this point, I break off the quotation; I have already dealt with the part of the further argumentation referring to the Son of Man and the serpent above.[74]

Rightly you state (28) that as an effect of Jesus' words on Nicodemus "John does not describe a dramatic transformation. Nevertheless, he retains a positive stance toward Jesus," which is especially evident in the fact that after Jesus' death he (19:39), "along with Joseph of Arimathea, prepares Jesus' body for burial."

Nicodemus is portrayed positively one more time when he opposes the priests and Pharisees in 7:50-51 who pass judgment without first hearing the accused and find-

74 See section 1.1.2.

ing out what he has done, where you (29) relate this defense to Jesus, while Ton Veerkamp argues that Nicodemus questions the cursing of the crowd, the *ochlos*, in 7:49:[75]

> The crowd has an advocate in this panel. In fact, Nikodemos says nothing else than what the Torah requires: the accused must be heard and his actions weighed up before he is convicted. Who is the condemned one? Jesus? Hardly. Jesus was to be tried, to be heard, and then condemned. But here the judgment is spoken, "Cursed." It is Israel, that is condemned by Israel.

It is precisely in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, who as a Rabbi is ready to engage in dialogue, that the diametrical contrast between Jewish-Messianic-political and the later Greek-Christian-spiritualized interpretation of John's Gospel becomes clear. According to the latter, which you hold to be the only correct one (29), Nicodemus "refrains from entering into the full faith that would lead to transformation and eternal life."

2.2.2.2 The Samaritan Woman as a Representative of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel

Also (29), "the Samaritan woman represents a broader group in which she may have some authority." However, you do not give any further thought to what group this is. Though you certainly recall "those biblical scenes in which boy meets girl at a well—Abraham's servant meets Isaac's future wife Rebekah (Genesis 24:15-24), Jacob meets his future wife Rachel (Genesis 29:9-12), and Moses meets his future wife Zipporah (Exodus 2:16-22)," you attach no further significance to these connections since in "this story, Jesus is not meeting his future wife."

Do you agree with the vast majority of mostly male John exegetes who can only judge Jesus' knowledge "that the Samaritan woman has had five husbands and is currently living with a man to whom she is not married (John 4:18)" as the moral depravity of this woman? Ton Veerkamp gives a convincing explanation for Jesus' provocative request to the Samaritan woman to fetch her husband after their conversation has reached an impasse:[76]

> Jesus is trying to make a breakthrough, now he wants to do some straight talking, politically, "Go and fetch your husband!" We are dealing with a daughter of Jacob and not with the dirty exegete's fantasy about a slut and her "enormous wastage of men."[77] She talks about "Jacob, our father." What kind of husband has the daughter of Jacob? Which husband has the daughter of Zion—Lamentations 2:1 etc.? In other words: What rulers, what gods have the two peoples had?

75 Veerkamp 191 (About the Messiah, par. 30).

76 Veerkamp 113-15 ("The husband you have now is not your husband," par. 2-8 and n. 163).

77 Veerkamp adds the remark: "Thus the exegete Schenke, quoted in Klaus Wengst, Das Johannesevangelium. 1. Teilband: Kapitel 1-10 (ThKNT), Stuttgart 2000, 161."

Under the prevailing conditions between the two peoples, the woman at Jacob's well can only take the invitation as an insult: Therefore, knotty timber requires sharp wedges, "I have no husband." Jesus is enthusiastic, "Right (*kalōs*, 'well') you say that." This is not sarcasm, not bitterness. "You had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. In what you said, there is something trustworthy." We must read extremely carefully. *Touto alēthes* (noun) *eirēkas*. A few handwritings have changed this and write the adverb *alēthōs*. No, it literally says, "This trustworthy thing you have said," because the word *alētheia* does not mean "truth" but "faithfulness, fidelity," *ʾemeth*. That this is about the central political point can hardly be doubted. These five husbands have had to do with the political situation of Samaria. Marriage is a symbol of the relationship between the God of Israel and the people. But it is the symbol of the tyranny of the king as well:

> Listen, daughter, and look, incline your ear,
> forget your people and the house of your father.
> Does a king desire your beauty
> because he is your lord—bow down to him (Psalm 45:11-12).

"Husbands" in John 4 are not any individual spouses, but *baʿalim*, rulers, kings, to whom the people of Samaria had to bow, the kings of Assyria and Babylon, the kings of Persia and the Greeks from the south (Egypt) and the north (Syria), the kings of Judah, their orders, their gods. The woman says, "I have no husband," and that means, "I do not recognize the *de facto* rule to which we are to submit. I do not forget my people, nor my father's house! I have no husband (*ʾish*), I have only a lord and owner (*baʿal*)." John argues on the line of the prophet Hoshea:

> It will happen on that day, proclamation of the NAME.
> You will call: "*ʾishi*, my husband,"
> you will no longer call: "*baʿali*, my lord and owner."

The five "husbands" the people ever had were *baʿalim*. The disastrous history of this people under the five *baʿalim* turns the Torah of Samaria into a kind of counter-Torah, all political organization of the society of Samaria was the opposite of a society structured by the Torah. The whole thing has now come down to the rule of the one who is "*no husband*," the rule of Rome; there is no longer any Torah possible, neither for the Judeans nor for the Samaritans, as we will hear. In fact, she is forced to invoke a reign to which he, Jesus, has declared war, and which, as the recent history of her people shows, she rejects. "No," he says, "this is not your husband, at best your owner." On the basis of the common rejection of Roman rule, the Roman *baʿal*, political understanding between the two peoples is possible. Therefore Jesus praises the woman's sentence, "I have no husband."

> Jesus' word is a commitment to a woman who realistically recognizes her political situation. Here, there is actually a platform for a conversation, a political one, to be precise. The commitment of people to the Messiah begins with the commitment of the Messiah to the people. "I have no husband" is the relentless insight into the pitiful political situation of her people. It arouses in the commentators the appearance of shamefacedly admitting some guilt, of wanting to give in. Nothing is further from the truth than such confessor exegesis.

In his note 163, Veerkamp adds explanatively:

> We note two things. First, in a small oriental town like Sychar, it cannot be hidden how the woman lives; a "wild marriage" [as it used to be called in German when living together without being married] was simply impossible there. She is a respected personality in her village. No, bigoted Christian moral concepts led and lead the commentators astray.

If, on the other hand, one takes seriously the fact that the woman confronts Jesus neither as a morally questionable person nor as his future bride, but actually as the representative of two stalwart matriarchs of Israel, then it becomes clear what a difficult dialogue is in store: Here Jesus is the representative of the Jews, more precisely of the Judeans, who emerged from the Israelite Southern kingdom of Judah, and opposite to him stands the woman as the representative of the ten lost tribes of Israel, which had once formed the Israelite Northern kingdom until its destruction by the Assyrians. Part of the history of the two nations is Mount Gerizim, mentioned in their conversation, on which stood the sanctuary that the Judean prince John Hyrkan had destroyed two centuries ago.

In my eyes, it is no coincidence that Jesus, of all things, at the end of the conversation with the woman, for the first time in John's Gospel pronounces the self-disclosure of the NAME of the God of Israel (Exodus 3:14): *egō eimi, ho lalōn soi*, "I AM HE —the one speaking to you." To this, Ton Veerkamp writes:[78]

> This peace and liberation conversation of the Messiah with the woman at Jacob's well is the "way of God's being" in Israel, and right *now*. To the person to whom these words have fundamental meaning, a new life begins. ... At the moment when Jesus removes the blockade, *Judeans do not associate with Samaritans, but they beat each other to death*, the NAME is happening as it was revealed in Exodus 3:14, *I will be there as I will be there*. The NAME is happening in speaking, in this political conversation, where a way out becomes visible that has never been there before.

78 Veerkamp 121 ("I AM HE," par. 3).

You, in contrast, are not concerned with the issues of Israel's liberation or of peace between Judeans and Samaritans but interpret (29) Jesus' offer of living water to the Samaritan woman exclusively in a spiritualized, otherworldly sense, namely, as "a life-changing offer" on the basis of which "she has no more need to draw water from the well on a daily basis." That "she leaves her water jug behind when she goes to testify to her fellow Samaritans" proves in your eyes that she is more convinced than Nicodemus to accept the offer of eternal life through Jesus. Your conclusion concerning the mentioned main characters of John's gospel:

> The introduction of the disciples, Nicodemus, and the Samaritan, acquaint the audience with the concepts of faith and rebirth that will help them understand the rest of the story. The stories would prod Alexandra to identify with the Samaritan woman rather than Nicodemus, while still leaving the door open to those who cannot yet fully take the step of believing and testifying to others.

2.2.3 Three People Healed and One Raised from the Dead—What Role Do They Play?

Whether it is justified (29) to call the people affected by healings in John's Gospel "minor characters," I leave undecided.

2.2.3.1 The Nobleman's Son—the Other Sign at Cana

In view of (30) the healing of the nobleman's son, you emphasize the way Jesus fulfills wishes:

> Although the father is not promised that his son will live forever, Jesus's actions prevent the death of his son, thereby fulfilling the father's immediate desire. The story supports the Gospel's rhetorical claim concerning the close connection between faith and life, and conveys the message that, like the nobleman, hearers who turn to Jesus will have their desires fulfilled, though not necessarily in the ways that they might expect. It also illustrates two points that can be important to the post-Easter audience: Jesus can fulfill human desires even if not physically present in the world; and it is not necessary to see with one's own eyes in order to believe.

No importance do you attach to the place of Jesus' second sign, namely—exactly like the first sign of the Messianic wedding—in Cana. Ton Veerkamp is convinced that this is significant:[79]

> The first stretch of way led Jesus to Cana in Galilee, 1:43 ff. Then the way leads a second time—via Jerusalem, the land of Judea, the Jordan, and via Samaria—back to Cana, Galilee. There, the other sign happens. Jesus' entire

79 Veerkamp 130-31 (The Other Sign in Cana, Galilee: "Your son lives," par. 14).

> life journey, from Galilee (1:43) to Galilee (21:1 ff.), is concentrated in this passage 2:1 to 4:54. These are the ways to the first and the second sign at Cana. A third time the way will lead from the land of Judea to Galilee, 5:1-7:1. Finally, we find Jesus in Galilee; 21:1 ff. does not, however, tell the last walk of Jesus from Jerusalem to Galilee: he *is* or *is happening* in Galilee, as "the Lord" (21:7). All signs that are happening in Israel—Judea, Jerusalem, and Galilee—can and must be traced back to the two signs 2:1 ff. and 4:46 ff. With these two signs, the Messianic wedding and the revival of the son, the foundation for the things to come is laid. Here—and thus—the Messiah was "revealed, made manifest."

2.2.3.2 After 38 Years of Paralysis—the Healing of Israel That Is Incapable of Acting

Regarding the (30) man who is healed by Jesus after 38 years of paralysis, you note that the "chronic nature of his plight, as well as his frustration, may contribute to Alexandra's empathy, though perhaps less poignantly than the desperate father of 4:46-53." You do not consider whether the number 38 might have symbolic significance. Yet, as Ton Veerkamp points out, there is a clear background for this number of years in the Jewish Scriptures:[80]

> The person in question was an invalid for thirty-eight years. Moses had sent out scouts on his way to the land. After their return, they advised the people not to go further there, because the conditions in the country would not allow them to move in and live according to the Torah there, "Giants we have seen there," Deuteronomy 1:28. The whole project had been foul from the beginning [1:27], "Out of hatred, the NAME has led us away from the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites and to destroy us." The result: defeat and stagnation in the truest sense of the word, for thirty-eight years Israel will go round in circles. Then the turning point comes, Deuteronomy 2:1-3.13-14,
>
> > Then we turned away, moved into the wilderness, on the way to the Reed Sea,
> > as the NAME spoke to me (Moses).
> > And we walked in circles around the mountain Seïr for many days.
> > The NAME spoke to me,
> > "It is enough for you to walk in circles around this mountain,
> > turn north.
> > . . .
> > Now get up, you shall cross the brook Zered (border river)."
> > We crossed the brook Zered.

80 Veerkamp 134-35 (Paralysis, 6-10).

> The days we went from Kadesh-Barnea
> until we crossed the brook Zered:
> Thirty-eight years,
> until the entire generation of war-capable men had died away
> from the midst of the camp,
> as the NAME had sworn to you.

Certainly, John with that number *thirty-eight* reminds us of the story of overcoming the paralysis of Israel. "Jesus realized that the time had been long enough." He acts here in the same power as the NAME said to Israel, "Enough (*rav*) it is for you to go in circles"—just "after the many days (*yamim rabim*, *hēmeras pollas*)." The man wants to, but cannot, "Others go down into the water before me," he could not be the first—precondition for healing—to go down into the water stirred up by the healing angel. Israel cannot free itself from this paralysis.

In Deuteronomy, the initiative starts from the mobilizing word: ". . . It is enough for you to circle around this mountain; turn north. Now get up!" The word there created an Israel capable of action; now, according to John, the Human who embodies the word (1:14) creates a new, Messianic Israel capable of action. Jesus recognized that "the time was long enough" and said, "Get up, take away your pallet and walk your way." I do not understand why most commentators refuse to see this parallel. At the moment they do not read politically, the difference becomes inexplicable and the connection is lost. In Deuteronomy, Israel's capability to act presupposes a political situation—a short period in the slipstream of great politics or the politics of the great powers. According to John, the rule of the Flavian emperors leaves no political slipstream anywhere in the Orient. Any insistence on the possibility of being able to live in this Roman Empire according to the Torah of Moses is illusory and leads the people astray (*hamartia*, "sin"). This is a principal moment in the political thought of John. The *in*capability to act, the political paralysis, must be made visible, especially in comparison with Deuteronomy; the number *thirty-eight* stands for Israel's political incapability to act. Only Messianism, or better, the Messiah, redeems Israel from its political paralysis. The refusal to get involved with the Messiah is transfiguration and perpetuation of the paralysis—contends John.

The human got up, took away his pallet, and walked his way, thus becoming the trigger of a conflict that makes visible the political difference between the Judeans and Jesus (John).

You need not share such a political interpretation of John's Gospel. And even if you think it is possible, you can still hold John's political assessment to be questionable. But shouldn't you at least consider whether such an interpretation might be appropriate, and offer counterarguments if you are not convinced?

Your own view of the healing miracles is on the level of the everyday experience of sickness, suffering, and death and the desires directed toward overcoming them (30):

> These episodes provide graphic illustration of Jesus's statement to the disciples that "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it" (14:13-14). We may imagine that these stories could provide Alexandra with the hope that she too will find her deepest desires fulfilled through faith, despite Jesus's absence from the physical world.

My experience is that at the time when I was still reading John's Gospel as a document of faith in Jesus, without whom access to God is impossible, I nevertheless already had difficulties with the miracle stories. And in this context also with Jesus' call to prayer, which you quoted. Since hardly any prayer in the name of Jesus literally leads to the death of a loved one being averted or to the healing of a disability that has lasted for years, even if I believe in Jesus in this way, in the end, I have to interpret the miracle symbolically—and this is what you are doing, since, in your eyes, all hopes placed in Jesus in John's Gospel ultimately amount to eternal life in heaven.

The question is whether—according to 14:13-14—Jesus can be regarded as a guarantor of personal wish fulfillment. Ton Veerkamp decisively contradicts such an interpretation:[81]

> Instantly, it seems, sentences appear which refer to the prayer of the community. But the question is whether it is about "prayer." For "prayer" the Scriptures have another word, *hithpalel* or *proseuchesthai*. If Yeshua addresses the God of Israel (FATHER), then John uses a different word than if the disciples (should) do so. The Messiah "asks" (*erōtan*) for another "advocate," that is, he will "request" him. The disciples "ask for" (*aitein*), and the utterance of this plea occurs in regard to the keeping of the commandments, here and in 15:7 and 15:16. This is not about rewards that the disciples would have earned by keeping the words or commandments of the Messiah. Rather, the point is that they then ask for exactly what meets the commandment of solidarity and the being with the Messiah. But this proves to be extremely problematic and is discussed in detail in the passage 16:23-28.

2.2.3.3 The Healing of the Man Born Blind on the Sabbath and the Fence around the Torah

Regarding the healing of the man (30) "who has been blind from birth," you note "a more detailed illustration of the connection between faith and transformation."

81 Veerkamp 299 (The Second Objection: "Show us the FATHER, and it is enough," par. 7). See also 329 (The Hour of the Woman, par. 20-21).

When he himself confronts "the Jewish authorities" (9:27-33), it is clear in your eyes (31) that the man has gained not only "physical sight," but also

> spiritual insight: an understanding that Jesus is the source of his own transformation. In the aftermath of the man's confrontation with the Jewish authorities, Jesus reveals his identity and receives his confession of faith (9:36-38).
>
> More than either the nobleman or disabled man, the man born blind provides a model for identification. The man has a condition which Jesus remedies; he credits Jesus with the remedy; and most importantly, he understands the broader implications of what he has just experienced.

But again, the question is whether John was originally concerned with spiritual insight as you understand it. Especially if you relate it as follows to an implied hearer like Alexandra:

> The same might be said of Alexandra and other members of the Gospel's implied audience: they have a condition—mortality—which needs a remedy. Jesus provides that remedy and, with the help of the Gospel, they understand its true meaning and divine source. Whereas the man born blind first experienced the remedy and then believed and worshipped, Alexandra and company must first believe in order to experience the remedy. But the point is the same: the need to understand and experience Jesus for who he really is—the Messiah, the Son of God sent by the Father to save the world (3:16).

Basically, in such an interpretation, everything that is said of Jesus and his healing deeds is smoothed over in a spiritual-otherworldly way. Precisely whom Jesus heals under what circumstances and with what titles he is referred to remains indifferent. Everywhere, all that matters to you is the extent to which someone gains the firm belief that Jesus alone can provide him or her with eternal life in heaven.

But what if John is really concerned, as Ton Veerkamp thinks, with a political dispute between Jewish Messianists trusting in Jesus and Rabbinic Judaism? Then you would have to take much more seriously what is at stake when Jesus performs a healing on the Sabbath—and for both sides:[82]

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82 Veerkamp 218-20 (The Interrogation and the Exclusion, par. 3-10). Since the word "Pharisee" has negative connotations that portray a distorted image of the group it originally denoted, Ton Veerkamp, in his translation of John's Gospel, renders *Pharisaioi* by the Aramaic equivalent "Perushim" for the sake of alienation. About the origins and intentions of the Perushim, he explains—Veerkamp 47 (The First Day. The Interrogation, par. 5):
"This party had a venerable tradition. It originated in the time when the Judean population fought against the northern Hellenistic monarchs (Syria-Mesopotamia), that is about 170 BCE. It formed as opposed to the politics of the national leaders and later kings of the Hasmonean dynasty (Maccabeans) who more and more revealed themselves as Hellenistic monarchs. The struggle of the Perushim was a struggle for the Torah in its written and oral

Let us note that the Perushim are authorized to conduct a legal proceeding. This speaks for a phase in which the synagogue is recognized by the Romans as a competent self-governing body of the Jewish people. This organ, therefore, has a certain power over people. The parents of the man born blind "feared the Judeans."

The juxtaposition of Judeans and Perushim shows that the Perushim act and speak for the whole people of the Judeans. Since the great rabbis undoubtedly come from the tradition of the Perushim, and since they were in fact at least regionally accepted by the Romans, the conflict is a conflict between the synagogue and the Messianic community, a conflict from which the parents would like to keep out as much as possible. They let their adult son speak for himself and take no responsibility for him.

The fear of being turned into *aposynagogoi* by the synagogal authorities, that is, of being excluded, is real. The self-governing bodies also have a duty of care for the people. If they exclude people, the latter lose the right to political and social protection. We will deal with this in the discussion of 16:2.

After the healed man had to answer the same questions again and again, he had the impudence to ask the Perushim whether they wouldn't like to become disciples of Jesus as well. They reply harshly that they are disciples of Moses: Moses is our teacher, *Moshe rabbenu*, only he, no one else. In this word the self-confidence of the great rabbis is shown, and the same self-confidence is shown by the answer of the Perushim to the healed one, "You are a disciple of this one, we are disciples of Moses." To the Perushim this is an irreconcilable contrast. To Moses God spoke, on Sinai, and entrusted him with the Torah, but where does this Jesus come from?

In their eyes, by healing on Shabbat, Jesus tears down the fence around the Torah. The "men of the great assembly" gave their followers the advice, "Be perfect in judgment, let many disciples stand up, and make a fence around the Torah" (Mishna Avot 1:1). Whoever acts like Jesus is going the wrong way, he is an errant—"sinner"—in our traditional translations. Whoever tears down the fence gives away the whole, and that would be the end of the whole people of Israel.

To the man born blind, the world has become a different one. He says, "One thing I know: I was blind, and all at once I see." Everything else does not interest him. Whether Jesus goes astray or he was healed on Shabbat: he does not

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tradition as the center of social life, under which supremacy whatsoever. The opponent of Jesus ben Joseph is the emerging Rabbinical Judaism that was not identical, but politically akin with the Perushim, after all. Many of the leading teachers of Israel after the year 70 CE came from the milieu of the Perushim."

> care. Exactly this attitude is a provocation to the Perushim, that is why they must react like this. The narrative is composed in such a way that all the sympathy of the readers is for the blind man, all their antipathy is for the Perushim. But we must see the other side as well. If the fence around the Torah is torn down, it is all over with Israel, which the rabbis want to preserve.
>
> After the destruction of the great synagogue in Alexandria in the so-called *Diaspora War* 115-117, after the annihilation of the assimilationist and self-confident Jewry of Alexandria, there was no other Jewish option than that of Rabbinical Judaism. To "fence around the Torah" means to preserve Israel's view of a society of *autonomy and equality* within the world of nations. Of course, the fence was also a defensive measure, defense, however, creates alienation.
>
> The Perushim pronounce the contradiction straightforwardly: Whoever is a disciple of Moses cannot be a disciple of Jesus; whoever is a disciple of Jesus cannot be a disciple of Moses. To the Perushim, a man who is completely indifferent to the Shabbat and the whole Rabbinical "concept of sin" is a great political danger, "They threw him out." Reason: "You are a complete misbirth and you want to teach us?" The disciples had asked, "Who was wrong, he or his parents, to be born blind?" This recalls their sentence of 7:49, "But these people who do not know the Torah shall be cursed." Teachings of such people as the man born blind were not accepted, because the Perushim had the authority to teach. These practically decide who "belongs" and who does not. Before John deals with this question, it must be clarified who is acting in this act of healing and what is actually happening here.

I quote Veerkamp at such length because he identifies the burning political issues that are actually at stake at the end of the 1st century between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews. In the field of tension just described, John is concerned with differently accentuated problematic situations in his encounters with various people, as Ton Veerkamp sets out in his interpretation of 9:35 and the verses that follow:[83]

> Jesus *finds* the one who has been excluded, as he *finds* the healed paralytic in 5:14. But there are great differences. The paralyzed man is questioned, but only when he knows that it was Jesus who had healed him does he go to the authorities, here called Judeans, 5:15. Immediately afterward, we hear for the first time that the Judeans are persecuting Jesus, 5:16. Jesus had told the paralyzed man not to go astray any more so that nothing worse might happen to him.
>
> Nothing of this sort is said to the blind man. Instead, he is asked a question, "Do you trust the *bar enosh,* the Human?" The latter had taken Jesus for a

83 Veerkamp 220-21 ("Your aberration remains," par. 2-6).

prophet, that is, for a man who had important things to say and do in Israel (9:17). He knows nothing about a "Son of Man"; "Who is he?" Here Jesus conspicuously avoids the *egō eimi*. "You have seen him," it says. And then, "He is that one (*ekeinos*) speaking with you." Let us remember the Samaritan woman who had said that—when the Messiah (*ekeinos*) came—he would announce everything. Jesus had answered, "I AM HE—who is speaking to you." The Samaritan keeps her distance, she does not bow to him. Here Jesus maintains the distance, "*That one* he is." It is left to the healed one to remove the distance. He does it by saying, "I am trusting, Lord." He bows before him.

John wants his listeners to listen carefully and notice the differences between the Samaritan, the paralyzed, and the blind. All are in some way excluded. The Samaritan finds illusory support in her ethnic identity; she does not have to bow to Jesus the Judean. The paralytic seeks refuge with Rabbinical Judaism. The blind man has lost his Jewish identity through his exclusion, but excluded are they all. The Messiah finds these excluded ones.

Then Jesus goes into the basics. To Rabbinical Judaism he says, "Do you not see what you are doing with your politics? You drive the people out. You cripple Israel." And now he takes the judicial authority of the one whom Daniel has called *bar enosh*, the Human. He, who constantly said that he had not come to judge, passes judgment, "Those who do not see might see, and those who see become blind." This is a political, not a moral judgment.

The Perushim understand what is said here, "Are we too blind?" Jesus replies: If you would admit that you do not know how to go on either, you would be open to a new perspective. Precisely because you think your policy is the only right one, because you think you are the only ones who have the insight, it remains a policy that leads astray, "Your aberration remains!" And this is what Jesus will explain in detail subsequently.

At this point, John's Gospel continues with the chapter of the Good Shepherd. But this shall not be discussed now; you are dealing here with the last and most sensational sign of Jesus—the raising of Lazarus.

2.2.3.4 The Raising of Lazarus as the Representative of Israel in Its Mortal State

The (31) raising of Lazarus you see as the "most spectacular healing story" of the Gospel, which "models a stance of profound and fully developed faith." But why, if Lazarus is described as a close friend of Jesus, he "himself does not utter a word in this Gospel," and not a single deed of his is presented after his raising? No expression of gratitude, no discipleship, nothing.

Above, Miriam has already explained in section 1.1.1 that we only understand the sign performed on Lazarus for the honor of the God of Israel if we recognize that he represents Israel—Israel in the state of death, of decay, by being delivered to the

oppressive rule of the Roman world empire and to the machinations of the own priestly leadership cooperating with Rome.

You, on the other hand (32), place the emphasis in this story on the fact that the "lives of all three siblings are transformed by their brother's resurrection." But precisely this is not expressed at all in the narrative itself. Of Lazarus, except that Jesus says about him (11:44), "Untie him and let him go," no reaction is reported. Mary expresses her grief for her brother within the passage, and the only phrase (11:32, see 11:21) she repeats is the reproach expressed by Martha at the beginning: "LORD, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." And though Martha's discussion with the Messiah about trust in the resurrection does amount (11:27) to her confession of trust in the Messiah,[84] this does not prevent her from expressing her skepticism in clear terms (11:39).

It seems more appropriate to me, therefore, to take the text itself seriously precisely in that it deals with the desperate questions related to Israel's fate after the catastrophe of 70 CE. Ton Veerkamp, starting from the sarcastic remark of Martha, points out the many allusions of the text that illuminate the raising of Lazarus from the Jewish scriptures in its true depth:[85]

> "Lord," she says, "he is already stinking, it's the fourth day." That is, "He is dead and more than dead. He is not accomplished, but perished!" The stench of decay is more than one reason for her skepticism. One can take leave of the living, of the dead perhaps, but not of those who are stinking and are more than dead. One buries them and leaves them to the tranquility of decay.

84 In Veerkamp 245 (Martha, par. 1), I translated this verse from Ton Veerkamp's German translation as follows:
11:27 She says to him,
"Yes, Lord, I am trusting,
I have trusted
that YOU ARE—the Messiah,
the Son of GOD, coming into the world."
On this, he explains in note 353:
We follow here Papyrus 66, which has *pisteuō*, *egō pepisteuka*, all other manuscripts have only *egō pepisteuka*. A Semitic perfect points to an action that was started and completed in the past, a Semitic imperfect points to an action that started in the past and was not completed, or to an action that is just beginning, that has an *open end*. This can be translated into Greek with the imperfect or present tense. Martha does not make a statement here, "I have trusted," but rather makes a confession, "I am trusting," or rather, "I want to trust." The death of her brother (the downfall of Israel) has destroyed her, "I have trusted that you . . ." Her trust was settled ("completed," therefore perfect) by the past of the war. Now she wants to trust once more. This is the interpretation of P66, and this is what the Greek present says.

85 Veerkamp 251-54 ("Untie him and let him go," par. 4-15).

If Lazarus is Israel, and everything suggests that it is, Martha says, “Everything is over and more than over.” To some, and even more so to the Messianists, the destruction of the sanctuary and city was the final end of Israel, especially as it dates back a generation if we assume a common dating of the Gospel of John around 100 CE. If this is so, the Grand Narrative of Israel will no longer help. Skepticism and confession, 11:39 and 11:27, are not mutually exclusive. “He who trusts will see the honor of God.” But how? But when? But where? Despair was nothing new in the history of this people. At a similar moment, a prophet had said the following shocking words, Isaiah 26:18-19,

> Pregnant we were, writhing,
> and when we gave birth, it was wind.
> No liberation was done to the land,
> By no means the inhabitants of the world did fall.
> May my dead live,
> may my corpses rise,
> may they awake, rejoice, those who dwell in the dust.
> That dew of the lights dew you,
> the land of the ghostly falls apart.

Some in Israel never wanted to admit that it was all over. One of them was the prophet Isaiah, one of them was Jesus. He lifts up his eyes—as in 17:1. It is the attitude of the praying and hoping of Israel, “To YOU I lift up my soul” (Psalm 25:1), “to the mountains I lift up my eyes” (Psalm 121:1), etc. He gives thanks, as he thanked when he fed Israel, 6:11. In John, the word is not a technical term of the church communion but precedes the decisive signs for the erection of Israel. He says, “I thank you that you listen to me. But I know that you always listen to me.” In the psalms, Israel calls again and again, “God, listen to my voice,” Psalm 130:2 and the like. The Messiah of Israel is the praying Israel, and the praying Israel is heard:

> And Elijah the prophet approached, he said,
> “YOU, God of Abraham, Isaac, Israel,
> today may be recognized,
> that you are God in Israel, and I am your servant,
> and that I do all these words according to your word.
> Answer me, *Adonai*, answer me,
> that they, this people, may recognize,
> that you are the God,
> that you changed their heart back.”

This prayer of Elijah in 1 Kings 18:36-37 is related to the prayer of Jesus. In both cases, the situation was hopeless, 1 Kings 19:10,

> "I have been zealous, zealous for YOU, God of hosts,
> those of Israel have left the covenant,
> they have ravaged your slaughter-site and killed your prophets with the sword.
> I alone am left,
> they seek to take away my soul."

The "retransformation of the heart of Israel" is the revival of the dead Lazarus. In the case of Elijah, the people is "to recognize," here it is "to trust." The people shall *recognize* by the life-giving rain after three years of famine, the people shall *trust* in a new life after years of devastation. Therefore, Jesus says what is really necessary: that there is a God and his fidelity (*alētheia*) in Israel. Therefore Lazarus must live. From the Tanakh, this passage shows that there is no hocus-pocus of an incantation of the dead, but that death in Israel must not be the last word, Ezekiel 37:1 ff.,

> The Hand of the NAME happened above me.
> He led me, inspired by the NAME,
> he set me down in the middle of a plain, full of bones.
> He drove me around and around them,
> there, many, very many were on the plain,
> there, withered they were, very.
> He spoke to me,
> "Human child, shall these bones live again?"
> I said, "My Lord, YOU, you know it."

We can only understand the narrative of the revival of Lazarus if we read it from these texts. Jesus cries it out with a "great voice," *phōnē megalē, qol gadol*. In the Synoptics, Jesus cries with this "great voice" at the moment before his death. Here his "great voice" resounds at the grave of Israel. He screams, he roars. This is not a sign of calm certainty of God, this is an angry command.

The deceased came out, but as a wrapped corpse, hands and feet bandaged, the face covered. This may no longer be a dead man, but it is far from being a living one. Hence the order, "Untie him (*lysate*) and let him go." Not until this order is carried out, the dead will become living. We also hear the verb *lyein*, "to untie, to loosen, to make free," in the psalm of a humiliated, despondent man who pours out his lamentation to the NAME. We hear (Psalm 102:19-22),

> It is written for a later generation:
> that a people to be created may praise the NAME,
> that he looks down from the height, the NAME,
> looks down from his heaven to the earth,
> to hear the groaning of the bound,

> to set free (*lysai*) the sons of death,
> that they tell HIS name in Zion,
> his praise in Jerusalem,
> that the nations may gather together,
> the kingdoms serve the NAME.

> If you listen to the last passage of the story of Lazarus' revival together with this psalm, you know what this is all about. Rome is the entirety of the peoples who went out united to destroy Jerusalem (Gog of Magog, Ezekiel 38-39). This is their present situation. The revival of Lazarus is exactly the opposite. It is the hope of John and with him of Israel. And the mission of the Messianic community is to "untie" the no longer dead and not yet living Israel, to release it from the bond of death. The Messianic community is pointed out to humankind (Matthew 28:19) to do to it what it should do to the no longer dead and not yet living Lazarus, "to loosen" it.

How poor and banal, measured against these contexts, appears the later Christian interpretation of the raising of Lazarus if it is referred in general terms, as you do (31), to the fact that the

> raising of Lazarus enacts the promise of John's rhetoric: that those who have faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God will overcome death. Whether Lazarus lived forever is not stated. Certainly those who aimed to kill him (12:10) assumed that he remained subject to the laws of mortality. But in emerging from the tomb, he demonstrated that love of Jesus loosens the bonds of death.

Do you seriously consider John could have meant that Lazarus would live eternally on this earth as a resurrected person? Wouldn't you assume that John, as a Jew, might not already believe, as indeed (11:24) Martha expresses, according to Daniel 12:2, in the Son of Man and in the raising of the righteous at the end of days? No, John is not concerned with the fact that there is a resurrection only through Jesus, and certainly not with the hope of an afterlife in heaven.

But then what about the famous sentence 11:25 that Jesus says to Martha?[86]

> Now resounds, "I AM—the resurrection and the life," words that have been said countless times at the graves of Christians, sometimes giving comfort, very often not. We are like Martha.
>
> Jesus added, "He who trusts in me will live even if he dies, and he who lives and trusts me will not die for the age to come." What does this mean? John knows that people will die. But they die knowing that the Day of Decision has come and that things will be made right! Inside? Spiritually? In the hereafter?

86 Veerkamp 247 (Martha, par. 9-12).

> This is not about *life after death*. It is about *life despite death*, the omnipresent death, despite the omnipotence of the deadly power of Rome.
>
> If anywhere, the Gospel of John has had a resounding effect here. The sentences of 11,25-26 are generally understood as confirmation for the continued life of the individual person after death. But Lazarus is not only an individual personality. A revival from individual death does not help him, he would have to die again. There is no statement, no narrated deed of Lazarus. He has no personality in the narrative—on purpose. This is not due to a lack of narrative talent. The woman from Sychar, the man born blind, also Nicodemus, also Thomas Didymos: they all have personality. Lazarus' personality is completely absorbed in the function it has in the narrative: to represent the deadly condition of Israel. Whoever trusts the Messiah—as a child of the people—will die just as little as the people. If Israel remains, the name of each child of Israel remains.
>
> What happens to me as an individual when I die? To this question, Johannes gives no answer at least here. If you had been there, Lazarus would not have died: This is not a question, but an accusation. Jesus replies, I AM, I WILL BE THERE (*egō eimi*), Lazarus is alive, even if his body is decaying.

A woman like Alexandra has no more access to this way of interpreting the figure of Lazarus. In this respect you are right (32) in formulating her possibilities of decision in view of this story very generally:

> She faces the same choice put before the Jewish crowd: to believe or to turn their backs. She also vicariously rides Mary and Martha's emotional roller coaster, an experience that might well have increased her desire to imitate Martha's confession of faith.

But I repeat: This confession of faith in Jesus as the one who alone overcomes death, which has become the standard in Christianity, has little to do with John's original concern, namely to seek ways of maintaining hope in the dawn of the age of liberation and justice that is to come, despite the catastrophe of the year 70.

2.2.4 Narrative Flow and Structure of John's Gospel

In your brief sketch (32) of the narrative flow in John's Gospel, I cannot retrieve anything of the "ever-deepening sense of engagement and character identification," which you discover in the "order in which characters are presented." In a note, you cite Robin Griffith-Jones,[87] who

87 (46, n. 17 and 23) Robin Griffith-Jones, "Apocalyptic Mystagogy: Rebirth-from-Above in the Reception of John's Gospel," in *John's Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic*, ed. Catrin H. Williams and Christopher Rowland (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 282.

> states that hearing the Gospel drew the hearer progressively deeper and deeper into the experience of transformative rebirth [282]. ... By the time the narrative reaches John 11, the raising of Lazarus, "the listeners were to be ready to hear the voice of the Son of God, and so to be born again from above. ... [T]he story of the raising of Lazarus was designed to realise the rising of the listeners from the dead." [296-97]. Griffith-Jones argues that this hearing took place in a ritualized, liturgical context and that the Gospel was written for catechumens who were neophytes in a religious community.

Of course, I can imagine that a suitably attuned audience might have heard and understood the Gospel in this way. But why, if John had originally had such an intention and audience, would he not have formulated his Gospel in a much more stringent way, without all the difficult-to-understand allusions to the Jewish Scriptures?

Much more appropriate to the text is the outline that Ton Veerkamp traces in John's Gospel when reading it Messianic-politically. After the prologue, the first large part, 1:19-4:54,[88]

> is about the *manifest Messiah*, i.e. about the Messiah who developed his program *in all openness* through *signs* and *words*. In the Scriptures, both together are called *devarim,* word deeds or deed words, in Greek *logoi*. These signs and words constitute a Messianic movement in Israel, and the supporter of this movement is the Messianic group or community. So this first part deals with the Messiah and his community.
>
> The second large part—5:1 to 12:50—will be about the decay of the Messianic community, according to which the Messiah has to hide from his adversaries.
>
> The third part—13:1 to 20:31—tells about the farewell of the Messiah and the isolation of the community in a room with "locked doors."
>
> A fourth part—chapter 21—describes the process of overcoming the community's isolation and of turning the Gospel of John from the paper of a sect into a text of the church.
>
> The three parts—*manifestation, descent into hiddenness*, and *ascent*—are corresponding with *foundation, decay*, and *rebirth* of the Messianic community.

The first part is characterized by the two principal signs of the Messianic wedding and the revival of the Son at Cana and the confrontation of the Messiah with the representatives of Judea and Samaria who are ready for dialogue.

The second part is internally divided into five chapters by five Judean festivals, within which paralyzed, hungry, blind, and dead Israel become the theme in the context of four further Messianic signs, before Jesus (12:37-41)—having entered Jerusalem

88 Veerkamp 43 (A Preliminary Remark, par. 1-5).

as Messiah-King and being acclaimed by a large Jewish crowd—laments regarding the prophet Isaiah that his signs did not bring about Israel's comprehensive trust in him.

As to the unusual but convincing structure of the third part, I let Ton Veerkamp have his say again:[89]

> The third part tells the great Passover of the Messiah. The leaving of the Messiah is the new exodus of Israel. It has five passages, in our counting the passages 12-16, separated by indications of time:
>
> 12. Before the Passover, 13:1-30a
> 13. "It was night," 13:30b-18:28a
> 14. The First Part of the Passion Narrative: Early in the Morning, 18:28b-19:13
> 15. The Second Part of the Passion Narrative: *ʿErev Pascha*, 19:14-42
> 16. Day One of the Shabbat Week, 20:1-31.
>
> The center of the last part is the long section about what happened during the night. It is the night of the Messiah's farewell from the Messianic community and the delivery of the Messiah into the hands of the enemy through the leadership of Judea. Passover is the great festival of liberation. The Gospel of John is the "Easter Gospel" par excellence. This festival is always "near," from the beginning, 2:13.
>
> On the main day of the festival itself, nothing happens; everything happens immediately before and after the festival. This day is the great and decisive gap. It shows that the theology of the Gospel of John is a *theologia negativa*. The "handing over of inspiration" is the essence of the farewell, 19:30. The acceptance of this farewell is the "acceptance of inspiration," 20:22. It enables the Messianic community to live a Messianic life without the Messiah.

2.3 Community of Believers

From different starting points, you illuminate (34) "the close tie between individual and communal identity," which probably "John's intended audience would have understood and accepted." In doing so, you think:

> Whereas John's narrative encourages identification with certain characters and groups, the discourse sections more explicitly convey the importance of community.

You assign a special role within "the shepherd and sheep discourse in John 10 and the farewell discourses in John 14-16" to the "extended metaphor" embedded there

89 Veerkamp 280 (PART III: PASCHA—THE FAREWELL OF THE MESSIAH, par. 1-4).

in each case: “the sheepfold (John 10) and the vine (John 15).” On the first metaphor, you refer to your book *The Word in the World*[90] and chapter 7 in the present book. On the second, you write in summary:

> Only by connecting to Jesus, the Father, and one another, can the disciples and, with them, the audience, bear fruit for eternal life.

In detail, it would again be necessary to clarify what “eternal life” means and what specific community is being spoken of.

2.3.1 The First Person Plural as the „We“ of the Messianic Group around Jesus

Moreover, “the importance of groupness” (35) is also conveyed by “the strategic use of first person plural pronouns,” that is,

> John invites Alexandra and company to join the “we” to which he belongs. And the second person plural pronouns (“you”) in Jesus’s discourses, especially when not required by the context, reach out beyond the diegetic audience to address the post-Easter audience. Through these plural pronouns, John both asserts the importance of community and also mediates an encounter with Jesus for his audience. These plural forms are an example of classical rhetorical style; they present affiliation—“groupness”—as a positive and desirable goal.[91]

You highlight two passages, in particular, 1:14 and 1:16, in which the narrator “uses the first person plural” with a view to “seeing the glory of the Word and receiving grace upon grace,” to which you note: “Exactly what is promised to ‘us’ is difficult to pinpoint.” If we understand the Gospel from the Jewish Scriptures, as Ton Veerkamp does, then we must understand the “glory” or “honor,” *doxa*, of the Word from the Hebrew word *kavod*, “force, brunt,” which is used in the Scriptures to describe the assertive power of the God of Israel who has Israel’s liberation in mind. And it is precisely this liberation that is at stake for the group of Messianic Jews who have come to trust Jesus through the Messianic sign of the wedding at Cana (2:11), whose constitution—“himself and his mother and his brothers and his disciples”—is succinctly outlined in 2:12, and of whom Jesus (4:22) speaks in the “we” form in his conversation with the Samaritan woman (see section 1.2.4.2).

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90 (47, n. 29) For discussion, see Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

91 (47, n. 31) This is the term proposed by Brubaker and Cooper as a substitute for the problematic term “community.” Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1-47, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007068714468; Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). See also Stanley K. Stowers, “The Concept of ‘Community’ and the History of Early Christianity,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 23, no. 3-4 (2011): 238-56.

2.3.2 The Second Person Plural for Addressing Those Who Hear the Gospel

You point to a great many passages in John's Gospel (35) where the second person plural "reaches out to its late first-century audience," often (36) in such cases as well when

> a plural pronoun is used when a singular might have been expected, suggesting that Jesus or the narrator is looking beyond the story world to include the audience outside the narrative.

Especially due to "the use of the second person plural throughout the farewell discourses, Alexandra and the rest of John's compliant audience" might feel personally addressed (37):

> By using the second person pronouns, the lengthy farewell discourses address the disciples but also look beyond the disciples to address also "those who will believe in me through their [the disciples'] word" (17:20).

In Jesus' prayer to the FATHER (John 17), however, "the second person singular pronoun is used to address God, and the third person plural is used to refer to the disciples, and, by extension, all believers."

2.3.3 The New Commandment of *agapē*, Solidarity, as a Sectarian In-Group Virtue

The most difficult theme for me in John's Gospel is the theme of *agapē*, commonly translated as "love." Indeed, (38) the "love commandment," as you write, does not seem to be able to be considered "as evidence of the universal, expansive, even pluralistic worldview of the Gospel and indeed of Jesus himself," but it is

> given to the disciples alone, not to the crowds or indeed to anyone outside their immediate circle. Second, and more important, the commandment does not instruct them to love everyone, but to love one another: the group present at dinner and whose feet were washed. This group excluded Judas, as the commandment was given after his departure. ... In emphasizing the love for another, the Gospel implies separation, even estrangement, from outsiders to their group.

In this case, Ton Veerkamp for once agrees with you. However, only to a very limited extent, because he does not see a religiously detached group at work here, which, so to speak, isolates itself on an island of the blessed from the people who are eternally damned according to God's will. No, he tries to take seriously the situation of the Johannine Messianists in their sectarian impasse, in which they have got politically carried away:[92]

92 Veerkamp 310 (The Parable of the Vine. Solidarity, par. 20-21).

> "This is my commandment: that you are in solidarity with each other." For the group around John, which is going through a most difficult phase—the people are running away from it, 6:60 ff., they are quarreling and hereticizing each other, 1 John 2:18; 2 John 10; 3 John 9—the group's coherence is vital. Solidarity is entirely focused on the group itself. As I said before, there is no trace of universal charity or philanthropy.
>
> The move into sectarianism rubs off on Jesus himself: No one has greater solidarity than putting in his soul for his friends, he says, calling the disciples "friends" and no longer slaves. This should be compared with Romans 5:7 ff., where this commitment in its most extreme form—the giving of one's life—is not for the sake of friends but for the sake of those who have gone astray! The friendship of this tiny circle with the Messiah is based on the fact that Jesus "made known to them what he had heard from his FATHER." They are the preferred—and at first the only—addressees of this announcement.

Desirable for Veerkamp, as for me, would be that *agapē* is understood in terms of solidarity with all people who are oppressed or degraded by whatever powers. For this, he sees the Gospel of John as quite suitable, especially since he interprets the last chapter 21 as evidence that the Johannine sect could free itself from its isolation:[93]

> Once again we draw attention to the very narrowly defined area in which solidarity is effective. We can hardly imagine it. To us, the disciples are simply the placeholders for all Christians. Since Christianity has at times been presented as congruent with the whole of humankind, solidarity among the few friends becomes a general virtue. But this makes it impossible to understand our text correctly. We have called solidarity a combat term and interpreted it analogously to the solidarity in the labor movement of the 19th and 20th centuries.[94] In the sectarian milieu of the Gospel of John and the Letters of John, *agapē* was primarily an in-group virtue. Only when the sect broke through its isolation and John became a church text, Johannine solidarity could become politically fruitful. Admittedly, in church use, solidarity, as a Messianic virtue par excellence, became general human love and thus lost its political power. It was once coherence in the fight against the world order of death. It became the general philanthropy sauce that was poured out over the world order of death. Such moralization is foreign to John.

Here again, points of contact with your argument arise, namely when Christian charity remains selective with regard to its addressees and abandons Jews, pagans and heretics to condemnation because of their false faith.

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93 Veerkamp 310 (The Parable of the Vine. Solidarity, par. 23).

94 Here Veerkamp refers to his "interpretation of the First Epistle of John, Ton Veerkamp, Weltordnung und Solidarität *oder* Dekonstruktion christlicher Theologie. Auslegung und Kommentar (= Texte & Kontexte 71/72 (1996)), 35ff."

2.3.4 A New Identity of the Believers as the Children of God

Now you do assume that (38), as "a compliant listener, Alexandra will join with others to constitute a group bound by love for one another, for Jesus, and, through Jesus, for God." But you doubt that there was such a thing as a Johannine community, since "John does not use the term *ekklesia*" and does not "describe an already-existing Johannine community."

Arguably, however, you think you know exactly that in John's eyes (39) "audience members" should understand themselves "as children of God (1:12; 11:52; cf. 1 John 3:1, 10; 5:2) who participated in the cosmic realm rather than the earthly realm of existence." Since you do not understand the term *kosmos* in the sense of the oppressive world order of Rome, in your view these

> children of God, believers in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, "do not belong to the [everyday] world" (17:14, 15) that hates Jesus (7:7; 15:18) but rather, Jesus prays, will be with Jesus where he is (17:24).

2.3.4.1 Filiation to God According to Aristotle or to Abraham and Sarah?

And although (39), on the other hand, you quite rightly see the concept of the sonship of God anchored in the Jewish Scriptures (Deuteronomy 14:1, Hosea 1:10, Wis 5:5; Bar 4:37, 5:5; 3 Macc 6:28, 7:6), you want to trace back precisely this Johannine concept to the pagan philosopher Aristotle:

> For John, this spiritual intimacy has a material foundation. Those who are persuaded by the Fourth Gospel to engage in a process of transformation are reborn as the children of God and the siblings of one another. Like the Father-Son relationship between God and Jesus, this identity as God's children is described using the language of Aristotle's theory of epigenesis.

In fact, however, John's Gospel (1:12-13) avoids precisely emphasizing the role of man in bringing forth the *tekna theou*, "God-Born," by explicitly ruling out their coming forth *ek thelēmatos andros*, "of the will of a man." In this respect, there is precisely no agreement with Aristotle, concerning whose theory you quote Mary Horowitz[95] as follows:

> The male is "*homo faber*, the maker, who works upon inert matter according to a design, bringing forth a lasting work of art. His soul contributes the form and model of the creation. Out of his creativity is born a line of descendants that will preserve his memory, thus giving him earthly immortality" (cf. GA 731b30-732a1).

95 (48, n. 45) Mary Horowitz, "Aristotle and Woman," *Journal of the History of Biology* 9, no. 2 (1976): 197, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00209881.

This is exactly what it is *not* about, neither about male procreative power nor about immortality. Since you quote the Jewish Scriptures, you should also interpret the Johannine idea of the God-Born from these very Scriptures, as Ton Veerkamp does:[96]

> "Not of the will of a man." Here you have to think of Abraham. The son is the theme of Genesis 15-22. This son is born from a woman "with whom it ceased to be after the manner of women", and who lived with a man, "who was old", from two humans who were sterile, Genesis 18:12-14 and 21:1-2,
>
> > Sarah laughed to her inner self, saying:
> > "After I am a nothing,
> > am I still to have sexual pleasure,
> > my lord being old, too?"
> > The NAME said to Abraham:
> > "Why did Sarah laugh and say:
> > 'Will I really bear [a child],
> > old as I am?'
> > Is anything too marvelous for the NAME to do?
> > At the appointed time I will return to you,
> > about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."
> > ...
> > And the NAME arranged it for Sarah as he had said,
> > he did for Sarah as he had spoken:
> > She became pregnant.
> > Sarah bore Abraham a Sohn in his old age
> > at the set time of which God had spoken to him.
>
> At no point there is talk of Abraham having begotten this son, the only-begotten, with Sarah. There only is talk of Sarah and her son. Nowhere we hear the classical sentence: "Such and such (Abraham) knew her and she (Sarah) became pregnant and bore a son . . .." The son, wanted by both of them, for whom they had begged God, is born *not of the will of a man*!" To be sure, we hear: "These are the begettings of Isaac, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac", Genesis 25:19. But the begetting by Abraham is an element of the chapter "begettings of Isaac." In marked contrast to all the patriarchs of the book Genesis, begettings (*tholedoth*), *tholedoth ʾAdam* (Genesis 5:1), *tholedoth Noach* . . . to *tholedoth Yaʿaqov* (Genesis 37:2) just the chapter *tholedoth ʾAvraham* is lacking (see the discussion of 8:58)! That's an absolute *joke* (Genesis 18:15),
>
> > Sarah lied, saying:
> > "I did not laugh", for she was afraid.

96 Veerkamp 32-34 (Birth, par. 11-19).

> He said:
> "No, but you did laugh!"

And Abraham agrees to it (Genesis 21:3),

> He called the name of his son,
> who was born to him,
> whom Sarah bore him:
> "*Yitzchaq* (Isaac), he laughs."

The child was born to Abraham, passive form; Sarah bore, active form. Both are old, a joke. The joke is the NAME. One chapter further it comes to be deadly serious, Genesis 22:1 ff.,

> It happened after these words:
> God tested Abraham, he said to him:
> "Abraham!"
> He said:
> "Here I am."
> He said:
> "Take now your son,
> your only one (*yachid*),
> whom you love,
> *Yitzchaq*.
> Then you go to the land Moriah,
> exalt him as a sacrifice of exalting,
> on one of the mountains of the land that I will tell you."

We'll get onto the "only son" (*yachid*, *monogenēs*) later.[97] Anyhow, we may conceive an idea of what the expression means when we hear: "not of the will of a man, but begotten divinely." The only one, *monogenēs*, is the new Isaac, the only one begotten divinely. Whoever trusts in him will be "born of God" as well in this sense: He really sees light, is enlightened, remains alive amidst an order of death.

2.3.4.2 From Jesus' Sonship of God to the Filiation with God of His Followers

If you want to call this divine begetting through trusting in God, described by Veerkamp, the bringing forth of a new "species of sorts," you are half right in writing (39-40):

> Although Jesus is the only one begotten directly of God, he "begets" future generations. The model and first son of this second generation is the disciple whom Jesus loved. Just as Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, rests in the

97 In this review, see sections 1.1.3 and 1.3.3 above.

> bosom of his father (*eis ton kolpon tou patros*; 1:18), so does the Beloved Disciple rest in Jesus's own bosom (*en tō kolpō tou Iēsou*) (13:23; 13:25).

With regard to Jesus, this is not true. Understood Jewishly, Jesus is not the only Son born directly of God. First of all, Jesus represents the *monogenēs*, the only-begotten son of Abraham, Isaac. And as the second Isaac, Jesus, at the same time, embodies the firstborn son of God—on the one hand, because Isaac, whom Abraham had to sacrifice as his own son, was given back to him as God's son, on the other hand, because Isaac was the father of Jacob = Israel, whom God, in turn, calls his firstborn son in Exodus 4:22. And in that Jesus both embodies Israel and is in perfect accord with the will of the God of Israel, he is not the *only* Son of God, but *uniquely* the Son of God according to Jewish and not Gentile understanding.

With regard to the Beloved Disciple, however, you are to agree: Just as the Messiah Jesus, as Veerkamp says,[98] is "the exemplary concentration of Israel, … 'in the bosom of the NAME/FATHER,' completely and utterly determined by God, just *divine*," thus[99] "the disciple ... *to whom the Messiah was related like a friend*" plays "the role of … the exemplary concentration of the Messianic community," which trusts fully in this Messiah Jesus.

2.3.4.3 Birth by Water and Spirit According to Aristotle or According to the Bible?

It is incomprehensible to me (40) as to how you can also consider a reference to Aristotle regarding the "idea of being born through the spirit," which is alluded to in 1:12-13 and pronounced in the conversation with Nicodemus (3:5):

> Relevant here may be the fact that *anōthen* also appears in the GA in reference to the upper cosmos which is the source of the generative abilities of animal species (GA 731b25).

I have already discussed in detail in section 2.2.2.1 how Ton Veerkamp explains this "to be born *anōthen*" in Jewish-Messianic terms. There, also the "second problematic element in Jesus's words to Nicodemus," namely "the reference to water," had been related to the "baptismal waters" of the Messianic Baptist movement. The "striking parallel in the Aristotelian vocabulary of epigenesis," as you see it, however, represents nothing but a coincidental agreement of the used vocabulary:

> According to GA 735b10, semen, that is, the fluid of generation that provides the sentient soul of the offspring, is said to be made of water and spirit.[100] Thus John 3:5 can be read as a declaration that a child of God is one who is begotten of the divine seed that originates in the upper cosmos.

98 Veerkamp 43 (A Postscript, par. 18).

99 Veerkamp 243 (Lazarus, par. 9).

100 (48, n. 44 and 48) A. Preus, "Science and Philosophy in Aristotle's Generation of Animals," *Journal of the History of Biology* 3 (1970): 26.

You can only read it this way if you completely detach John from his Jewish background and interpret him as being steeped in pagan thought.

Also, what you state about "giving over of Jesus's *pneuma* to the disciples" in 20:22, "when the risen Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon them," has nothing to do with the Aristotelian view that "the *pneuma* is carried by the male seed that gives form to the offspring." This is clearly contradicted by John 1:13, "not of the will of a man," as already explained. Rather, the spirit, inspiration, *ruach*, of the God of Israel is clearly to be thought of here, as Ton Veerkamp explains:[101]

> Then Jesus "inspires" his disciples physically, he breathes over them. Within the Messianic writings, the verb *emphysan* occurs only here, John 20:21. In the Greek version of the Scriptures, the verb is rare. It stands for the Hebrew verb *nafach*. The verb means "to blow (with the mouth)," with two opposite effects: to animate and to burn. The original meaning is "to breathe on (a fire)," Isaiah 54:16; Job 20:26. God's anger is breathed on as fire against his rebellious people (Ezekiel 22:20-21). In Genesis 2:7, on the other hand, we hear,
>
> > The NAME, God, forms mankind as dust from the field.
> > He blows (*wa-yipach, enephysen*) into their nostrils breath of life.
> > Thus, mankind became to be living souls.
>
> The intimidated people in this barricaded room are, so to speak, dead people in a house of the dead. They must be revived. The great vision Ezekiel 37:1 ff. was already quoted in the discussion 6:63. The prophet is led before a field full of withered bones, and the NAME asks him (Ezekiel 37:3-6),
>
> > "Human child, can these bones revive?"
> > I said, "My Lord, ETERNAL, you know."
> > Thus my Lord, the NAME, said,
> > "Testify as a prophet over these bones, you shall say to them,
> > 'You withered bones, hear the word of the NAME!'"
> > Thus says my Lord, the NAME, to these bones,
> > "It is I, I cause inspiration to come into you, and you revive!
> > I give you muscles, draw flesh, stretch the skin over you.
> > I give inspiration over you; you live up, you recognize,
> > I AM—the NAME."
>
> Only from such central texts of the Scriptures, we can understand what Jesus is doing here. He says, "Accept the inspiration of sanctification." We announced this passage in our discussion of 19:30, Jesus "gave the inspiration." Here, 20:22, we have the corresponding complementary injunction, "Accept ..." "It is the inspiration that makes alive, the flesh can contribute

101 Veerkamp 399-400 (The Locked Doors, par. 6-10).

> nothing," we heard in 6:63. The threatened, vulnerable existence of these intimidated people, flesh, is inspired and shall be transformed into Messianic existence.

The begetting and new birth from the Spirit are to be understood from this transformation of frightened human beings—suffering from oppression and degradation by the ruling world order—by the inspiration of sanctification emanating from the Messiah of the God of Israel, but not at all (40) from an Aristotelian "molding ... in his shape and form." Formally, everything you write about "the divine father" is true:

> Just as the divine father begot and sent Jesus into the world through the process of divine *pneuma* and generation, so does Jesus beget and send his disciples into the world. As Jesus says to God, "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (17:18; cf. 20:21). With this spiritual rebirth, the disciples inherit the abilities that Jesus had, namely, the ability to forgive or retain the sins of others (20:23), just as Jesus acquired the abilities of the father to judge and to give life.[102] They will do the works that Jesus does and even greater works than these (14:12).

But all this must be understood from the Jewish Scriptures or it will be misunderstood.

Also, in regard to "the outpouring of water and blood from Jesus's pierced side" in 19:34, you consider (41) a connection with "the rebirth of the believers," which "can occur only with Jesus's death," for an "outpouring of water and blood is unusual in a wound such as piercing, but it is inevitable during childbirth." That "in dying, Jesus also gives birth to the new species," you also relate to Jesus' word: "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (12:24), and finally with the interpretation of verses 14:2-3 as a promise that the "children of God, like the only-begotten son, will receive the benefits of dwelling with God, as Jesus goes to prepare a place for them in his Father's house."

It would be going too far to adjust the interpretation of all these interrelated elements of John's Gospel from the Scriptures; I confine myself to Ton Veerkamp's explanation of verse 19:34:[103]

> Then follows, "And immediately there came out (*exēlthen euthys*) blood and water." We hear this word *euthys* for the third time. Judas Iscariot took the

102 It is interesting that you note on this (48, n. 50) that John at least *also* refers to biblical ideas of inspiration, *pneuma*:
"We might suggest that the Johannine author is here playing with the double notion of pneuma, as motivating life force and as breath, drawing on both the Aristotelian and biblical notions of human generation."

103 Veerkamp 382-83 (Fourth Scene: The Stabbed One, par. 8-11).

dipped bite and immediately went out (*exēlthen euthys*). Cultivated language demands that the two words should be in reverse order: *euthys exēlthen*. Therefore, some not unimportant manuscripts "improved" the order. But both passages are to be related to each other by the same word order, 13:30 and 19:34. The honoring of the Messiah is a process, initiated by the "immediate departure" of Judas ben Simon, "And immediately he [God] will honor him [the HUMAN, *bar enosh*]," 13:32. This process continues in the immediate (*euthys*) departure (*exēlthen*) of water and blood.

What is meant by "water" we know from 4:14 and 7:38. The Samaritan woman is promised water that will "become a spring of water in her, welling up to the life of the age to come." This becomes clearer in the second quotation. In the sanctuary during the Feast of *Sukkot*, Jesus speaks of "rivers of living water from his body." To avoid any misunderstanding, John adds, "This he said about the inspiration that those who trusted in him were about to receive. But there was no inspiration yet because Jesus had not yet come to his honor," 7:38-39. The hour of his death is the hour of his honor. Immediately inspiration proceeds from Jesus. Our interpretation of Jesus' death as the handing over of inspiration is thus confirmed.

"Blood," we know from the great speech of Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum, "Whoever is chewing my flesh and drinking of my blood will be given life in the age to come, and I will make him rise in the day of judgment. For my flesh is food to be trusted, my blood drink to be trusted," 6:54-55. The word "blood" occurs in John only here and in the speech in the synagogue of Capernaum (if we disregard the passage 1:13). The point here is the inspiration, the enabling of the life of the age to come. And this happens through the death (the blood) of the Messiah. The blood is the blood of the Passover lamb. Then, it saved from death in Egypt; now, the blood of the Messiah saves from death at the ruling world order. The death of the Messiah is to be understood as the slaughter of the Passover lamb: the necessary condition for the final festival of liberation to be celebrated. Death in both cases is a *prerequisite* for Passover, namely Passover itself. Passover is what will happen one day; Passover is *not yet*. This becomes clear only in 20:17.

To John, this is the real climax of his narrative. He names himself as an eyewitness; he, the author of our text, appeals to his listeners to trust the events reported here. In the Gospel, a testimony is trustworthy when it is confirmed by Scriptural evidence.

Thus it is not about a spiritual new birth to be understood statically, which guarantees an otherworldly existence in heaven for those born anew of water and spirit, but about the fidelity of the God of Israel, which inspires those trusting in Jesus to overcome the world order through the new commandment of *agapē*, solidarity, in other words, to actively await the life of the age to come.

2.3.4.4 Guarantee of Eternal Life in Heaven or Hope for Life of the Age to Come?

Having hardly written this, I read your sentence (41):

> Rebirth as a child of God guarantees eternal life.

Referring back to 5:24-26, you reason it, asserting:

> The decay and death that are part of the cyclical life process are no longer operative for this new species. Rather, hearing the word, imbibing the spirit, eating the flesh: all of these are necessary for spiritual rebirth that promises eternal life.

However, just verses 5:24-25 have nothing at all to do with such supernatural qualities of a new species but clearly refer to Daniel 12:2, the Jewish hope for the resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgment.

Incidentally (42), you yourself—in view of the "still-inevitable fact of physical death"—point to doubts about a "cosmological understanding of the new family into which the transformed hearers of the Gospel are reborn" in the sense of a guarantee of eternal survival, to which verses John 21:20-23 point. Such rumors, however, that the Beloved Disciple "would not die" fit less with a concept of life after death in heaven than with the expectation that he might experience the dawn of the age to come during his earthly lifetime.

2.3.4.5 The New Family of God in John's Gospel and Its Dark Backside

For later generations, it is only "the Gospel itself that functions as the source of the Holy Spirit through whom they can become children of God." In this context, you mention "the Paraclete, who is the Holy Spirit," and refer by way of explanation to two passages also cited by Veerkamp, Genesis 2:7 and John 6:63, where Jesus declares, "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." The question is how, on the basis of these passages, the "transformative rebirth into the family of God" and the fulfillment of the "profound human desire for eternal life" are interpreted: Is it about an antagonism of flesh and spirit, matter and supernatural life, or is it about the earthly existence of human beings, their flesh, not being devalued, but being directed by the Spirit toward the liberating and right-creating will of God?

Despite your recourse to Genesis 2:7, you persist in holding Aristotle as the decisive authority concerning the rhetoric of belonging to the family of God:

> The use of the Aristotelian concept of epigenesis to flesh out the idea that believers constitute the family of God is a final step in the rhetoric of affiliation. Using such strategies, many of them based in Greek rhetoric, John articulates the human desire to avoid death and seek eternal life, identifies faith in Jesus as the fulfillment of that desire, and the use of the Gospel itself as the vehicle for rebirth.

The backside of such an understanding, then, in your eyes (43), is that such a newborn family must sharply distinguish itself from other families. In this context, of all places, you refer to the passage John 1:13—which, in my view, contradicts the Aristotelian emphasis on the man in the act of procreation—in order to state:

> Human families, created by the "will of the flesh, or the will of man" (1:13), do not necessarily have a negative stance towards all those outside their family. The members of the family that John describes, however, is an exclusive family of choice. Joining this family requires separating from other powerful, family or family-like affiliations.

Does such an understanding actually do justice to John's Gospel? After all, your point is not only that "any group affiliation requires connection to an in-group and difference from outsiders," which "social psychologists and social identity theorists" point out, but that this Johannine group, in its self-conscious obduracy, radically distinguishes itself from a very specific other group. The "rhetoric of disaffiliation that marks the boundary between the children of God and those who claim falsely (in John's view) to be the children of God, that is, the *Ioudaioi*," is what you intend to address in the following three chapters.

In doing so, you raise "some concern about our imaginary Alexandra," namely that "she will soon begin to see the *Ioudaioi* not as friends, family, or respected members of society but as her spiritual or even physical enemies."

In my conversation with you, I will continue to be concerned with carefully distinguishing between the conflict situation from which John originally described Jesus' sharp confrontations with the *Ioudaioi*, and the Christian interpretation of John's Gospel that became determinative after Judaism and Christianity parted ways.

3 The Rhetoric of Expropriation

In the second part of your book (51), under the leitmotif of "disaffiliation," you consider the relationship of John's Gospel to the Jews, whose role largely amounts to "persecuting both Jesus and his followers." Moreover, the Jews are important to the Gospel in that

> membership in God's family entails not only a guarantee for the future but also an entitlement to specific benefits that, prior to Jesus's earthly sojourn, were reserved for the Jews alone.

That, as you note, in "contrast to Paul's letter to the Galatians, the Gospel is silent on Jewish practices such as circumcision and the dietary laws," speaks in my mind to the fact that John is addressing neither a community composed only of Gentile Christians nor a community mixed of Gentile and Jewish Christians, but a predominantly Jewish community—at least initially.

Further, you note that Jesus'

> acts of healing on the Sabbath do not advocate desecration of the Sabbath but rather demonstrate his filial relationship with God: "My Father is still working, and I also am working" (5:17).

You also can (63, n. 1)

> imagine, on the basis of Jesus's behavior as described by John, that a community that formed around John's Gospel would have observed the Sabbath and festivals.

Finally, (52) also the purification of the temple

> does not challenge the Temple's existence or importance as an institution but rather stresses the importance of keeping "his Father's house" untainted by commerce.

Some of these "identity markers," however, are redefined by "John's account of Jesus's words and deeds," and the question is debated among scholars as to whether this is "a replacement theology or a fulfillment theology, or something else altogether." You state your own goal in this chapter "not to search for more delicate language in order to cover up John's supersessionism" and comprehend

> that what the Gospel presents is not only replacement, fulfillment or displacement, but expropriation. In the Gospel's rhetoric, the Jews are no longer God's children but have relinquished their entitlement to that identity by refusing to believe that Jesus is God's son.

It follows (53) that "Scriptures and Temple" no longer belong to the Jews, but to "those who do believe."

> The Jewishness of the Gospel, or rather, the Gospel's use of Jewish scriptures, modes of reasoning, and theological concepts such as divine love does not reflect its positive stance towards Jews or Judaism, but the appropriation—expropriation-of Jewishness, a self-understanding grounded in covenantal relationship with God.

3.1 Is God's Covenant with Israel Abrogated in John's Gospel?

You concede (53) that the term *diathēkē*, "covenant," itself "does not appear in the Fourth Gospel." But you note that "the terms of the covenantal contract," which bound the Jews to God on the basis of "God's promises to Abraham and Moses in the Torah," were "redrawn" in John's Gospel "by sending his Son into the world as an expression of his love (3:16)."

> In this new reality, covenantal relationship with God belongs only to those who believe that Jesus is truly God's son and the Messiah of Israel (20:30-31). Underlying the notion of covenant is election; election, in turn, implies exclu-

sivism. A group that defines itself as elected or chosen by God necessarily differentiates itself from others who, in its view, are not so chosen. In Second Temple Jewish texts the excluded group are the Gentiles; for John, in an ironic twist, they are the *Ioudaioi*.

3.1.1 John as Messianic Critic of the World Order in Prophetic Firmness

But the latter is precisely the question. Does it not have a meaning after all that the term "covenant" nowhere appears in the Gospel, that is, that exclusion of the Jewish people from the covenant is nowhere sealed? As I often said, the issue here is not the later Christian interpretation of John's Gospel, which actually presupposed just that.

In line with Ton Veerkamp, I do not consider the following scenario impossible: John, as a Messianic Jew, assumes the self-evident validity of God's covenant with Israel, which is still opposed by the Gentiles, *goyim*, as followers of detestable gods. In addition, these *goyim* exercise an oppressive and bloody tyranny in the form of the Roman Empire, euphemistically called *Pax Romana* or *kosmos* ("ornament, well-ordered world, world order"), whose emperor rightly deserves to be called "adversary,"—Greek *diabolos*, Hebrew *satan*—of the God of Israel. He understands this world order as a new Egypt, a worldwide slave house, from which Israel can no longer emigrate to a land of freedom, where it can live separately from the *goyim* under the constitution of the Torah. Only trust in Jesus, the Messiah crucified by Rome, and the observance of his new commandment of *agapē* can overcome the world order. Under these political circumstances, John, at the same time, with prophetic anger is attacking the leading class of the Jews' own people, especially the priesthood at the time of Jesus, for their collaboration with Rome, just as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Hosea in their days indicted their own Judean kings for their collaboration with Egypt or Assyria (Isaiah 30:1-2; 31:1, 3; 36:6, 9; Jeremiah 2:18; 42:13-22; Ezekiel 17:15; Hosea 7:11; 12:2). This collaboration is demonstrated in the extreme by the priests coercing Pilate to execute Jesus the Messiah. To John, this conflict is not a now settled matter inasmuch as Rabbinic Judaism, emerging in his time, also both rejects Jesus the Messiah and values recognition by Rome as a permitted religion; hence the reason that the Johannine Jesus sees the Pharisaic/Rabbinic Jews under the influence of the Roman *diabolos*, the political adversary.

By this, I mean that just as little as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Hosea, by criticizing their own people, considered God's covenant with the Jews to have been terminated by God, as little does John. This is confirmed by the fact that nowhere in his Gospel there is any mention of a comprehensive turning to the *goyim*, of a mission to the Gentiles. Instead, the Johannine Jesus is concerned to gather all Israel, including the ten lost tribes of northern Israel in the form of the Samaritans and the Diaspora Jews, into the Messianic community as a new Israel trusting in the Messiah.

3.1.2 Jesus' Denial of Legitimate Jewish Claims to the Covenant with God

According to you (53), in John 8:31-59, the *Ioudaioi* themselves describe their "covenantal identity" most clearly (55) by making "three major claims," namely "that they are children of Abraham, have never served any other beings, and that they are children of God." That these claims are justified is evidenced (54) by God's making a covenant with Abram/Abraham (Genesis 15 and 17), by pointing out that part of making a covenant is renouncing service to foreign gods (cf. Psalm 106:36), and (55) by God's request to Moses to present the people of Israel to Pharaoh as his "firstborn son" (Exodus 4:22-23). All of this amounts to the same corollary: "Jews are in an eternal covenantal relationship with God."

I find it interesting that on the one hand (53) you refer the above elements of Jewish identity to "their profound commitment to monotheism, a tenet that is central in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish theology, and Jewish liturgy," but on the other hand in a note you refer, rather covertly, to Alan F. Segal[104] who considers it possible that "the ancient Jewish notions of monotheism may also have allowed of a belief in 'Two Powers in Heaven.'" From this point of view, it should at least seem conceivable, as Larry W. Hurtado[105] thinks, to also consider an "unusual 'binitarian' devotional pattern" of worshiping Jesus together with God as an inner-Jewish development that is

> shaped by the exclusivist monotheism inherited from the Jewish tradition. The Christdevotion we see in these Christian writings is certainly a novel development. It is equally clearly presented as a religious stance that seeks to be faithful to the concern for the one God, and therefore it must be seen in historical terms as a distinctive variant form of monotheism.

Nevertheless, in John's Gospel an irreconcilable controversy arises between those who regard Jesus as Israel's Messiah and those who are described there as *Ioudaioi.* Within this controversy, the "Johannine Jesus" in your eyes denies all claims of the Jews to the covenant with God by referring to "their rejection of his Messiahship." In my eyes, however, what is crucial is how he does this. I like to go into this in more detail, drawing on Ton Veerkamp's interpretation.

3.1.2.1 If the *Ioudaioi* Were Children of Abraham, They Would Not Kill God's Son

While Jesus concedes to the *Ioudaioi* that "they may be descended from Abraham (*sperma Abraam*—the seed of Abraham; 8:33)," at the same time "they cannot be the children of Abraham (*tekna Abraam*; 8:39)," because they do not act like Abraham: "Whereas Abraham accepted God's messengers (cf. Genesis 18), the *Ioudaioi* try to kill God's son (8:40)."

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104 (64, n. 12) Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

105 Larry W. Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2003, 50.

Ton Veerkamp writes on this accusation:[106]

> We hear the accusation of killing for the sixth time here. Apparently, this thought has become an obsession to John. This has probably to do with the fierce hostility to which his group was exposed by the synagogue in their town.

In his interpretation of 16:2-3, Veerkamp explains in more detail what he means by this. In the conflict between the Johannine Messianists and rabbinic Judaism at the time of John, he tries to do justice to the concerns of both sides and to make understandable why John accuses the synagogue—in Veerkamp's eyes wrongly—of having renounced the covenant with the God of Israel:[107]

> Rabbinical Judaism now makes the disciples people "without a synagogue" (*aposynagōgoi*). . . .
>
> The synagogue was not a church, not a religious community. Rather, it was both a place of assembly and an organ of self-government, where the children of Israel were able to manage their affairs within the framework of the status of an ethnic group recognized by the Romans with their permitted cult (*religio licita, politeuma* in Alexandria). This meant not insignificant protection against administrative sanctions and arbitrariness by the authorities. The degree of autonomy varied according to time, city, and region. The synagogal status was something between full citizenship and the status of a stranger and immigrant.
>
> But the status was precarious; there is ample evidence that privileges were confiscated and that there were expulsions and pogroms tolerated or even instigated by the authorities, such as the pogrom 37/38 in Alexandria. The synagogue, therefore, had to take care that groups with views hostile to the state did not gain the upper hand.
>
> Apparently, the leadership of the synagogue at the place where John and his group were staying had concluded that they posed a danger to the synagogue. It was therefore their duty to expel such groups. The leadership of the synagogue, where John's group belonged, represented the line of Rabbinical Judaism, but John made no secret of his aversion to this line. The exclusion was a legitimate and politically understandable act of synagogal leadership. This is the reason we can see and must see, and therefore the word "without reason" (*chinnam, dōrean*) is misplaced. It is part of the self-evident duty of non-Jewish exegetes to understand the conflict also from the perspective of the synagogue and not to take sides with "Jesus and the apostles" from the

106 Veerkamp 206 (The *Diabolos* is Not the Devil, par. 2).

107 Veerkamp 316-18 ("When he comes, the advocate, the inspiration of fidelity," par. 4-12).

outset. As I said, John does not even bother to search as to the reasons for the exclusion. Here we do not have to be disciples of John.

If, on the other hand, a group is expelled from the synagogue, it loses status and protection, and the members of that group must deal with the Roman authorities individually. This meant danger to life. The execution of anti-state elements was an act of political loyalty, and such loyalty at that time was *ipso facto* religious. Whoever took part in such persecution performed a "public service" (*latreia*) to that God who was the God of the State.

According to John's view, the followers of Rabbinical Judaism participated in the persecution. There is no evidence of this outside the Gospel. Messianists ("followers of a certain Chrestos," the governor of Bithynia, Pliny, wrote to Emperor Trajan around 110) were executed by Romans; members of the Judean ethnic group hardly had this possibility, but they had the possibility of denunciation. Whether they made use of this possibility, we cannot know. But the synagogue could not kill anyone. While there may have been murder and manslaughter among the opposing factions, this happened at best privately and certainly not as a "public service" (*latreia*).[108]

In any case, the political consequences of the exclusion explain the sharpness in which John turns against Rabbinical Judaism; and they also explain why John could not find rational reasons for their attitude among his opponents. "You seek to kill me," 7:19; 8:40; 8:59; 10:31; 11:53; 12:10, is the constant reproach. Given the persecution and murder of Messianists by Rome, which began early on, this accusation is obviously not completely unfounded; the exclusion meant danger to the lives of the ones excluded. "One does not do such a thing; there are no justifiable reasons for an exclusion which means danger to the life of the excluded," thus the reproach of John can be paraphrased.

Admittedly, the political orientation of the Messianists is rationally comprehensible as well. If under Roman conditions the situation of the children of Israel is precarious inside and outside the country, then they must not hope to find niches in which they can survive, but then they need a completely different world. Paul says this no less clearly than John. The fact that there is no mediation between survival and world revolution makes the conflict tragic in the truest sense of the word. We can discover rational reasons on both sides

108 Veerkamp adds the remark: "Luke reports an attempt by the synagogue in Corinth to turn the dispute with the Messianist Paul into a political affair. The governor Gallio declared himself not to be in charge and the affair ended in the presence of Gallio with a spanking for Sosthenes the head of the synagogue and Gallio did not care, Acts 18:12 ff. Such brawls were not *latreia*!"

> from the safe distance of two millennia. But for those affected at the time, a rational confrontation was obviously not possible.
>
> To John, the synagogue places itself outside of Israel, "They recognize neither the FATHER nor me." "Not recognizing God" is the revocation of the covenant that the God of Israel has made with the fathers and with the children of Israel. In contrast to the accusation of killing, this accusation that Rabbinical Judaism has given up its commitment to the God of Israel is definitely unfounded; we must contradict it. If Rabbinical Judaism is reproached with this, if this becomes the thing—and it became the thing—Israel will be disinherited by Christianity. The accusation is strictly analogous to the accusation of atheism that the Roman authorities will put on the Christians. However, John had no power, and the accusation could be dismissed as ridiculous. But when Christianity became a state religion and the Christian church a state institution, the accusation had far-reaching political consequences.

At this point, Ton Veerkamp's and your assessment of John's Gospel meet in terms of its impact on Christianity. Unlike you, Veerkamp tries to give a plausible reason why John reproaches Rabbinic Judaism so sharply. From John's point of view, it is the Rabbinic Jews who denounce their covenant with God, while he still holds that God stands by his covenant with Israel. In his Messianic community, the Johannine Jesus wants to gather all Israel—including Samaria, the Jews of the Diaspora, and individual God-fearers from the *goyim*—and by no means found a completely new non-Jewish Gentile religion. The fact that the Gospel of John is interpreted very soon in exactly your sense does not correspond to the original aim of John.

3.1.2.2 To be Enslaved under the *hamartia* Means to Be a Slave of Rome

As to the *Ioudaioi's* self-confidence in being free from enslavement, in your eyes (55) the Johannine Jesus accuses them that they

> were and continue to be enslaved as long as they refuse to believe. In 8:34, Jesus proclaims: "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

On this point, I have already explained in section 1.2.3.3 what is actually meant by the term *hamartia* in John's Gospel. It is neither about defining the refusal to convert to the religion of Christianity as sinful nor about an idea of sin in terms of moral transgressions. Rather, John judges Rabbinic Judaism's search for a *modus vivendi* with Rome as an implicit submission to the interests of the prevailing world order, a transgression of the freedom and justice toward which Israel's Torah is directed:[109]

> To be "slave of aberration" in the end means to be "slave of Rome."

109 Veerkamp 204 (Fidelity and Freedom, par. 10).

3.1.2.3 Whoever Submits to Rome Has the *diabolos* as His Father

It is precisely this political dispute between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews about positioning against the Roman world order that must be seen in the background of the momentous verses 8:42-44, which Ton Veerkamp translates as follows:[110]

> 8:42 Jesus said to them,
> "If GOD were your FATHER,
> you would solidarize with me,
> for I came out from GOD and have come;
> for I have not come from myself,
> but that ONE sent me.
> 8:43 Why don't you recognize my speech?
> Because you cannot listen to my word.
> 8:44 You are from the father, the adversary.
> The desire of your father you want to do.
> He is a murderer of humans on principle,
> fidelity is not a standpoint for him,
> because there is no fidelity with him.
> When he speaks lies and deceit,
> he speaks what is his own,
> he is a deceiver and father of deceit.

You describe what is happening here from the premise (55) that the *Ioudaioi* cannot love Jesus, even though he is sent by God, because their "rejection of Jesus has ousted" them "from their covenantal relationship with God" and revealed "their true ancestry as children of the devil." Thus, you interpret the term *diabolos* not from the Jewish Scriptures, but in its later Christian meaning as unearthly demonic power.

Veerkamp,[111] on the other hand, understands *diabolos* as a transfer of the Hebrew term *satan*, which nowhere in the Jewish Scriptures denotes "a supernatural evil spirit" but either an earthly political opponent or a functionary of God "who appears as an opponent in the heavenly court proceedings." So what specifically is John 8:44 about?

> Here it is about a mighty adversary, who is not sent by God, thus about a mighty earthly adversary. This opponent has "desires" (*epithymiai*). They are factually identical with the desire—better: "greed"—of the world order (*epithymia tou kosmou*, 1 John 2:16-17). John 8:44 and 1 John 2:16-17 are the only passages in Johannine literature where the word for greed appears, in connection with *diabolos*.[112] Satan is an earthly Satan, he is the world order, he is Rome.

110 Veerkamp 205-06 (The *Diabolos* is Not the Devil, par. 1).
111 Veerkamp 208-09 (The *Diabolos* is Not the Devil, par. 11-15).

> All this becomes clear when the leading priests in the scene in front of the praetorium assured Pilate, "We have no king except Caesar!" They explain where there is their unambiguous political loyalty, who is their "god." For the functional word "god" denotes the convergence of all earthly loyalties. To the leading priests, the point of convergence is Caesar. This passage 19:15 explains our passage 8:44—and vice versa. Jesus accuses his opponents of pursuing the politics of Rome, Rome is their god and father. They let themselves be determined in their political actions by the interests of the ruling world order, it is to this they are in solidarity. Therefore they cannot solidarize with the Messiah ("to love"—*agapan*).
>
> Everybody can know that this Satan, this *diabolos,* is a murderer of humans, after the massacre that the Romans carried out after the devastation of Jerusalem. In this Satan there is no fidelity, he speaks "lies and deceit" (*pseudos*), "in principle (*ap' archēs*)." Whoever pursues politics with Rome is "a deceiver (*pseustēs*) like his father."
>
> Jesus is talking about fidelity, about God's fidelity to Israel, and that is the word they do not trust, says Jesus. No one can accuse him of being wrong, of leading himself and others astray, when he is talking about the fidelity of God, a fidelity diametrically opposed to Rome. Since they, as realpolitikers, start from the superior political reality of Rome, they cannot hear what Jesus has to say.

Not to be misunderstood: Of course, even a political "demonization" of Rabbinic Judaism, which allegedly submitted to Rome as the adversary of the God of Israel, cannot simply be dismissed as harmless and excusable. It should be criticized by Christians as well, as it deserves: as a political misjudgment and overreaction in a conflict situation that had already become unbridgeable in John's time—with then unforeseeable disastrous consequences.

3.2 The Significance of the Torah or the Tanakh for the Gospel of John

As to the relationship of John's Gospel to the Jewish Torah, you state (55):

> In 8:17 and 10:34, John's Jesus seems to dissociate himself from the Torah by referring to "your law" when speaking to the *Ioudaioi*. Nevertheless, throughout the Gospel as a whole, Jesus, and those who believe in him, are in fact the ones who have rightful access to the scriptures, or, at least, to their correct, that is, Christological, interpretation. Even though the Torah was given to the *Ioudaioi*—a point that the Gospel does not deny—they themselves have failed

112 The adversary who appears in the immediate vicinity of these verses (1 John 2:18, 22) is called *antichristos*; *diabolos* is spoken of 4 times in 1 John 3:8, 10.

> to understand it, for they have never known God (5:38-47; 7:28; 8:19, 24-27, 47; 15:21; 16:3).

Beyond question (56) is the paramount importance that the Jewish Scriptures have for John's Gospel, though when you speak of the "centrality of Torah to John's rhetorical message," you obviously mean the entire Tanakh of Torah, Prophets, and Writings.

3.2.1 The Concept of *logos* in John's Gospel and Its Relation to *sophia*

In the prologue, you recognize references to biblical wisdom, such as "Proverbs 8:22, the Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach) 24, and the Wisdom of Solomon." However, we need not view this, as you do, as evidence for the pre-existence of Jesus.

Ton Veerkamp[113] suggests that the first verses of John's Gospel should not be translated with the past tense, "in the beginning *was* the Word," as if it were a matter of "a historical chronology: 'In the beginning was the Word, and then there are further events.' Yet the Word always is acting as inception, as a principle, in everything that is happening":

> 1:1 In the beginning is the Word.
> The Word is onto GOD,
> divine is the Word.
> 1:2 This one is in the beginning onto GOD.

Decisive is that the Messiah Jesus perfectly embodies the *logos* or *sophia* of the God of Israel and that thus a new beginning is set for Israel in the sense of a new beginning or completion of creation (see also 5:17). In other words: The Messiah Jesus is not to be understood in any other way than in his directedness toward this one and very specific God of Israel, *pros ton theon*, "onto GOD" and that he embodies his liberating NAME.

As to your question (64, n. 16), whether "the Gospel identifies Jesus as divine wisdom, why the use of Logos rather than Sophia," you consider the

> explanation ... that Sophia, as a feminine noun (in both Greek and in Hebrew, *hokhmah*), is not a suitable way to describe a male incarnation. Logos, a masculine noun, would be far more suitable. But this alone does not seem like enough to account for the use of Logos.

In my view, it is closer to the point that John may refer only marginally to wisdom traditions of *sophia* since the accent of his Gospel is precisely not to praise the world as God's well-ordered creation, *ktisis*, but to attack the—propagandistically—so-called *kosmos*, world order, as a ruling system of injustice brought into disorder by humans. In such a context it makes more sense that John with the word *logos* refers

113 Veerkamp 18-20 (The Word and the Life, par. 1, 5).

to the Hebrew term *devarim* in the sense of the liberating word deeds or deed words of the God of Israel.

Therefore, I would not overestimate (57) the "similarities to the *logos* in Philo," who develops "the *logos"* as "a highly complex concept" with reference to "both Platonic and Stoic philosophy." Precisely because "Philo's *logos* was the medium of creation and continues to mediate between God and the world" Philo actually touches more on "Sophia or wisdom" and less on "John's *Logos*," as just reasoned.

Nevertheless, even if the word *sophia* does not occur in John's Gospel, echoes and references to wisdom traditions are not excluded. In this context (56) you cite Sirach 24:8-9, where

> Wisdom describes how she came to reside within Israel: "Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said, 'Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.'" Similarly, John 1:14a declares that "the Word became flesh and lived among us."

It is interesting that, at this point, you explicitly use the vocable "tent," *skēnē*, whereas in John 1:14 you do not perceive that the word form *eskēnōsen* used there goes back to the same root and refers to the indwelling of the NAME in the tent of meeting during the wilderness wanderings.

In the same chapter of the Book of Sirach (57) you find support for the "identification of Wisdom as Torah," namely

> in Ben Sirach 24:3: "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist." The Prologue uses this same language of the divine *Logos* who becomes incarnate in Jesus (1:14). Furthermore, the grace and truth that accompanies God's only begotten son (1:17) is in Exodus 33:18-20[114] associated with the giving of the Torah.

You rightly object against the assumption of Ben Witherington III,[115] who

> suggests that "the evangelist simply uses the term Logos to better prepare for the replacement motif—Jesus superseding Torah as God's Logos." But the Prologue ties the *Logos* to the Torah in several ways. In the first place, *logos*, in the sense of "word," recalls biblical and postbiblical reflection on God as the one who speaks the world into being. This follows the pattern of the creation narrative in Genesis 1, whereby light, the sky, the sea, and all other

114 Here I wonder whether you really meant to refer to this Exodus passage, since it does not speak of truth or Torah. Did you mean Exodus 33:13—although even there it speaks only of grace and the way, not the Torah?

115 (64, n. 19) Ben Witherington, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1995), 53.

> worldly, including humankind, elements are brought into being by God's speech.

In doing so, you do not address the fact that the biblical use of the word *davar* with regard to creation does not simply mean a static bringing "into being" but always implies a liberating action of God. It is no coincidence that the word *bara'*, which denotes only God's creative action, appears particularly frequently with Deutero-Isaiah in connection with the hope of liberation and justice for Israel (see Isaiah 45:12-19).

3.2.2 Does Jesus Fulfill the Torah or Push it Aside as God's Decisive Revelation?

The authority of both "the Torah as well as the books of the prophets" is in any case recognized in John's Gospel, also according to you, as well as "within Jewish circles." In this context, you acknowledge in a note (65, n. 21) the attitude of an "interpreter" like Daniel Boyarin,[116] who, similarly to Ton Veerkamp, pleads

> that the Gospel sees Jesus as supplementing rather than replacing Torah. Daniel Boyarin states that "For John, as for that other most 'Jewish' of Gospels, Matthew—but in a very different manner—Jesus comes to fulfill the mission of Moses, not to displace." According to Boyarin, 1:10-12—"He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him"—describes the "partial failure" of Israel to accept God's Word when they received it in the form of scripture. In response to this failure, God conceived of Plan B: to incarnate the Logos in flesh and blood. Says Boyarin, "The Torah simply needed a better exegete, the Logos Ensarkos, a fitting teacher for flesh and blood. … God thus first tried the text, and then sent his voice, incarnated in the voice of Jesus." Although he does not say so, Boyarin's analysis implies that, for John, Jesus not only fulfils and supplements Torah, Jesus is Torah, just as, for Second Temple Jewish wisdom literature, Sophia/Hokhma/Logos are Torah.

This idea is well worth considering, that Jesus embodies the Torah in John's eyes; in any case, according to 1:18, he is literally God's exegete (*exēgēsato*).

Now, what are the implications for the Jews in John's Gospel (57) that "Jesus, like Torah, is both the content and the vehicle of revelation"? In your eyes, first of all, the Torah loses its central meaning, because

> Jesus, the *Logos*, has nudged the Torah aside, and now occupies its place as the centerpiece in God's relationship to humankind. The second is the demotion of the Jews from their privileged relationship to Torah and their role as its authoritative lnterpreters.

116 (64, n. 12, and 65, n. 21) Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, 104.

In doing so, however, you presuppose a view of the Torah that is no longer John's, according to which the only meaning of the Torah is to point to Jesus as the Son of God, rather than to understand the meaning of Jesus from the Torah. John himself, as a Jewish Messianist, did not want to push the Torah to the side but he was convinced that only through Jesus the Messiah, the Torah's concerns of autonomy and egalitarianism for Israel could be realized or brought closer to fulfillment, ultimately by handing over in his death on the cross to those who trust in him the inspiration of sanctification that will enable them to overcome the world order through the new commandment of *agapē*, solidarity. As a Messianic Jew, he was in a relentless dispute about this with the Rabbinic Jews about the proper interpretation of the Scriptures, accusing his opponents of missing the meaning of the Scriptures and not trusting in them.

I do not fully understand the meaning (58) of the last two paragraphs of your remarks on the Torah in this section. You compare "the covenant through God's Son" and the "covenant through Torah" and state that both contain "the intertwined ideas of commandment and obedience." On the side of the Torah covenant, you mention the Israelites' promise of obedience in Exodus 19:8, to which corresponds God's perpetual covenant promise in Exodus 19:5-6. On the side of the covenant through God's Son, on the other hand, you initially also speak of "commandment, obedience, and love as constitutive of the relationships among God, Jesus, and the believers," but then refer only to Jesus' obedience to the FATHER in John 14:31, 12:49-50, and 10:18. What you intend by this remains unclear, for at this point your corresponding argumentation breaks off.

In any case, in my view, John does not want to replace the covenant established between God and Israel in Exodus 19 with a covenant between Jesus and his believers. He is concerned precisely with bringing to fulfillment the covenant of God with Israel, violated in his eyes by the Jewish leadership—in that it rejects the Messiah Jesus and submits to the Roman world order—by overcoming the Roman world order through his death on the cross and the handing over of inspiration. For the Messianic community, understood as the Body of the Messiah, the new sanctuary in which the God of Israel will have his NAME dwell (2:19, 21-22; 14:2-3, 23), is not to be composed of members of an entirely new religion, Christianity, gained by way of Gentile mission, but as a result of the gathering of all Israel (Judea, Samaria, Diaspora Jews).

Later (59) you draw the following conclusion in view of the Torah:

> In his identity as the *Logos* or Word that proceeded from God before the world was created, Jesus displaces the Torah as God's preeminent and decisive revelation, even as the Torah remains revelatory insofar as it bears witness to Jesus and authenticates the claim that he is the Messiah and Son of God (see 1:1-3; 5:39-40).

This argumentation remains contradictory, however, since there can be no question of Jesus replacing the Torah if his status as the Messiah of Israel is indeed to be substantiated by the Torah.

3.3 The Temple as the Place Where God Has His NAME Dwell

Also, (59) "the Temple retains a positive significance within the Gospel," but even to it (58) John advocates a "rhetoric of expropriation." However, you say yourself:

> If the Temple is God's house, and if Jesus is God's son, then surely Jesus has the right to drive out those who, in his judgment, are turning a place of worship into a marketplace.

John proceeds precisely from these presuppositions, well interpreted Jewishly. Can we speak of an "expropriation" if John has in mind the goal of liberation and justice for Israel and is convinced, on the basis of the Jewish Scriptures, that Jesus is the Messiah who can achieve this goal?

Your following formulation is too undifferentiated (59):

> As God's son, he has already removed access to the Temple from the (unbelieving) Jews, who remain slaves of sin due to their unbelief.

This statement sounds as if Jesus had driven out of the temple every Jew who did not believe in him, as if their sin consisted in this unbelief and as if he had founded a new religion. In fact, Jesus initially does nothing else than the prophet Jeremiah (7:11), who compared the goings-on in the temple of his day to a den of robbers, and he justifies his behavior explicitly on the basis of Psalm 69:10 and implicitly on the basis of Zechariah 14:21. Neither Jeremiah nor Zechariah, despite their criticisms, could be suspected of wanting to throw every Jew out of the temple.

Also the conception of the Johannine Jesus (2:19, 21) of the "temple of his body" must have nothing to do with the fact that he arbitrarily "has displaced the Temple as the locus of worship of the divine," rather, according to the Scriptures, God has his NAME dwell where he chooses, be it in the tent of meeting or in the temple at Jerusalem, or be it in the flesh of the Messiah (John 1:14), that is, his earthly existence, or in his body, to be understood symbolically, the Messianic community (14:2-3, 23).[117]

3.3.1 Places of Worship after the Destruction of Sanctuaries

In the conversation with the Samaritan woman, an essential point of view is added: precisely because it is important to the Johannine Jesus to bring together all of Is-

117 You yourself refer in a note (65, n. 23) for the "discussion of Temple imagery in John 14" to James McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms: The Temple Theme of Jn. 14, 2-3* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989).

rael, including Samaria, it matters significantly to John that in his time not only the long-destroyed sanctuary of the Samaritans on the Gerizim but also the temple in Jerusalem no longer exists. In this regard, Veerkamp states:[118]

> Both peoples have "no place, nowhere" anymore. "Neither Jerusalem nor Gerizim" is an inconsolable reality, to both peoples. What future do they have? Who else can they follow, except the idol of this world order?

After the destruction of the Temple, Rabbinic Judaism, too, must develop alternative forms of practicing its religion, and it finds them primarily in concentrating on the study of the Torah in the synagogue. And it is precisely with this Rabbinic Judaism that the Messianic Jews in John's Gospel argue about whether the study of the Torah alone is sufficient to survive in a niche of the Roman World Empire, or whether trust in the Messiah Jesus is necessary to overcome this oppressive world order as such.

In your eyes (59), what Jesus implies in 2:21 and tells the Samaritan woman in 4:21 is already

> fulfilled at least provisionally in John 6. Contrary to his usual practice, Jesus does not go up to Jerusalem for the Passover but spends it on a mountain in the Galilee. A multitude of Galilean Jews flock to him there; he nourishes them with bread, fish, and his teachings. For those Galileans, worship has already shifted from Jerusalem to wherever Jesus is.

I do not think, however, that this is about the place of worship. Nowhere in the Gospel the Passover itself is celebrated, not even here, for according to 6:4 *ēn de engys to pascha*, "near was Pascha." It is true that in chapter 6 it is asked whether Jesus wants to be proclaimed king as the nourisher of Israel, but his hour, the hour of liberation, of the new Passover, has not yet come; it is not dawning until Jesus will die on the cross as the new Passover Lamb.

3.3.2 "Bowing Down to the FATHER Inspired and According to Fidelity"

More essential is a verse in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman about the way of worship or bowing to the FATHER, in regard to which you write:

> 4:23 clarifies that the "you" in question are not only Samaritans but all "true worshippers" who "will worship the Father in spirit and truth."

What is meant by this can be interpreted very differently. Ton Veerkamp translates and explains as follows:[119]

118 Veerkamp 117 (Neither—Nor, Inspiration and Fidelity, par. 4).

119 Veerkamp 116 and 118-19 (Neither—Nor, Inspiration and Fidelity, par. 1 and 10-14).

4:23 But the hour is coming
—indeed, it's happening now—
when they who are bowing faithfully,
will bow to the Father according to inspiration and fidelity,
for the FATHER is seeking such as these who are bowing to him.
4:24 As inspiration, GOD is working;
and those bowing to him
are to bow according to inspiration and fidelity."

. . . "The hour is coming—and it is now!—that those who *really* bow to the FATHER are bowing according to *inspiration and fidelity*." This is always translated as "in spirit and truth." Not false, but worn, worn out. Consciousness has as essential content the fidelity of God to Israel, and this fidelity is *inspiring*. *Inspiration*—the word contains the Latin word "*spiritus*" (*pneuma, ruach*)—is what orients people's actions, speech, and thinking, from fidelity—to fidelity. "God" is what claims the ultimate loyalty of people, it is what a person is actually concerned about. "God" has a NAME in Israel, and this NAME can only be pronounced as, *Who is leading out of the house of slavery* (Exodus 20:2), as *moshiaʿ yisraʾel*, "liberator of Israel" (Isaiah 45:15). But in fact, "God" is functioning as anything else, as nameless gods. Samaria is called upon to pay homage only to this NAME as "God," as what it is actually about.

Such as these the FATHER is seeking, "for God," according to Jesus, "may only work as this inspiration." That is, to be inspired by the liberator and his liberation, to direct all political activity to this liberation, to let this liberation be "God." This conversation is not about academic clarification of whether God is a "spirit." No: God inspires by his fidelity to his people that he wants to liberate, as he once liberated Israel from the slave house.

The sentence: *pneuma ho theos* has the form of a declarative clause. What inspires people is their "God." And what they recognize as "God", as what it is actually about, that is, what they must pay homage to politically. In Israel this is the FATHER; by this word, John paraphrases the inexpressible NAME.

What is the meaning of "And this is now?" Christian orthodoxy sees here an inner process: whoever gets involved in it is "redeemed." This is not entirely false. Whoever makes this political perspective his life's purpose, does indeed live differently. To him, the splitting of Israel is overcome.

If now the reality of the bitter enmity does not open itself to this reasonable perspective, then you can react in two ways. On the one hand, it may be said, "All illusion," as Pilate said, "What is fidelity," 18:38; on the other hand, it is possible to internalize this perspective and let reality be just this catastrophic reality. This second reaction is the emergence of the Christian religion. Admittedly, the eschatological hope of the transformation of the world remains; but

> for the time being, nothing more can be expected from the world, and the temporary perspective of the individual is life after death and heaven.[120] The woman from Samaria reacts in a third way, with skepticism.

As the narrative progresses, the woman apparently does overcome her skepticism, and the entire Gospel is a single attempt by John to explain how a Messiah who is crucified by the Romans, who bids farewell to Messianic adventures, can nevertheless be trustworthy in taking hopeful steps to overcome the Roman world order—namely, by inspiring a Messianic community in which all Israel is to be gathered to practice *agapē*, solidarity.

In this sense, your conclusion regarding the temple (60) is approximately correct:

> And while the Gospel nowhere suggests that the Temple has lost its status as God's house, it is now Jesus who constitutes the preeminent locus for divine-human relationship.

Not quite accurate is the generalization "divine-human relationship." In fact, John, like Rabbinic Judaism, is also originally concerned with the relationship between God and Israel.

3.4 The Withered Vine: Intra-Jewish Criticism or Ousted Metaphor?

Now we come to a verse (60) that, at first glance, takes the hostility to Jews of John's Gospel to the extreme:

> The verse that encapsulates the expropriation of Jewishness is John 15:6. This verse appears in the context of the so-called parable of the vine in which Jesus identifies himself as the true vine and God as the vinegrower. Jesus declares that all who abide in—believe in—Jesus as God's son will belong to and nourished by the vine (15:1-5). But "whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned" (15:6).

The image John uses here, however, is not new. You too are aware that in

> Second Temple Jewish literature, the metaphor refers to the Jews, who, like Jews today, identify with the Israel of whom the prophets spoke. The vine could also be identified with divine wisdom and Torah (Sir 24:17; Philo *On Dreams* 2.171).

You take it as expropriation of this Jewish metaphor that "John's Jesus identifies himself as the 'true vine' and believers as the fruit-laden branches."

120 Veerkamp adds the remark: "Gnosis doesn't even leave the trace of a world transformation. All material things are evil in themselves and must burn. Only the non-material, the soul, the spiritual, shall and can live. Christianity never went thus far."

> Jesus is the vine therefore both in his role as the divine *Logos* of the Prologue and as the corporate body in which believers must abide in order to bear fruit. ... Who, then, are the withered branches that are cast forth, gathered, and burned? Cyril of Alexandria knew: the Jews.[121]

I do not dispute that Cyril in the 5th century interpreted the parable in such an anti-Jewish way—from the Christian's perspective toward the disinherited religion of the Jews. But John writes as a Jewish Messianist, familiar with the metaphor of the vine from his own tradition.

Even you yourself accurately describe the background of the parable in "the widespread use of the vine as a metaphor for Israel in the books of the prophets." Thus Isaiah 5:1-9 explains why the children of Abraham may be excluded from God's "covenant with Abraham and his descendants" made for eternity according to Genesis 17:7. It boils down to (61) that where "God expected justice and righteousness, he saw only bloodshed and cries (5:7)." Likewise, you refer to Jeremiah 2:21 and 8:13, where "divine nurturing" turns "to divine punishment" and there is talk of "a vine that had already died, forsaking the one who had nurtured them and given them everything they needed in order to thrive." Finally, the prophet Ezekiel in 16:6 speaks not only of "the mere withering of the vine" but that "Israel's faithlessness must result in the utter destruction that only fire can accomplish," indeed, "Ezekiel 9:12 contains the same elements as John 15:1-6: withering, gathering, and burning."

The two passages Isaiah 5:1-6 and Jeremiah 2:21 are also mentioned by Ton Veerkamp, who additionally refers to Psalm 80:[122]

> Then the song "Shepherd of Israel, listen" (Psalm 80). In this song, Israel is compared to a vine that God brought up from Egypt into the land, "its root rooted in . . . its branches stretched out to the sea." The keywords of our parable John 15:1-2 (*ampelos*, "vine," and *klēmata*, "branches, flowering twigs") are also found in this song. The theme of the song is the decline of Israel, which has become the prey of foreign peoples. The refrain of the song (four times, v.4, 8, 15, 20) reads,
>
> > God: let us return,
> > let your face shine,
> > we will be liberated.
>
> The texts see Israel as a vineyard where the vines bear fruit: Israel's hoped-for yield is the legal order of its God. But in fact, Israel is the foreign vine that bears no fruit, and if it does, then only *beʾushim*, "rotten fruit." To the desires

121 (66, n. 29) Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, Book 10. Accessed October 9, 2017: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/cyril_on_john_10_book10.htm.

122 Veerkamp 308-09 (The Parable of the Vine. Solidarity, par. 10-16).

for the restoration of Israel, the Messiah answers, "I AM—the faithful vine." In Psalm 80, of all places, there is talk of a *ben ʾadam* (the Hebrew form of the Aramaic *bar enosh*), v.18-19,

> Let your hand be over the man of your right hand,
> over the Human, you made strong for yourself.
> Never again we want to turn away from you,
> let us live, who are called by Your name.

This background makes us understand what is said with this parable. The Messiah of Israel is that *bar enosh*, Human, and so Israel itself, Daniel 7:27. He is the absolute opposite of that deceptive Israel, that "wrong, foreign vine." To describe Israel as a collective, the metaphor "vine" is used. The vine is the Messiah, the members of the group are the flowering branches, the grapes. They must be provided for so that the grapes bear fruit. This is not the work of the Messiah, but the vintner, the God of Israel.

The work of God is "to cleanse." Through the word (*logos, davar*) of the Messiah the disciples are clean, 15:3, that is, through the word, the disciples "already" fulfill that condition of purity which has always been fulfilled for each member of the people to participate in the community.

This is based on the intense connection with the Messiah, "Stay firmly with me, as I with you." The Messianic vision is the basic condition for a truthful life. If you are not really confident that the prevailing conditions, namely the "world order," are not unchangeable, but that "life in the age to come" (*zōē aiōnios*) is a real perspective for the life of people on earth, you cannot do anything: For "separated from me (*chōris emou*) you can do nothing." Otherwise, all doing is useless, barren, unfruitful.

You now again (61) interpret the use of "these prophetic motifs" for "the intertwined relationships among Jesus, God, and believers" as an, in your eyes, undue appropriation:

> In the Gospel, as in the books of the prophets, God is the vinegrower. For John, however, Jesus replaces Israel as the vine, of which believers are an integral part. Whereas the prophets describe a judgment on all Israel for faithlessness, John differentiates between the faithful (those who believe Jesus to be the Messiah, Son of God) and the faithless (those who reject such belief, that is, the Jews). The passage therefore declares that, on account of their refusal to believe in Jesus, Jews are no longer God's vine. God has removed them from divine covenantal relationship; like withered vine branches, God gathers them up, casts them into the fire, and burns them (15:6).

Here we must look very carefully. Can we really speak of an appropriation if John understands Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and Son of Man, who at the same time em-

bodies in the whole of his life the people of Israel, an Israel fully aligned with the will of the FATHER? No, Jesus does not replace Israel in order to reject it, but he embodies Israel in order to liberate it! In my eyes, Jesus in John's Gospel proclaims judgment over Israel in the same way as the prophets. They too did not want to destroy Israel as a whole but were concerned with the preservation of those who would listen to the message of judgment. So if there is an inner-Jewish prophetic-Messianic dispute being fought out here, there can be no question of John expelling *the Jews*.

In your next paragraph, it becomes clear that you definitely know that the (61-62)

> differentiation that John enacts is not his innovation but, like the metaphor of the vine and branches, based on scripture. Zechariah 8:12 refers to a remnant that shall remain, promising a time when "the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things." Jeremiah 6:9 also describes the faithful remnant as a vine: "Glean thoroughly as a vine the remnant of Israel; like a grape-gatherer, pass your hand again over its branches."

At this very point you speak again of the fact that the "vine metaphor in John 15 therefore exemplifies the rhetoric of appropriation and expropriation that I have been tracing in this chapter," in that

> John appropriates a biblical motif of covenant and removal from the covenant —symbolized by the vinegrower's cultivation and then destruction of the vineyard—effectively declaring that the faithlessness for which God destroyed the vineyard in the past is matched by the faithlessness that the Jews display in their rejection of God's son. The believers are the righteous remnant of Israel that retains its covenantal relationship with God from which the faithless have been cast off to wither and die.

As I often said, this is true for the doctrine of disinheritance espoused by the later Christian church when Gentile Christians gained the upper hand in it and John's Gospel was no longer interpreted in liberation-theological terms but in cosmological-Gnostic terms. However, if at the time of the Gospel of John Messianic Jews are quarreling with Rabbinic Jews, there is no disinheritance of the Jews yet but something similar to a fight between prophets of Baal and prophets of YHWH or between Sadducees and Pharisees or Zealots.

In fact, you answer your question posed in a note (66, n. 30) "of whether the new vine that includes Jesus and the believers is also called Israel" basically in the affirmative because:

> The label "Israel" does not appear often in the Gospel, but it is generally used positively, or, at least, Jesus does not distance himself from the term. In 1:31, John the Baptist declares that he undertook his mission of water baptism in order that Jesus might be revealed to Israel. In 1:49, Nathanael declares Jesus

> to be the Son of God and King of Israel, which Jesus takes as an expression of his belief (1:50). In 3:10, Jesus criticizes Nicodemus for his lack of understanding as a "teacher of Israel." And when Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly, the people call out "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!" (12:13). Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine whether John envisioned the children of God as Israel.

In my eyes, there is much to be said in favor of John viewing the children of God as Israel. I only mention the passage 11:50-52, where Caiaphas as the high priest is an unwitting prophet about Jesus dying for the people, *laos*, namely Israel—and also for all the scattered children of God, by which the Jews of the Diaspora are meant.

3.5 The Jewish Features of John's Gospel as Part of His Anti-Judaism?

Thus, although you concede that John's "Gospel is thoroughly Jewish," you reproach him that these

> features, however, function rhetorically not to include Alexandra and the rest of John's audience within a broader Jewish corporate entity but, perhaps ironically, to exclude the *Ioudaioi* from the divine covenant. In appropriating the scriptures, the Temple, and covenantal language for its audience, the Gospel rhetorically casts the Jews out from that covenant. This expulsion is justified on the grounds that the *Ioudaioi* have failed to recognize that God has redrawn the terms of the covenantal contract. No longer is the covenant to be based on acceptance of and obedience to the Torah, but on the basis of belief in Jesus as God's Son. No longer do the leaders of the Ioudaioi control the Temple precincts. As God's Son, it is now Jesus who has jurisdiction over his Father's house. In other words, the Jewishness of the Gospel is not an antidote to its anti-Jewishness, but part and parcel thereof.

This means in your eyes

> that the children of God have taken on some of the identity markers of the *Ioudaioi*. They are now the ones who have access to the Temple and Torah, and they are the ones in covenantal relationship with the God of Israel, and therefore have the status of God's elect or chosen. Thus they are like *Ioudaioi* without actually being *Ioudaioi*, "Jew-ish" without being Jewish. To be more precise, they stake their claim to the status and perhaps even the name of Israel but reject both the label *Ioudaioi* and the *Ioudaioi* themselves.

In doing so, you are describing exactly what the Gentile Christian Church soon used John's Gospel for, namely, to present itself as the true Israel, *verus Israel*,[123] and in

123 See Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel. A study of the relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135-425)*. Translated from the French: H. McKeating, Oxford 1986.

fact to disinherit the Jews. Certainly, they did not even suspect how Jewish John himself had thought only a short time before, for they no longer thought Jewishly, but Greekly.

Crucial in your argumentation is the point that already in view of John's Gospel itself you consider the change of the conditions of the covenant agreement between God and man as pure arbitrariness. If John on the other hand—as a Jew from the Jewish Scriptures—passes the Messianic-political judgment that liberation from the world-wide slave house of the Roman world order can only succeed in trusting in the Messiah sent by the God of Israel, then this is not yet anti-Judaism, but inner-Jewish polemics, which, however, are not less sharp than those of the prophets of Israel and Judah. You do not have to share them, but you might understand their motivation in principle.

4 Rhetoric of Vituperation

At the beginning of your 4th chapter (67) it is evident what happens if we do not understand John's Gospel from its context of an inner-Jewish conflict between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews, but view it as a propagandistic pamphlet baiting a reader like Alexandra with hopes for the fulfillment of her "deep desire for eternal life and cause her to be reborn into the family of God, bound by love to her sisters and brothers."

> John presents this process as a gift, wrapped in love, spirit, light, and life, in order to entice her with the joy that she will experience if she is so reborn. But the rhetorical strategies he uses to describe this cohesive and loving community are matched by equally powerful and diverse tactics that emphasize the need for the children of God to separate themselves from those outside their group. One of these strategies, as we have seen, involves both appropriation and expropriation: the rhetorical appropriation of central markers of Jewishness and the ouster of Jews from their entitlement to them. Closely related to this strategy is a second rhetorical move: repudiation of the *Ioudaioi*. It seems inevitable that Alexandra and other compliant audience members will absorb this hostile rhetoric alongside the glowing promises of rebirth and life eternal.

Indeed, Christian missionaries from the 2nd century to our own time have used John's Gospel in terms of such a strategy, perhaps to strengthen and assert the new Christian religion in its identity vis-à-vis Judaism by demarcating and demonizing the old religion. But such hostility of religions was not originally the point of John's Gospel.

The way John incorporates the *Ioudaioi* into the rhetoric of his Gospel, you compare to the way he takes up, creates, and moulds (67-68)

> the human dread of death … for his own rhetoric of affiliation. So too does he refer to a historical group known to have existed in the first century—the

> *Ioudaioi*—but he defines and describes this group in ways that serve his rhetoric of disaffiliation. Although the Gospel does not portray the *Ioudaioi* in a uniformly negative light, John uses the label *Ioudaioi* primarily to construct a group that is distanced from and hostile to both Jesus and the believers.

Precisely this characterization of the *Ioudaioi* that is not consistently negative, however, might give pause for thought as to whether John was really concerned with a fundamental rhetoric of alienating *the Jews* from their covenant with God or with an entirely differently motivated engagement with particular groups of Jews.

So let us see in this chapter whether it is indeed true that John basically characterizes the *Ioudaioi* as negative so that one cannot identify with them:

> If the Gospel's rhetoric encouraged affiliation primarily by encouraging identification with the believers portrayed in the Gospel—the disciples and Mary Magdalene—it insists on disaffiliation by discouraging identification with the *Ioudaioi*, or, to put it another way, by presenting the *Ioudaioi* as negative models.

4.1. Neutral Use of the Term *Ioudaioi*

First, you admit that among the "approximately seventy references to the *Ioudaioi*" there are those that do not "express an explicitly hostile stance."

4.1.1 Need Jewish Festivals and Customs to Be Explained to a Non-Jewish Audience?

Seven of them neutrally refer to Jewish festivals and customs in which Jesus naturally participates, up to and including his burial according to Jewish rites (2:6; 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 19:40). Nevertheless, these passages imply "the audience's unfamiliarity with these festivals and practices," because the rites and occasions in question are, after all, declared to be Jewish, which you (89, n. 4) see confirmed by 10:22

> which refers to the holiday of Hanukkah or Dedication but without specifying that it is a festival "of the Jews:" "At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter." The reference to the season, however, like the phrase "of the Jews" in the other examples, suggests an audience that does not have close familiarity with the festival. Otherwise the detail that "it was winter" would be extraneous.

However, we can also explain the aforementioned formulations in another way than with a predominantly or even exclusively non-Jewish audience. Individual God-fearers from the *goyim* are certainly to be assumed among John's audience because of 12:20. Also, Jesus could refer to festivals of the Judeans in a similarly distancing manner as he speaks (8:17; 10:34; 15:25) of "your" or "their Torah."

According to Ton Veerkamp, the indication "it was winter" at 10:22 need not be an explanation referring to the usual time of the festival:[124]

> The phrase "it was winter" seems redundant. But in Mark, the Messiah asks his disciples to pray that the great catastrophe of the end times may not happen "in winter" (13:18). Perhaps John wants the listeners to make the connection with Mark 13:18.

Another explanation is offered by Hans Förster:[125]

> Commonly, the mention of the "Dedication festival in winter" in John 10:22 is understood as a reference to non-Jewish readers. They are informed that "the" Jewish Dedication festival took place in winter. However, until the 4th century three Jewish temple consecration festivals were known and celebrated: The *enkainia* in autumn commemorated the dedication of Solomon's temple, the *enkainia* in spring celebrated the temple rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah, and the *enkainia* in winter had as its theme the reconsecration of the temple desecrated under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. All three festivals were designated by the term *enkainia*. So it seems to make more sense to refer John 10:22 to readers who knew about these three festivals and who are told which of the three festivals called *enkainia* is meant: the one in winter.

4.1.2 Distinguishing the *Ioudaioi* from Inhabitants of Galilee or Samaria

Two mentions (67) of *Ioudaios* are about distinguishing them from other geographic regions or populations in Palestine: 3:22 refers to the land of the Jews in the sense of Judea as distinct from Galilee or Samaria, and 4:9, according to you, refers

> to a social custom, according to which "Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans." Here John is explaining why the Samaritan woman is surprised at Jesus's request for water: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"

In fact, however, this is not merely "a social custom." Rather John is alluding to the enmity between Judeans and Samaritans who both had formed the kingdom of David and Solomon many centuries before the ten northern tribes of Israel broke away from King Rehoboam son of Solomon.[126]

4.1.3 Does the Emphasis on Jesus' Jewishness Underscore His Ousting of Judaism?

Another seven passages "describe Jewish individuals or groups," from Nicodemus, "a leader of the Jews (3:1)," to the Jews who mourn Lazarus (11:19, 31, 33) and

124 Veerkamp 234-35 (The Messiah and God, par. 56).

125 Hans Förster, Bibelübersetzung, Bibelverständnis und Antijudaismus. Ein hermeneutischer Zirkel? In: Deutsches Pfarrerblatt 10/2020, 631-635, here 635.

126 See the detailed discussion in sections 1.2.4.2 and 2.2.2.2.

whom Jesus (69) names as his addressees in 13:33 and 18:20. In 3:25 there is also mention of "a discussion about purification ... between John's disciples and a Jew."

All of these passages emphasize "Jesus' Jewishness," as well as the fact that

> others call him 'rabbi,' a quintessentially Jewish title meaning teacher (1:38; 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8), and Mary Magdalene calls him *Rabbouni*, meaning, 'my teacher' in Aramaic (John refers to this language as Hebrew [20:16]).

However, as you noted in the previous chapter, although "John's overall Jewish context is evident also in his conceptual framework and vocabulary," to the point that according to John "salvation for all of humankind will arise through the intervention of the one God of Israel, who has sovereignty over the entire cosmos, including the created world and all of humankind," all this, in your eyes, only underscores the extent of the "appropriation of Jewishness that we discussed in the previous chapter by associating Jesus uncritically with specific Jewish observances and adopting and adapting Jewish ideas and language for the Gospel's own theological discourse."

4.2 Salvation Is of/from the Jews

That 4:22 need not be seen (69) as "an unambiguously positive reference to the Jews" is justified (70) by the fact that Jesus does not utter the phrase "salvation is from [or of] the Jews"

> to emphasize that the Jews are the origin of salvation but that Jesus is the one through whom salvation comes. In other words, Jesus, the Jew who, by rights, should not have been speaking to a Samaritan woman, is the salvation that comes from the Jews. This analysis supports the idea that, while *Ioudaioi* is a positive term here, the point of the verse is not to stress Jesus's Jewish origins so much as to draw attention to Jesus himself.

4.2.1 Salvation Is from the Jews—Brought About by the Jewish Messiah

In principle, Ton Veerkamp views this quite similarly, as already stated in section 1.2.4.2, however, he interprets *sōtēria* not as the salvation of souls but as liberation from the world order. It is Jesus as a Jew, as the Jewish Messiah, who must be understood from the Jewish Scriptures, who brings liberation for Judeans and Samaritans. Yes, you are also right with the following sentence referring to 4:42

> that Jesus is truly the savior of the world (*estin alēthōs ho sōtēr tou kosmou*). As the savior, Jesus himself *is* the salvation that comes from the Jews, to Samaritans, Jews, and, one presumes, others as well.

At this point, by the others, you surely mean, above all, the Gentiles, though John originally takes a far more reserved view of them than Paul and Luke or even Matthew.

Since the preposition *ek* used in 4:22 is ambiguous in its sense—it "can mean 'of,' as in 'a part of' or 'can be found within.' It can also mean 'out of,' or 'emerging from'"—Jesus is not, in your eyes, explaining "that salvation is 'of' the Jews in the sense of belonging to or reserved for Jews only."

This is correct—however, already in the Tanakh Abraham is promised to be a blessing for the nations, and conversely, also the Jews in the Tanakh attain and preserve salvation only if they act according to the Torah and do not "fornicate" with other gods, as in the eyes of John in Jesus' time the leading class of the Jews in Jerusalem does with the adversary, *diabolos*, Rome and its gods.

4.2.2 Attempts to Come to Terms with 4:22, between Hostility and Benevolence toward the Jews

Among Christian exegetes, because of the "ambiguity of this seemingly simple preposition" you perceive "rather complex interpretations." For example, C. K. Barrett[127] does not understand verse 4:22b in the sense (70-71)

> that Jews as such are inevitably saved, but rather that the election of Israel to a true knowledge of God was in order that ... at the time appointed by God, salvation might proceed from Israel to the world, and Israel's own unique privilege be thereby dissolved. As the next verse shows, this eschatological salvation is in the person of Jesus in process of realization and the Jews are losing their position to the Church.

Thus Barrett confirms your position, but in my opinion merely reflects the Gentile-Christian distortion of the message of John's Gospel, which no longer interprets the Messiah from the Tanakh but interprets the so-called Old Testament exclusively in terms of the New Testament under the leadership of the Gentile-Christian conceived God-man Jesus.

Similarly (71), Edward Klink[128] understands the Johannine Jesus as

> the true Jew, through whom all people on earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3). Jesus is the 'blessing' given to the Jews, and it is through the Jewish Jesus that the rest of the world is blessed." For Klink, Jesus is simply asserting that the one whom the Samaritan woman has identified as a Jew is offering salvation to those whom the Jews have excluded.

Other exegetes focus on the contrast between Jews and Samaritans. Michael Theobald,[129] for example, "argues that the phrase *ek tōn Ioudaiōn* means from the

127 (xxxiv, n. 10, and 89, n. 6) C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1965), 198.

128 (89, n, 9) Edward W. Klink, *John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 244.

129 (89, n. 8) Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 324.

Jewish scriptures, rather than Samaritan scriptures," but there is at least no explicit mention of this. Rudolf Schnackenburg[130] in turn

> views this statement as an affirmation "that the Jews still have precedence in the history of salvation. The Samaritans ... do not possess true knowledge of God; their worship rather grew out of national and political ambitions. The Jews ... are the legitimate worshippers of God, and salvation, that is, the Messiah, stems from the Jews. ... In the situation as he found it, Jesus had to overcome the woman's repugnance to the "Jews" (v.9)."

He too distorts the original intent of John's Gospel from the later view of Christianity, that Jesus would have been concerned with purely spiritual religious goals and not with political liberation. In doing so, Schnackenburg does justice neither to the Jews, whose understanding of "salvation" is centrally linked to the exodus traditions of liberation from the Egyptian slave house, nor to the Johannine view of the Samaritans: they are not accused of "national and political ambitions" in general, but—in the metaphor of the many men who were not their true husbands—of having been dependent on ever different oppressor-gods for centuries, instead of serving the liberating NAME of the God of Israel. Also, Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman is not simply about overcoming her individual resistance, but about a way to overcome the enmity between the two people groups.

There are, however, theologians like Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt[131] who deal with verse 4:22 in a different way. Ton Veerkamp refers to him although he does not share his dogmatic-Christian reading but instead clarifies once again in what way liberation in the eyes of John comes from the political movement of the Jewish-Messianic followers of Jesus:[132]

> Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt has the half-sentence, "that liberation comes from the Judeans," in the version "for salvation comes from the Jews." His concern was to liberate the Christian faith from its anti-Semitic and—for the Jews until today—deadly tension and thus from its barrenness for the world. But his "dogmatic" reading—in the best sense of the word—does not lead to the comprehension of our narrative.
>
> The "we" here is not a homogeneous Jewish entity, which is not surprising in the context of the Gospel of John. It is the "we" of the Messianic community, which knows that it is of Judean origin and neither wants to nor can deny this.

130 (22, n. 41, and 89, n. 7) Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 1.435-36.

131 Veerkamp does not give a source for his reference to Marquardt in the following quotation. Worth reading is Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Johannes – aus dem Hebräischen gedacht* [John—thought from the Hebrew] (https://www.fwmarquardt.eu/Johannes.html).

132 Veerkamp 118 (Neither—Nor, Inspiration and Fidelity, par. 7-9).

> Only thus has it been a movement for and in Israel, only thus a concrete-political liberation movement of the people of Israel, which is more than the people of Judea. This "neither—nor" points beyond the contrast between Judea and Samaria, not of course in the form of a Christian afterlife that overcomes all opposites. For John, the "hereafter" is—in this world—"all Israel in *one* synagogue or *one* courtyard," as the content of his political program (11:52 and 10:11-16). These Messianic Judeans know to whom they bow, knowing that the historically real sanctuary, which had turned into an *emporion*, a marketplace, and was destroyed, became replaced by the sanctuary of the "body of the Messiah," i.e., the Messianic community (2:18 ff.), which was built up in three days.
>
> The Messiah does not call the Judeans to renounce their origin and thus to receive a new identity, but to finally do justice to their origin as children of Israel and to leave the decayed "market economy," into which the house of the FATHER has turned. The Samaritans are not fighting this struggle for their own origin, they don't know, what they actually do—politically speaking—, they thus do not know, what is actually going on with them, "to whom they bow." Hellenism has ruined the land of Samaria in such a way that it no longer knows what it is and should be.

You yourself emphasize regarding the relationship between Jews and Samaritans in this context (71):

> In declaring that salvation is of or from the Jews, John's Jesus is promising the Samaritans the salvation through covenantal relationship that the Jews alone had previously enjoyed as God's elect people. The one who provides salvation is a Jew; the salvation that he promises is the one that comes to God's covenant people. The Samaritans have an opportunity to benefit from the Jewish covenant with God without becoming Jews, but that covenant is still seen as primary, and better than, more authentic, truer, than the Samaritan beliefs. Furthermore, not only Samaritans, but now also the Jews themselves, can be in relationship with God only by worshiping the Father in spirit and truth, that is, through faith in Jesus.

However, in your view, the ultimate question remains: "is this indeed a positive usage of the term *loudaioi* or is it rather neutral or even, in the context of the Gospel's rhetorical program, negative?" The Johannine Jesus here is "simply asserting that the one whom the Samaritan woman has identified as a Jew is offering salvation to those whom the Jews have excluded," but he is not "declaring that only Jews will be saved."

But, as I said, even the Jewish Scriptures, while assuming the election of the people of Israel, also speak of blessing the nations. Especially if we understand the concept of *sōtēria* not as the salvation of the soul but as liberation for a life of justice and

peace, an exclusive understanding of salvation is not appropriate, all the more so since John assumes that under Roman conditions liberation is not to be achieved through the Torah of separation from the nations but through the solidarity of *agapē* that overcomes the world order from within.

What difficulties (72) Christian exegesis has had with 4:22 is shown by the attempt to eliminate it historically-critically from the Gospel as inauthentic; according to Gilbert Van Belle,[133] this was already done in "Ernst Renan's *La vie de Jésus* in the mid-nineteenth century." Rudolf Bultmann devoted only a footnote to the verse in his 1941 commentary:[134]

> "In spite of 4:9, it is hard to see how the Johannine Jesus, who consistently dissociates himself from the Jews, ... could have made such a statement."

That such a view "was taken up by the Nazi scholar Walter Grundmann,[135] in a 1938 article," is not surprising, since the latter assessed John's writing as a "thoroughly and correctly anti-Semitic Gospel." But there were other Nazi scholars, such as Gerhard Kittel,[136] who "considered 4:22 to be part of the Gospel, although the positive statement about the Jews apparently did not affect his overall approval of John as an anti-Semitic text."

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133 (90, n. 12) Gilbert Van Belle, "'Salvation Is from the Jews': The Parenthesis in John 4:22b," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium*, 2000, ed. R. Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 373. For a detailed survey, see Van Belle, 371-76, and Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 79-105.

134 (90, n. 13) Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 189-90, n. 6.
I quote [translation mine] from *Das Evangelium des Johannes. Erklärt von D. Rudolf Bultmann*, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Berlin, Ausgabe für die Deutsche Demokratische Republik 1963, fotomechanischer Nachdruck der vergriffenen zehnten Auflage des Kritisch-Exegetischen Kommentars über das Neue Testament, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1941, 139, note 6:
"V. 22 is in whole or in part a gloss by the editors. The *hoti hē sōtēria ek t. Ioud. estin* is impossible in John not only in view of 8:41 ff; already 1:11 showed that the evangelist does not regard the Jews as the people of property and as the people of salvation... And it is difficult to understand, despite 4:9, that the Johannine Jesus, who constantly distances himself from the Jews (8:17; 10:34; 13:33 . . .) should have spoken that sentence."
This work is the 10th edition of a John commentary of the corresponding series, but in fact the 1st edition of Bultmann's interpretation.

135 (90, n. 14) Anders Gerdmar speculates that Grundmann had access to the print proofs of Bultmann's commentary. Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews*, *from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 394, 558, n. 100.

136 (90, n. 17) Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 463-64.

Among recent exegetes, some call verse 4:22 "into service to counteract the anti-Jewish tone of other Johannine references to the *Ioudaioi*," while others "strongly disagree with using the verse to exculpate John's otherwise anti-Jewish stance." You (73) agree with the latter

> and would further suggest that while 4:22 seems to contradict the anti-Jewish statements in the Gospel, it in fact stems from the same set of ideas and impulses. … The Gospel explicitly grounds its anti-Jewish statements precisely in the point that "salvation is from the Jews" yet the Jews rejected him. The Samaritans, however, who come to Jesus and now "know that this is truly the Savior of the world" (4:42), are now children of God because they believe in his name.

4.3 Wavering Jews

Further (73) "thirteen occurrences in which crowds of *Ioudaioi* ponder the christological claims made by or about Jesus among themselves and express ambivalence about Jesus's identity" you also judge as "consistent with the anti-Jewish rhetoric that pervades John's Gospel."

The phrase "christological claims," which you choose here, is treacherous, however, since it is a term that originated in later Christianity and became increasingly dogmatically charged from Greek philosophy. John's original concern is whether Jesus is recognized as the Messiah of Israel, capable of bringing about Israel's liberation from the Roman world order.

4.3.1 *Ioudaioi* with the Choice to Decide for or against Jesus

As passages that "point to differences of opinion among the Jews and leave open the possibility that at least within the narrative, some will become believers," you rightly cite 6:41, 52; 7:11, 15, 35; 8:22; 10:19, 24; 11:36; 12:9); Jesus himself in 8:31 expresses "hope for the Jews" who had trusted him if they remained firm with his word. However, two passages that you also place in the category of undecided Jews, 11:45 and 12:11, speak explicitly of many Jews trusting in Jesus; we must add to this 7:31, where the same is said of the crowd, *ochlos.*

There are, therefore, (74) authors such as Susan Hylen,[137] who assess "the *Ioudaioi* ... as an ambiguous group character that is often undecided as to their stance toward Jesus, and as such, they can constitute a point of positive identification for an audience faced with a similar set of choices," or Christopher Skinner,[138]

137 (90, n. 24) Susan Hylen, *Imperfect Believers: Ambiguous Characters in the Gospel Of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 129.

138 (91, n. 25) Christopher W. Skinner, *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 108.

who assumes that the reader "must weigh each case" and "is not always called upon to identify with the believers and against the *Ioudaioi.*"

4.3.2 Does Jesus Oppose the *Ioudaioi* with Prejudice from the Outset?

You do not agree with Hylen or Skinner. You write that even "those who are tempted to believe, however, are not quite among the faithful followers that the Gospel presents as worthy of eternal life." In 6:26, Jesus reproaches them for seeking him not for the signs but for the loaves that filled them. And several times (6:36 and 6:64) he intersperses remarks in his talk about the bread of life about the fact that at least some of his listeners do not trust him.

This is true. Problematic about your argument is that you refer *zōē aiōnios* to eternal life in heaven, of which Jesus allegedly does not consider his listeners worthy. According to Ton Veerkamp, Jesus is arguing with various Jewish factions about the appropriate way to attain the life of the age to come *in this world*, that is, to overcome the Roman order of death, which he estimates the *Pax Romana*, the *kosmos*, to be.

Whoever wants to make Jesus a king in the manner of the Maccabees or the Zealots of the Judean War on the basis of the feeding of the 5000, has not understood his deed as a symbolic indication of the way in which he, as the Son of Man who is lifted up to the Roman cross, will overcome the Roman world order.

And with those who, as Pharisaic or Rabbinical Jews, counter his Messianic exuberance with Scriptural quotations, Jesus argues by ever new allusions to the Jewish Scriptures in order to prove that the God of Israel has indeed sent him into the world order to overcome it. For this, I quote at length Ton Veerkamp in his interpretation of verses 6:30-40, which I first reproduce in his translation:[139]

> 6:30 Now they said to him,
> "Then what sign do you do,
> so that we may see it and trust you?
> What are you working?
> 6:31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written,
> *He gave them bread from heaven to eat*."
> 6:32 Jesus said to them,
> "Amen, amen, I say to you:
> Not Moses has given you the bread from heaven.
> But my FATHER is giving you the bread from heaven, the effective one.
> 6:33 For GOD's bread is the one that comes down from heaven
> and gives life to the world."
> 6:34 They said to him,
> "Sir, forever give us this bread."

139 Veerkamp 160-65 (No More Hunger, No More Thirst. The Decisive Day, par. 1-23).

6:35 Jesus said to them,
"I AM—the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will not go hungry,
and whoever trusts in me will not be thirsty,
never!
6:36 But I told you: You have seen me, but still don't trust.
6:37 All that the FATHER gives me will come to me,
and whoever comes to me I will not cast out.
6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will
but the will of the ONE who sent me.
6:39 And this is the will of the ONE who sent me:
that I should let nothing be destroyed of all he has given me
but should raise it up on the Day of the Final Decision.
6:40 For this is the will of my FATHER:
that everyone who observes the Son and trusts in him
should have the life of the age to come,
and that I should raise him up on the Day of the Final Decision."

. . . Those who claim not to have seen a sign on the other side of the sea now demand a sign. The disciples are confronted with this demand in all the Gospels (Mark 8:11 par.). Apparently, the emerging Rabbinical Judaism demands evidence from the Messianists that their politics have indeed served Israel well. The evangelists deal with this demand in different ways. With John, this demand virtually becomes an obsession. Again and again, Jesus must legitimize himself.

For the local opponents of the Messianists, who were probably followers of Rabbinical Judaism, Jesus was at best a muddlehead, at worst an impostor, but always the embodiment of a disastrous policy. Here the question is simply, "What are you working, effecting, bringing about? What is the point of all this messianic excitement?" And they immediately refer to the difference between the spectacle of Jesus on the other shore of the sea and the feeding of the people on their forty-year march through the wilderness—as it should be, with a Scriptural quotation (Psalm 78:24).

The opponents are different now. If those who wanted to make Jesus king were short-sighted Zealots, now speak those who are most skeptical of any messianism. What would be the feeding of the five thousand compared with the feeding of Israel in the wilderness?[140] What follows is a fierce debate

140 Veerkamp adds the remark: "The difficulty with John is always the heterogeneity of his opponents: sometimes the emerging Rabbinical Judaism, sometimes the Zealots, sometimes disappointed followers, often referred to by the same word *Ioudaioi*, 'Judeans.'"

among the teachers of Israel about the interpretation of central Scriptural passages such as Psalm 78:24 and Exodus 16.

These Judeans are faithful disciples of Moses, which is known to Jesus. But he too points to a difference; he turns the tables. First of all, he states that this bread of heaven, the manna, does not come from Moses, but the FATHER, the God of Israel. Jesus' answer undoubtedly contains a contradiction. But this contradiction must be written out completely, "Not Moses has given (perfect), ... my FATHER is giving (present)."

It is often noted that the quote is not literal. We must hear the passage Exodus 16:4 in its context; all other passages, including our original text Deuteronomy 8:3, refer to this passage. The people came to the wilderness of Sin, then it says, 16:2-4,

> They complained, the whole community (of the sons) of Israel,
> against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness.
> They said to them,
> If only we had died by the hand of the NAME in the land of Egypt,
> when we sat at the meat pot, eating bread for satiation;
> instead, you have led us into this wilderness,
> to kill the whole assembly of Israel.
> The NAME said to Moses,
> "There, I will rain bread from heaven upon you..."

If his listeners do not accept the Messiah, they scorn what keeps them alive, the "bread from heaven." And that is the *effective* bread, that which really *is working* today. Here we translate the adjective *alēthinos* as "effective," because it is opposed to a bread that does not really solve the problem, that is not *working*.

The manna stands for the "five loaves" from 6:9. It is about Moses, about the Torah—hence "five"; "Moses" can no longer be the answer today. Just as the five loaves can only temporarily satiate the crowd, just as the manna temporarily satiated the people then, so the Torah of Israel no longer nourishes today under the prevailing Roman conditions. It was precisely this view that Rabbinical Judaism rejected, and which today Judaism vehemently rejects. Under the given circumstances, Torah is non-real—ineffective—, says John, says Paul as well. Among those who vehemently reject this Messianic view is also the Messianist Matthew! It is not our task to express a preference for John or for Matthew. We have to interpret John.

Real—effective—, according to John, is only "the bread that descends from heaven and gives life to the world (to humans in their living space)," that is, it allows the world an order through which humans really can live. People know what Jesus is talking about: It is about a new order that makes life possible;

people want this bread because they suffer under the ruling world order. It is about politics, and people know it. It is literally about the definitive bread, about the new, definitive (*pantote*, "forever") world order of the Messiah of Israel, about the definitive solution of definitive problems. This is what they want.

Jesus pours them pure wine, says clearly and unambiguously, "I AM—the bread of life." John introduces that famous conditional sentence that we hear dozens of times in his text, mostly constructed in a good Aramaic way with a participle, "If someone comes to me (*ho erchomenos*), he will not starve; if someone trusts me (*ho pisteuōn*), he will not thirst, never!"

Of course, seeing and trusting are two different things. A human must be able to recognize in what he sees what is actually happening. This did not happen during the feeding of the five thousand. He who recognizes this, or at least wants to recognize it, is not "repelled"—or rather "excluded, cast out"—by what the Messiah represents.

He becomes clearer. He, the Human, *bar enosh*, does not remain—as in Daniel—standing in front of the throne of God but comes down from heaven. Not his own will is done, but the will of the One who sent him, and this means: he has expelled him from the sphere of heavenly power into the powerlessness of a man who finds no attention. "Becoming flesh" is how the prologue summarizes this painful walk, the *Halakha* of Jesus.

So why all this magic? That people are freed from the prison of the flesh and made into spiritual men? This is what Christianity has been preaching for almost two millennia. No, the purpose is that humans should not perish, not get lost, should not have to lead a life that means almost nothing but misery; rather, that they may lead "the life of the age to come."

Now the symbolic action of collecting the chunks, "so that nothing is lost," becomes clear—in both cases the verb *apollesthai*. Another conditional sentence: "Everyone who observes (*theōrōn*) the Son (the Son of Man, *bar enosh*), who sees him as he really is and trusts him, will reach the life of the age to come, and Jesus will raise him up on the Day of Decision"—the day when "the court sits down and the books are finally opened" (Daniel 7:10), the day of the Son of Man when justice is *finally* done. On that day those who are guided by the vision of this Son can stand upright—all of them, even "the dead in their graves" (5:28). The purpose of the final judgment is that humans should be raised up, not that they should perish. This—and only this—is the will of God.

The expression *eschatē hēmera* literally means "last day," or, in more sophisticated [German] language, "youngest day." But the idea of a "last day" after which there are no more days was impossible for the Judeans of those days.

Eternity as the contrast to the limited time (*days*) is a Christian, not a Jewish conception.

In the Qurʾan that day which John calls "the last day" is the day of judgment. In almost every one of the 114 suras of the Qurʾan, this day occurs. Afterward, a new time begins, in which those problems that determine and burden our lives have definitely been solved.

In the Tanakh, this expression is well known: *be-ʾacharith ha-yamim*, "in the lateness of days," Martin Buber translates; the Greeks translate *ep' eschatōn tōn hēmerōn* or *en tais eschatais hēmerais*. And if it really is about a "last day," then simply about the last day of a certain series of days, for example, the *Sukkot* week, Nehemiah 8:18. The Tanakh does not know an absolutely last day. But it does know days on which decisive things will happen, for good (Deuteronomy 4:30) or for evil (Ezekiel 38:16).

That the dead can live again is a traditional idea; a very drastic example is the vision from the book of Ezekiel. The prophet was asked whether the many bones that lay around in a wide plain could live again,

> and there were very many of them, very dry . . .
> "Human child, will these bones live?"
> He said, "My Lord, Eternal, you know it!" (Ezekiel 37:2-3)

These are the remnants of people who were not buried, people who were denied a dignified conclusion to life, victims of the annihilators of Israel. "Will these bones live?" It cannot be that these died in vain. It is the eternal question of all who must mourn for those who were murdered, who had to die long before their time.

This thought from the book of Ezekiel has occupied many since the Maccabean period. The Perushim were among them, they firmly expected the resurrection from the dead. And this happens on that *day* when "the court sits down and books are opened," *after the days* of the beastly rule of the world powers. Then the days of the Human are coming, which will be completely different days, but will remain just earthly days. The *last* day is the day of that decision that will make all days new; it is the last day in the series of days of inhumanity.

As already said, it is the FATHER's will that everyone who *observes*, who *takes into consideration* (*theōrōn*) the Son, should arrive at the life of the age to come, or, to put it another way, that this Son should make him stand up on the *Day of Decision*—precisely to that "upright walk" of which Leviticus 26:13 speaks and that only really is life. Resurrection to the life of the age to come therefore has to do with a Messianic *theory*, from *theōrein*, "to observe, to regard, to pay attention, to consider exactly." Freedom is a theory that is a prac-

> tice, the practice of him who walks his way of life, his *Halakha*, with this Messiah, taking him "into consideration" in all that he does.

Again and again, it is the question of whether the Gospel of John is originally about this horizon of liberation, interpreted from the Jewish Scriptures, on the background of which sharp inner-Jewish disputes are fought out.

4.3.3 The Portrayal of the *Ioudaioi* in Their Extreme Diversity

Back (74) to your review of the passages in John's Gospel in which Jesus deals with the Jewish crowd, *ochlos*.

In 7:19 Jesus reproaches his listeners for the fact that none of them obeys the Torah of Moses and that they are trying to kill him, and by this, according to you, as is clear from 7:20, he cannot mean "the Jewish authorities" but the crowd, *ochlos*.

But in this very passage, 7:11-52, John portrays those whom he calls *Ioudaioi* as very different in their behaviors. They seek Jesus and argue about him (7:11-12). There are Jews who fear other Jews (7:13) and Jews who have heard rumors from other Jews of wanting to kill Jesus (7:25). Some ponder whether the Jewish leadership has recognized Jesus as the Messiah (7:26) but the leading priests and Pharisees want to have Jesus arrested (7:32), while many in the crowd, *ochlos*, are trusting him (7:31). Finally, once again, a schism arises among the Jews (7:43). Even the officials sent by the leadership to arrest Jesus are impressed by him (7:46), and the leadership curses the crowd that trusts in Jesus as people who do not know the Torah (7:49), whereupon the Pharisee Nicodemus makes himself unpopular with his colleagues by standing up for those they have cursed (7:50-52). Can there actually be more evidence that what John refers to as the *Ioudaioi* is far from uniformly characterized? Thus, even though Jesus severely reproaches *the Jews*, these reproaches can by no means apply to *all Jews*, for there are many among them who trust in Jesus.

4.3.4 The Harshest Criticism of *Ioudaioi* Is Directed at Apostate Members of the Sectarian Group around John

According to Ton Veerkamp, the extreme impatience and sharpness of the argument in chapter 8 beginning in verse 31, which you (75) point out, is due to the fact that the Jews he is dealing with here are explicitly those who previously believed in him but now no longer do:[141]

> The addressees changed. The almost unbearable vehemence by which Jesus attacked these new opponents can only be deduced from the text itself. It is about Judeans "who had put their trust in him" (*pepisteukotas autō Ioudaious*) but now no longer do so. This requires a past perfect. A sect can talk of apostates only with hatred.

141 Veerkamp 202-03 (Fidelity and Freedom, par. 2-3).

> An additional difficulty is that in the further course (8:48), Judeans will be mentioned without further specification. But there too, it is about those very particular Judeans who "no longer walked the way with Jesus," 6:66. This does not excuse the boundless vehemence by which John harasses the "renegades," as the apostates were called among communists. Apparently, the disappointed Messianists accused the group around John of not belonging to Israel, probably, of being members of the *goyim*, non-Judeans. John turns the tables. To him, *they* were "children (seed) of Abraham" and thus "children of the people of Israel," you, disappointed Judean Messianists, should ask yourselves whether *you* are actually still "children of Abraham." This question is the subject of the part that follows.

Indeed, John cannot be allowed to have his way with everything he puts into the mouth of his Jesus in terms of the harshest criticism of Jews.

Nevertheless, I do not agree with your judgment about Jesus' attitude toward the Jewish crowd in this generality:

> In these passages Jesus prejudges the waffling crowds, as it seems he did also in 2:23-24 when he did not entrust himself to the believing crowds after cleansing the Temple, and in 6:15 when he hid from those who proclaimed him a prophet and wished to make him king. Much as we might hope that John's Jesus would give these wavering Jews a chance, their rejection of Jesus seems to have been a foregone conclusion.

First, you disregard the variety of different attitudes that exist among the Jews according to John, second, you overlook the many Jews who trust in John, and third, you do not ask yourself why Jesus hides himself, for example, from Zealot Jews who want to force him to revolt against Rome.

4.4 Hostile *Ioudaioi*: The Rhetoric of Vituperation

In addition to (75) the 30 "occurrences of the term *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi*" so far, there are 41 more that you assess as "unambiguously negative, expressing the Jews' hostility toward Jesus and/or Jesus's hostility toward the Jews."

As a framework for assessing these utterances, you refer to the classical Greek "rhetoric of vituperation," which "referring to slander, blame, or vilification, was a standard aspect of epideictic rhetoric." If we think, for example, of modern Trumpism, this concept seems to be coming back into vogue, to which

> the accuracy of the accusation was beside the point. Neither orators nor their audiences paid much attention to the facts or alleged facts brought to the argument.

Thus, (76) it was not always the speaker's intention "to persuade the audience of the truth of the speaker's position, but often rather to persuade them that the

speaker, rather than his/her opponent, has their best interests at heart." Such rhetoric of "vituperation often worked together with the rhetoric of praise to assert, reinforce, and perform communal values." It would seem that Trumpism should be judged in this regard as a recourse to ancient rhetorical devices.

But is the fierceness of Johannine rhetoric toward the *Ioudaioi* also due solely to such an attempt to enhance oneself by degrading others? The scholarly discussion largely assumes so. Jerome Neyrey[142] (91, n. 35), for example,

> discusses praise and vituperation as represented in the Gospel itself, with the Jews and Jesus facing off as adversaries. The Jews deliver a vituperation about Jesus, which Jesus and the narrator counter with praise.

Sean Freyne[143] "describes John's form of vituperation as 'irony which flows over into caricature and parody.'" And David Rensberger[144]

> notes that the Gospel's "vituperation against 'the Jews' produces a distancing effect that must not be underestimated."

4.4.1 Does John Engage in Narrative Vituperation or are his Accusations Comprehensible?

Indeed (76) the "main accusation against the *Ioudaioi* concerns their opposition to and pursuit of Jesus, culminating in his crucifixion." The question, however, is whether this accusation was actually a slander from John's point of view or was in some sense true. If, in his eyes, Jesus had set out as the Messiah of Israel to overcome the Roman world order but the leaders of Judea in Jesus' days collaborated with Rome to secure the autonomous status of the province along with their privileges, then the accusation against the chief priests was not unfounded that they had handed Jesus over to the Romans.

In fact, John's Gospel is about this basic conflict, which is already "hinted at in the Prologue ... (1:11)" and in the first narrated scene (1:19-27), when the *Ioudaioi* "send priests and Levites to interrogate John the Baptist as to his identity." What you do not mention from this scene is the remark in 1:24 that the messengers belonged to the Pharisees, on which Ton Veerkamp writes:[145]

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142 (xxxvi, n. 30, and 91, n. 35) Jerome H. Neyrey, "Encomium versus Vituperation: Contrasting Portraits of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 3 (2007): 530-31.

143 (91, n. 28-29) Sean Freyne, "Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 131.

144 (91, n. 37) David Rensberger, "Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of John," in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, ed. William R. Farmer (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 153.

145 Veerkamp 47 (The First Day. The Interrogation, par. 6).

> The remark that the priests and the Levites belong to the Perushim is more than strange. Generally, the priests belonged to the party of the Sadducees. Here, John causes a special group of priests and Levites to perform. *Judeans* means the whole political establishment of the capital city; probably it seemed opportune to John to send a "Pharisaic" delegation to John. The Sadducees regard themselves as the real high representatives of the Judean people. The relation between priests and people will become clear in 11:46-54. The reason for the enmity between Jesus and the priests is unambiguously pronounced in 19:15; their first loyalty is directed at the Roman emperor: "We have no king but Caesar." For John, the Perushim belonged to the political establishment, to those whom he calls "Judeans." In this arc of suspense, the first passage has to be read.

The mention of the Pharisees, who only assumed the sole leadership role of the then emerging Rabbinic Judaism after the Judean War, the destruction of Jerusalem along with the Temple, and the disempowerment of the priesthood, probably indicates from the beginning of John's Gospel that to John this conflict between his own Jewish-Messianic splinter group and the synagogue led in his days by Pharisees is the most burning one.

As already explained in section 2.2.3.3, the Messianists are apparently considered troublemakers in the synagogue to such an extent that they are made *aposynagōgoi*, people without a synagogue, at least here and there; without this protection, however, they may be exposed to pogroms by the Gentile population. The "relentless focus on the *Ioudaioi's* intentions to kill Jesus" is due to this, which "identifies them as the enemies of Jesus and all believers." That John must have had other experiences with Jews, however, is clear from the aforementioned account of the diversity of Jewish reactions to the person of Jesus. Against this political background of the time of Jesus or John, the opposition of Jesus to the Jewish leadership or of the Johannine sect to Rabbinic Judaism seems at least understandable. It is not simply based on a whim of John to want to build up Jesus as God-man of a new religion at the expense of the Jews.

Quite correctly you see that only after

> these introductory chapters, however, the Jews' antagonism towards Jesus and those associated with him proceeds beyond words to an intention to harm. From John 5 to the end of the Gospels, the Jews persecute Jesus for breaking the sabbath and making claims about God (5:16, 18); argue with him over their covenantal relationship with God (8:48, 52, 57); attempt to stone Jesus (8:59; 10:31-33), and, finally, orchestrate his death (18:14, 31, 35, 36, 38; 19:7, 12, 31).

This observation agrees with the outline that Ton Veerkamp notes in John's Gospel and that I have already mentioned in section 2.2.4 above. After the first major part,

1:19-4:54, deals with the public appearance of Jesus' Messianic movement in Israel, the second major part, 5:1-12:50, describes the disintegration of the Messianic community and the Messiah's need to hide from his opponents before he is delivered to death on the Roman cross in the third part, 13:1-20:31, and overcomes the Roman world order by ascending to the FATHER.

4.4.2 Rhetoric of Binary Opposition

Furthermore, you discover (77) in the Gospel of John a

> pervasive rhetoric of binary opposition, in which the behavior, attitudes, and attributes of the Jews are contrasted to the ones that the Gospel is trying to promote to its audience. … One set of metaphors describes opposing states of being, such as light/darkness, life/death, above/below, from God/not from God. Another set describes opposing activities, such as believing/disbelieving, accepting/rejecting, doing good/doing evil, loving/hating.
>
> The positive element of each pair is associated with Jesus, the negative element of each pair with those who oppose Jesus and reject the claim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

It is not at all obvious, however, that darkness, for example, is fundamentally associated with the Jews in John's Gospel. First of all (8:12; 12:46), Jesus is the light of the world, to *phōs tou kosmou*, he comes into the darkness of the ruling world order to expose (3:19) the sinister machinations of those who profit from it. It is not this darkness (1:5) that can overcome him as the light, rather Jesus (16:33) has defeated the world order, *nenikēka ton kosmon*. But according to you,

> although "darkness" is an abstract metaphor, it characterizes the Johannine Jews both as a group and individually. In 8:12, Jesus promises the Jews that "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." But the Jews' absolute rejection of Jesus excludes them from this promise (12:37). In 3:2, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and leader of the Jews (3:1), comes to Jesus "by night" (3:2); in 13:30 night falls immediately upon Judas's departure from the disciples to betray Jesus to the authorities.

I oppose that a general formulation as in 12:37 does not preclude John from speaking of Jews trusting in Jesus in other places, as shown above, and Nicodemus, by mentioning the time of his coming, is characterized not as a representative of darkness but as a secret sympathizer of Jesus with whom Jesus is in earnest discussion.

As for Judas and verse 13:30, you are correct. However, Judas is not at all a representative of the *Ioudaioi* opposed to Jesus, rather he is a former disciple of Jesus who ate his bread, was his housemate—compare 13:26 with Psalm 41:10 and Ruth 2:14—and yet deserts to the Roman enemy, the *diabolos*, indeed (13:27), virtually possessed by this *satanas*.

4.4.2.1 Jesus' Political Confrontation with Rabbinic Judaism

It is true, however, that the Johannine Jesus also accuses the *Ioudaioi* of ultimately pursuing the cause of Rome by not recognizing him as Messiah. You, however, speak in general terms of an existence of the Jews in darkness:

> A consequence as well as a cause of the Jews' existence in darkness is their inability to see. Their blindness is contrasted with the new-found vision of the man born blind who declares Jesus to be the Son of Man (9:39-41). The one who sees Jesus also sees God (12:45).

Ton Veerkamp interprets 9:39-41 politically:[146]

> To Rabbinical Judaism he says, "Do you not see what you are doing with your politics? You drive the people out. You cripple Israel." And now he takes the judicial authority of the one whom Daniel has called *bar enosh*, the Human. He, who constantly said that he had not come to judge, passes judgment, "Those who do not see might see, and those who see become blind." This is a political, not a moral judgment.
>
> The Perushim understand what is said here, "Are we too blind?" Jesus replies: If you would admit that you do not know how to go on either, you would be open to a new perspective. Precisely because you think your policy is the only right one, because you think you are the only ones who have the insight, it remains a policy that leads astray, "Your aberration remains!" And this is what Jesus will explain in detail subsequently.

This means: it is indeed about a quarrel fought fiercely between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews. But a dispute in which John is concerned with the political issue of Israel's liberation from the oppression of the world order, which in his eyes can only be achieved through trust in the Messiah Jesus. This is why he can also impute to those who reject Jesus, as you write, that they

> do not see or believe in God because they do not see and believe in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God (5:38). Accepting Jesus demonstrates a love for God, for Jesus, and for fellow believers (15:12-17). Rejecting Jesus is tantamount to hating God. Jesus accuses the Jews of not having the love of God in them (8:42) and tells the disciples that his enemies hate both himself and his Father (15:23-24).

As I said, here John can be accused of insinuation, but at the same time, we can try to understand why he argues—in an inner-Jewish dispute—with such sharpness but without arbitrarily adopting a rhetoric of anti-Jewish vituperation. To this end, Ton Veerkamp writes translating and interpreting 15:20b-25:[147]

146 Veerkamp 221 ("Your aberration remains," par. 5-6).

147 Veerkamp 311 and 314-15 (The Fight, par. 1 and 15-21).

15:20b If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too;
if they kept my word, they will keep yours too.
15:21 But they will do all this to you on account of my name
because they have no knowledge of the ONE who sent me.
15:22 If I had not come, had not spoken to them,
they would not have gone astray.
Now, they have no pretext for their aberration.
15:23 The one fighting me with hatred
is hating my FATHER too.
15:24 If I had not done the works among them
which no one else did,
they would not be in their aberration.
Now, they have seen them,
and have fought with hatred both me and my FATHER.
15:25 But that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their Torah:
They hated me for no reason at all.

. . . [N]ow the subject changes, from "world order" to "they." There can be no doubt that by this plural Rabbinical Judaism is meant. They "persecute, fight with hate, exclude from the synagogue, do not recognize." The object is "the disciples," the reason "because of my name." The object of hatred, John interprets, is not so much the disciples, but rather the Messiah and the God of Israel, the FATHER.

To John, this is actually incomprehensible. He cannot understand why the synagogue behaves in such a way toward the Messianic community, and he includes himself among those who were hated for no reason in Israel, Psalms 35:19; 69:5 or Psalm 109:1 ff.,

> God of my praise, do not be silent.
> For the mouth of the criminal
> and the mouth of deceit
> open themselves against me.
> Speeches of hatred surround me,
> are waging war against me for no reason (*dōrean, chinnam*)!
> Instead of love, they are a *satan* for me,
> me—a prayer![148]
> They do evil to me instead of good,
> hate instead of my love!

148 Veerkamp adds the remark: "The passage is unexplainable. The LXX saves itself from the affair and writes: 'Their prayer has become a sin.' According to Job 24:12, instead of *thefilla* ('prayer, praise'), one could perhaps read *thifla* ('dirt'), which is possible in consonant writing. Then we would have: 'me—the piece of dirt!'"

> Without reason, *chinnam, dōrean*, in Israel is always a very serious reproach. Thus the Book of Job accuses the God of his fate of devouring the righteous without reason.
>
> Rome's hatred against the Messiah is not justified, but it is reasoned. This can be understood. The hatred of the synagogue is not rationally comprehensible to John. They have only "pretexts" (*prophaseis*) for this hateful fight. If the Messiah had not done these works, then . . .! But now it says with the psalm, "Hatred instead of my love."
>
> If anywhere, it is clear here that a rational discussion of political paths between ecclesia and synagogue has not been conducted; both are irrational for each other. In the case of Rome, you might understand this; it has reasons to "fight the Messiah with hatred." But the Judeans. They have seen the works, "which no one else has done." They fight him and us, says John, "without reason."
>
> We are not biased here. We only have to state that with the accusation "without reason" a conversation, let alone an understanding, becomes impossible. We observe that John does not want to look for reasons among his opponents —and the search for reasons on both sides would be the basic condition for a conversation between both sides. John, for his part, assumes without any reason (!) that Rabbinical Judaism cannot have any reasons. He makes no effort at all here. The interpretation must state what is irrational in the vocable *chinnam, dōrean*, without being a party to this conflict.

4.4.2.2 The Jews as Biological Children of the Devil?

But what about the "most insidious contrast," as which you judge the one "between the children of God and children of the devil (8:44)"? You describe this contrast in the following terms (77-78):

> The identification of the Jews as children of the devil situates them firmly within the cosmological tale alongside the villain whom the Word must defeat: the "ruler of this world" (14:30), "the evil one" (17:15), Satan (13:27), or the devil (13:2). Just as the positive language serves the purpose of pathos, by enticing the audience to take the path that leads to light, life, and joy, so does the negative usage encourage them to view the *loudaioi* in a negative light and for that reason to distance themselves from these children of Satan.

That with this *diabolos* or *satan* in John's Gospel, however, originally no supernatural demonic devil is meant at all, but the this-worldly leader of the Roman world order, I have already explained in detail above in section 3.1.2.3.

In the present context (78) you go into more detail about the fact that the

> confrontation between the Johannine Jesus and the Johannine Jews in 8:31-59 revolves around competing genealogical assertions. The Jews initially claim

> Abraham as their father (8:39). In 8:41 they trace back their genealogy even further, to God, declaring: "We are not illegitimate children (literally: begotten out of fornication, *ek porneias ou gegennēmetha*); we have one father, God himself" (8:41). To this Jesus responds: "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth (*ek tou theou exēlthon*) from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me" (8:42).

You now oddly reconnect this argumentation of the Johannine Jesus with Aristotelian doctrines:

> Because their behavior does not resemble that of Abraham or of God, Jesus denies their claim to be children of Abraham and of God. Jesus's argument in this case rests on the Aristotelian claim that paternity can be attested by the likeness or similarity between father and son.

To support this, you quote Jerome Neyrey[149] who notes,

> Aristotle expresses the common expectation that "children will be chips off the old block" (see Deut 23:2; 2 Kings 9:22; Isa 57:3; Hos 1:2; Prov 23:25-26; 30:17[150], either like father, like son (e.g., Matt 11:27) or like mother, like daughter (e.g., Ezek 16:44). If the parents or ancestors were "landed" or citizens of a free polis, then the root stock of the family was noble; virtuous ancients should be expected to breed virtue. Plato says: "They were good because they sprang from good fathers" (Menex. 237). Confirmation of this is found in the endless introduction of biblical characters as "son of so-and-so." To know the father is to know the son. The honor rating of the father indicates the honor rating of the son.

But why do you or Neyrey mention the Greeks Aristotle or Plato at all, when he subsequently cites only biblical evidence for what he claims? You argue as follows:

> In identifying the devil as the father of the *Ioudaioi*, John is drawing on the Aristotelian theory of epigenesis, just as he did in identifying God as the father of Jesus. Epigenesis, therefore, provides not only a background against which to understand the Word's entry into the world, but also a rationale for the boundary that John draws between his audience and the *Ioudaioi*.

From this Aristotelian theory you further infer something like a biological descent of the Jews from the devil (78-79):

> Those within the elect group belong socially and even organically, that is, by means of divine generation, to the children of God. Those outside, though they may claim to be divinely begotten, are in fact children of the devil, as evidenced by their behavior towards Jesus, the Son of God.

149 (91, n. 38) Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009), 10.

150 Here, your text mistakenly said "Eccl" instead of "Prov" and "30:7" instead of "30:17."

4.4.2.3 Fathers and Sons in Patriarchally Structured Societies

Such ideas may well correspond to the later discussion among the Church Fathers to which you refer in a note (91, n. 39) "as to whether Jews were by their nature the children of the devil." But if John was a Jewish Messianist, he certainly did not want to listen specifically to Aristotle and speak of descent from gods or devils in the biological sense, but, as Ton Veerkamp makes clear in explaining Jesus' parable of the father and son (5:19-21),[151]

> He starts from that social structure in which the chain of fathers—sons forms the supporting framework. We are dealing with a patriarchally structured society. The son continues the life story—the Scriptures say, the NAME—of the FATHER. He only does what he sees the FATHER doing, it says in John.
>
> The sentence, "my FATHER works until today, so do I", is now continued with a parable. The father *does*, the son also *does*, but always only what he sees the father doing. In patriarchally structured societies, in which not innovation but tradition is the condition of progress, this is a universally valid proposition; in the father's workshop the son learns by imitation, "What the father does, the son also does." Only in this way he honors the father. Because the father is connected with his son as with the one who will continue his history or his name, he shows him what he is doing, "For the father loves the son as a friend (*philei*)"—this applies generally—and the father "shows him all that he does"—this also applies generally. Even in patriarchally structured societies, there are intact social structures. The father is devoted to the son like a friend, not like a subordinate; he shows him what he himself does (his works) so that the son can do such works, even greater works (progress by imitation).
>
> Then John resolves the parable. "To your astonishment" it is now no longer a matter of any father and any son, but of him whom John calls FATHER, and of him whom John calls Son of Man, *bar enosh*. The God of Israel shows the one whom he sends (Son) his works of creation, and even greater works: the raising of the dead (Ezekiel 37!), the restoration of creation. The transition from parable to theologically and politically grasped reality is shown in the transition from the present *(deiknysin)* to the future *(deixei).* The Father "will show him greater works so that you [the Judean opponents] will be astonished." The work of the Father as the God of Israel is "to raise up and give life to the dead." The work of the Son is also to *make alive*. Admittedly with the restriction: *whom he wants to*. This restriction invokes that authority that the Father, the "advanced in days" from the vision of Daniel, gave to the Son. *Whom he wants to*, therefore, is not arbitrariness, but the result of that trial that Daniel describes.

151 Veerkamp 139 (The Parable of Father and Son, par. 2-4).

So, first, this means that it is no coincidence that similar statements about the relationship of fathers and sons are found in Aristotle as in the biblical situation, which is also patriarchal. Secondly, however, John's conception of the Son is very clearly based on biblical motifs such as the Son of Man from the Book of Daniel or the *monogenēs*, the Only Begotten Son of Abraham in Genesis, and even the designation *diabolos* or *satanas* is to be understood from its biblical meaning, here not as a functionary of God as in the book of Job or Zechariah, for example, but as an adversary of the liberating NAME of the God of Israel or of the kings anointed on his behalf, who is to be identified here with the Roman emperor.[152]

4.4.2.4 Nuance, Irony, and Paradox as Additional Stylistic Devices

I find your remark (79) very interesting:

> John's rhetoric of binary opposition does not necessarily point to a thoroughgoing dualistic worldview. Beneath and around these dichotomous categories, we can detect some nuance, irony, and, as in the formulation, "the hour is coming and now is," paradox. Binary opposition functions rhetorically, however, to contribute to the Gospel's construction of two opposing groups—the children of God and the children of Satan—and the boundary between them —faith in Jesus as Messiah, the Son of God, and rejection of that faith.

Apparently, you are not quite convinced, after all, that the cosmological narrative you assume, within which the followers of Jesus as children of God and the Jews as children of the devil are irreconcilably opposed to each other, is entirely consistent with the findings in John's Gospel. What remains unclear in this context here, however, is what you specifically mean by "nuance, irony, and ... paradox."

I myself had pointed to manifold nuances of the term *Ioudaioi*, which you, however, consider irrelevant.

In your book *Befriending the Beloved* Disciple,[153] you had spoken of irony in connection with the assaults of the Jews against Jesus for making himself God as the man he is:

> From the Gospel's point of view, these statements are ironic; for Jesus *is* the Son of God, and is equal to, or resembles, God. Jesus is not calling for the worship of a god other than the God of Israel. Rather, he is proclaiming himself to

152 I have dealt with Jesus as the second Isaac above in sections 1.1.3, 1.3.3, and 2.3.4.1, with Jesus as the Son of Man in 1.1.2, and 1.2.4.3. The fact that the *diabolos* as the father of the Jews refers to the political subjugation of Jewish leadership circles to the Roman emperor has been addressed, for instance, in section 3.1.2.3.

153 Reinhartz, Befriending, 93. See on this, my statement in section 5.3.2.2: Jesus as blasphemer, in the fifth and fourth last paragraphs.

> be the Son of God (20:31), the one through whom God reveals himself to the world (1:18).

But I do not think that John is concerned with irony, that is, with an attitude of hurting superiority, but rather that the sharpness of his argument arises from a wounded disappointment, namely, disappointment that Rabbinic Judaism does not accept the Messiah who, in its eyes, fully embodies the liberated NAME of God.

In your book just mentioned[154] you also referred to the tension "between the belief that eternal life pertains to some future period and the belief that we can experience eternal life even in our present earthly lives." Ton Veerkamp[155] in his interpretation of 5:25 relates this tension to the revolutionary or Messianic awareness that the liberation expected for of the age to come can already be felt and experienced in the present, such as, for instance, a Judean and a Samaritan woman experiencing reconciliation in their conversation at Jacob's well.

4.4.3 The Rhetoric of Fear

In your section (79) on the "rhetoric of fear," which in your view represents one of "the most powerful ways that John encourages dissaffilation from the *Ioudaioi*," you basically repeat the same arguments as in section 4.4.1, for, as you also write yourself, the fear of the Jews is about "an undercurrent in the depiction of the *Ioudaioi* as violent in both their intentions and their behavior," which John, in your view, wrongly accuses the Jews of persecuting Jesus and his followers and even threatening them with death. What may have been the basis of this judgment with regard to very specific groups in the leading class of Judea at the time of Jesus or John, I have already described in the aforementioned section.

John addresses the fear of the Jews in passages such as 4:1-3, 7:1, or 11:8; in 3:1 he alludes to it, and in 19:38 and 20:19 he expresses it literally.

One passage deserves special consideration, namely 7:13, which you judge to be "ominous":

> John 7 is set in the area of the Jerusalem Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. The *Ioudaioi* were searching for Jesus, and the crowds were divided as to whether Jesus is a good person or deceitful one. The narrator then explains that "no one would speak openly about him for fear of the Jews" (7:13). The passage as a whole creates an ominous atmosphere that becomes intensified when Jesus eventually does show up at the festival and speaks openly to the crowd. Some Jerusalemites then wonder: "Is not this the man whom they are

154 Reinhartz, Befriending, 117. See my commentary in section 6.2.2, Tension between the age to come and life now, par. 1-7.

155 Veerkamp 140-41 (Interpretation of the Parable: "And this is now," par. 1 and 7).

> trying to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him!" 7:25-26).

You understand (80) this entire passage to mean "that not only Jesus but also those who believed in him or even expressed interest in him feared the Jews' retribution." What you pay barely any attention to in this formulation is the fact that those whose fear is expressed here are also Jews, not a homogeneous group of Jesus' followers. In the fact that here certain Jews are fearful of other Jews, however, it is clear that John does not regard all Jews as persecutors of Jesus or his followers across the board; in any case, there are also Jews who are not in a position by which they can instill fear in other Jews.

Three passages deal with a very concrete form of fear of the Jews, namely the "fear of expulsion from the synagogue" on the basis of confession to Jesus as the Messiah, in 9:22, 12:42-43, and 16:2. You do not want to address the question of whether this actually conceals traumatic experiences of the "Johannine community" until chapters 6 and 7. If this is the case, it would in any case mean that the rhetoric of fear would not be completely plucked out of the air.

4.4.4 The Rhetoric of Repetition

Finally, you state that the very repetition of the phrase "*hoi Ioudaioi*, seventy times in this Gospel," in predominantly negative usage, must contribute to the "creation of a rhetorical chasm between Christ-confessors and *Ioudaioi*," at least among such listeners "who were listening to the entire Gospel being read or recited aloud, as I imagine our Alexandra would have done in the agora."

And again, it must be pondered whether this predominantly negative characterization of the *Ioudaioi* is really merely a rhetorical device of vituperation, first heard in the agora of a city of Asia Minor from the mouth of a Christian missionary. Could it not just as well be that a Miriam is persuaded by John's words in a sectarian circle, living as a Jew among Jews and sharing John's disappointment with the leading circles of her synagogue?

4.4.5 Miriam Explaining John's Hostile Speech about the *Ioudaioi*

I am aware of how negatively John speaks of the *Ioudaioi*, and I also know who he is referring to in particular. At the time when he starts to promote trust in the Messiah Jesus in our synagogue, there is much discussion. Most are skeptical, how can you have any hope for a Messiah after the Judean War? Don't you see where the Zealots have brought us? Their Messianic adventures have brought on the Romans, who have destroyed Jerusalem and taken the temple from us.

In response to this, John says: The Zealots cannot succeed because they want to fight against the Romans with their own means. That is why he is very critical even of Peter and the brothers of Jesus, who initially led the first Messianic community in

Jerusalem. The brothers (7:4) want Jesus to openly challenge the world order; Peter (18:10, see 21:18), girded for Zealotry, defends Jesus with the sword.

But most in the synagogue reject Jesus even more vehemently. How could he be the Messiah? He hung on the cross of the Romans, is he not (Deuteronomy 21:23) accursed by God? If he was the Messiah, shouldn't he have brought the age to come long ago? But you see the ruins of Jerusalem, our people massacred and crucified—the end of all Messianic hopes!

John reminds us of the prophets of Israel and Judah. Did they not also warn their people, their kings? They turned away from their God and were punished with the fall of Israel, with the exile of Judah to Babylon, with the destruction of the First Temple. Even at the time of Jesus, it is our own people that rejects the Messiah. If the Pharisees had not sought Jesus' life, the chief priests had not handed him over to the Romans, perhaps the Judean War would not have occurred and the Temple would not have been destroyed. But there is still hope. If all Israel gathers anew in the Messianic community, trusting in the Messiah Jesus—Judeans, Galileans, Samaritans, all the Jews of the Diaspora and with them the God-fearing *goyim*—then we will overcome the Roman world order!

At this, the Rabbis of our synagogue can only shake their heads. This is crazy. Everything speaks against the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. He makes himself the Messiah, places himself on the chair of Moses, even wants to be the Son of God. He is nothing but a blasphemer and troublemaker.

Most in the synagogue agree with them. Let us be glad that the Romans still allow us to practice our religion at all, they say. Let us listen to Moses and the Torah! We do not want Messianic experiments!

John does not stop aggressively promoting trust in the Messiah. He does not shy away from reproaches. Have you become sons of Rome, have you taken the Roman *diabolos*, the adversary, for your father? Have you abandoned the God of Israel, his *agapē*, his love and solidarity? Do you only want to be on good terms with Rome like the Pharisees and high priests of Jesus' time?

Thus, more and more turmoil arises, and when John and the ones who are with him do not stop agitating for Jesus, in the end, the people in charge see themselves forced to intervene. We are thrown out of the synagogue. I can understand the synagogue leaders. They do not want to risk that we are denounced to the Romans with anti-state activities. After all, we are *religio licita*, permitted religion, we don't have to take part in the emperor's cult, not all the pagan neighbors are happy about that. People like John provide ammunition to those who are against us.

But still, I think John is right. If people would listen to Jesus, maybe there would be more *agapē*, more solidarity in the world. I join those who no longer meet in the synagogue, but here and there in the home of a follower of Jesus.

This is not an easy time for us. We are losing the synagogue that is familiar and gives us security. We are attacked as troublemakers. The situation is serious, the group breaks apart, some separate, return to the synagogue. It almost happens that our group is completely disbanded.

During this time we get the idea to join the Messianic community, which was originally in Jerusalem and of which Jesus himself appointed Peter as the leader. At least, this is how John told us, in a chapter of his Gospel that he himself appended to his Gospel.

It does not take that long, only a few decades, until many of us bitterly regret this step. More and more Gentiles join the community, we Jews play a smaller and smaller role. There is no longer talk of the Messiah, but of Jesus Christ. We should proudly call ourselves Christians, no longer Jews. The hot debates among Jews about how to overcome the Roman world order through solidarity turn into nasty hostilities against all Jews as murderers of the Messiah and even against Jews who trust in Jesus and at the same time want to follow Jewish rites like Jesus himself.

So, dear Adele, in the end, I have to agree with you. Gentiles missionaries, as you describe them, are recruiting in the marketplaces of the Roman Empire for followers of a Son of God and Savior who bears less and less resemblance to the Messiah John proclaimed to us. It is unbelievable in what a short time the message of this Gospel could be perverted in such a way, turned into the opposite. It must be all the more difficult for people of your time to trace John's original intentions.

4.5 Overlaps of the Term *Ioudaioi* with Other Groups of the Population

Now (81) you do perceive "that the term *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* is not used monolithically simply to denote Jesus's opponents." But you disagree with the assumption that might follow from this "that John's rhetoric would impress Alexandra and the rest of his audience with the diversity among the *Ioudaioi* in their response to Jesus." In favor of the assumption that, according to John, the entirety of the Jewish people indeed does not accept Jesus, as he indeed expresses it in 1:11, is not only that

> the majority of references are hostile, as are virtually all of the exchanges between Jesus and the wavering Jewish crowds. The negative portrayal of the *Ioudaioi* is evident in three more subtle ways: the blurring of boundaries among various Jewish subgroups; the association of the *Ioudaioi* with the negative aspects of the world (cosmos); and the Gospel's ambivalence about Jesus's own status as a *Ioudaios*.

4.5.1 Are there Subgroups among the *Ioudaioi*?

On the one hand, (81) in your eyes "John knows that the first-century *Ioudaioi* were not a monolithic undifferentiated group," and you list all the passages in which Pharisees or high priests appear:

> Pharisees (on their own: 1:24; 3:1; 4:1; 7:47; 8:13; 9:13; 9:15; 9:40; 11:46; 12:19; 12:42) and chiefpriests (on their own: 12:10; 18:35; 19:6; 19:15; 19:21), occasionally in combination (7:32; 7:45; 11:47; 11:57; 18:3).

On the other hand (82) you do not want to let this stand as an argument against your assumption that John advocates a generally anti-Jewish attitude.

4.5.1.1 Does Everything Said of the *Pharisaioi* Refer in Principle to All *Ioudaioi*?

In favor of this is the fact that in 9:15-16 and 9:18 the same persons are referred to with once as Pharisees and the other time as Jews, and that 12:42 "refers to the fear of the Pharisees in the same way as 7:13, 19:38, and 20:19 refer to fear of the Jews." However, since it is obvious how differently John uses the word *Ioudaioi*, we can argue the other way around as well. In fact, in this context *Ioudaioi* refers to the Pharisaic Jews or the representatives of Rabbinic Judaism, with whom the Johannine Messianists deal mainly as internal Jewish opponents. This does not mean, however, that *Ioudaioi* must always refer to the Pharisees or that *Ioudaioi* as such are in every case to reject Jesus in principle or to be rejected by him.

4.5.1.2 Do All Jews Demand Jesus' Crucifixion or Only the Leading Priests?

In 19:14-15, you discover "a similar pattern ... with respect to the priests." It is *Ioudaioi* who loudly demand to Pilate that Jesus be crucified, to which Pilate asks back:

> "'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.'" Had John intended to differentiate the authorities from the Jews as a whole, as some argue, he could easily have referred to the former as leaders of the Jews, a term he uses in 3:1 to describe Nicodemus.

Again I object: Just this mention of the leading priests recognizing the emperor as their only king—contrary to the Torah which prescribes the God of Israel as the only king or at best a king from among the Jews themselves—shows that the *Ioudaioi* named here are none else but a mob stirred up by the leadership to serve their interests. Striking in this context is that after Jesus' capture, there is no more talk of Pharisees with any word and not even of the crowd, *ochlos*. Ton Veerkamp points this out in his interpretation of 18:28a as follows:[156]

> *They* took him to the praetorium, the administrative seat of the procurator of the province of Judea. *They*: the police group and those who were present at the interrogation by Annas and Caiaphas. *They* are the *Judeans* of the following sections. They are very *specific* Judeans; for the understanding of what follows, this "they" is of vital importance. The Perushim are not there, nor is the crowd arguing about whether or not Yeshua was the Messiah. There is no

156 Veerkamp 351 (Simon's Discipleship. Jesus before the Great Priest, par. 17).

> crowd *(ochlos)* before the praetorium. It is very specific members of the people who want to see Jesus on the cross. John was not an anti-Judaist or even an anti-Semite! He was very much an enemy of the Judean leadership and their satellites.

According to John's account, which Jewish grouping is active in the trial of Jesus, Veerkamp describes even more precisely in the following paragraphs:[157]

> Here we are told: A political leadership delivers a disliked member of the people to an occupying power in order not to jeopardize its business basis for a proper and probably profitable relationship with the occupying power. It is not the task of an interpretation to establish historical facts, especially since the endeavor would be futile. Its task is to interpret the narrative in its internal contexts and to place it in a known socio-political context of contradiction. This is true for the Gospel as a whole and even more so for the Passion narrative. It cannot do more but at least it should do this. . . .
>
> The arrest involved "officials of the Perushim" (Pharisees), the great opponents of Jesus; they are not represented at the trial before the Roman court. In John's Gospel, the Perushim stand for the emerging Rabbinical Judaism. They were and are the opponents of John's Messianic community. But he does not hold them responsible for the transfer of Jesus to Roman jurisdiction.
>
> This argument *e silentio* is important. The eternal anti-Semitic accusation that the Jews—and all Judaism was Rabbinical Judaism until modern times—killed Jesus finds no support in John. The Gospel's accusation of killing refers to the exclusion of the Messianists around John from the synagogue, as we saw above, in the discussion of 15:26-16:15.
>
> The triangle of actors in the Passion narrative thus consists of *Pilate* (Rome), the *leading priests* (the Judean government) or *their followers*, and *Jesus*. The Judean government has put it to Pilate that Jesus is striving for political power, i.e. kingship. For the Romans, this is interesting information. They, as the real authorities, need to know who might be challenging Roman power, or if it is an internal dispute on power in self-government. So Pilate asks, "Your nation and the leading priests have handed you over to me, what have you done?"

By putting the latter phrase into Pilate's mouth in 18:35, John declares the leading priests as representatives of the Judean nation to be responsible for Jesus' execution, not every individual member of the people of the Jews.

157 Veerkamp 353-54 ("What is fidelity, anyhow?", par. 7, 9-11).

4.5.2 The *Ioudaioi*, the People, and the World

You also want to understand the fact (82) that John often blurs the distinctions "among the *loudaioi*, the 'people,' and the 'crowds,'" in terms of extending "the rhetoric of vituperation beyond the *loudaios* passages as such."

4.5.2.1 The *ochlos* in John's Gospel as a Jewish Crowd

Now, of course, it is clear that the crowd of people, *ochlos* or *anthrōpoi*, in chapter 6 consists of Jews, since Jesus deals only with Jews except in his contact with Samaritans, with the Greeks in 12:20-22, and with Pilate and his soldiers.

However, the behavior of these people shows that Jesus is not dealing with Rabbinical Jews in the feeding scene, but with rather Zealot Jews who (6:14) take him for the prophet Moses had announced and (6:15) want to proclaim him King against his will.

In the synagogue of Capernaum, from verse 6:30 on, as becomes clear later (6:59), the addressees are changing. Here Jesus is again confronted by Pharisaic/Rabbinic Jews, to whom Jesus presents himself in extremely provocative speech as the Messiah who (6:41, 48) is the true bread from heaven, whose fleshly existence, if he is to be trusted, must be entered into to such an extent that, figuratively speaking (6:51-58), one has to chew upon his flesh and drink his blood.

Incidentally, nowhere in either part of chapter 6, there is any denigration of the Jews but instead a substantive demarcation of Jesus the Messiah from both Jewish Zealotry and Jewish Rabbinism. Jesus' speech in the synagogue of Capernaum might even be considered more of a self-denigration from a Jewish perspective, since he seems to defy even the Torah's prohibition against ingesting blood in his provocative language.

If we look at the chapter from 6:60 on, it becomes fully clear that it is not all about the same addressees, because Jesus is suddenly attacked explicitly by his own disciples, many of whom (6:66) turn away from him because of his offensive remarks.

Similarly, at the beginning of chapter 7, even Jesus' own brothers are sharply criticized for their lack of trust in Jesus (7:5); this judgment is probably based on John's assessment that the Messianic community in Jerusalem, led by James, Judas, and other members of Jesus' family, was also leaning toward Zealotry.

These two examples alone show that there is no question of a clearly determinable simple binary opposition of two monolithic blocs, the followers of Jesus and the Jews.

You yourself (82) consider chapter 7 only from the time when Jesus himself appears at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, and it is important to you that

> the people in the Temple area at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles are also referred to as the crowd (*ho ochlos*; e.g., 7:20, 31, 32, 40, 43) and the *Ioudaioi*

> (7:11; 15). During this exchange, Jesus accuses the crowd of the actions that elsewhere are associated with the *Ioudaioi*.

Again, however, it is not at all necessary for you to refer to the "reference to Moses" in 7:19 to show "that the crowd are *Ioudaioi*," for John takes it for granted that the crowd at the festival consists of Jews.[158]

According to Ton Veerkamp, however, it is now characteristic of the situation at the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus (7:10) can only go into action here *en kryptō*, in secret, that is, subversively. Apparently, the question of who Jesus is, whether he is indeed the Messiah or whether he is leading the people astray, triggers turmoil among the crowd as well as among the leading class of the people:[159]

> These questions cannot be discussed openly, "for fear of the Judeans." The *Judeans* seek him, there is a fear of *them*; the problem in 7:11-13 is the ambiguity of the subject. There is a tension between the crowd (*ochlos*) and the Judeans (*Ioudaioi*). In any case, the idea of *Ioudaioi*, *Judeans*, Jews, is here strictly ambiguous: "Jews" are afraid of "Jews."
>
> The festival is already half over, half of the great time of processions with palm branches and torches. Here a festival is celebrated that is not yet a festival at all. The indication of time in 7:14 is not a neutral determination, but rather denotes a blank space. The walk to the festival had been a hidden, subversive one. Now, it seems, Jesus is lifting this hiddenness. In truth, he moves among Judeans who are afraid of Judeans; the Judean crowd protects him from the seizure of Judean officials; the crowd is the precondition for subversive existence.

However, you do not accept such distinctions, but point out that in 7:20 it is explicitly the crowd, *ochlos*, that responds to Jesus' accusation of wanting to kill him. According to you, this "reference to killing Jesus clearly has its antecedent in 5:18, which continues to be Jesus's frame of reference in speaking to the crowd in 7:21-24" about justifying his act of healing a man on the Sabbath. Veerkamp also comments on this reproach Jesus makes in the midst of the crowd:[160]

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158 The same, of course, applies later to verse 11:42, in which "Jesus prays to God for Lazarus's healing 'for the sake of the crowd [*dia ton ochlon*] standing here.' The chapter as a whole specifies that those who came to mourn with Mary and Martha were *Ioudaioi* (11:19)." What else could they be? Roman or Greek pagans, *goyim*? Or Christians? After all, John's Gospel is set primarily in Judea and Galilee, where mainly Jews live, and there is no mention of Christianoi in John's Gospel yet. Likewise, there is nothing extraordinary in that "12:9 refers to 'the great crowd of the Jews' who learned that Jesus was dining with the Bethany siblings."

159 Veerkamp 186 (About the Messiah, par. 3-4).

160 Veerkamp 187 (About the Messiah, par. 10).

> "None of you do the Torah, why do you seek to kill me?" The crowd is outraged. In fact, John is lumping together Judeans who are afraid of Judeans with those Judeans who instill fear in other Judeans. The outrage of the crowd is therefore justified.

In fact, we have to think about why John here puts arguments into Jesus' mouth in the middle of a crowd during a festival that belong to the dispute with Rabbinic Judaism, namely about the question whether healings may be performed on the Sabbath when it is allowed to perform circumcision on the Sabbath. Possibly his point is simply that, especially in politically tumultous times, it is commonplace for disputes of a public nature to be discussed vociferously, even in the streets or in the crowds at a festival. This blurring of differences between leading circles and the crowd, which you perceive here just as Veerkamp does, cannot mean, however, that such differences are basically meaningless for John.

On the contrary, in the further course of chapter 7 John describes both the rumors among the people and the activity of the leadership and its officials in a very differentiated way. Thus, in 7:25-27 rumors about the intentions of the leading classes are negotiated, in 7:32 officials are sent out by the very leading priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus, in 7:40-43 there is a dispute among the crowd as to whether Jesus can be the Messiah, and beginning in 7:44 the leadership discusses the failure in the attempt to arrest Jesus. Let us listen again to Veerkamp on this matter:[161]

> As in 7:12, we hear in 7:25 the inner discussion among the Judeans in the crowd. They are debating a rumor, "They" are seeking to kill Jesus. But "they" let him calmly say what he thinks in public (*parrhēsia*). Have "they" perhaps recognized that the Messiah is performing here?
>
> The people in this crowd show Messianic knowledge. The Messiah comes, without anyone being able to say from where. He is there and everything will be different. But the people know the origin of Jesus, Jesus ben Joseph from Nazareth, Galilee. For this reason alone, he cannot be the Messiah. Jesus says, "You know me," my origin, but you know very well that nothing is said with the statement of my official origin; you know very well that I have not "come from myself." What I am is that I am sent, no matter whether I come from Nazareth, Galilee, or elsewhere, no matter whether my father is Joseph of Nazareth, Galilee, or another. What you do not know is who sent me. I, so Jesus says, know him, I am with him, he has sent me.
>
> "They"—those fear-instilling Jews—have meanwhile recognized that no harmless fool appears here, they try to get hold of him. For the time being this does not work, because his hour has not yet come. Here it says "hour" against "op-

161 Veerkamp 188 and 190-91 (About the Messiah, par. 14-17, 28).

> portune moment," *hōra* against *kairos*. His hour will come, in this hour all foolish messianic expectations will be shattered.
>
> The discussions continue. Many trusted because they had seen the works that traditionally are associated with the Messiah: The deaf hear, the blind see, the paralyzed can walk, as the prophet Isaiah said in the song *yesusum midbar*, "Let the wilderness rejoice," Isaiah 35:1 (see above in the discussion of 4:14). The Perushim heard these discussions and knew: this is a highly political matter. They informed the authorities (*archiereis*, "the leading priests") and ordered the arrest of Jesus. Both leading priests and Perushim are the "official" Judea, although the Perushim were political opponents of the leading priests. Both groups together pursued the goal of arresting Jesus. At the trial, the death sentence, and the execution, the Perushim are absent; they had played their part in the arrest. Only the leading priests were protagonists there. . . .
>
> Some officials try to arrest him; the plan was—still—unfeasible. The officials return to their principals without having achieved anything. They ask them why they had not arrested Jesus. Odd is the reasoning of the officials, "Never has a man spoken like this!" Not a possible resistance of the crowd, in which there were many sympathizers of Jesus, but the power of his words kept them from getting violent. Political unreliability dawned to the Perushim, "Have you too perhaps been led astray?" In the crowd there had also been Judeans who believed that Jesus was misleading other Judeans (7:12), and neither the authorities nor the Perushim trusted Jesus. The *archontes* ("superiors, authorities") are not only the leading priests but all those who exercise political power.

As I said, by no means all these disputes are about a simple opposition between Christ-followers and Jews. It is about inner-Jewish political entanglements on the background of Judea's dependence on the ruling Roman world order.

4.5.2.2 Does *kosmos* Refer in a Negative Sense to the Jews or to the Roman World Order?

Finally, you note (83) a "partial overlap between the *Ioudaioi* and 'the world,' *ho kosmos*." To do so, you first distinguish two different meanings of *kosmos* as "a neutral and generalizing term," namely, as "a spatial category" (1:9-10a, 9:32; 9:39; 10:36; 13:1; 16:28; 17:5; 17:18; 17:24; 21:25; possibly also 3:19; 6:14; 11:27; 12:25) or as synonymous with "humankind," (1:29; 3:16; 3:17, 4:42; 6:33; 6:51; 7:4; 8:12; 8:26; 12:19; 17:18; 17:23; perhaps 9:5 though this has a spatial connotation as well).

But the world also occurs in a negative sense, and you are wondering why there are so many passages that are (84) "vague and open-ended, without a concrete referent for 'world,'" which you summarize as follows (83-84):

> The relationship between Jesus and the world is ambiguous. On the one hand, the Prologue states that Jesus, as the *Logos*, was involved in the creation of the world, and was sent into the world in order to save it. On the other hand, Jesus sometimes strongly differentiates himself from the world (8:23). His kingdom is not of this world (18:36) but he has conquered the "ruler of this world" (12:31; 14:30-31; 16:11; 16:33). In the future, the world will not see Jesus but the disciples will (14:19; 14:22). Jesus does not give as the world does (14:27); furthermore, the world does not know God (17:25; cf. 16:8; 14:17) and hates those who believe (15:18).
>
> The disciples too are separate from the world: "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you" (15:18-19). While the disciples mourn Jesus, the world will rejoice, yet in the end, the disciples' pain will turn to joy (16:20-21). Indeed, "those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (12:25). The disciples are sharply distinguished from "the world" in Jesus's prayer (John 17). God gave Jesus the disciples "from the world" (17:6); he asks on their behalf, not on behalf of the world (17:9). Like Jesus, they do not belong in the world (17:13-16) but unlike Jesus they must remain in the world, and for that reason require divine protection from the "evil one" (17:11; 17:15).

You now give some arguments for the negatively understood *kosmos* to be identified with the *Ioudaioi*:

1. *Kosmos* in 12:19, where the Pharisees complain that "the whole world" follows Jesus, can of course refer to the whole Jewish people. But just here "world" is not meant negatively but rather in the neutral sense of "people."
2. In 18:20, Jesus does not speak to Pilate, as you write, but to Annas the high priest: "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret." Again, "world" can certainly refer to Jewish audiences, but without negative connotation.
3. Finally, you refer "the idea that the believers need protection from the 'evil one' (*ek tou ponērou*); 17:15) or the 'ruler of this world' (*ho archōn tou kosmou*; 12:31, 14:30, 16:11)" to

   > 8:44, in which Jesus tells the Jews that they have the devil as their father. While it might seem appropriate for Jesus to ask God to protect believers from evil spirits, it may well be, as 16:2 implies, that they truly need protection from the Jews, who are set to persecute them as they did Jesus.

If that were correct, if John were indeed clearly identifying the *Ioudaioi* as the evil world ruled by the devil and the Jews as genetically descended children of that devil, then I would throw his Gospel in the dustbin as anti-Semitic and argue for its removal from the ecclesiastical canon of New Testament writings.

But another identification of *kosmos* makes much more sense in John's Gospel, which I have mentioned many times,[162] namely *kosmos* as "world order," so-called "well-ordered world" that the Roman Empire boasts of being a *Pax Romana* but which the Jewish Messianists around John condemn as an oppressive and violent world-un-order led by the emperor as the adversary—*diabolos* or *satanas*—of the liberating God of Israel. Where the Jews are indeed badly insulted as the children of this *diabolos*, they are in fact accused of collaboration with Rome—the leading priesthood at the time of Jesus for the sake of preserving elite privileges, Rabbinical Judaism at the time of John in order not to endanger its status as *religio licita*.

However, John does not use the word *kosmos* in this negative sense everywhere, as you also have pointed out at length. Besides the neutral meaning of "all the world" in the sense of "people," he often conceives *kosmos* in the sense of creation, *ktisis*, that is, of the living space of human beings well created by God. Therefore, he can also hope for the liberation of the world from the ruling world order that weighs on it through the Messiah Jesus. This is the solution to the ambiguity in the term *kosmos*, which would hardly be explicable in your argumentation—for why would Jesus want to save the world, which in your eyes is identical with the evil Jews?

Since the proper understanding of the word *kosmos* is crucial for the whole interpretation of John's Gospel, I quote again Ton Veerkamp's basic remark on this question:[163]

> *Kosmos* is both "world" and "world order." In John, *kosmos* is primarily *ho kosmos houtos*, "this world order." The word denotes what the rabbis call *ʿolam ha-ze*, "this age." It is a political category: the ruling world order, precisely the Roman Empire. Where John speaks of the *kosmos* being liberated, it is not the world in its present order that is meant, but the human living space, the world that is liberated from the order that weighs upon it, 4:42! The Greek *kosmos*—it has no actual equivalent in the Hebrew Scriptures—means "(harmonious) order, ornament (cosmetics)." Here it means both living space and that order which threatens the order of the individual peoples and just above all the orders of Israel. To John, the bad thing about the world is not the world itself, it is the object of God's solidarity, 3:16. What is bad is the order under which it suffers. Therefore, there is no "gnostic," rather a "political" cosmology in John, which we try to account for by the alternating translation "world" and "world order."

162 Especially in sections 2.2.1.2 and 3.1.1.

163 Veerkamp 28 (note 36 on the translation of John 1:9).

4.6 Is Jesus Himself a *Ioudaios*?

It is true that in John the term *Ioudaios* has rather negative connotations. In my eyes this has to do with the fact that the Messianic Jews are mainly dealing with Rabbinic Judaism, which does not accept Jesus as the Messiah and is therefore attacked in the strongest terms. I also concede that John is already far along the path on which the followers of Jesus soon truly distinguish themselves as *Christianoi* from the *Ioudaioi* as representatives of what they see as an outdated *halakha.* But I do not share your assessment that it was already

> John's perspective on Jesus's importance for humankind, which, as we have seen, includes the claim that believers in Jesus have replaced the Jews as God's covenantal partner. In John's rhetoric of binary opposition, anyone who becomes a follower, whether Jew or pagan, is no longer identified a *Ioudaios* because for John the *Ioudaioi* are those who reject the Gospel's claims about Jesus, belief, eternal life, and covenantal relationship with God. Therefore the fact that Jesus's earliest followers were ethnically Jewish does not mitigate the Gospel's anti-Judaism.

Such a view certainly corresponds to the Gentile Christian reading of John's Gospel that was already emerging a few decades after it was written, but not to John himself, for he does not define *Ioudaioi* as enemies of Christ, but courts them, speaks of Jews trusting in Jesus, but unfortunately has to lament the—in the end complete—rejection of Jesus by Rabbinic Judaism.

You don't really want to accept Jesus' self-designation as *Ioudaios* in "his conversation with the Samaritan woman" because this "exchange demonstrates both Jesus' Jewish origins and his transcendence of that identity." This is true in a sense, insofar as Jesus transcends non-Messianic Judaism, just as he transcends the division between Judeans and Samaritans. But this transcending in John is aimed at "all Israel," the restoration of the Twelve Tribes including Samaria, and not at a large-scale Gentile mission as in Paul and Luke or—in a different form—also Matthew.

The "titulus that Pilate insists on placing on the cross, identifying Jesus as king of the Jews" (18:33, 39; 19:3, 14, 19), you are *a fortiori* unwilling to relate to Jesus' self-understanding. Instead, you assert (85-86):

> the Johannine Jesus never made this claim. By this point in the story, our Alexandra, and other members of the Gospel's extradiegetic audience surely understand that "King of the Jews" falls far short of describing Jesus's true identity. The entire episode, far from fixing Jesus as a *Ioudaios*, testifies to Jews' utter rejection of Jesus, and Pilate's complete misunderstanding of who he really is.

You are right in that Jesus did not want to be a king in the sense of the Jewish Zealots, nor did he want to be a king of the kind that all nations have and that Pilate

could imagine. But if you read 12:14-16 carefully, you will see that the Johannine Jesus certainly had in mind a kingship understood from the Jewish Scriptures: a kingdom of peace in the sense of the prophet Zechariah:[164]

> Here Jesus gives a hint which obviously is not understood by anyone. Cheered by the crowd was the one who awakened Lazarus and therefore should be king. This reaction is none other than the one after feeding the five thousand, 6:15. In fact, the crowd is cheering the Messianic King, but not a Zealot king, which is what they actually want. Therefore Jesus "invents" the little donkey. . . .
>
> The quote is from the first of the three "burden words" added to the Book of Zechariah . . ., Zechariah 9:9 ff:
>
> > Rejoice loudly, daughter of Zion,
> > blow the trumpet, daughter of Jerusalem.
> > Your King comes to you,
> > a true one, a liberator he is,
> > a humbled man, riding on a donkey,
> > on a colt, the child of the donkey.
> > He exterminates chariots from Ephraim, cavalry (383) from Jerusalem,
> > the war bow is eradicated:
> > Peace will be granted to the nations,
> > its government permanently, from sea to sea,
> > from the great river to the edges of the earth.
>
> In the Book of Zechariah, the messianic king brings peace to the city. We do not know exactly what situation this text aimed at. In any case, the king ends the war between Ephraim and Jerusalem, the great theme of the conversation between the Messiah and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The king of Zechariah 9 may have been Alexander. People tend to consider such great kings as Cyrus the Persian or Alexander the Macedonian to be Messiah.
>
> John is fed up with such great Messiahs. This disillusionment is a consistent feature of the Messianic groups. If king, then one on a little donkey. No more great kings. The condition for peace between Ephraim/Samaria and Jerusalem/Judea is world peace for the peoples. This is exactly what the crowd may want, without really knowing they want it. They do not know that world peace is nothing but the other side of the revival of Lazarus/Israel. They do not know it and the disciples do not know it either. Only later they will know, they will understand "the Scriptures," including the Scriptural passage Zechariah 9:9-10. Jesus' "invention," an invention of the whole Messianic movement—the little donkey (*onarion*)—is the fruit of the study of the Scriptures in the Messianic communities.

164 Veerkamp 266-67 (The Messianic King, par. 11-15).

You also address the argument "that the absence of *Ioudaios*/I*oudaioi* as an unambiguous label for Jesus or his disciples simply shows that John, and his audience, took their Jewishness for granted," but consider this unlikely "in light of the overwhelmingly negative connotations of *Ioudaioi* throughout the Gospel." However, if one takes seriously what the opposition of the Johannine Jesus to the *Ioudaioi* is based on and that this term is anything but uniformly used, contrary to your assessment, there is at least no question about his clearly positive attitude to the Jewish Scriptures and to the goal of gathering all Israel into his Messianic community.

4.7 What Significance Should be Attached to the Negative Rhetoric toward the *Ioudaioi* in John's Gospel?

Dear Ms. Reinhartz, we do not agree on whether it is generally true already for the original Gospel of John that

> John's rhetoric of vituperation turns *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* into a label for the opponents of Jesus and, by extension, the enemies of the disciples and all later Christ-believers.

I agree with you, however, that your assessment is correct for the Gentile Christian reception of the Gospel, which soon began, when the original conflict between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews and the Johannine reference to the Jewish Scriptures was completely obscured by Christian dogmatics influenced by Greek philosophy.

4.7.1 Vituperation as a Conventional Means without Emotional Effect?

But what about the arguments of those who—like Thomas M. Conley[165]—consider the rhetorical device of vituperation merely a convention that "served precisely to establish clear sides in a given debate" and "was not intended to arouse a negative emotive response on the part of the listener"? Luke Timothy Johnson even considers "the New Testament anti-Jewish slander as 'remarkably mild' in comparison with other ancient texts."[166]

> Johnson attributes the vituperation in John and other New Testament texts to the gap in power between the "messianists" and the Jews. Some "non-messianist" Jews, Johnson notes, had a hand in executing Jesus and persecuting the leaders of the movement. Whether this is a factual rendition is irrelevant;

165 (xxxvii, n. 41, and 92. n.46) Thomas M. Conley, "Topics of Vituperation: Some Commonplaces of 4th-Century Oratory," in *Influences on Peripatetic Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of William W. Fortenbaugh*, ed. David C. Mirhady (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 236.

166 (xxxiv, n. 14, and 92, n. 49 and 50) Luke Timothy Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 3 (September 1, 1989), 419-41, here 441 and 242.
As for the page number 242 for the second Johnson quote (in the indented text), I suspect a typographical error since according to the bibliography the article covers only pages 419-41.

> what matters is that for "messianists," it is the "non-messianist" Jews who were to blame. In such circumstances, Johnson implies, slander on the part of the persecuted party was only natural and does not necessarily express the hatred that we normally associate with the terms anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

This assessment is close to the position of Ton Veerkamp presented here. He, too, attributes the Johannine accusations against the *Ioudaioi* primarily to the collaboration of the priestly elite with Rome in the crucifixion of Jesus and to sanctions by Rabbinic Judaism against the troublemaking Johannine grouping. However, he would not claim that the controversy would have been less emotional because of this. Political disputes in particular could no doubt always have been carried out in the utmost ferocity.

So I agree with you (87) that "we should hesitate before subscribing to the view that convention and emotion are mutually exclusive." And even if

> slander and blame can be conventional and connotative rather than denotative, it does not necessarily follow that audiences, then and since, would not respond emotionally. The reception history of John's Gospel suggests that, on the contrary, its depiction of the *Ioudaioi* could indeed arouse strong negative emotions and be used to justify violence against real live *Ioudaioi*, Jews.

For an Alexandra who already hears or reads the Gospel in its Gentile Christian reception, your assessment is certainly correct that she scarcely

> would have understood that the Gospel's hostile comments about the *Ioudaioi* were not meant to condemn them but simply to identify them as opponents in a debate.

For the original Gospel of John, however, it remains to be said, in my opinion, that it is not about a condemnation of the totality of all Jews as such, but about a thoroughly emotional inner-Jewish dispute about the appropriate attitude both in favor of the Messiah Jesus and in opposition to the Roman world order.

After all, you do not claim "that the Gospel is responsible for the violence done in its name, only that its vituperative rhetoric made it amenable for those who hated and persecuted Jews." In this, unfortunately, I must agree with you wholeheartedly, even though I have a different view of the background of this rhetoric.

4.7.2 Does Johannine Rhetoric Already Lead to the "Parting of the Ways" between Judaism and Christianity?

It is clear to me that (87) a Johannine rhetoric like the one you have identified must ultimately lead to a parting of the ways of two religions. However, as shown, I do not fully agree with your assessment that the "boundary wall that is built up brick by rhetorical brick ... between believers and *Ioudaioi*" already looks exactly as you describe it in John's time:

> On one side of the wall stand the rhetorical "children of God" who are persuaded by the Gospel that belief in Jesus as Messiah, Son of God, and affiliation with others who believe the same, will fulfill the innate and universal desire for eternal life. On the other side stand the "children of Satan" whose rejection of this world-view is marked by their violence towards Jesus and his followers.

This assessment is, after all, based on definitions of eternal life and Satan that characterize the opposition of the children of God and the children of the devil in a completely different way than John intended in his inner-Jewish debate about the Messianic way of overcoming this Roman *kosmos* and reaching the age to come.

But the fact is that a parting of the ways had to come as soon as the political and inner-Jewish character of this debate faded into the background. A more and more Gentile Christian dominated church became used to reading John's Gospel as a cosmological and anti-Jewish writing. That is, in my view, not yet the Gospel itself is "reflecting a process of self-identification that would ultimately create a 'Christianity' that saw itself as completely outside and in some sense opposed to the *Ioudaioi*," but for a Gentile Christian understood Gospel of John "such a 'parting' is not only imaginable but also essential."

4.7.3 Does John's Negative Rhetoric Refer to Specific Groups of People around the Addressees?

Your book could end here if you had decided to (88)

> to refrain from drawing historical conclusions on the foundations of rhetorical or any other kind of analysis. …
>
> At the same, given the central role that historical constructions have played in Johannine scholarship over the last half century or more, it is cowardly not to try. In the next section of this book, then, I address what George Kennedy referred to as the rhetorical situation that may have prompted the rhetorical aims and strategies described in the previous chapters.

But before you want to present "the so-called expulsion theory" and your own "propulsion" theory in chapters 6 and 7, you deal in chapter 5 with

> the difficult question of whether John's rhetorical *Ioudaioi* have a historical referent. Would Alexandra have associated this label with a particular group of real people in her own social milieu?

5 Rhetorical *Ioudaioi* and Real Jews

At the beginning of chapter 5 (93) you deal with a number of exegetes who, similar to you, assume that

> John has constructed the *Ioudaioi*—as well as Jesus, the disciples, and all other characters—to suit an important rhetorical goal: to promote his audience's disaffiliation from those who do not believe and thereby to strengthen the mutual affiliation of those who do.

While, in your view, "John's rhetoric and its literary and symbolic universes can be analyzed in isolation from its historical context and from the history of its interpretation and reception," you nevertheless object to attempts such as that of Rudolf Bultmann "that the Gospel's *Ioudaioi* must be understood symbolically rather than historically,"[167] with your question, "would a compliant audience member such as Alexandra have distinguished so systematically between rhetoric and reality?"

For the Christian reception of John's Gospel, which began very soon, I fully agree with your assessment:

> There can be no doubt that John's stance towards the *Ioudaioi* contributed historically to Christians' attitudes towards Jews.

I know only too well the self-identification as a Christian in distinction from *the Jews* that comes to light when the term, as for instance Cynthia Baker[168] writes, (94)

> serves as the alpha to the Christian omega; the "Old" to the Christian "New"; the "particular" to the Christian "universal"; grounded and bound materialism to visionary, redeemed spirituality; deicide to self-sacrificial love—at best, the sainted or moribund "ancestor"; at worst, the evil "spawn of Satan" to a godly, good, and triumphantly immortal Christianity. *The Jews*, in other words, serves instrumentally to name the key *other* out of which and over against which the Christian *self* was and is constituted (emphasis in the original).

But all this is not to be blamed on John originally yet. For he himself still thinks precisely from the Jewish categories indicated here, which were later rejected by Christianity: His goal is the age to come, understood this-worldly—quite materialistically in the social-critical sense of Marxism—as the dawn of a liberated and just society

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167 (104-05, n. 6) Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1971), 647, 655, and passim.
Interesting I find your following comment on Bultmann (ibid.):
"Bultmann's analysis is problematic, however, for its anti-Jewish implications. For Bultmann, the Jews represent the unbelieving world. The term bears no relation to a particular historical group but rather refers to an existential rejection of Christ. But at the same time, he did not include Pilate, who is also of this world, in this category."
You are right with your criticism, because Bultmann obviously takes the Roman authorities in defense against the Jews, who in his eyes misuse their function for their purposes. You yourself, however, had also seen the Jews at least partly in accordance with the negatively understood world, while you did not refer the term *kosmos* to the Roman world order.

168 (105, n. 7) Cynthia M. Baker, *Jew*, Key Words in Jewish Studies, 8 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 4.

and not yet an otherworldly spirituality. And with a triumphant Christianity, which disinherits the Jews as the children of the devil, he has nothing in mind at all.

You, on the other hand, answer your question, "Is the Gospel's rhetorical construction of the *Ioudaioi* culpable in the demonization of real Jews?" with yes, because:

> By situating the story in a historical time and place, and populating it with undisputedly historical figures such as Caiaphas, Pilate, and Annas, John encourages Alexandra and others to postulate a historical referent for the *Ioudaioi* as well.

Formally, this is true, but it was not John's original intent. As a Jewish Messianist who sharply criticized other Jewish currents but understood the Roman world order as the actual adversary of the God of Israel, he could hardly have imagined that later Christians would propagandistically misuse his Gospel, alienated in Greek, as an anti-Jewish concoction.

That the "authoritative status that the Gospel acquired for Christians by virtue of its inclusion in the Christian scriptural canon" referred not only to "its uplifting Christology but also to its characterization of the *Ioudaioi*" is indeed problematic, especially since to this day an anti-Jewish reading of John's Gospel is still attributed to the original author. Like you, I am glad that many "faithful Christian readers of the Gospel, certainly since the mid-twentieth century," no longer share such anti-Judaism, "insofar as they give weight to the social and historical distance between John's time of writing and their own era." Unlike you, however, I think that it is precisely in this that they are consistent with John's original intentions.

5.1 Possible Historical Correspondences for the Johannine *Ioudaioi*

Among (94) "the different hypotheses concerning the historical identity of the *Ioudaioi*" you often discover "the intention, explicit or implicit, of limiting its referent." Although (95) the "extensive use of *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* in other ancient texts, such as the writings of Josephus, inscriptions, and papyri, supports the idea that *Ioudaios* was a widespread and well-known designation that had concrete meaning for those who used the term," there are some scholars who "argue that in the Johannine context *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* does not denote the Jewish people as a whole but a specific subgroup."

Daniel Boyarin's[169] attempt to define "the *Ioudaioi* as a group that originated in Judea" and "affiliated themselves ancestrally with the exiles who had returned from Babylonia in the fifth century BCE," while the "followers of Jesus, on the other hand,

169 (xxxiv, n. 13, and 105, n. 12) Daniel Boyarin, "The IOUDAIOI of John and the Prehistory of Judaism," in *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson et al. (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 216-39.

came from the residents who had stayed behind" and "were not known as *Ioudaioi* (or, in Hebrew, *yehudim*), but as *ʾammei haʾarets* (people of the land)," I consider quite absurd. And not only because half a millennium had passed since the exile, but above all because I do not find the slightest hint for such a distinction in John's Gospel itself. One might identify the crowd, *ochlos*, with the *ʾam haʾarets*, but—as already discussed in section 4.5.2.1—the crowd is neither distinguished from the *Ioudaioi* nor identified with followers of Jesus, in general, but rather presented as part of the Jewish people in its heterogeneity.

Nevertheless, I agree with Boyarin in "his overall view of the Gospel of John as a purely Jewish document" and also consider "the conflict it describes as an entirely inner-Jewish issue," but with completely different background, which I have already sufficiently described.

Among the other scholars you mention, I would like to comment first on Urban von Wahlde[170] who (96), citing 11:49-52 and 19:6, construes the *Ioudaioi* "precisely as the Jewish authorities, as distinct from the crowds." In doing so, he hits on an essential point that Ton Veerkamp also makes, but disregards the fact that this political leadership has both opponents and supporters, people who argue in its favor or who are afraid of it; in addition, there are fellow travelers and a mob that can be incited in its favor.

Stanley Porter[171] "seems to opt for a generalized understanding of *Ioudaioi* as the Jewish people. At the same time, however, he argues, the sense of the term varies contextually." This is in line with the view I also hold, in agreement with Ton Veerkamp. However, I don't think it is as simple as he thinks that the "variations of meaning are signaled by the presence of the definite article." Rather, which Jewish group is specifically meant must be inferred from the context in each case.

Ruben Zimmermann[172] in turn (97)

> resists the drive to pin John's *Ioudaioi* to one consistent meaning, sense, or referent. After summarizing the various hypotheses, he proposes that we embrace the ambiguities and inconsistencies of the Gospel's use of *Ioudaioi* and ascribe them to "unreliable narration," and therefore to refrain from passing judgment on "the Jews."

170 (88, n. 1, and 105, n. 13) Urban C. von Wahlde, "The Johannine Jews: A Critical Survey," *New Testament Studies* 28, no. 1 (1982), 33-60.

171 (89, n. 3, and 105, n. 21 and 22) Stanley E. Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus in Pursuit of the Johannine Voice* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 160 and 161.

172 (89, n. 3, and 105, n. 26) Ruben Zimmermann, "'The Jews': Unreliable Figures or Unreliable Narration?" in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, ed. Steven A. Hunt, D. F. Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 109.

I understand his intention to avoid by this interpretation an "unambiguously anti-Jewish interpretation of 'the Jews,' which, he argues, has been the norm in the history of interpretation." He assumes that the

> anti-Judaism inheres in readers' interpretations; if we resist the temptation to harmonize or subsume the neutral and questioning uses under the negative or hostile ones, we will also avoid anti-Judaism.

In your eyes, "Zimmermann and the other scholars mentioned above are correct that the Gospel uses *Ioudaioi* in a number of different ways," but that (97-98)

> does not necessarily mean that the term as such refers to a particular, clearly differentiated historical subgroup. The term retains its generalized meaning even if a more specific nuance is foregrounded in a particular verse or passage, as when, for example, a specific Jew was discussing purification with the Baptist's disciples (3:25), or when the Jews who were interrogating the man born blind are also referred to as Pharisees (cf. 9:18). Taken together with the rhetorical blurring of distinctions outlined in chapter 4, these reflections support the views of those who argue for a generalized meaning. They also, I would argue, justify the view that the Gospel is anti-Jewish in the sense that it fosters negative views of Jews as a group.

As explained in detail in the previous chapter, I agree with you insofar as indeed in John's Gospel Jews can be spoken of in a generalizing way as members of the Jewish people, but nevertheless it must be considered in a differentiated way from case to case which part of this people the Johannine Jesus is dealing. There are conflicts in the foreground, concerning the Jewish leadership—the priests at the time of Jesus, the Rabbinical Judaism at the time of John—but there are also Jews who trust in Jesus or are undecided. There is no question of anti-Judaism in his inner-Jewish confrontation as a Messianic Jew with other Jews.

Against Zimmermann I object that his assessment of John as an unreliable author is at least negligent. In most cases it is quite possible to deduce from the context which addressees are concretely meant by the *Ioudaioi* in his Gospel.

5.2 How is the Word *Ioudaioi* to be Translated Appropriately?

On the problem of translating the word *Ioudaioi*, you first point out (98) that numerous factors "affect translation choice," and that "our translation choices have ideological implications that may override other considerations."

If "both a generalized meaning and variations of emphasis" are to be presupposed, one might consider the possibility "to translate each occurrence contextually." As an example, you mention Norman Beck,[173] who

173 (106, n. 33) Norman A. Beck, *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the*

> suggests, for example, that one could use "they" in 2:18, "some people in the temple" in 2:20; and omit "Jew" or the textual variant "Jews" altogether in 3:25; similarly, one might opt for "the people from Jesus's home area" in 6:41, and "Jesus's enemies" in 19:38. This approach falls short, however, because it dilutes the rhetorical force which in part depends upon the seventy-or-so-fold repetition of *Ioudaioi*. For this reason most prefer a uniform translation.

In this you are correct, for John certainly did not use the word so frequently by accident. Another objection to Norman Beck is that he is all too clearly trying to translate in a politically correct way, i.e. not to let the readers even get the idea that the text could be meant in an anti-Jewish way.

In the end, the only possible translations are "Jew/Jews," which was generally used in the past, or "Judeans," which was suggested "since the 1970s, on both historical and ethical grounds."

5.2.1 The *Ioudaioi* as "Judeans," for ethical reasons, among others

It was (99) Malcolm Lowe,[174] who in 1976 brought into discussion the "geographical meaning" of *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* "referring to residents of Judea" for the Gospel of John and argued for the general translation "Judean/Judeans." Passages such as 6:4, 41, 52 which refer to *Ioudaioi* in the Galilee and which he regards as exceptions to the rule could, in my view, be explained from the fact that Galileans are a subgroup of Judeans in the broader sense of which Lowe himself speaks (106, n. 37) when he refers Judea "to a broader region such as 'the procurate of Pontius Pilate (i.e. Judea together with Idumea and Samaria) or the kingdom of Herod the Great and the last Hasmoneans (i.e. approximately the whole of the historic land of Israel).'"

Steve Mason[175] is among the scholars who

> argued that we must overcome our tendency to view "Judean" as a primarily geographical designation. Instead, Judean should be used consistently as the translation for *Ioudaios* in Josephus, in the Gospel of John, and indeed, in all ancient sources: "Just as 'Roman,' 'Egyptian,' and 'Greek' (etc.) had a wide range of associations beyond the geographical ... so too 'Judaean' should be allowed to shoulder its burden as an ethnic term full of complex possibilities."

Nevertheless, he objects to the English translation for *Ioudaioi* as "Jews," on the one hand "because it does not evoke the geographical meaning of 'Judean,' while at the

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Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1985), 290-310.

174 (88, n. 1, and 106, n. 37) Malcolm F. Lowe, "Who Were the 'IOYΔAIOI?'" *Novum Testamentum* 18, no. 2 (1976), 104, 115, 117, 103.

175 (xvii, n. 10, and 106, n. 39) Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 38 (2007), 504.

same time urging that 'Judean' take on a meaning that goes far beyond geography," but on the other hand because of "the religious connotations of the word 'Jew.'" To this end, you explain (99-100):

> To be sure, by the first century, the *Ioudaioi* are no longer merely the residents of a certain geographic area but members of an ethno-political entity. Although they share a set of ancestral traditions and customs involving priests, Temple, and sacrifices, and shared a number of foundational narratives (the Bible), the *Ioudaioi* did not constitute a religious community, because, according to Mason, religion, as a concept and as a type of institution, did not yet exist. [48-88] It is therefore misleading to use a term commonly associated with a religion—Judaism to translate a term found in a text from the period prior to the time when "religion" first appeared.

Philip Esler[176] cites ethical reasons "for preferring Judean." He "argued that there is no persistence of identity between the *Ioudaioi* of John's time and the Jews of ours," so that "only by 'gross moral and intellectual confusion can we impute to the latter any responsibility to the former.'" Similarly, Frederick Danker[177] writes:

> "Incalculable harm has been caused by simply glossing *Ioudaios* with 'Jew,' for many readers or auditors of Bible translations do not practice the historical judgment necessary to distinguish between circumstances and events of an ancient time and contemporary ethnic-religious-social realities, with the result that anti-Judaism in the modern sense of the term is needlessly fostered through biblical texts."

You object against (100) Danker and Esler that simply changing the translation of *Ioudaioi* to "Judeans" would not prevent anti-Jewish sentiment, for surely no one

> tested the hypothesis that using "Judeans" instead of "Jews" works to deflect attention from Jews as guilty of Jesus's death. Jews do not have to be present, physically or linguistically, in order for anti-Judaism to exist.

5.2.2 Translating *Ioudaioi* as "Judeans" or "Yehudim" as a Means of Alienation

Ton Veerkamp also translates *Ioudaioi* into German as "Judäer [Judeans]," but as a signal to indicate the problem rather than as a panacea against an anti-Semitic read-

176 (88-89, n. 1, and 106, n. 44) Philip F. Esler, "From Ioudaioi to Children of God: The Development of a Non-Ethnic Group Identity in the Gospel of John," in *In Other Words: Essays on Social Science Methods and the New Testament in Honor of Jerome H. Neyrey*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey et al. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 110.

177 (107, n. 45) William F. Arndt, Frederick William Danker, and Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 478. See also Daniel C. Ullucci, *The Christian Rejection of Animal Sacrifice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 103.

ing of John's Gospel. The epilogue to his interpretation of the Gospel of John in 2007 states:[178]

> If in our translation we write *Judeans* instead of *Jews*, *Perushim* instead of *Pharisees*, then we take into account the fact that the words *Jews* and *Pharisees* arouse anti-Semitic associations. If in any Christian service we have Jesus railing against the Jews and the Pharisees during the reading of a relevant text from John, then the anti-Semitic mechanism is set in motion against our will and against our political correctness. None of us can meet a Jewish person with the same impartiality that we show when meeting non-Jewish people. …
>
> We cannot read John without encountering in ourselves traditional anti-Semitism. The text has become identical with its history of impact during two thousand years of Christianity and *is*, therefore, its history of impact. Our trick of saying *Judeans* instead of *Jews*, *Perushim* instead of *Pharisees*, may have the effect of a certain de-Christianization of the text in a meeting of a House of Study;[179] however, the fact that we have to take recourse to such tricks shows the fragility of the ice of our *political correctness*.

Five years earlier, in the introduction to his first attempt to translate and interpret parts of the Gospel of John, Veerkamp had chosen an even more radical path of alienation in translating Hebrew or Aramaic names into German, including the word *Ioudaioi*:[180]

> Names of persons and places in the text are a problem in themselves. To Christian readers, Jesus, John, Simon-Peter, or Peter, etc., are "old acquaintances." For this reason alone, it is advisable to give the persons back their original Hebrew or Aramaic names. To a Greek person, *Iēsous* or *Lazaros* were also exotic names, and for them these people were non-Greeks, which means strangers, even barbarians. The text comes from a culture foreign to us—the people in the text lived, thought, felt different from the Greeks—and us.
>
> If we translate the Greek word *Ioudaioi* as "Jews," we pretend that John had problems with those *Ioudaioi* that were identical with that murderous paranoia that "Christians" of the Middle Ages and the Modern Age developed regarding the respective Judaism. This difference must be taken into account. Therefore we write the Hebrew "Yehudim" (the Aramaic "Yehudayin" would be another possibility) and the corresponding "Yehuda" for the country and for the person of Judah. John does not write *lerousalēm*, as Luke does, but *Hi-*

178 Veerkamp 419-20 (The Gospel of John and Anti-Semitism, par. 11 and 13).

179 Veerkamp alludes here to activities within the framework of the Verein für politische und theologische Bildung LEHRHAUS e. V., Dortmund (founded 1978), which also publishes the exegetical journal Texte & Kontexte.

180 Veerkamp 15-16 (On the Translation of John, par. 17-18, 20).

> *erosolyma*, which is undoubtedly an attempted transcription of the dual form *Yerushalayim*; we retain this form. Samaria is *Shomron*, so the woman from Samaria is a *Shomronite* woman. The attempt is not so much a return to an origin of whatever kind, but rather what Bertolt Brecht calls "alienation." . . .
>
> In the so-called "bibliodramas," empathy plays the main role, Jesus thus becomes an everyday—therefore also boring, in any case, interchangeable—figure. Only through alienation does he become for us what he was for the narrators: the unique, the special in itself. And the characters who interact with him become unique. . . . In the translation we let the characters appear in the dress of oriental names.

In his 2015 translation of John's Gospel, however, Veerkamp[181] returns to the traditional form of proper names, since the text is meant to be read aloud and "the reading aloud must be for listening" but the alienation makes "listening more difficult than necessary."

5.2.3 Eliminating the "Jews," to Produce a Gospel "Free of Jews"?

Now, we had already seen that translating *Ioudaioi* with "Judeans" does not automatically free the text of the Gospel from suspicion of anti-Semitism. Worse (100), according to you, is that

> eliminating the "Jews" lets the Gospel of John off the hook for its role in the history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. To be sure, using "Jews" risks perpetuating the rhetorical hostility of the Gospel itself. But to use "Judean" instead of "Jew" whitewashes the Gospel of John and relieves us of the difficult but necessary task of grappling with this Gospel in a meaningful way.

In this, of course, you are right. The point cannot be to produce a "judenreines Evangelium," a "Gospel free of Jews,"—as the Nazis sought to produce a Germany free of Jews—and as (101) Amy-Jill Levine[182] clearly points out:

> "The Jew is replaced with the Judean, and thus we have a *Judenrein* ('Jew free') text, a text purified of Jews. ... So much for the elimination of anti-Semitism by means of changing vocabulary."

There are, then, two main reasons for which you advocate continuing "to use 'Jews' as a translation of *Ioudaioi*": First, because it

> allows readers to see the link between the Johannine Jews that are vilified by the Fourth Gospel and those who fell victim to anti-Semitism that arose out of long habits of vilification.

181 Veerkamp 439 (note 593).

182 (107, n. 46) Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 159.

And secondly, "to use 'Judeans' for all occurrences of *Ioudaioi*" would mean to write "the Jews out of both the history and the geography of Israel." There is, after all, a "continuity between the ancient *Ioudaioi* and rabbinic, medieval, and modern Jews," which you see, among other things, in "the importance of Jerusalem, the Temple, the Pharisees, and other staples of ancient 'Judaeanism' in the construction of Jewish identity."

In this context, you cite a theory by Bruce Malina,[183] which "has long been debunked as anti-Semitic fiction," according to which

> "Most of those Central European Jews and hence most U.S. Jews from Central Europe are descended from Khazars, a people who accepted the Jewish religion in the eighth century AD. They did so, it seems, to be unencumbered by either Byzantine Christendom or Islam. ... Thus most U.S. Jews are essentially Khazar Americans rather than "Jewish" Americans. The same is true of the majority of people living in the Jewish State."

Even if such theories are absurd, they show "the potential negative implications of denying that ancient Judeans were also Jews."

In fact, if, like Ton Veerkamp, one nevertheless argues for translating *Ioudaioi* as "Judeans," it cannot be a matter of making invisible what is Jewish about John's Gospel, nor of denying any continuity of ancient Judaism with the present one. On the contrary, he is concerned to bring out precisely the thoroughly Jewish structure of Johannine thought, within which Jewish people of different currents fought sharp struggles over the right political attitude toward the Roman world order.

However, at the same time, he emphasizes that John's Gospel does not yet presuppose the opposition between Christianity and Judaism, which took place only after John's Gospel was written, though not much later. Through John's sharp front against the Rabbinic Jews and their equally sharp rejection of the Messianic claims of a group believing in a crucified Messiah, the parting of the ways already appears on the horizon, but it is not yet accomplished, at least not from John, who still pursues the goal of gathering all Israel and not a Gentile mission.

5.2.4 The *Ioudaioi* as the Leading Classes of the Jerusalem "Judeans" in Contrast to More Rebellious *Galilaioi*, "Galileans"

In the context of his approach, Veerkamp gives yet another reason for translating *Ioudaioi* not fundamentally as "Jews" but predominantly as "Judeans." Although the word *Ioudaioi* in John's Gospel can refer to the members of the Jewish people as a

183 (107, n. 48) Bruce J. Malina, "Was Jesus a Jew? Was Aristotle a Greek-American? Translating '*Ioudaios*,'" [may be accessible at https://de.scribd.com/document/361035308/Malina-Was-Jesus-a-Jew].

whole, which also includes the Galileans and the Jews of the Diaspora—Jesus himself is also regarded as a *Ioudaios* by the Samaritan woman and by Pilate as a matter of course—in most cases John means the word as referring to the leading classes from Judea and especially Jerusalem, while he regards Jesus and most of his closest disciples as Galileans:[184]

> Jesus is involved in numerous and fierce contradictions. In no Gospel does he deal more harshly with his opponents as in John. His opponents are "the Jews," the Pharisees, the priests, Jews who had initially believed in him (8:31). That is why John has acted as the main text of Christian anti-Judaism. It all comes down to translating scrupulously here.
>
> John was a Jew, Jesus was also a Jew. We translate the Greek word *Ioudaioi* as "Judeans," not "Jews." Jesus was a Jew from Galilee, that is, a Galilean, he was not a *Ioudaios*, one from Judea. The Galileans were very orthodox Jews; most of them rejected any cooperation with the Romans. The Jews from Jerusalem were different; they tended to compromise, their culture was more Hellenistic than Jewish. Probably for this reason the Galileans were regarded as backwoodsmen by the people from Jerusalem. They were the militant spearhead of the rebellion against Rome in the Judean War.
>
> Although in John, Jesus strictly rejected armed struggle, he had friends among the militants (Zealots). Peter was a Zealot (13:37, 18:10). The contradiction between Jesus the Galilean and the Judeans of Jerusalem was that of political opposition. So was the contradiction between Jesus and the Perushim (Pharisees), who were an influential and yet moderately anti-Roman party not only in Judea but also in Galilee. Jesus saw Pharisaism as a political aberration that tended to cause division (*schism*, 7:43; 9:16; 10:19) among the Jews in the land, in Samaria, and in the Diaspora. Thus, it is not only a matter of being a disciple of Moses but also of being a disciple of Jesus from Nazareth, so that the schism can be overcome.
>
> The Pharisees were opponents, but not enemies. It is different with the renegades, people who had left the group around John; in 6:66 it is still neutrally stated that "many of his disciples went away . . .," but in 8:44 they are "of the devil," as traditionally translated. Our translation deliberately differs, "You are of the father, the enemy." The *diabolos* is not the evil angel from the other world, but the this-worldly mortal enemy, Rome. Rome is the father of the renegades, they act in his sense, they are collaborators, traitors, no pardon for them! So it is not about "*the* Jews," not even about the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Judeans, it is about a very specific group of Judeans, who were originally members of the group around John.

184 Veerkamp 8-9 (Contradictions, par. 1-6).

> The occasion for the secession was the bread speech, 6:30-58. This speech has clearly sectarian features, it does not take the slightest trouble to arouse understanding, but proceeds according to Hobson's choice, "It's sink or swim."[185] This made it difficult for people at that time to follow this Jesus, and for us today it is difficult to read John and even to understand him.
>
> Our translation does not take away these difficulties, but it at least tries to make the real contradictions audible. John is a sectarian paper, but it is not a document of anti-Judaism, even of anti-Semitism. It has been Christianity that, at least since Augustine, has admitted the anti-Jewish reading of John as the only possible one. Our translation, therefore, tries to peel off the mighty layers of traditional translations and interpretations; it diametrically opposes not John, but his history of impact. Those who put on the glasses of anti-Judaism are no longer able to perceive the real—political!—contradictory structure of the text, a contradictory structure "with dominant," as the French philosopher Louis Althusser said. The dominant is the contradiction between Rome and Jesus; vv.12:27-33 make this perfectly clear once you are prepared to admit that "the ruler of the world" is Rome. All other contradictions in the text have to be derived from the relationship to this main contradiction.

5.2.5 The *Ioudaioi* as "Jews" in a More than Purely Religious Sense?

The question (102) of whether "it is wrong to speak about religion in antiquity, as Mason asserts," is arguable. Indeed

> Mason is surely correct that *Ioudaios* was a complex term that carried ethnic, political, cultic, and many other dimensions. But the question remains: Why broaden the referent of "Judean" from its primary geographical meaning when there is a perfectly good English word Jew—ready to hand?

And you also disagree with the assumption of "Mason and others ... that Jewish identity is primarily a religious identification."

> Population surveys and other studies have demonstrated what is or should be obvious to anyone who is Jewish or who knows Jews: many Jews do not understand their Jewishness in religious terms at all. While all would agree that Judaism broadly includes elements that we construe as religious (belief in one God, sacred scripture, synagogues, prayer, and so on), many strongly self-identified Jews do not believe in God, never attend synagogue, and do not participate in Jewish worship or any form of Jewish practice. For some, identity is based on allegiance to family and to Jewish history; to others, on cultural ele-

185 I tried here to find a reasonably adequate English equivalent for a German phrase that would be literally translated as "Eat, bird, or die," which goes back to the controversial theological writing "Friss, Vogel, oder stirb" by J. N. Weislinger, Strasbourg 1726.

> ments such as foods, songs, and politics (e.g., the Jewish Labor Bund). With the possible exception of certain ultra-Orthodox groups, it would be difficult to find many Jews who share precisely the same understanding of what it means to be a Jew, or for whom that understanding remains stable throughout their entire lives. Indeed, Jewish identity includes the same elements—ethnic, political, cultural, genealogical, and, yes, geographical—that, in Mason's view, are conveyed by the Greek terminology.

I am willingly persuaded by these arguments to reconsider whether it is advisable to translate the word *Ioudaioi* as "Judeans" throughout John's Gospel. John, after all, actually used this one word for very different groupings. If most of the time it means rather the Judeans as opposed to Galileans, as Ton Veerkamp assumes, but in other places it refers to Jews in a more general sense that includes Galileans or refers to the Jewish crowd, shouldn't we still choose the translation "Jews" where it is appropriate? What speaks against this is that John just did not choose this way and assumes that his hearers or readers are able to pick out the nuances of meaning. Then it might be good if today's recipients get an impulse by the continuous use of the alienating word "Judeans" not to take its meaning for granted.

So I agree wholeheartedly with your assessment (103) that "there is no perfect solution to the translation conundrum." On this, you quote Tina Pippin:[186]

> If one changes the literal meaning of *Ioudaioi* to refer to Judeans or Jewish religious authorities, then one dilutes the force of the ethnic verbal warfare, and ignores that it was a warfare that turned into so much more than a first-century dispute. If one keeps the literal "the Jews" in the English translation, then one is perpetuating the hateful polemic.

Although the translation "Jews" may also reflect the "complex construction of identity that parallels, even if it cannot precisely mirror, the ethnic-political, social, religious, and emotional identity to which the ancient term *Ioudaios* refers," I would—because of the latter danger, which moreover refers to a reception of John's Gospel that does not correspond to the author's original intent—nevertheless prefer the translation "Judeans," but not without the accompanying note that John, while referring the word primarily to the central conflict with the leading priesthood of Jesus' days and the Rabbinic Judaism of his time, allows a wide range of additional meanings to resonate or come to the fore, depending on the context. Like you, I consider the option "to use the Greek term without translating" to be unworkable, especially since it unnecessarily complicates listening to the text, especially when it is read aloud.

186 (108, n. 58) Tina Pippin, "'For Fear of the Jews': Lying and Truth-Telling in Translating the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 76 (1996): 93.

5.3 The *Ioudaioi* as a Mere Rhetorical Category or as a Historical Reference Group?

I can agree with your first summary sentences (103) about understanding "the Gospel's *Ioudaioi*":

> As we have seen, the term does not correspond in a straightforward manner to a single referent; in some cases the referent is obviously the Jewish authorities or perhaps the people of Judea but in other cases it seems to be the people as a whole.

However, I strongly disagree with the following sentences:

> Furthermore, there are no real traits associated with the Jews other than holidays and practices attributed to them, their lack of faith, their propensity for murder, and their association with Satan. These comments suggest that the Johannine *Ioudaioi* are not a specific historical group but rather a rhetorical and theological category. Although they have some affinities to "real" Jews their main importance lies in their role in the Gospel's rhetoric and theology.

No, precisely the accusation of lack of trust in the Messiah, combined with the accusation against the leading priesthood of having collaborated with the Roman *diabolos* and brought about Jesus' death, or against Rabbinical Judaism of having withdrawn the protection of the synagogue from the Messianists around John, refer to very concrete conflicts reflected in John's Gospel.

From your construction of all these accusations as purely rhetorical stylistic devices to vilify a group of people from whom one can distinguish one's own group all the more radiantly, you draw the, in your eyes, self-evident conclusion (104)

> that in constructing its hermeneutic or theological Jew, the Gospel also creates distance between its ideal or intended audience and any Jews, or forms of Jewishness known to its real audiences. In that sense, the Gospel rhetorically constructs a high wall between Christ-followers and *Ioudaioi* that had implications for the historical relationships between Christians and Jews over the course of millennia.

It is significant, however, that in a note (108, n. 60) you merely refer to authors who have done research on the "hermeneutical Jew in patristics" or specifically in Augustine or "in the Middle Ages." Indeed, when Christianity began to distinguish itself from Judaism and its *halakha* as a new and better religion, it created repulsive images of the representatives of a supposedly outdated religion, using also the polemics of the Gospel of John.

However, I deny that this polemic was already originally formulated by John out of nowhere or from pure malice in order to build up a new savior religion with Jesus in the center on the basis of the time-honored religion of the Jews. The sharpness of

the original polemic is much better explained by the conflict between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews at the end of the 1st century.

To be sure, it is (108, n. 61) "a matter of dispute" exactly "when the Gospel of John became widely known and accepted as a foundation for Christian faith" and whether there was "'Johannophobia' among the fathers of the church" at the beginning because of "the compatibility of John's dualistic language with the ideas of groups labeled as heretical from the point of what became mainstream Christianity," which "led the fathers to ignore or overlook the Fourth Gospel in the early second century," as Alan Culpepper[187] and Raymond E. Brown[188] suggest.

Such early Johanneophobia, however, may have been rooted in the sectarian fierceness of the Johannine controversy with both Rabbinic Jews and the leading representatives of the Jerusalem Messianists. Ton Veerkamp[189] assumes that the settlement of the latter conflict is reflected in chapter 21 of John's Gospel, which centers on the recognition of Peter's leadership position and his relationship to the Beloved Disciple, and is thus also in accord with the assumption convincingly argued by Charles Hill[190] "that the Gospel of John was both known to and valued by the mainstream church by the mid-second century."

What is indisputable, then, is (104) that the Gospel of John "must have had a real audience to which it was meaningful and persuasive." From this starting point, you attempt to answer the question in your last two chapters:

> Who might our fictional compliant reader or hearer, Alexandra, have been in real life? With this question, we turn now to the rhetorical situation that might be constructed from John's account.

However, I will continue to critically question your approach as to whether a pagan Alexandra or a Jewish Miriam should actually be considered as an original hearer of John's Gospel.

6 The Rhetorical Situation according to the Expulsion Theory

In chapter 6, you deal (111) with the theory that is now widely accepted in New Testament scholarship and was founded by J. L. Martyn[191]

187 (44, n. 2, and 108, n. 61) R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend (Studies on personalities of the New Testament)* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 131.

188 (xxxviii, n. 61, and 108, n. 61) Raymond Edward Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 146-47.

189 Veerkamp 404 ff (Part IV: GALILEE).

190 (108, n. 61) Charles E. Hill, The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

191 (xxxiv, n. 15, and) J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville:

> that the Gospel of John was written for an existing "Johannine community" of Jewish Christ-confessors ("Christians") that had experienced a traumatic expulsion from the Jewish community.

This theory reconstructs "a set of historical events based on a particular reading strategy" and

> provides a hypothesis concerning John's historical audience and the circumstances that prompted him to write this Gospel. It also implies a particular way of understanding the Gospel's stance towards the Jews and Judaism, and its relevance for the "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity.

6.1 Martyns Theory at a Glance

The "Johannine community that had already formed around the particular beliefs articulated in the Gospel itself," assumed by Martyn (112)

> was composed primarily of ethnically Jewish believers in Christ who continued to participate in "the synagogue," that is, Jewish communal life, even as they also saw themselves as a subgroup within the Jewish collectivity.

In this context, you refer to the fact that according to Lee I. Levine[192]

> the first-century synagogue … was primarily a communal institution, in the sense that the full range of communal activities - "political meetings, social gatherings, courts, schools, hostels, charity activities, slave manumission, meals (sacred and otherwise), and of course, religious-liturgical functions" occurred there.

Now Martyn [47] assumes the following sequence of stages of events:

1. "The synagogue did not initially prevent the participation of Jews who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah," although "there was considerable tension between Jews who believed the Christian message and those who did not."
2. "Over time, the tension grew to the point where the Jews expelled Christ-confessors from the synagogue," namely "through a formal mechanism initiated by a central Jewish authority."
3. "Discord increased to the point that Jews engaged in active persecution of the Johannine community (16:2)."

Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). The earlier editions of Martyn's book were published in 1968 and 1979.

192 (125, n. 5) Lee I. Levine, "The Nature and Origin of the Palestinian Synagogue Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115, no. 3 (1996): 430-31, https://doi.org/10.2307/3266895.

4. "John wrote his Gospel in order to strengthen the faith of the Johannine Christians in this dire situation (20:30-31) and to provide them with arguments against their Jewish opponents."
5. "This traumatic event marked the Johannine 'parting of the ways' from the Jewish mainstream, in this local area if not in the Roman Empire as a whole, and resulted in two separate and rival communities of faith."

From Ton Veerkamp, I would agree with this scenario to the point that indeed "John's Jewishness" had to do with "the ethnic identity of the Johannine community." However, Martyn falls short when he interprets "John's often antagonistic language about the Jews" merely "as the natural stance of the victims toward their oppressors." The Johannine sectarians were not mere victims but challenged sanctioning measures by synagogue officials through provocative behavior and aggressive statements. John also certainly did not understand his Gospel as a mere consoling and defensive writing, but as a prophetic agitation against a misguided policy of various Jewish factions who refuse to trust Jesus the Messiah.

6.1.1 Internal Evidence: The *aposynagōgos* Passages in John's Gospel

Martyn builds his theory primarily on the three passages in John's Gospel in which the word *aposynagōgos* occurs, "one who is apart from the synagogue," 9:21-22, 12:42-43, 16:2. In them, two serious consequences of this action are presupposed (112-13):

> First, being put out of the synagogue is a dire and dreaded prospect, one which inhibits potential Christians from public adherence to Jesus (9:22; 12:42) and is linked strongly with the threat of physical persecution to the point of death (16:2). Second, exclusion from the synagogue was an official decree or declaration of the Jews (9:22) and/or one group among them (the Pharisees, 12:42).

The extent to which the consequences of expulsion from the synagogue could reach (113) is a matter of disagreement among scholars. Severino Pancaro[193]

> lists four possibilities: 1) exclusion from the synagogue building itself; 2) exclusion from synagogal gatherings; 3) exclusion from the local Jewish community; or 4) exclusion from the national-religious Jewish community of all Jews.

The more extreme the consequences are painted, the more supporters the particular option has in scholarship. For Sean Freyne,[194] for example, implications go so far

193 (125, n. 9) Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 247-48.

194 (91, n. 28, and 126, n. 16) Sean Freyne, "Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See*

> that expulsion resulted not only in separation from the Jewish community but also in the loss of social and legal status within the larger Roman world. Expulsion from the synagogue was therefore a traumatic experience that forced Christ-confessing Jews to leave the Jewish community. Though enacted by the authorities (12:42), its consequences were felt through social exclusion presumably through the cooperation, collusion, or acquiescence of the entire Jewish population.

6.1.2 External Evidence: The Decision of the *Birkat ha-minim* in 85 CE

Martyn [56-65], however, bases his theory not only on this internal Johannine evidence but also (113-14) on

> the claim that in about 85 CE the central Jewish authority, established at Yavneh (Jamnia), promulgated a decree that forbade Jewish believers in Jesus from participating in synagogue services. This authoritative body inserted a curse euphemistically called the Blessing on, or of, the Heretics (*Birkat ha-minim*) into the daily liturgy, in order to flush out Christ-confessors. By recruiting suspected Christians as prayer leaders, Jewish leaders could observe whether and how they recited the twelfth benediction. Failure to do so would be seen as a sign of their allegiance to Jesus as the Christ and would result in their exclusion from the synagogue. Martyn argued that John 9:22, 12:42, and 16:2 reflect the effect of using *Birkat ha-minim* within the synagogues attended by Johannine Christ-confessors.

6.2 The Gospel of John as a Two-Level Drama

Since (114) in Martyn's eyes "it is anachronistic to imagine that Jesus's followers would have been excluded from the synagogue during his lifetime,"

> the three *aposynagōgos* passages must allude to a situation in the late first century, when the Gospel itself was written. For Martyn, these passages are characterized by an immediacy which suggests "that some of its elements reflect actual experiences of the Johannine community," particularly "the dramatic interaction between the synagogue and the Johannine church." [46] On the basis of this observation, Martyn described the Gospel as a two-level drama. The surface level is the story of Jesus in the first third of the first century CE. The second level is the story of the Johannine community in the last decade of the first century. To understand the Gospel's rhetorical situation therefore requires the interpreter to tease this second level out of John's story of Jesus.

Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 129.

According to you, such a "two-level reading strategy" is based on "several assumptions," all three of which are not necessarily true in my eyes.

6.2.1 Who Were the Addressees and What Was the Goal of John's Gospel?

The first assumption (114) holds

1) that the Gospel was a central, perhaps foundational, document for a particular community that already existed at the time that the Gospel was written...

This sentence is contradictory: either the community already existed or the Gospel of John was its founding document. Neither alternative, in my view, must be necessarily presupposed for Martyn's theory.

A little later you write (115) that Martyn assumes as addressees of John's Gospel "an existing Johannine community" whose "contours and history" were "fleshed out" by Raymond Brown

> using the expulsion hypothesis as his foundation. According to Brown, this community looked to the Beloved Disciple, the authority behind the Gospel if not its actual author, as their founder. It began as a group of Jewish Christ-followers in Palestine, and then moved to Asia Minor around the time of the first Jewish revolt (circa 70 CE). There it attracted Samaritan and, finally, Gentile adherents [Brown, 25-58]. For both Martyn and Brown, this community was traumatized by its experience of expulsion. The aim of the Gospel was therefore to strengthen their faith and resolve in the face of persecution by reminding them that through belief in Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, they would enjoy life in his name.

I can understand the assumption that a Johannine community of some sort might have arisen in Palestine rather than Asia Minor, since the Gospel is indeed deeply Jewish in character. But, as already said, the analysis of the relations between the Johannine Messianists and Rabbinic Judaism falls short if John's people are presented only in their victim role and not also as agitators and provocateurs for the Messiah Jesus in the struggle against the Roman world order and its collaborators.

6.2.2 Who Is to Be Identified with "the Enemy" in John's Gospel?

The second assumption is (114)

2) that the particulars of the community's history, specifically its relationship with the Jewish community, was encoded in the Gospel narrative and hence transparent to its earliest readers...

To this I ask: Why should this necessarily be assumed? The author may also have projected experiences of his time back into the time of Jesus, so that the readers could think to themselves: Even then, it was like today!

Further (115), in connection with this assumption, you ask about the "Enemy" of the Messiah or the Johannine community that Martyn [56-65] identifies in John's Gospel. He is not thinking of "the ordinary people," but of the "Jewish political and religious leadership," who enforced the exclusion from the synagogue. This means:

> In Martyn's two-level reading of John 9, the Pharisees who interrogate the man and his parents are the Jewish authorities; the man and his parents are members of the Johannine community, and Jesus the healer is a Christian preacher [43]. While the dreaded decree *Birkat ha-minim* was imposed by "the Jews," the ones who enforce it are the Jewish authorities, or the synagogue [45].

6.2.3 The Gospel as a Window to the Past—of the Johannine Community?

Finally, with regard to the Johannine community, you assume (114)

3) that this community read the Gospel both as a story of Jesus and as its own story.

This premise is just as difficult for me to understand as the previous one, unless it is meant that a community of Jesus-followers relates the experiences of their Messiah and his disciples to themselves or, conversely, puts themselves in their place. However, I think it is quite absurd to imagine that a community at the end of the 1st century would expect to be told its own story in a narrative set two generations ago.

Martyn, however, felt that through this reading of the Gospel "the exegete could 'take up temporary residence in the Johannine community,'" even "distinguish between pre-Johannine materials and those elements of the Gospel that have been shaped by the community's own interests and experiences." Ultimately (115), he sought a "'seeing with the eyes' and 'hearing with the ears' of the community" [29].

I am still not convinced, however, that his theory "implies that the Gospel should be read analogically or even allegorically, as a story pointing beyond itself," at least not in that this analogy or allegory is aimed directly at one's own community.

To be sure, for us readers today, the Gospel can serve "as a window to the past" by revealing which of the community's own experiences were projected back into the time of Jesus. And certainly the author in some sense uses "its story of Jesus, set in the early first century, to reflect back upon the past experience of its late-first-century audience," but in any case not in such a way that the audience finds *its own experiences* reflected in the Gospel, but rather that they receive impetus from the Gospel to *come to terms* with their own experiences.

6.2.4 The Appeal of the Expulsion Theory

You list several factors (115) that make up the appeal of the expulsion theory:

First, it provides us (116), as you quote David Rensberger,[195]

> "with a definite social framework and polemic context within which John's highly developed theology could have taken shape, and it permits us to ask further questions about the social, as well as the theological, implications of Johannine thought."

That is, it explains (115)

- "John's anachronistic references to the Jews' expulsion of Christ-confessors from the synagogue...
- (116) the strident debate between Jesus and the Jews throughout the Gospel . . .
- the portrayal of the Jews in the Passion Narrative,
- and the pervasiveness of the designation *Ioudaios* as well as the confusion as to its precise referent or referents."

Second,

> the hypothesis is seen as a key for historical-critical investigation of the Gospel, the community within and for which it is thought to have been produced and, indeed, the relations between Judaism and Christianity in the first century.

And third, "the hypothesis is useful for homiletical purposes." By interpreting, as Robert Kysar[196] argues,

> John's comments on Jews and Judaism as a response to Jewish rejection and exclusion, the hypothesis defuses the anti-Jewish potential of the Gospel and makes its expressions more acceptable to a post-Holocaust audience.

6.3 Criticism of the Expulsion Theory

However, the (116) "popularity" of the expulsion hypothesis "and its utility for exegetical, historical-critical, and homiletical purposes" makes it "not immune to criticism."

6.3.1 Could Expulsion from the Synagogue Justify John's anti-Judaism?

First, you question the unstated premise that such hostile and hurtful rhetoric toward the Jews as you have presented in your book can in any way be "a reasonable

195 (127, n. 33) David Rensberger, "The Politics of John: The Trial of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 395-96.

196 (127, n. 30) Robert Dean Kysar, "The Promises and Perils of Preaching on the Gospel of John," *Dialog* 19, no. 3 (1980), 219-20.

response to hostility" experienced by a Johannine community through its exclusion from the synagogue. You ask (116-17):

> Are not the Jews then still to blame for the exclusion of the Johannine Christians, which, according to this theory, led to the separation of Judaism and Christianity, and then, by extension, to the many difficult centuries in the history of Jewish-Christian relations?

Even if, as Samuel Sandmel[197] suggests, "one may ... explain the historical circumstances" of the Gospel, "one cannot deny the existence of a written compilation of clearly expressed anti-Jewish sentiments." Janis Leibig[198] warns to

> "overlook the dialectical relation—in fact, the radical interpenetration—between John's theology and the concrete historical situation."

Recently, Robert Kysar[199] also expresses "literary-critical insights" on John:

> "The fourth evangelist could tell the story of Jesus most powerfully only with a negative figure set over against the Christ figure in the dynamics of the narrative. The situation of the Johannine community provided such an antagonist ready at hand in the figure of the Jews." The result is that "the community that was founded on the sacrifice of an innocent person for their salvation now sacrificed their former Jewish brothers and sisters for the sake of their self-identity."

This judgment is certainly true with regard to the later Christian church or Gentile Christian reading of John's Gospel. However, I repeat that at the time of the emergence of the Gospel it was not yet about needing a bogeyman for self-identification, from which one could distinguish oneself. Rather, there was already an opposition of the Messianists to Rabbinic Judaism, which was fought out in the harshest form, however, as an inner-Jewish political conflict and not yet as hostility to the Jews from the point of view of an external other religion of Christianity. The fierceness of such a dispute and the legitimacy of the arguments used in it can also be open to criticism, but it deserves a more differentiated and in-depth consideration.

6.3.2 Is the Evidence for a Synagogue Exclusion at All Valid?

Against "Martyn's hypothesis" as such speaks that "it is now acknowledged by most scholars that *Birkat ha-minim* was not yet incorporated into Jewish liturgy in the late

197 (128, n. 39) Samuel Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 119.

198 (128, n. 41) Janis E. Leibig, "John and 'the Jews': Theological Anti-Semitism in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20, no. 2 (1983): 224.

199 Robert Kysar, *Voyages with John: Charting the Fourth Gospel* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 156.

first century." Reuven Kimelman[200] proved, with recourse "on the extant primary sources," that

> "there never was a single edict which caused the so-called irreparable separation between Judaism and Christianity."

And Ruth Langer[201] concludes in her "definitive study of *Birkat ha-minim*, … that there is no evidence for the existence of this 'blessing' prior to the third century CE."

In addition (118), "the council of Yavneh (Jamnia)" cannot be regarded "as the central authority of post-70 Judaism" in the way Martyn understood it.

Apart from that, "such a curse," even if it had existed, "could not have been used to exclude Christ-confessors from the synagogue, unless those Christ-confessors were prepared to think of themselves as minim (heretics)." But the Johannine Messianists definitely do not consider themselves as such, rather they accuse their opponents of making common cause with the Roman enemy and therefore no longer knowing the God of Israel. Precisely for this reason, there may nevertheless have been experiences of synagogue expulsion, but not in connection with the "blessing" mentioned, but as an understandable sanction of the synagogue leadership against sectarians who stirred up trouble and posed a danger to the status of the synagogue as *religio licita*.

You also mention scholars who "still maintain that an expulsion from the synagogue occurred, even if it was not due to a widespread policy emanating from a central authority."[202]

Interesting to me is your consideration that "Jesus was not the only person for whom messianic claims were made":

> Although none of these individuals was acclaimed by the majority of Jews, the often sizeable groups that formed around them were not, and are not, excluded from the larger Jewish collectivity.

First of all, this supports the idea that followers of Jesus may well have been tolerated in their synagogues for extended periods of time. And it must be considered why at some point this was no longer the case for the Johannine group in particular, per-

200 (128, n. 44) Reuven Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 244.

201 (128, n. 45) Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians? A History of the Birkat Haminim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

202 (127, n. 34, and 128, n. 53) R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of John and the Jews," *Review & Expositor* 84, no. 2 (1987): 283. See Claudia Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians: History and Polemics*, 30-150 C.E. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994). See also David K. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 24.

haps because of their provocative behavior in a political dispute that I have already mentioned and which was perceived as unbridgeable.

Finally, ask yourself whether the "exclusion from the synagogue, even had it occurred in any formal way, would have had the wide-reaching consequences that scholars attribute to it," that is, whether the synagogue was at all already seen as epitomizing the "Jewish community" as a whole. By the year 70 CE

> the Jewish collectivity was not referred to as the synagogue but as "Israel," or "children of Israel"; it was still the Temple that constituted its symbolic gathering place.

In John's Gospel, Jesus teaches in both the temple and the synagogue; he is interested in the gathering of all Israel. Nowhere does John mention, as do Paul, Matthew, or Luke (in Acts), the *ekklēsia*, the gathering of Jesus' followers from which the later Christian communities developed. It seems, then, that his group in particular held on to the synagogue as a gathering place for a much longer time than other Jesus-followers. An exclusion may have been felt all the more painfully, even if it was a regionally limited measure.

Since in your eyes (119) there is no longer a "historical anchor for the expulsion hypothesis," from

> a historical perspective, one can only conclude, with D. Moody Smith,[203] that "the sources available to us do not permit us to say exactly what transpired to produce the tension between Johannine Christianity and Judaism that is evident in the Fourth Gospel."

It follows for you that John uses the fear of the Jews merely as a rhetorical device, similar to the way today's right-wing populists use the fear of Überfremdung or Islamophobic arguments for their purposes:

> From a rhetorical perspective, as we have seen, the references to expulsion contribute to a rhetoric of fear that John used along with other strategies to construct a barrier or boundary between Christ-confessors and the *Ioudaioi*. By portraying characters who fear expulsion due to their faith, the Gospel conveys the message that Christ-confessors have good reason to stay away from the Jews.

6.3.3 The Two-Level Reading Strategy Put to the Test

Another argument against Martyn's hypothesis (119) is that it is difficult to relate his "two-level strategy to the entire Gospel." It is, after all, "based primarily on a two-

203 (47, n. 36, and 129, n. 61) D. Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources, and Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 209. The link between *Birkat ha-minim* and the Gospel is also questioned by Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians*, 91.

level reading of John 9, the healing of the man born blind," but at the same time is intended to "reflect the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the entire Gospel in its current form and to point to the central historical experience of the Johannine community."

But this is contradicted by two other passages in the Gospel, 11:1-44 and 12:11. In sum, you discover (120)

> three different models of the historical relationship between the Johannine community and the Jewish community among which it apparently lived. John 9 and the other *aposynagōgos* passages suggest that Johannine Christ-followers were excluded from the Jewish community for confessing Jesus to be the Messiah. The story of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus implies that known Christ-followers were comforted in their mourning by Jews who did not have prior faith in Jesus as the Messiah. The comments of the Jewish leadership in 12:11 express alarm concerning those who were leaving the community—apparently of their own volition—in order to join the Johannine church.

Moreover, nowhere in John's Gospel is even the slightest hint "that John meant his Gospel to be read as a two-level drama." You give detailed reasons (121) for John's understanding of his Gospel not as a report of his own experiences but as a truthful testimony of Jesus. Explicitly, "the Gospel at two points insists that its record of Jesus's signs is factual, or, at least, true," namely, in 19:35 and 21:24. Serving the same purpose is the

> pattern of prophecy and fulfillment which in itself imputes historicity to John's account. Several events, such as the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12:12-16) and the casting of lots over Jesus's clothes (19:24), are described as a fulfillment of biblical prophecies whose import was not always understood at the time (12:16). ... Some of Jesus's words too are introduced by fulfillment formulae. John 18:32, for example, describes the handing over of Jesus to Pilate as a fulfillment of what "Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die." This introduction identifies Jesus's words as prophetic and therefore as authoritative. ... These points draw the reader's attention to the role of the Gospel not as a mirror for the community's own historical experience but precisely as the true story of the Son of God's sojourn in the human world.

I too think that John certainly did not intend to write a history of his own community. But experiences of this community did flow into his writing. And what he testified of Jesus as the Messiah was intended, conversely, to strengthen their confidence in the Messiah, to influence the thinking and actions of his community. However, it was contradictory experiences of John's own time that had an impact on his presentation of the story of Jesus, on the one hand of the everyday coexistence of Jews with other Jews, even if they thought differently about Jesus, on the other hand of disputes between Messianic and Rabbinic Jews about the Messianity of Jesus up to extreme provocations on the part of the Messianists, which again could lead to

sanctions by the synagogue leadership. Whether John consciously projected such experiences back into the time of Jesus or simply assumed that things must have been the same then as they were in his time may be left open to question.

The "extratextual reference point to its own story," to which "John's rhetoric" is directed, is in any case

> not within the detailed historical experience of the Johannine community in the latter part of the first century CE but in the life of Jesus several decades earlier. John situates Jesus's life story in the context of God's eternal relationship with humankind, and thus gives it a seminal role in the spiritual journey of his audience. These comments suggest that Alexandra would have viewed the events recounted in the Gospel first and foremost as a story of Jesus, a story that is "true" historically (in the time of Jesus) and cosmologically (in the eternal relationship of God and the world).

You therefore believe "that Alexandra and other members of John's implied audience would not have read the *aposynagōgos* passages as an allusion to their own experiences," rather "they would have heard these passages as part of John's rhetoric of fear" (122) and as an impetus to distance themselves from the *Ioudaioi.* "The anachronisms that are so obvious to modern scholars of ancient Judaism and Christianity may not have been obvious at all to the intended audience."

6.3.4 Was There Actually a Johannine Community at All?

Finally, you see typical circular reasoning in the assumption that there was a Johannine community before the Gospel of John, which arose because of the traumatic expulsion from the synagogue:

> In the expulsion theory, and, indeed, most discussions of the Gospel's aim and audience, a Johannine community is extrapolated from the Gospel itself and then used as a lens through which to interpret the Gospel as a window to that community's historical experience. While, as I have argued, circularity is unavoidable in any theory about John's historical context, the existence of a prior Johannine community has been reified and therefore all but axiomatic in Johannine studies.

If one bases the hypothesis of a Johannine community on the *aposynagōgos* passages alone, this is certainly to be agreed with. However, if John engages in Messianic criticism of Rabbinic Judaism, one may wonder whether he does so as a Jew among Jews who initially meet in their local synagogue or whether he already belongs to a group of Messianists who are critical of the majority of fellow Jews in their environment. In any case, since there were, very early on, Messianic communities of various kinds that trusted in the Messiah Jesus and called themselves *ekklēsia*, it is not unlikely that John's Gospel also emerged from such a grouping and was not simply the work of a single author or speaker.

6.4 The Enduring Appeal of the Expulsion Theory

Martyn's paradigm (122), however, appears to be immune to any criticism. Is it possible that the "critics are simply wrong and that Martyn was right"? Your suggestion is different, namely

> that the appeal of the expulsion theory lies in the rhetorical finesse of Martyn's book itself. Three elements of this rhetoric seem to me to be the most important: writing style, dramatic mode of presentation, and explanatory power.

6.4.1 The Fresh Wind of a Lively Style in the Interpretation of John

When I read of your enthusiasm for the fresh wind that Louis Martyn blew into the interpretation of the Gospel of John "in the late 1970s and early 1980s" and compare his lively style with the dry way of presentation of, for example, Werner Kümmel,[204] then I realize why I, who finished my theological studies in 1976 with the 1st Theological Examination, did not have the opportunity to make similar experiences at that time. For thirty years, as a parish pastor and clinic counselor, I was quite little concerned with new developments in exegetical scholarship. My new encounter with the Gospel of John, which triggered in me the feeling of having finally found genuine access to this text, did not take place until 2006 and 2007, when I came across Ton Veerkamp's political reading, which, to my knowledge, unfortunately, did not find any echo in the academic world.

In fact, Martyn [30] raises issues that are really important in what you cite as examples from him (130):

> "One thing, at least, is shared by all New Testament authors in this regard: none of them merely repeats the tradition. Everyone hears it in his own present and that means in his own way; everyone shapes it, bends it, makes selections from among its riches, even adds to it. Put in other terms, everyone reverences the tradition enough to make it his own."

No author, that is, not even a biblical author, can avoid bringing into the narrative of past events presuppositions of his own present.

6.4.2 Historical Narrative Presupposes Dramatic Imagination

Since, according to R. G. Collingwood,[205] "historical thought, by definition, is always about absence: 'events which have finished happening, and conditions no longer in existence,'" there is never historical thought without imagination and fantasy, "and

204 (130, n. 68) Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Paul Feine (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 232.

205 (139, n. 70) R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 233.

for that reason, the narratives constructed by historians have much in common with the narratives constructed by playwrights, novelists, and filmmakers."[206]

Louis Martyn certainly did not intend to engage in "historical fiction," to be sure:

> Nevertheless, his use of the dramatic form gestures towards the role of the imagination in the very attempt to take up residence in the Johannine community, a point which must be acknowledged even by those who view his hypothesis as historical fact.

6.4.3 The Longing to Participate in the Concrete Life of the Past

Ultimately, Martyn was able to respond to the "deepseated desire" of his listeners and readers (124)

> to live in the past. He singlehandedly created the community, built its church, peopled it with preachers and parishioners, and shaped a dramatic narrative of conflict, ostracism, and resolution. In doing so, he satisfied the craving for detail that the Gospel itself denies us, and, like a good novelist, allowed us to inhabit this world while providing our scholarly selves with the reassurance that in fact it could have happened this way. Martyn's book not only urged us to "take up temporary residence in the Johannine community" but it became a means through which we could do so.

I may say that around the year 2004, I experienced the reading of the complete volumes of the exegetical journal *Texte & Kontexte* published up to that time quite similarly as a house of study in which an understanding of the Messianic writings of the so-called New Testament became possible for me from the Grand Narrative of liberation in the Jewish Scriptures.

6.5 Everything That Argues against Martyn's Expulsion Theory

Finally, you present the expulsion hypothesis once again coherently, "complete with hero, villain, conflict, and emotion."

> It envisions the Johannine community as victims who have suffered a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue at the hands of the Jewish authorities. It offers consolation and above all vindication to the victims, through the death and resurrection of God's son, who offers eternal life to those who believe. And it promises victory over their enemies who will suffer eternal condemnation on account of their rejection of God's son and their persecution of those who believe in him. Finally, it provides one way to account for the Gospel's

206 (139, n. 74) My own detailed study comparing life of Jesus research and Jesus novels provided ample support for Collingwood's position. See Adele Reinhartz, *Caiaphas the High Priest*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011.

> Jewishness and anti-Judaism: the Jewishness as an indicator of the community's Jewish ethnic identification, and the anti-Judaism as the understandable rancor against those who had expelled them.

Described in this way, Martyn's theory meets Veerkamp's reading in only one point: that the Johannine Messianists, as troublemakers, were in all likelihood subject to sanctions of expulsion in the synagogues in which they appeared.

But neither was the Johannine community a mere victim without prior provocative action in a harsh inner-Jewish dispute about political options related to the Roman world order nor was the Gospel intended to console over the shame suffered by providing eternal life in heaven and condemning enemies to hell. The entire theory suffers from the fact that the Jewishness of the community is reduced to its ethnic origin and is not made fruitful for the interpretation of, say, the life of the age to come from the Jewish Scriptures.

You go on writing:

> If Martyn is correct, our fictional Alexandra would have been a Jewish Christ-confessor who had herself been expelled from the synagogue and welcomed the Gospel as a narrative treatment for her trauma. The Gospel's hostile comments about the Jews, as well as the rhetorical expropriation of the Jews' scriptures, Temple, and covenant, would have seemed like a just response to their violent rejection.

Thus brought to the point, it becomes clear that if this were true the Gospel would be nothing more than a document of faint-hearted vindictiveness. It would have nothing to do with what I would understand as the core of the Christian faith, namely *agapē*, standing up for one's neighbor in solidarity, and certainly nothing to do with the liberating God of Israel, to whom solidarity with his people Israel is dear to his heart.

You then also compile once again the three counter-arguments already mentioned:

1) the lack of external evidence for a formal expulsion;
2) the overlooking of other models within the Gospel of the relationship between Jesus's followers and the synagogue;
3) the lack of evidence that the intended audience read the Gospel as a story of their particular historical experience.

In addition, there is an argument that refers to the sharpness of the rhetoric (124-25):

> Why would a Gospel intended for those who have already suffered for their faith engage in such a pervasive rhetorical campaign to encourage belief in the first place?

This is in line with my account above that the background of such a sharp conflict must be different from that assumed by Martyn.

Last, you challenge Martyn's theory that a general hostility to Jews should have developed within a purely Jewish Johannine community (125):

> And why would the Gospel's anti-Jewish rhetoric, which extends to the Jews in general, appeal to a Johannine community that was itself Jewish? Why not simply target the leaders responsible for enacting and enforcing the traumatic expulsion decree?

You are right: If John's Gospel had been written merely to process a trauma of exclusion, then there would be no explanation for the variety and acuteness of the charges leveled in his Gospel. That these refer generally to all Jews I dispute. But even in the political scenario, I advocate following Ton Veerkamp, the Messianic Jews around John are facing not only the Rabbinic synagogue leadership but also many other fellow Jews for whom the troublemakers are a thorn in the flesh, while for Zealot Jews they may not act radically enough.

7 John, Alexandra, and the Propulsion Theory

At the beginning of your 7th chapter (131), you again summarize Martyn's "expulsion hypothesis" from the point of view of Alexandra, your constructed "compliant listener." We agree that it is not sufficient to imagine that Alexandra

> was a Jewish believer in Jesus recently disoriented and traumatized by her experience of expulsion. She heard the Gospel in a church or housechurch, during worship or a meal with her fellow community members. Hearing the Gospel inspired her to persevere, and reminded her of the promise of eternal life to those who believe. She was comforted by the Gospel's message of perseverance, but also confirmed in a suspicion of Jews, or, at least, of Jewish authorities, who had expelled her and her community from their midst.

Therefore, you develop your own alternative theory.

7.1 John as a Successful Speaker on an Asia Minor Marketplace

I find it significant that you begin your own attempt "to see with the eyes of the Gospel's audience" by presenting a scenario (151, n. 2) that you picture

> along the lines of the famous "gourd" scene in Monty Python's Life of Brian, in which Brian, escaping from his pursuers, finds himself in a lineup of orators, each exhorting their listeners to follow them. To avoid detection, Brian too begins to orate, and, to his surprise, gathers a large and responsive crowd who then follow him out into the wilderness. I have no doubt that the Python troupe modeled their scene on the known practices of mass oratory in ancient Rome, and, I suspect, also on the ongoing practice of public oratory at Speakers' Comer in Hyde Park in London.

While I think the "Life of Brian" is a well-done satire of an understanding of the Christian mission that courts followers by more or less questionable means, I doubt from the bottom of my heart that anything but a caricature of the actual concerns of John's Gospel can come out of embedding the original Johannine rhetoric in an ancient "mass oratory" or a modern "Speakers' Corner" setting.

But let us look seriously at how you sketch the rhetorical situation within which John performs:

> My narrative begins not in a church filled with members of an already-existing Johannine community, but in a crowded agora in an urban Greek-speaking center such as Ephesus. The market is bustling with merchants, craftspeople, and customers who exchange goods and gossip, and with passersby on their way to or from home, work, or school. At one end of the agora stands a podium or rostra, on which a number of orators are holding forth.
>
> One of these orators is our friend John.

You imagine (131-32) that around him "a small crowd gathers, Alexandra among them. Some stay for a short while; Alexandra and some others, however, linger to hear John out to the end." At this, I wonder if you assume that John delivers his entire Gospel in one piece; that would have to require if I extrapolate from the length of my sermons, about five hours.

From two passages in John's Gospel (151, n. 3) alluding to events that are not, or only later, "narrated in the Fourth Gospel," namely, "3:24, which refers to the imprisonment of John the Baptist," and 11:2 referring to a deed of "Mary of Bethany . . . that is not recounted until the following chapter (12:3)," you conclude that parts of John's audience may have listened to him several times before. From this, I would infer that you assume that John may well be varying his delivery, or possibly compiling his Gospel as he goes along, based on his public lectures.

John's speaking activity (132) is successful in your eyes to such an extent that his audience,

> for reasons known only to them, … find his message both appealing and persuasive. They begin attending meals and other gatherings of John's fledgling but growing group, and become Christ-confessors. Like Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, they are eager to be reborn as the children of God, Jews as God's family. What the Gospel recounts, I suggest, is not the expulsion of the Johannine Jewish Christ-believers from the synagogue, but the propulsion of those Christ-believers into the coveted role of God's covenant people. As a result, they not only have access to the treasured tokens of covenantal relationship, but they must also separate themselves from the non-Christ-confession Jews (*Ioudaioi*) whom they have ousted. If, as John warns them, Christ-believers are in danger of persecution in the earthly realm, they can be assured that on the

> cosmological plane, those who reject Jesus have already been cast forth from their life-giving relationship to God.

Such a scenario does not make sense to me from the outset. Why should a Gentile audience on an Asia Minor marketplace find the Jewish people's covenant relationship with God so attractive that they claim this covenant for themselves, while at the same time denouncing this Jewish people as the devil's spawn? Weren't Jews in Hellenism and the Roman Empire anyway in an outsider position, tolerated as *religio licita* and exempted from sacrifice for the divine emperor, but considered workshy because of their observance of the Sabbath? Just as I could not imagine an Islamophobic speaker in Hyde Park today developing a religion to take away from Muslims the paradise praised by Muhammad.

Here's how you distinguish your design from Martyn's theory:

> Whereas Martyn's narrative is ecclesiological-centered on the conflict between a Johannine community and the synagogue in the late first century—mine is cosmological—centered on the conflict between God and Satan. If Martyn's Johannine community and synagogue are reflected in the characters within John's story of Jesus, so too the players in my narrative mirror the cosmic combatants I am positing. And if Martyn's narrative has implications for a parting of the ways instigated by the Jews' expulsion of Johannine believers from the synagogue, mine suggests that from the perspective that this Gospel encourages, a cosmic and profound parting of the ways has been instigated by the propulsion of Christ-confessors into the coveted covenantal relationship with God that the Jews forfeited by rejecting God's son.

As stated earlier, I too find Martyn's concept unconvincing, except in the respect that the conflict between Jesus and the *Ioudaioi* depicted in John's Gospel is an internal Jewish dispute between Messianists and various other Jewish factions.

If you don't want to understand the term *zōē aiōnios*, which is central to the Gospel, from the Jewish conception of the age to come *in this world*, but as eternal life in heaven beyond, and therefore ultimately characterize the conflict between followers of Jesus and Jews as a cosmological opposition between God and the devil, I wonder whether John is supposed to have developed such rhetoric out of pure malice, preconceived hatred of the Jews, or a weakly developed sense of self. I do not perceive a concrete starting point for this.

I can well imagine that an already existing Gospel of John, which originally arose out of inner-Jewish conflicts, was later used missionarily by the Gentile Christian dominated church in the sense you represent.

For a man like Marcion, however, who in the 2nd century wanted to oppose the evil God of the Jews with the good Father revealed through Jesus, the Gospel of John was obviously too Jewish to be recognized by him.

In your eyes, then, something like a Johannine community emerges only through John's Gospel as a "dynamic force that propels them toward a radically new identity and reframes their relationship with others, notably, the Jews."

> The question then becomes: how might my narrative lead us to imagine the social circumstances that could have stimulated such a thoroughgoing attempt at boundary creation?

In any case, you do not exclude (133), "that the Gospel of John created a 'textual community' that was not only an interpretive community centered on this version of Jesus' story, but also a social entity," even if "a rhetorical analysis cannot answer" the question of whether such "a group … was loosely or tightly organized, small or large, long- or short-lived, part of a larger network or isolated." However, you also write (151, n. 6): "My agnosticism about a historical Johannine community does not put me in the camp that holds that this Gospel was written for 'all Christians.'"

After all (133), there must have been "some people, somewhere," who "responded to the Gospel's rhetoric" in such a way that

> it was copied and recopied, distributed widely, and eventually incorporated into the New Testament canon, thereby ensuring that its persuasive message would circulate far beyond the time and place of its writing.

In this way, you suggest, citing Wayne Booth,[207] the Gospel is "like all successful stories: it makes its audience, causing them to see, understand, and experience what they had not done before." And you quote Averil Cameron:[208]

> "In just such a way did Christian literature and Christian discourse make Christians."

By referring to today's "crowds at sporting events waving placards with 'John 3:16' written on them"—a practice I am not familiar with from Germany—you impressively attest "that the rhetorical use of the Fourth Gospel continues to this day."

Nevertheless, it is still not proven that such a use of the Gospel of John was intended at the time it was written.

7.2 The Ethnic Identity or Identities of the Implied Audience

Regarding the ethnic identity of the Johannine audience, you write (133):

> All we can say for certain about John's intended audience is that they were capable of understanding Koine Greek. Any other thoughts about their response

207 (45, n. 10, and 152, n. 9) Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 397-98.

208 (152, n. 10) Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 46.

> to the Gospel, or their ethnic, cultural, or other identities, their geographical location, or other demographic features can only be extrapolated from the Gospel itself and, more importantly, from the particular lens through which we view the Gospel.

7.2.1 "Jewish-Christian" Implied Audience

In favor of "the Gospel's audience being ethnically Jewish Christ-believers," speaks, apart from the "expulsion theory," which according to you is to be excluded, "its sophisticated use of the Jewish scriptures, and its portrayal of Jesus as a participant in Jewish festivals."

In your view, however, the distance by which the Gospel speaks of "festivals 'of the *loudaioi*'" in 2:13, 5:1, 6:4, 7:2, and 11:55 and Jesus twice "refers to 'your law' when speaking to his fellow Jews" in 8:17 and 10:34 contradicts this. But this distance, when it comes to Jesus, cannot mean that Judaism is being viewed here from a Gentile or Christian perspective. The distance becomes explicable if we understand by the *Ioudaioi*, as Veerkamp does, primarily the Judaean-Pharisaic (or later Rabbinic) Jews opposing the Galilean-Messianic Jews around Jesus as opponents.

That (134) in 2:6 and 19:40 "Jewish handwashing and burial practices" and in 20:16 "the 'Hebrew' term *rabbouni* as 'teacher'" are explained may indeed be related to the fact that John's audience includes God-fearers from the *goyim*, which is implied in 12:20; the passage 19:40, moreover, seeks to emphasize with particular clarity the nature of the relationship between John and Mary as of a teacher to a disciple.

7.2.2 Samaritan Implied Audience

There are also scholars who argue "for a Samaritan audience in addition to the Jewish-Christ-confessing core of the Johannine community." Foremost among these is Raymond Brown,[209] who assumes that

> the first edition of the Gospel was addressed to a "Jewish-Christian" Johannine community—a pre-Gospel group founded by the Beloved Disciple—who had formerly been followers of John the Baptist. Subsequent redactions, however, were geared towards new members from other ethnic backgrounds. The second redaction, in his view, took into account a large number of Samaritan participants, whose entry is worked into the narrative in John 4:4-42.

According to John Bowman,[210] "the Samaritan expectation of a prophet like Moses as outlined in Deuteronomy 18:18" might argue that in 7:40 "the presence of Samar-

209 (xxxviii, n. 61, and 152, n. 12) Raymond Edward Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 37.

210 (153, n. 16) John Bowman, "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 40 (1958): 300.

itans among the Jewish crowds in the Temple area during the Feast of Tabernacles" is to be implied. And also (134-35) Edwin Freed[211]

> argues that some of the locations mentioned by John, (Aenon, Salim, Sychar, and Ephraim); the Samaritan connotations of *topos* as it is used in 4:20; 11:48; the denigration of both Moses and Abraham; the use of Samaritan terminology such as "our father" and "our fathers" (4:12, 20; 6:31: 8:39, 53, RSV); and Jesus's declared independence "from both the fathers and the law" (6:49; 8:38, 31, 56; 8:17; 10:34) imply that the Gospel addresses Samaritans, at least in part.

However, according to Margaret Pamment,[212] many of these "affinities with Samaritan thought can be explained on the basis of the scriptures they shared with Jews."

Without doubt, however, Samaritans—as we will see in section 7.3.3—play a much larger role in John's Gospel than the Greeks mentioned only in 12:40-42, of whom it is not even said whether Jesus accepts them as disciples.

7.2.3 Gentile Members of the "Johannine Community"

Raymond Brown [55] is also the one who

> sees "clear signs of a Gentile component among the recipients of the Gospel." Gentiles constitute the third group that entered the community, after an initial group of Jewish Christians that include the Baptist's disciples and a second group of anti-Temple Jewish-Christians and their Samaritan converts. Brown cites 12:20-23 and 37-40, in which "the arrival of 'some Greeks' serves Jesus as a sign that his ministry has come to an end" and John describes the Jews' blindness as a fulfillment of Isaiah 6:10.

But these passages—as will be explained at length in section 7.3.5—cannot prove a turning already of John to the Gentile mission, at most an openness to accepting God-fearing *goyim* into the gathering of all Israel he hoped for.

Louis Martyn [167] too

> offered a detailed critique of Brown's chronology, in which he followed Hans Joachim Schoeps[213] in seeing the "hellenes" of John 12 not as Gentiles but as Greek-speaking Jews. Contra Brown, Martyn remained convinced that "the history of the Johannine community from its origin through the period of its

211 (90, n. 10, and 153, n. 17) Edwin D. Freed, "Did John Write His Gospel Partly to Win Samaritan Converts?" Novum Testamentum 12, no. 3 (1970), 242.

212 (153, n. 18-19) Margaret Pamment, "Is There Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel?" *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 73, no. 3-4 (1982): 229-30.

213 (153, n. 21) Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 131. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 164.

> life in which the Fourth Gospel was composed forms to no small extent a chapter in the history of *Jewish* Christianity" (emphasis in the original).

You wonder, however, that the "current consensus remains with Martyn's view that John's actual late first-century audience consisted of Jewish Christ-believers," because hardly "the strong dissociation from the label *Ioudaioi* that is so central to Johannine rhetoric" could be reconciled with this in your eyes.

As I said, this really cannot be explained by Martyn's theory of exclusion alone but very well by Veerkamp's assumption of an inner-Jewish conflict about the political attitude towards the Roman world order.

7.3 Evidence in John's Gospel for Its Audience as Gentile Outsiders

Now you (135-36) want to prove your own theory "that the Gospel serves as a vehicle for persuading an audience to undergo rebirth as the children of God who have usurped the Jews as God's covenantal partners" and that it "implies an audience that is neither part of an existing Johannine community nor Jewish."

To prove your "construction of the Gospel's audience as primarily pagan," you first resort to a number of passages in John's Gospel itself, while (137) being aware "of the inevitably imaginative, speculative, and unverifiable nature of all attempts to identify the Gospel's audience and aim."

7.3.1 Does John 20:31 Aim at Faith Preservation or Faith Awakening?

First (136) you deal at length with what I consider to be the rather idle "question of whether we should see the Gospel as addressed to those who already believe, or to those who do not yet believe."

Verse 20:31 contains a word for which there are two text-critically equally well attested variants, *pisteusēte*, "you may come to believe," or *pisteuēte*, "that you may continue to believe." The first version could prove a missionary-committed Gospel, directed in your eyes also to Gentiles, the second a comforting and encouraging function for an already existing community. Finally, you come to the conclusion

> that the Gospel's purpose—to evangelize or to confirm faith—cannot be decided on the basis of the variant or grammar. Complicating the issue even further is the likelihood that the Gospel was meant to be heard more than once—perhaps many times—and therefore had to be meaningful for both insiders and outsiders.

7.3.2 Does Jesus Want to Go to the Greeks and Teach Them as per John 7:32-35?

One of the two places where John's Gospel actually speaks of *Hellēnoi*, "Greeks," reads as follows in Ton Veerkamp's translation:[214]

214 Veerkamp 183-84 (About the Messiah, par. 1).

> 7:32 The Perushim heard the crowd whispering these things about him;
> and the leading priests and the Perushim sent officials
> in order to seize him.
> 7:33 Now Jesus said,
> “Still a little while I am with you,
> and then I go away to the ONE who sent me.
> 7:34 You will seek me, you will not find me;
> and where I am, you cannot come.”
> 7:35 The Judeans now said to themselves,
> “Where is this one about to go his way, that we won’t find him?
> Is he about to go his way to the Diaspora among the Greek
> and teach the Greek?

For (137) the phrases *eis tēn diasporan tōn Hellēnōn* and *didaskein tous Hellēnas* in the last verse you do not exclude a “reference ... to pagans,” although, for instance, J. A. T. Robinson[215] “argued that the ‘Greeks’ in 7:35 are Greek-speaking, Diaspora Jews.” This is also the opinion of Ton Veerkamp who explains Jesus’ concern in this way:[216]

> The Messiah is going away to the one who sent him, that is, to a place where they cannot get to. The Messiah enters the hiddenness of God. There every seeking will be in vain. Jesus cryptically expresses himself, the misunderstanding is intended, as in chapter 6. The crowd continues to discuss and puzzle about what is meant, whether Jesus—after his failure in Judea—wants to go abroad, into the Diaspora, to try his luck in teaching the Greeks—the Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora—or, as we will hear in 8:22, to kill himself. To John, misunderstanding is a literary means of breaking off a discussion that can lead to nothing.

Even if *goyim* were indeed meant here by the Greeks, Jesus’ real intentions are by no means addressed. The absurd speculation in the parallel situation (8:22) that Jesus wants to commit suicide indicates that also here the Johannine Jesus is not really considering to engage in Gentile mission.

7.3.3 The Other Sheep in John 10:16—Jewish Christians, Samaritans, or Gentiles?

I also quote verse 10:16 first in the translation by Ton Veerkamp:[217]

> 10:16 And other sheep I have,
> they are not of this courtyard.
> Those also, I must lead,

215 (154, n. 30) John A. T. Robinson, “The Destination and Purpose of St John’s Gospel,” in *New Testament Issues* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 191-209.

216 Veerkamp 189 (About the Messiah, par. 19).

217 Veerkamp 225 (The Interpretation of the Comparison, par. 1).

> they will listen to my voice;
> and there will be,
> flock: one; shepherd: one!

You have already explained (137) in your book *The Word in the World*[218] that you identify these other sheep with Gentile followers of Jesus who are added to those sheep "that are of 'this' fold but who, strikingly, have followed the voice of the shepherd out of the sheepfold into the pastures beyond (10:3)."

That for Martyn [167, 164] "the 'sheep not of this fold' are Jewish-Christians from other groups," though he "acknowledges, however, that most other commentators see this phrase as a reference to Gentiles," fits into his theory, which he "wishes to argue," but "there are not enough direct clues to pinpoint the meaning precisely."

You base your own "interpretation of the 'sheep not of this fold' as Gentiles" on "the biblical and post-biblical use of sheep imagery as a metaphor for God's people Israel" (137-38):

> In the Torah and prophetic literature, shepherd is a metaphor for leader, and used variously of the leaders (Jer 23:1; Ezek 34:1-6), Moses (Exod 3:1-6), and, especially, David (1 Sam 17:34-35) and the future Davidic Messiah (Jer 23:4-6; Ezek 34:23). These motifs retain their importance in Second Temple Jewish literature, where "shepherd" may refer to a teacher of the "law" (2 Bar 77.13-17) or to Moses (Bib Ant 19:3; Philo, *Life of Moses* 1.60-62). Psalms of Solomon 17 describes David as the shepherd who, on the one hand, will bring the Gentile nations under his yoke (17:30) but, on the other hand, will attract "all nations" who "will come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, bringing as gifts her children who had become quite weak, and to see the glory of the Lord with which God has glorified her" (17:31). First Enoch 89 focuses on the "Lord of the sheep" (1 Enoch 89:21, 23, and throughout).[219]

Quite correctly, you assume (138) that in "these and other passages, the sheep are Israel, that is, the nation or people that is in covenantal relationship with God." But since in your eyes John's Gospel "has propelled Christ-believers into the covenantal position of Israel, it is they who are Jesus's sheep in John 10." Therefore, 10:16 must envisage a future "when others—the Gentiles, I argue—will join those who became members of God's flock during the time of Jesus."

Indeed, such an understanding applies to the Christian church's later reception of John. But since John nowhere originally speaks explicitly of a comprehensive turning

218 (154, n. 33) In an earlier work, I have analyzed this passage also as a reference to the "harrowing of hell." See Reinhartz, *The Word in the World*.

219 (154, n. 36) A review of the sources can be found in Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

to the *goyim*, the Gentile, pagan peoples, as do Paul, Luke, or even Matthew, another option is much more obvious for 10:16.

The words *mia poimnē, heis poimēn*, "flock: one; shepherd: ONE" are clearly recognizable as references back to the prophets Zechariah and Ezekiel. Zechariah 11:14 deals with the breaking of the staff of "concord" between Judah and Israel, while Ezekiel 37:16-17 speaks explicitly of the reunion of all Israel—Judah and Joseph (Ephraim, [northern] Israel). Ton Veerkamp refers to the literal correspondences in Ezekiel 34:23 and 37:22:[220]

> The background is Ezekiel 34:23: "I will raise one (*ʾechad*) to them as a shepherd," and Ezekiel 37:22, "I will make them one people and one (*ʾechad*) as king will become king to them all." Thus the breach, reported in Zechariah 11:14, is healed.

In any case, according to Ton Veerkamp, everything speaks for the fact that the Johannine Jesus does not want to replace Israel with a church consisting mainly of Gentiles, but wants to gather all Israel including the lost tribes of Samaria and the Diaspora Jews in his Messianic community. And if, in addition, God-fearers from the *goyim* are added, then in no case to disinherit the people of God:[221]

> In v.16 the text seems to lose the thread, which it takes up again not until v.17. Obviously, the author seems to want to prevent a threatening misunderstanding. The people who hear these words might think that they, the Messianic Judeans, are the sheep, they alone. But there are others to whom the same commitment applies. After two thousand years, Christianity can think of nothing but a "pagan mission" here. John merely says that it is not only about the sheep of this courtyard, not only about the Judeans of Jerusalem, that there are other children of Israel, for example, the woman from Samaria, also those who live widely scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Among them are certainly also the non-Jewish sympathizers of (Hellenistic) Judaism, the "Greeks" from John 12:20 ff. The Messiah wants to unite them all: they shall all become "one flock, one shepherd." Among those who "are not of this courtyard" may be members of other peoples (*goyim*). But they will belong to Israel—and not vice versa Israel to a completely new people of God, such as the Christian church! The ONE, the NAME, is the shepherd of Israel, Psalm 23:1; 80:2; Ezekiel 34:13-15, etc.

7.3.4 The Prophecy of the High Priest Caiaphas in John 11:49-52

Verses 11:49-52 are extremely interesting in several respects (138):

220 Veerkamp 225 (note 323 on the translation of John 10:16).

221 Veerkamp 230 (The Interpretation of the Comparison, par. 24).

> In this passage, the high priest Caiaphas counsels the other Jewish authorities that "it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed" (11:50). The narrator then explains that Caiaphas "did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God" (11:51-52).

7.3.4.1 Caiaphas' Argumentation between Interest Politics and Propaganda

You do not elaborate on the fact that Caiaphas expresses his "concern for 'the people' [*laos*] and 'the nation' (*hyper tou laou kai mē holon to ethnos apolētai*) which, according to the context, implies the Jewish people or the Jewish nation," using two different vocabularies for "people" and "nation," respectively. However, it is precisely this difference that is very important for Ton Veerkamp to make clear in which way John characterizes the argumentation of the leader of the Judean self-government, which is both interest-driven and propagandistic:[222]

> Now we must draw attention to the difference between "nation," *ethnos*, and "people," *laos*. *Ethnos* is *goy* in Hebrew, and *laos* is *ʿam*. Deuteronomy 4:6 both words meet in one sentence, "What a wise and reasonable people (*ʿam-chakham we-navon*), this great nation (*ha-goy ha-gadol ha-ze*)." An *ethnos*/*goy* is a people as it acts outward, to the outside world. A *laos*/*ʿam* is a people as it is held together inwardly. The Romans are dealing with an *ethnos*/*goy*; if they recognize the people as *ethnos*/*goy*, they grant them a certain degree of self-government. To "abolish the nation" is to deprive a people of the right of self-government. This is precisely what the political leadership fears.
>
> Consequently, the *kohen gadol* (*archiereus*), the high priest, is in demand. He acts as the predominant chairman of the board of directors, who must put the helpless management ("You know nothing") back on track. He does not appeal to morals, but to interests, "You do not consider that it is in your interest (*sympherei hymin*). To save the sanctuary and thus the people as *laos*/*ʿam*—and that means, in the eyes of the leadership, preventing the downfall of *ethnos*/*goy*—a human must die. Political interest ranks before morality; Caiaphas says, as Brecht later said, "First foods, then morals." They are not interested in the people, but in their model of self-government, in the status of the *ethnos Ioudaiōn*. Their political interest is the maintenance of *local self-government*. For it is on this that their idea of the "place," *maqom*, is reduced. They are not concerned with "the place (*ha-maqom*) that the Eternal One chooses to make his Name live there (Deuteronomy 16:2, etc.).
>
> This cunning confusion of terms, this contamination of *laos* with *ethnos*, is part of the constant repertoire of all politics. *Hyper tou laou*, "for the sake of

222 Veerkamp 256-57 (Dying for the Nation, par. 7-9).

> the people," is the propagandistic element here. The hesitant leadership collective has to understand that Jesus must be killed both *in their interest* (the real reason) and *for the sake of the people* (propaganda).

At the same time, however, Caiaphas' prophecy also unintentionally contains the aspect that Jesus' death actually benefits the Judean people as well, for they, like Galilee, Samaria, and the entire Diaspora, belong to all Israel that Jesus wants to gather into his Messianic community.

7.3.4.2 Are the "Dispersed Children of God" Jews of the Diaspora or Gentiles?

For you (138) only the last part of "Caiaphas's so-called prophecy" is interesting, in which

> the narrator enlarges this meaning: Jesus was about to die "not for the nation only" (*kai ouch hyper tou ethnos*) but for the ingathering of the "dispersed children of God" (*ta tekna tou theou ta dieskorpismena synagagē eis hen*).

In this "reformulation" you find two arguments for your theory that John's Gospel is addressed to Gentiles.

First, in your eyes, the use of the verb *synagein*

> to which the noun synagogue is related … may imply a contrast between the future ingathering that is fulfilled in Jesus and the present exclusion of which the Jews are accused.

However, you suggest that this assumption has little probative value, citing your second "more important" argument, according to which the evangelist's formulation

> broadens the prophecy to refer not only to the Jews, or to Diaspora Jews, but to the children of God whom the Prologue has already defined as those "who received him [the *Logos*], who believed in his name" (1:12). In other words, these are believers who are not Jews, therefore Gentiles. Here the Johannine narrator broadens out the prophecy of the ingathering of the exiles to refer not only to Israelites or Jews, as per the prophetic literature and its later Jewish interpreters, but also to believers in Jesus, arguably, Gentiles.[223]

But again, this conclusion is not compelling. Within your overall interpretation of Johannine rhetoric as consistently anti-Jewish, it makes sense; to that extent, it is also consistent with later ecclesiastical readings of John's Gospel. But for the original John, it again remains an assumption, unsupported by anything, that already he wanted to speak of Gentile children of God displacing the Jewish people in 1:12-13 and 11:52.

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223 (154, n. 37) For a detailed discussion of the ingathering motif as it pertains to John 11:49-52, see John A. Dennis, "Jesus's Death and the Gathering of True Israel: The Johannine Appropriation of Restoration Theology in the Light of John 11.47-52" (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

At most, in the closer definition of the "God-born," *tekna theou*, trusting in the Messiah according to 1:12 by the phrase "who are begotten not of bloods," *ouk ex haimatōn*, one could see an allusion to the fact that—similar to Paul—also uncircumcised people from the nations can be added to the "Messiah's own," as Ton Veerkamp explains:[224]

> "Not of bloods." We take the plural "bloods" for the Greek plural *haimata*. In Hebrew, there is the plural *damim* which in the Scriptures is to be found 73 times, most of all related to sacrificial rites. Exodus 4:24-26 relates,
>
> > So it happened:
> > On the way, at a lodging place, the NAME encountered him (Moses),
> > he sought to kill him.
> > Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin,
> > she touched his foot with it.
> > She said: "You've become a bridegroom of blood (*damim,* plural) for me."
> > He (the NAME) let him go.
> > Hence she said "bridegroom of blood,"
> > because of the circumcision.
>
> Not circumcision, distinguishing mark between Israel and the other peoples, decides about who belongs to "the own" of the Messiah. "Not of bloods" thus means: not to be begotten from and for circumcision. Here is no difference of opinion between John and Paul.

For 11:52, you then yourself address (138) that the phrase *ta tekna tou theou ta dieskorpismena* refers first of all to the "Hebrew phrase for 'ingathering of exiles,' *kibbutz galuyyot*," which, in fact (138-39),

> does not appear until rabbinic literature but the idea is much older. The expectation of eschatological return to the land is first mentioned in Deuteronomy 30:3-4, in which God promises that in the future "the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the LORD your God has scattered you. Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world, from there the Loan your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back."

To this, you add (154, n. 38):

> The idea is prominent in prophetic literature, especially the books of Isaiah (11:12; 27:13; 56:8; 66:20), Jeremiah (16:15; 23:3, 8; 29:14; 31:8; 33:7), and Ezekiel (20:34, 41; 37:21).

Although you see only in Isaiah 11:12—"He will raise a signal for the nations"—a reference "that the Gentiles are included in this ingathering," you think to be able

224 Veerkamp 31 (Birth, par. 5-7).

thereby to reason what has nothing at all to do with the reference to all the other biblical passages:

> But if one accepts the Johannine view that 1) Christ-believers have replaced the *Ioudaioi* as the covenant people, and 2) Gentiles are now welcomed into the believing group, then the ingathering of exiles would refer to Gentiles as well.

Since this conclusion is based on two conditions that you have already presupposed, it is simply a circular argument. According to Ton Veerkamp, on the other hand, John is actually concerned with the gathering of the children of Israel scattered among the nations as promised by the prophets:[225]

> Here the political writer Johannes intervenes. Caiaphas does not say all this out of himself, out of jest and whim, writes John, but as the great priest of the year he must act as a prophet, that is, he must point to what is politically mandatory. Within the Sanhedrin, he gives a governmental declaration (which here means *prophēteuein*) that Jesus should die for the sake of the nation, and so for the sake of the people. But, says John, here, in the Sanhedrin, it is not about the people (*laos*), but about self-government (*ethnos*). Jesus will die, but not only for the sake of self-government (*ethnos*), as Caiaphas said, but "also to bring together into one all the children of God who have been scattered."
>
> To bring together all Israel, all the children of God, wherever they live under the ruling world order, in one synagogue (*synagagein*): this is the goal of Johannine politics. When all the *God-born* have been brought together, then there will be the place where the God of Israel will allow his name to live. For the *God-born* are not the children of Adam, or even the children of God—humans in general—but rather certain humans, the children of Israel. And a child of Israel is the human who accepts "the light," "who is not begotten of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man (Abraham), but divinely," 1:13.
>
> *Diaskorpizein*, "to scatter," always refers to the fate of Israel after the destruction of the first sanctuary. This centrifugal movement, which determined the life of Israel in the Diaspora since the first destruction of the place, is reversed into a centripetal movement, towards the one place. This is not an invention of John, but a good prophetic tradition.
>
> The message in John is not that "Jesus died for all humans" and that Israel according to the flesh has had its day, but that the humans, as far as they "accept the light," find their destiny in the newly created people (*ʿam nivraʾ*) of Psalm 102:19. In John, this is something else than the heathen mission and the Christian church.

225 Veerkamp 257 (Dying for the Nation, par. 10-13).

7.3.5 The Greeks who Want to See Jesus in John 12:20-24

The last John text (139) you discuss in this context is also the second and last passage in which the word *Hellēnes* appears in John's Gospel. You emphasize that "John 12 describes an event that took place just prior to Jesus's final meal," we must keep in mind, however, that between the mention of "some Greeks" in verse 20 and the description of the foot-washing meal in chapter 13, there are still 30 verses in which the crowd, *ochlos*, is mentioned twice (12:29, 34) as actor besides Jesus. The verses 12:20-24, which you are concerned with, you quote as follows:

> Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

7.3.5.1 John's Reluctance Toward Gentile Mission

In this case, I first quote Ton Veerkamp's commentary on these verses since I like to supplement or go beyond him in some respects based on your argumentation:[226]

> About the Greeks of 12:20, the exegetes have speculated a lot. Some saw in them Diaspora Jews, others proselytes, some *goyim* ("Gentiles"), still others religious-minded people who sympathized with Judaism (*sebomenoi*, (God's) worshipers, Acts 17:4, 17, and others). There is much to be said for the latter. These are Greeks who went up to the festival of the Judeans. They do not want to "sanctify themselves" in the same way as the Judeans, but "bow down" to God.
>
> They want to meet the Messiah, but they have no direct access to the Messiah. The connection to the Messiah is only through the mediation of the disciples. The contact person is Philipp. To the Greeks he is a person of respect, they call him *kyrie*, "Sir." . . . Alone, Philipp does not see himself in a position to make a decision. He consults Andrew, who like himself and Simon Peter comes from the same place Bethsaida in Galilee. Both then go to Jesus. This cumbersome procedure shows how difficult it was for the Messianic group around John to integrate people who are not from Israel into the Messianic movement. This confirms our thesis that John does not know any "heathen mission" as a genuine Messianic mission. On the other hand, access is not completely excluded. But a high hurdle is set up.
>
> Jesus immediately informs his present and future disciples about the conditions that the disciples actually have to fulfill. The direct contact with Jesus

226 Veerkamp 268-69 (The Grain of Wheat, par. 2-6).

> obviously did not take place, at least if we refer the sentence, "Jesus answers," to Philipp and Andrew and not to the Greeks. The Greeks are not rejected, but they are not invited either. John is skeptical about Paul's project of a Messianic community of Judeans and *goyim*.
>
> The Messianic movement, viewing Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, was extremely fragmented during the time when John wrote. A uniform Messianism spread over the whole (*kath' holon*) Roman world was not in sight at that time. By the end of the 2nd century, you could speak of something like a catholic church. The Roman Empire stabilized in the 2nd century, and revolutionary *Messianism* had become a *Christian* religion.
>
> John, of course, did not foresee this development but feared that a significant entry of "Greeks," or even of *goyim*, would make the Messianic community of the new Israel something else than the place where the scattered children of Israel were to be brought together. A community of Judeans and *goyim* is something different than the great unified synagogue of Israel mentioned in 11:52, John's main political goal. That is why John (Jesus) impedes the conditions of admission. With his disciples, as we will hear in 13-16, he will talk very differently.

7.3.5.2 The Greeks in 12:20 as Gentiles Who Want to Bow Down before Israel's God

You notice (139) quite different things in this passage 12:20-24.

First, despite the mention that the Greeks wanted to bow, *proskynein*, before the God of Israel, you assume, as Mary Coloe[227] in your view "demonstrated persuasively" that "the Greeks are likely to be Gentiles rather than Greek-speaking Jews" because "the prophetic quotations and allusions in John 12" speak to "an eschatological context in which all nations will acknowledge the sovereignty of Israel's God."

From precisely this prophetic background, however, these Greek Gentiles would have to join the gathering of all Israel into Jesus' Messianic community. Nowhere do I see any indication in John, conversely, that Jesus would found a completely new religion with these Greeks, for instance, independent of Israel and all Jews.

7.3.5.3 The Requirements of True Discipleship in John's Gospel

Second, according to you, the way these "Greeks do not approach Jesus directly but through his disciples" reminds of

> the pattern of recruitment described in the call of the first disciples (1:29-51) and in the coming of the Samaritans (4:39-42). As we have seen, this pattern

227 (153, n. 23, and 154, n. 39) Mary L. Coloe, "Gentiles in the Gospel of John: Narrative Possibilities - John 12:12-43," in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David C. Sim and James S. McLaren (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 218-19 and throughout.

> is associated with true discipleship, in contrast to the diminished faith of those who believe only when they see signs (2:23-25; 6:15).

Indeed, Ton Veerkamp does not pay attention to the aspect of this parallelism. But also you pay too little attention to the fact that apparently "true discipleship" always has to do with (1:36) "seeing Jesus walking his way," that is, what his *halakha*, his way of life was like, and (1:38-39) with "staying" (*menein*) by him as a disciple to enter into sometimes hard teaching. This is true of the first Jewish disciples, of the Samaritans (4:40) who ask Jesus to stay with them so as to be trained by him, and probably also now of the Greeks, to whom Jesus inflicts the hard parable of the grain of wheat.

At the same time, Veerkamp rightly emphasizes John's reservation about a general mission to the Gentiles. He speaks only of *Hellēnes tines*, "some Greeks" who want to see Jesus of their own accord, not of a sending of disciples by Jesus to all peoples as in Matthew. John's skepticism toward a Gentile Christian-dominated church, as Veerkamp assumes, was indeed appropriate after all, for it was they who would soon set about disinheriting the religion of Judaism.

7.3.5.4 Has Jesus' Hour Come with the Arrival of the Greeks?

Third, you notice that, in fact,

> Jesus' response does not address directly the Greeks' request. He does not send Philip and Andrew back with a yes or no answer. Rather, he declares that the time has come for him to be glorified.

Precisely in "this declaration" Raymond Brown[228] (139-40) sees

> a turning point. Until now, Jesus has insisted that his hour has not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20) but, with the coming of the first Gentiles, the hour has finally arrived. The hour of glorification is also the hour of his death, a death that is necessary in order for his mission truly to bear fruit. This complex of ideas suggests that the Greeks who wish to see Jesus are themselves the fruit that will flourish on account of his (impending) death. This latter point is reinforced by 12:32, in which Jesus declares: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

At first glance, this conclusion actually caused me some embarrassment. Indeed, at this very moment, when Andrew and Philip tell Jesus that "some Greeks" want to see him, Jesus himself sees his hour has come:[229]

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228 (19, n. 11, and 154, n. 40) Raymond Edward Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 1.466.

229 According to Ton Veerkamp's translation: Veerkamp 268 (The Grain of Wheat, par. 1).

> 12:23 Now Jesus answers, he says,
> "The hour has come
> for the *bar enosh*, the Human, to be honored."

However, in the following words of Jesus about the way this Son of Man will be honored, and also in the reactions of the crowd to his speech, the Greeks play absolutely no role anymore. So, is it really the appearance of the Greeks alone that causes the hour of the Messiah to dawn? Are they indeed (140) "the fruit that will flourish on account of his (impending) death"?

It seems to me that Brown, at least, is clearly arguing here in an interest-driven way from the point of view of a Gentile Christian who rejoices in being among those who want to see Jesus and are therefore appreciated by him in the way that his death benefits him as well.

Nor is it at all certain that 12:32 can serve as confirmation of this view, where Jesus says: *kagō ean hypsōthō ek tēs gēs,* ***pantas*** *helkysō pros emauton*, "and I, when I shall be exalted above the earth, will draw **all** to myself" (emphasis mine).

Certainly, we Gentile Christians like to refer to such a general word in a very general way—but should we thereby, according to John's will, exclude the Jews, or even "all Jews"?

John could even mean it the other way around again, that this "all" refers first to the people of the Jews. After all, Jesus utters the sentence 12:32 in the midst of his remarks on the judgment of the Son of Man over the world order. Let us listen to how Ton Veerkamp translates and interprets verses 12:31-32:[230]

> 12:31 Now the judgment is upon this world order,
> now the ruler of this world order will be thrown out.
> 12:32 And I, when I will be exalted above the earth,
> I will draw all to myself."
>
> . . . "Now the judgment (*krisis*) is upon this world order." The word "now" invokes the expression "and this is now" from the conversation with the woman at Jacob's well (4:23) and from the speech after the healing of the paralytic (5:25). Jesus will say this again to his disciples: now the *bar enosh*, the Human, will be honored, 15:31. The exaltation of the Messiah is happening *now*, the abolition of this world order is also happening *now*.
>
> The meaning of the word *krisis* is determined by the source from which the word in John is taken, Daniel 7, where a trial is being held. In the course of this trial a political monster is disempowered, and its power, indeed all power to

230 Veerkamp 271 and 273 ("Now my soul is shaken," par. 1 and 15-18).

> come, is given to a figure like a man (*bar enosh*). This, according to Jesus, is happening *now*.
>
> Accused is "this world order" and, as *pars pro toto*, "the ruler of this world order" or, if you like, "the principle of this world order (*archōn tou kosmou toutou*)," the Emperor of Rome. This ruler or principle is "thrown out," that is: excluded, no longer playing a role. The judgment in this trial is: this world order has played out. That is the negative aspect of this judgment.
>
> The positive aspect is, "When I am exalted from the earth, I will draw all to myself." "All" means "not only the nation, but all the scattered children of God," 11:52, and perhaps people like those Greeks if they meet the conditions of discipleship.

But back to the initial question of whether the arrival of the Greeks alone makes dawn the hour of the Messiah. If we look at the context a few verses backward, we notice that (12:13) immediately in advance, the Jewish crowd, *ochlos*, hail Jesus as "the King of Israel" and (12:17) witness his raising of Lazarus. For this reason (12:19), the Pharisees lament that "all the world is going after him." This may be dismissed as insufficient belief in miracles or Zealously misunderstood hopes for a Messiah King, but, after all, 12:11 speaks of "many *Ioudaioi* trusting in Jesus."

This must lead to the conclusion: Even though Jesus expresses massive criticism of many Jews—priestly or Zealot and especially Pharisaic ones—and even though John regards his Messianic group in a frontline position against Rabbinic Judaism, John's attitude is grossly distorted if we completely ignore the positive estimation of many Jews for Jesus in 12:9-12:19 in contrast to the positive estimation of some Greeks for Jesus in 12:20.

7.3.5.5 Do Only the Greeks Want to "See Jesus"—as Opposed to All Jews?

Fourth (140), you consider it

> significant that what the Greeks request is to see Jesus. In this regard, the Greeks are anxious to do what the Jews refuse to do: truly see Jesus for who he is. This contrast—between the Greeks who ask to see and the Jews who refuse to see—is key to this passage, to the rhetorical message of the Gospel as a whole, and to its aim and audience.

This contrast cannot be sustained in this generality either. If the Greeks are to stand for a positive attitude of "the" Gentiles toward Jesus, at least Pilate and his soldiers represent counter-examples. And although John portrays "the Jews' adamant blindness" toward Jesus' messiahship throughout his Gospel, especially that of the Pharisees in 9:39-41, at least the formerly blind man whom Jesus healed (9:37) is a Jew who can see Jesus. And, as just shown, the verses immediately preceding the mention of the Greeks do contain positive appreciations of Jewish interest or even trust toward Jesus.

But what then about "12:37-40, just a few verses after the Greeks make their request"? You describe and interpret the references back to the Jewish prophet Isaiah as follows, and I highlight your central conclusion in bold:

> In 12:37, the narrator summarizes the first twelve chapters of the Gospel: "Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they [the Jews] did not believe in him." The choice had been put before them so many times, and as recently as 12:36: "While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." Their refusal of the light was not a failure of God, Jesus, or the proclamation, but rather a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic words: God "has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they might not look with their eyes, and understand with their heart and turn" (12:39-40; cf. Isaiah 6:10). **The Jews' blindness prevents them from seeing and consigns them to the realm of darkness. The Greeks' desire to see Jesus, by contrast, presages their entry into the light of faith and eternal life.** As Jesus cries out at the end of the chapter: "Whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness" (12:45-46).

John, indeed, interprets Rabbinic Judaism's rejection of Jesus the Messiah, which was disappointing to him, from Isaiah as blindness and hardening of heart ultimately caused by God. But just as Isaiah did not conclude that God's covenant with Israel would thereby lapse and pass over to the oppressive powers of Babylon or Egypt at that time, John does not speak of breaking the covenant with Israel or passing over to the Greeks as such. Instead, John still hopes that—as many Jews trust in Jesus and even some Greeks want to see him—ultimately all of Israel, including Samaria, Diaspora Jews, and God-fearing Gentiles, will trust in the Messiah of Israel. The contrast between darkness and light is not identical with the opposition of Jews and Greeks but with the opposition of those Jews and Greeks who see Jesus and trust in him, and those who are blind to his Messiahship.

Now from this, you could conclude that nevertheless all Jews who—like you—do not want to believe in Jesus should be lost since they thus exclude themselves from eternal life in heaven. However, the same would also apply to all Greeks, Gentiles, and non-Jews who do not believe in Jesus.

In addition, John shares with Isaiah and the other Jewish prophets an understanding of eternal life, *zōē aiōnios*, which is not at all directed to an afterlife in heaven, but to the dawn of a this-worldly age to come in which Israel can live in freedom and justice.

That is, Isaiah envisioned judgment upon the Judeans of his time in the this-world catastrophe of the destruction of the First Temple and exile to Babylon. And he nevertheless hoped (Isaiah 1:9; 10:21, 22; 11:11, 16) that a "remnant" of the people would survive, indeed (Isaiah 11:12) that "the exiles of Israel and the dispersed of Judah will be gathered from the four corners of the earth."

Accordingly, John sees judgment on the Judeans of his days in the this-world catastrophe of the destruction of the Second Temple and the continuing, even intensified, oppression under the Roman world order. At the same time, he hopes that both Jews and some of the Greeks will place their hope in the Messiah Jesus, through whose death on the Roman cross judgment upon the Roman world order has already been sealed. Those who are not ready for this trust are doomed to keep living under oppressive conditions. Whoever lives trusting the Messiah receives the inspiration of the fidelity of the God of Israel and thus the power to obey the new commandment of *agapē*, solidarity. Only through it can the world order be overcome from within, from below.

7.3.5.6 Is for John "Israel's loss" Really "the Gentiles' gain"?

You, on the other hand (140), infer from 12:37-40 "a narrative chronology," which is found quite similarly in Paul in Romans chapters 9-11:

> Jesus first came to the Jews, was rejected by them, and subsequent to his death, was embraced by the Greeks or Gentiles, who became children of light and thereby also children of God.

In such a chronology, however, Paul presupposes, first, that there are already both Jews and Gentiles who trust in Jesus and together form the body of Christ in the community of the *ekklēsia*, and second, maintains firm confidence that after the proclamation of the gospel, *euangelion*, to all nations, the majority of Jews who have not yet trusted in Jesus will also turn to him.

John, on the other hand, speaks generally both in 1:11 and in 12:37 of the fact that "his own people did not accept him," or did not trust in him, even though they had been witnesses to so many of his *sēmeia*, signs. On the other hand, however, he nowhere clearly identifies those who nevertheless accept him and trust in him with the Greeks mentioned only in 12:20.

Thus, you are correct (141) in relating your following sentence to the general attitude of Rabbinic Judaism criticized by John:

> Indeed, the entire signs sequence, from the wedding at Cana in John 2 to the raising of Lazarus in John 11, illustrates the opportunities to see, accept, and believe that the Jews have squandered, in fulfillment of the divine plan as articulated in Isaiah's prophecy.

But from this, John by no means implies your succinct assertion:

> Israel's loss is the Gentiles' gain.

All the reasoning you give for it, while plausible in retrospect from the later reception of John by Christianity, proves to be far-fetched on close examination of John's Gospel itself.

Your argument 1 consists of an unsubstantiated assumption, at least as far as the Gentiles are concerned as the exclusive addressees of the Gospel in the future:

> The Greeks' desire to see Jesus will be satisfied imminently, with Jesus's death. John 12:24 indicates that it is only by dying that Jesus, and his followers, can bear fruit, that is, spread the message and bring others to "see Jesus."

Where, in John's Gospel, is even a single Greek mentioned as coming to see him after Jesus' death and resurrection? Where in the words of the ascending Jesus to his disciples in 20:19-23 is there even a syllable of mention of a mission to the nations?

Your argument 2 you borrow from Mary Coloe [216]:

> "The coming of the Greeks, representative of 'the world' in the words of the Pharisees, sets into motion the ultimate cosmic victory of God."

But the term *kosmos* in 12:19 exceptionally refers neither to the human living space well created by God nor to the unjust ruling world order, but to the many Jews within the crowd who follow Jesus. So it is excluded both that the Greeks mentioned in the following verse could be meant by the Pharisees and that this word here refers to a future cosmic victory of God.

I had already dealt with argument 3 above in section 7.3.5.4:

> Only when he is lifted up from the earth will he draw all (*pantas*) to himself (12:32).

Why should the word *pantas*, "all," refer only to Gentiles or not also or even primarily to Jews?

Your argument 4 is based on a view, shaped by Christian prejudices, of the divine signs and deeds of power that accompany the liberating work of the God of Israel:

> With the coming of the Greeks, the focus of the Gospel moves away from the signs stories and their accompanying discourses, to a future, eschatologically oriented mode that addresses the disciples, and, through them, the Gospel's audience outside the narrative. This is seen most directly in Jesus's words to Doubting Thomas in 20:29: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

I do not repeat here what I have already written in my commentary on your book *Befriending of the Beloved Disciple* about the "Signs and proofs of power of the God of Israel and his Messiah,"[231] but I do make two points to consider:

First: If John's Gospel were indeed moving away from "miracle stories" toward an otherworldly cosmology, why do the concluding verses of chapter 20:30-31, of all places, give so much emphasis to the signs Jesus did in front of his disciples?

231 Signs and proofs of power of the God of Israel and his Messiah.

Second: If John would consider the coming of the Greeks to be the trigger of Jesus' move toward eschatology, why does he nevertheless deliver his discourses to that effect to the purely Jewish audience of his disciples, as before, and not include a single Greek?

Your argument 5 basically consists in the fact that Gentile Christians may feel confirmed by the Gospel to regard themselves as the owners of the Paraclete as well as of all eschatological knowledge necessary for salvation:

> The Gospel's audience is already living in the time after Jesus's death, when all is known, when the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, has come to reveal all things, and when the eschatological promises can be fulfilled. I would therefore argue that the Gospel presents itself rhetorically as the vehicle through which the Gentiles see Jesus after his death has completed the divinely prescribed narrative arc that began when the Logos became flesh (1:14).

The Gentile Christian church soon interpreted John's Gospel in this way. But this does not prove, of course, that John already had such intentions.

7.4 Was Gentile Mission an Original Purpose of John?

Although I am absolutely unconvinced (141) by your arguments "for imagining a Gentile audience for the Gospel's persuasive rhetoric," you consider "the question of missionary purpose, which this hypothesis suggests," as even more speculative, since, based on the "strongly-attested textual variants" in 20:30-31, it is not clear "whether the Gospel was intended for the not-yet-Christian or the already-Christian." And I add: the target audience may not have originally been Christian at all, because Christians did not exist at that time.

7.4.1 The Jews as Addressees of a Missionary Gospel of John

You yourself then also deal with D. A. Carson,[232] who reasons the view "that the Gospel participates in a mission to Jews" primarily by arguing that verse 20:31 cannot be "intended for Christians" (142), because

> the question underlying 20:31 is not "Who is Jesus?," the answer being "Messiah, Son of God," but "Who is the Messiah?," the answer being "Jesus." The only ones who would be interested in this question, he argued, are non-Christian Jews, who expect a coming Messiah but do not yet know that this is Jesus [Carson 1, 645].

232 (153, n. 26, and 154, n. 42) D. A. Carson, "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (1987) [Carson 1], https://doi.org/10.2307/3260824; D. A. Carson, "Syntactical and Text-Critical Observations on John 20:30-31: One More Round on the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 4 (2005): 693-714, https://doi.org/10.2307/30041065 [Carson 2].

Even if the linguistic study of 20:31 could not unequivocally support such a conclusion, the passages 1:20, 25, 41; 4:29; 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42; 9:22; 10:24; 11:27; 12:34 clearly argue that throughout John's Gospel the issue is precisely this question of whether Jesus is the Messiah expected by the Jews and not, conversely, which of many possible identities Jesus might have.

Carson's position, however, does not agree at all with your own view, and you ask yourself:

> Is it plausible that a Gospel that engages in an anti-Jewish rhetoric of vituperation would be a viable vehicle for bringing non-Christ-confessing Jews around to the belief that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah?

The answer to that is a clear yes, namely, if the rhetoric of vituperation you brand as anti-Jewish is in fact something quite different, reflecting a sharp internal Jewish dispute.

Carson, too, saw "the Fourth Gospel ... not as anti-Jewish as many have argued. Salvation is still 'from the Jews'" (4:22). And he opines:

> "It may even have been part of John's strategy to drive a wedge between ordinary Jews and their leaders among his readership, while still in the example of Nicodemus, leaving hope even for the leaders themselves [Carson 2, 648]." From Carson's perspective, the Gospel does not posit an opposition between the *Ioudaioi* and Jewish-Christ-confessing members of a Johannine community, but between two groups of Jews: those who believe in Jesus and those who do not (yet) do so.

According to Terence Donaldson[233] as well "the idea that the Gospel intends to missionize among Jews could make sense in a post-70 context once the Temple and the traditional structures of Jewish life were no longer viable." A position sketched by him as follows corresponds in many points to the approach of Ton Veerkamp:

> In such a context, John's community declared Jesus to be the Messiah of Israel and the replacement for the destroyed Temple, presented itself as the representatives of "the nation" for whom the Messiah had died (11.51), and invited other Israelites—perhaps especially those of the diaspora (cf. 11.52)—to join them. In order to bring those Israelites to belief in Jesus, John's community had to dissuade them from giving their allegiance to those others, found especially among the synagogue leadership in Judea (i.e., "the Jews"), who were also attempting to rebuild the house of Israel after the war with Rome. In such a situation, John's treatment of "the Jews" and Judaism would have functioned as an instrument of persuasion in an inner-Jewish debate.

233 (104, n. 4, and 155, n. 46) Terence L. Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 107.

You, however, consider (143) such considerations to be "mere conjecture" and also point out that Donaldson himself

> is not advocating this interpretation but merely describing it. There is no real evidence for Jewish movement towards Christ-confessing groups after the Temple's destruction, though it is of course not impossible that some Jews may have done so.

However, you really cannot claim that your own argumentation for the Gentiles as the target group of John's Gospel is based on much more than "mere conjecture." Moreover, John's rootedness in the Jewish Scriptures actually points much more to Jewish addressees of the Gospel, though perhaps less to mission among Jews than to the emergence of the Gospel in an already Jewish-Messianic oriented grouping.

7.4.2 What Is the Case for Gentile Mission as the Goal of John's Gospel?

You, however, think:

> Although it seems unlikely that the Gospel was directed towards non-Christ-confessing Jews, the possibility of a missionary aim should not be discarded. Indeed, the idea that John participates in the Gentile mission is plausible in the context of what we know about the late first century.

The arguments you put forward in favor of this, however, are quite weak. It is true that the Gospel was "accessible to Gentiles" through its Greek language, "though of course also to Diaspora Jews."[234] The fact that there was already "a Gentile mission" attested by the "letters of Paul as well as the Book of Acts" speaks rather against the original use of John's Gospel for the Gentile mission, since it is nowhere mentioned in the Gospel itself. However, it is not surprising that, once it overcame its sectarian status, it could soon be used for Gentile mission in an increasingly Gentile Christian dominated church.

More worthy of consideration is your argument that

> an author like John, who is deeply immersed in Jewishness even as he repudiates Jews, may well have seen the incoming of Gentiles to the covenant community as a necessary element of the divine cosmological victory over the ruler of this world that was inaugurated by the Son's sojourn in the world.

But in this formulation, I stumble over the keywords "cosmological victory" and "the Son's sojourn in the world" because you betray your spiritualizing if not gnosticizing

234 Only in a note (155, n. 50) you address the question of whether John was indeed, as you suggest following Esther Kobel: Dining with John. Communal Meals and Identity Formation in the Fourth Gospel and its Historical and Cultural Context, Leiden: Brill 2011, 251-70, "making use of pagan practices," and indeed "especially in the Bread of Life discourse." So far, I am not familiar with Kobel's work and thus have not been able to examine her arguments more closely.

approach that Jesus' victory over the prince of this world is about the otherworldly demonic devil with the goal of an afterlife in heaven for the saved souls of those who believe in Jesus.

For the reasoning of your just quoted lines, you refer to "Biblical and Second Temple Jewish texts," to which Terence Donaldson[235] points. For example 1 Enoch, however, is precisely not about such spiritualized goals but

> describes the eschaton as a time "after the reestablishment of righteousness within Israel and the defeat of Israel's enemies, Jerusalem is gloriously refurbished, the exiles are delivered and reunited with their compatriots, and the Gentiles who have survived the judgment come to Jerusalem to join the grand gathering, where they are transformed into the purity of the primordial era (1 En 90:30-38)."

Quite similarly, the goal of John's Gospel can be described in inner-Jewish terms, namely as the restoration of paralyzed, starving, blind, dead Israel, the reunion with the lost tribes of Samaria, and the addition of Gentiles. But as a this-worldly goal and not as the shift of otherworldly salvation—away from Judaism as such—exclusively to Christ-believing Gentiles!

In the Gospel of John, the inclusion of the Gentiles in the liberating work of the Messiah of Israel is mentioned only very reservedly. Ton Veerkamp interprets the remark (17:21) from the prayer of the Messiah, *hina ho kosmos pisteuē hoti sy me apesteilas*, "that the world may trust that you sent me," in this direction:[236]

> And then there is an almost unbelievable subordinate clause, "That the world order may trust that you have sent me." After all that John has said, for example, about the inspiration of fidelity that the world order cannot accept, this cannot be true. Does the text here become contradictory in itself? Only if this world order gives itself up as *this* order in the process, coherence is maintained. Only if the world is no longer Roman world order, no longer considered the space of the *pax Romana*, but finds itself the living space, *a world of people*, which would be according to the fidelity of God to Israel, if it becomes the *pax Messianica*, then it can trust that the Messiah is the messenger of this God. This is also a biblical vision, Isaiah 66:18,
>
> > And I,
> > to take all nations, all language groups out of their doing, out of their planning,

235 (155, n. 47 and 48) Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism* (to 135 C.E.) (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 502. Also relevant are Sib Or 3:719, 772. Ps of Sol 17; also 4 Ezra 13:35 and 2 Baruch 71:1 and ch 72.

236 Veerkamp 341 (The Prayer of the Messiah, par. 28-31).

> I have come.
> And they come, and they see my honor.

> If the world order of all nations in the Roman Empire trusts the Messiah, it is "taken out of its doing and planning." Then it is just no longer the *ruling world order*, *kosmos*. This vision of Israel from the times of the so-called Tritojesaja, where Greece has already made itself felt as a factor (*yawan*, "Ionia"), makes this incredible subordinate clause understandable.
>
> But this depends on the principle, "I with them, you with me, so that they have finally come to unity." Only then, the world order will recognize what is the matter: God sent him and was in solidarity with the disciples because he was in solidarity with the Messiah. A world order capable of recognizing this is then a completely different one. And this is the point here, this is what Isaiah 66 was about. The goal of biblical politics is a different world order, one that can trust the Messiah because it would then have Messianic contours. Would have . . . irrealis! To achieve this, the real existing world order has to be subjected. It is already subjected, we will yet hear that in this prayer.

Here it becomes clear: John is more interested in the subjugation of the world order than in the missionizing of Gentiles. However, the liberation of Israel from the world order must be accompanied by the liberation of the Gentile peoples from the world order as well, otherwise, it would not be the dawn of the age to come.

7.4.3 What sort of Gentiles would be attracted to the Gospel?

As the addressees of a Gentile mission through John's Gospel (143) you can imagine above all "Gentiles in urban centers in Asia Minor or elsewhere in the Roman world" who "would have had exposure to Jewish tradition and ... would have participated in Jewish activities with or without formal conversion." There were (144) "social contacts that take place when Jews and Gentiles live in proximity to one another" and certainly Gentiles with "some prior knowledge of and/or interest in Jewish scriptures, practices, and beliefs." You go into detail about "the God-fearers debate" but do not attach very much importance to it in your context since you think it possible

> that even Gentiles who did not enter synagogues may have been aware of some of the most important stories in the Jewish scriptures, especially the Abraham and Moses sagas on which John draws so extensively.

But you also do not exclude

> the possibility that not all members of the Gospel's intended audience would have been expected to recognize John's biblical references and allusions. … (145) One may draw an analogy to modern movie-goers, who are capable of responding to a film without necessarily understanding all of its visual, aural, or narrative allusions or influences.

That there had long been Gentiles in John's time who were not only interested in Jewish worship and practice but also joined Messianic communities is beyond question because of the Pauline mission to the Gentiles. However, Paul deals intensively with Gentile concerns and backgrounds, which John does not do at all; rather, John very often alludes to the Jewish Scriptures in such subtle ways that he can hardly have an exclusively Gentile audience in mind.

I do not deny that John is soon taken up very readily by a Gentile Christian dominated church in order to confirm itself in its dissociation from *Ioudaismos*, Jewish *halakha*, or Judaism in general. But this reading is already based on the fact that the fundamentally Jewish character of the whole text is no longer grasped in its own character. So the whole thematic tendency can be misunderstood until today, namely in a cosmological-spiritualized sense, connected with a hatred of the Jews.

You, however, view already John's Gospel as originally addressed to Gentiles who try to

> gain the spiritual and eschatological benefits of Jewishness by joining a Christ-confessing group, even without taking on Jewish ethnic or identity markers.

Above all, the "Gospel's rhetoric of fear, expressed in the phrase 'for fear of the Jews' and ... the *aposynagōgos* passages" speak in your eyes for the fact that "the Gospel's implied author(s)" are "competing with the synagogue or with Judaizing Christ-confessing leaders for Gentile adherents."

7.4.4 Doubts about the Gentile Missionary Orientation of John's Gospel

You yourself emphasize (145):

> Neither the historical identity of the Gospel's intended audience nor the Gospel's precise aim can be determined with any certainty. Both the internal and external evidence can be interpreted to support several competing hypotheses.

In this context, you mention as an example Martin Hengel,[237] for whom

> it was obvious that John participated in the Gentile mission, pointing to the absence of Jewish particularism. Hengel views the Samaritans as "semi-Gentiles" and, for that reason, the depiction of Jesus as the "savior of the world," and the prophecy that future worship would take place neither on Gerizim nor in Jerusalem, represents an appeal beyond the Samaritans to the broader Gentile world.

Contrary to this assessment is the fact that John does not address the Samaritans in their role as half Gentiles. Rather, he clearly sketches the Samaritan woman at Ja-

237 (127, n. 34, and 156, n. 65) Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 121-22.

cob's well as the representative of the lost ten tribes of Israel, whose men who were not husbands point to their enslavement to five foreign peoples and, finally, to the Roman world order. And that the Samaritans (4:42) refer to Jesus as the *sōtēr tou kosmou* points precisely not to their pagan identity but names Jesus as the liberator from this world order that weighs upon them.

In summary, you describe again the case that (145-46)

> can be made for the hypothesis that the Gospel participated in the early church's mission to the Gentiles. The references to the Greeks' interest in Jesus and the eschatological incoming of the Gentiles hints at a schematic view of history: initially God's covenant was with the Jews, and the renewed covenant through Jesus was also offered to the Jews. The Jews rejected that offer, with the result that God turned against the Jews, removed them from the covenant community, and instead offered the gift of eternal life to the Gentiles, who themselves were searching and therefore eager to accept the offer.

Of course, "God's turning away from the Jews and towards the Gentiles in Jesus's own lifetime" is "historically implausible" but still "rhetorically powerful." You see "this claim" as "consistent with the Gentile mission of Paul and other post-Easter apostles" and also (156, n. 68) with the

> patristic use of the Gospel of John to contrast Jews and Gentiles, and portray the Gentile church as the true followers of Christ. The Fathers further develop the absolute opposition between Jews and Christians, often using Johannine language.

True, John's Gospel was soon used in this way. Wrong is that John already originally intended this turn to the Gentiles.

7.5 The "Parting of the Ways"

You now ask (146):

> What are the implications of this propulsion theory for the historical "parting of the ways" or, to be more precise, for the process by which the Jesus movement of Christ-confessors developed institutions, practices, and, most important, a self-identification that explicitly placed itself outside the Jewish realm?

In doing so, you assess (156, n. 69) the metaphor of the "Parting of the Ways" for the "process of Christian self-definition" as "hardly satisfactory" since in your view it was neither "a singular and well-defined process," nor was this process "as significant for Jews as it was for Christ-confessors." I take it from this that you do not share the view of those who consider the emergence of both Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple to be a parallel process.[238]

238 See the conference of the Evangelische Akademie Frankfurt: "Ab jetzt Zwillinge? Das

7.5.1 When Did the Ways Part?

The period (146) within which the "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity occurred was unanimously determined to be the time "between the first and second revolts" until the "late twentieth century." But (147) from "the early twenty-first century," some felt[239] "that the ways did not part until the fourth century with the Christianization of the Roman Empire under Constantine, or even later." They cited "ongoing and extensive social contact between Jews and Christians" and "patristic warnings against intermarriage, Sabbath and festival observance, and attendance at the synagogue" as criteria for a not yet completed separation of the ways. But neither is there a "reason that differentiation should preclude social contact" nor "traversing porous boundaries does ... in itself demonstrate that the boundaries did not exist, but simply that it was possible to cross them."

Shaye Cohen[240] on the other hand puts forward the convincing argument

> that Christ-confessors not only began to see themselves as differentiated from Jews by the late first and early second centuries, but also that they were seen that way by Romans. To support this point, Cohen points to Roman persecutions of Christians, which, throughout second and third centuries, did not target Jews. He concludes that "in the eyes of the Romans, Christians were not Jews, and Jews were not Christians. The two communities were separate."

In addition, according to Cohen (147-48), already under the Roman emperor Nerva (96-98 CE)

> the *Fiscus Judaicus* (the Jewish tax) … should be applied only to those 'who continued to observe their ancestral customs,' thereby exempting Gentile and Jewish Christians alike. "Christianity," notes Cohen, "was now seen by the Romans as not-Judaism; the *fiscus Judaicus* applied to neither gentile Christians nor Jewish Christians.

In any case, you rightly emphasize "that the process by which Christians began to see themselves as not-Jews was complex and by no means uniform throughout the Roman Empire."

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christlich-jüdische Verhältnis neu denken [From now on Twins? Rethinking the Christian-Jewish Relationship]," 27-28 June 2016, which drew primarily on Daniel Boyarin, Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2004.

239 (157, n. 71) For the arguments in favor of this position, see the introduction and articles in Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

240 (157, n. 75) Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 234 and 235-36.

7.5.2 Does John, through His "Rhetorical Parting," Operate to Disinherit the Jews?

Although in (148) your view it "is difficult to say" how exactly "to situate the Gospel of John in the processes by which Christians developed a separate identity," you nevertheless believe

> that, as part of its rhetorical project, the Gospel ascribes differentiation between Christ-followers and Jews to the time of Jesus *in order to promote a parting in its own time and place.*

For according to (146) your "analysis in chapters 1-4," the Gospel does indeed construct

> a profound rhetorical chasm between Christ-confessors and *Ioudaioi*. Christ-confessors are children of God, who experience eternal life in the present and future. Christ-confessors are not *Ioudaioi*, nor can *Ioudaioi* be Christ-confessors. This is not to say that Christ-confessors could not have been ethnically or genealogically Jewish, as were Jesus and the disciples. In undergoing the transformative process proposed and facilitated by the Gospel, however, the Jewish Christ-confessors become children of God and thereby cease being *Ioudaioi* who, having rejected Christ, have the devil as their father.

This means (148) that in your opinion the separation of ways from

> John's perspective, … was not a consequence of broader social, political, or other external factors but a necessary, divinely mandated step in God's plan of salvation that was initiated when the "word became flesh," furthered by Jesus's death (3:16), and to be completed when believers would join Jesus in his Father's house (14:2). The Gospel is emphatically attempting to produce a separation of Christ-confessors from the *Ioudaioi* by exhorting its audience to see themselves as "not-Jews" even as they maintain or take on Jewish identity markers such as belief in the God of Israel and in the revelatory status of the Jewish scriptures.
>
> Whether the Gospel was immediately successful in this objective cannot be determined. But it is interesting to note that it was used by church fathers for this very same purpose: to support the view that God had turned away from Jews towards Gentile Christians, and that a Christian separation from Jews and Judaism was essential for Christian identity.

I have already detailed above my criticism of the rhetoric of John's Gospel as you thus describe it. Here I merely point out that you yourself doubt whether the Gospel was successful early on in achieving a separation of believers in Christ and Jews, pointing instead to its use by the Church Fathers for this purpose. In my view, John himself was not yet concerned with a separation from *the Jews* as such, but with the gathering of all Israel into the community of the Messiah. It was only the emerging Gentile Christian dominated church that—also with recourse to John's Gospel—pursued the separation from the Jews.

What you (148-49) quote in this regard, for example, from Chrysostom[241] in the Homily I of *Against the Jews*, confirms an appalling Christian self-righteousness toward the Jews:

> Although those Jews had been called to the adoption of sons, they fell to kinship with dogs; we who were dogs received the strength, through God's grace, to put aside the irrational nature which was ours and to rise to the honor of sons.

That is, what in John 8 was, in my view, still an expression of a sharp inner-Jewish argument about political attitudes toward the Roman world order, now actually amounts for Chrysostom that

> God has disowned the Jews and replaced them with believers—now definitively identified as Gentile Christians—who are now God's beloved children and covenant partners.

You quote similar remarks from Augustine,[242] who in "his comments on John 2:13-22" among others (150) reproaches the Jews: "They were flesh; they knew the things of flesh. But he [Jesus] was speaking spiritually." That is, while John himself could still understand the relationship of flesh and animating divine inspiration, Hebrew *ruach*, in terms of the Jewish Scriptures, the church fathers constructed opposition of supposedly Jewish carnal-earthly and Christian spiritual-immortal thinking.

In fact, you are to be agreed one hundred percent that

> many of the same passages that have been brought in support of the hypothesis that the Gospel had Gentiles in mind as being among his intended audience are used by the Church Fathers for a supersessionist purpose: to proclaim that God's covenant has been removed from the Jews and extended to the Gentile Church.

But equally correctly you recognize:

> That some of the Fathers read John as a history of God's turning from the synagogue to the church, from the Jews to the Gentiles, has no historical bearing on the real audience of the Fourth Gospel. Cyril, Augustine, and the other Fathers were writing centuries later than John, after the church had become a primarily gentile enterprise. Nevertheless, their reading of John suggests that the Gospel too may be advocating this same view of history as part of its rhetorical agenda.

241 (157, n. 78) "Chrysostom. Adversus ludaeos," n.d., http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chrysostom_adversus_judaeos_01_homily1.htm.

242 (157, n. 80) Augustine and John W. Rettig, *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 1-10*, vol. 78, The Fathers of the Church (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 221.

This also leaves unproven, according to your view, that already John had in mind the expulsion of all Jews from the covenant with God and the Gentiles as the actual addressees of his Gospel.

7.6 The Gentile Alexandra in Ephesus as a Christian Child of God

That (150) the "historical circumstances—if any—that prompted John to write his Gospel, and the concrete rhetorical situation that he aimed to address, are ultimately unrecoverable," is frustrating in your eyes for "our desire for detailed knowledge of the past, but it also frees us up to piece together a back story in different ways."

Unlike Martyn, you did not imagine the original hearers of John's Gospel "in the pews of the Johannine church, listening to the preacher provide consolation and encouragement to maintain their faith in the face of adversity." You outline your own conception in summary thus (150-51):

> I imagine myself in ancient Ephesus, looking on as a pagan woman named Alexandra listens in rapt attention to a Christian preacher named John. I imagine Alexandra as being buoyed by her new identity as a child of God, a branch on God's vine, a sheep in God's flock. At the same time, whether she realizes it or not, her relationships with others—her family of origin, her friends, her neighbors—have shifted. Now that she has seen the light, and has accepted Jesus as the only way to the Father, she feels an affinity for those like her, even if they worship at other churches with different leaders. But she distances herself from those who continue in their pagan ways, and, especially, from the Jews who do not share her beliefs, or who may not even have heard of this Messiah, Son of God, about whom John preaches so passionately. Does she hate and despise them? Does she truly believe they have the devil as their father? I hope not, but, yes, it is quite possible that she does.

The way I myself imagine a listener of John, I have already presented above in section 0.4.3.3. I leave the floor to Miriam to comment from her point of view on your remarks in the concluding chapter of your book.

8 Miriam's Response to Adele Reinhartz' Conclusion of Her Book

Dear Adele, I read with interest your engagedly written book, and—mediated by the thoughts of Helmut Schütz—I would like to conclude by vehemently contradicting you once again. No, Alexandra was not an original hearer of John's words. She may have heard a Christian missionary in Ephesus who made an anti-Jewish pamphlet out of John's Gospel in order to betray everything John and his original listeners were about, namely the glory of the God of Israel and his Messiah Jesus, which is that the people of Israel can live in freedom, justice, and peace!

8.1 Was There No Johannine Group in Which His Gospel Originated?

Your criticism (159) of "J. L. Martyn's theory that the Gospel was written for a Johannine community that had experienced a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue" is valid. Our point was not to present ourselves woefully as poor victims of the Jews and to take rhetorical revenge on them, so to speak.

But what it was really about for us, you did not find out either, although you made honest efforts:

> Having deconstructed Martyn's methodology, results, and homiletical implications, it seemed incumbent upon me to propose an alternative. Developing such an alternative, however, was a much more difficult task than I had imagined. Only when I began to question the assumption that the Gospel was written for an already-existing Johannine community did I find a way forward. This way led me to a study of the Gospel's rhetorical program, and a new regard for the Gospel's potential to have a dynamic impact on the lives of people who are open to its message.

Against this, I ask two questions:

First: Even if Martyn's theory of expulsion is not correct, why shouldn't there have been already a grouping of some kind within which John's thoughts originated and which was at the same time their first audience? Since Jesus' death and ascension to the FATHER are witnessed, there are, after all, people who trust in Jesus in many places, differently structured communities, some who still gather in the synagogues, others in their own communities which they call *ekklēsia.*

And second, why should John develop rhetoric out of nowhere to wrest all the benefits of their religion from the Jews and give them to the Gentiles through Jesus the Messiah? I know, the Gentile Christians soon did that and misused John's Gospel for that purpose. But that was not at all in line with the intention of John and of us people who rallied around him.

But now I hear your question, which was on your mind during your criticism of Martyn, like a really serious challenge also to John himself and to me:

> How, or why, can a Gospel that is imbued with Jewish ideas, set in a Jewish religious, political and social context, and filled with Jewish characters also cast the Jews themselves as the enemies of Jesus, truth, and God? In other words, how can a Gospel that is so Jewish also be so anti-Jewish?

You gave yourself a first answer to it already "before writing this book," namely that indisputably (159-60)

> Jesus was a Jew, his friends were Jews, and they lived their lives in a predominantly Jewish environment doing the things (keeping the Sabbath and festivals) that other Jews did and going to the places (synagogue, the Jerusalem Temple) that other Jews went to.

And this, of course, suggested (160) that the author of the Gospel "too was Jewish, or at least had considerable knowledge of Second Temple Jewish traditions and modes of biblical exegesis."

8.2 Is John Expropriating the Jews of Their Covenant or Expressing Prophetic Criticism of the Judean Leadership?

But from this point, your imagination goes astray. Why must you explain "the anti-Jewishness of John," which is "in some tension with its Jewishness," from a "process of self-definition" within which "a boundary between the 'self' and the 'other'" must be created? Why does it not occur to you to consider the manifold political conflicts that exist within Judaism and even more so between Jews and the Roman world order in the 1st century, which Josephus, for example, describes, as a background to the tensions in John's Gospel?[243]

As soon as you reduce the various lines of conflict within John's Gospel to the one opposition between "self" and "other," "Christ-believers" on the one hand and "*Ioudaioi*, who claim to be God's children but reject faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, plot his death, and persecute his followers" on the other, you project a later Christian anti-Judaism back into John's Gospel that in no way does justice to the conflicts within which we argue.

In so doing, you find yourself compelled also to understand "the Gospel's neutral or positive statements about the *Ioudaioi*, and, especially, ... the Gospel's appreciation for the Jewish scriptures as a witness to Jesus, and its depiction of Jesus and the disciples as engaged in Jewish activities" as means that "support the anti-Jewishness that is so deeply embedded in the Gospel's rhetorical project."

And so you sketch the background of John's Gospel in seven points with extreme contrast to its original Jewish Messianic concerns:

1) Mortality is universally dreaded; the desire for eternal life is the quintessential human desire.

No, we are not concerned with a remedy for death, which all people supposedly fear. The *zōē aiōnios*, the life of the age to come, that we long for is the overcoming of the death power currently embodied in the Roman world order and the dawning of a liberated life of righteousness for all Israel.

2) This desire can be fulfilled only by believing that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God.

243 Josephus, Antiquities 18.1.2 to 18.1.6, informs his readers about different parties among the Jews, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots (while describing the activities of the Zealot party without referring to it by that name).

If by this desire you mean a remedy that helps against death, then we as Jews have known it for a long time, namely trust in the God of Israel, even if we do not believe in an afterlife in heaven. From Jesus, as the Messiah and Son of the God of Israel, we expect the liberation of the world from the ruling world order that weighs upon it.

3) Accepting this belief causes ordinary human beings to be reborn as the children of God, a group that constitutes God's family and consequently lives in an intimacy with the divine that is mediated by his only son.

John is not concerned with ordinary people having a special spiritual experience with God. Such intimacy with God smacks of Gnosis or mystery cults, with which we as Jews have nothing to do. All the more, John does not want to gather Christ-believing people as God's children in a new family of God, while the old covenant of the Jews with God has become obsolete.

The word *tekna theou*, God-born, in 1:12, means something quite different, and the three more detailed provisions in 1:13 serve from the Jewish Scriptures to explain the way of trusting in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel.

God-born means begotten "not of bloods,"[244] so it is not circumcision alone that determines whether someone is God-born but to trust in the Messiah of God.

God-born means begotten "not of the will of the flesh,"[245] that is, their transitory and vulnerable existence in the present eon, under the ruling world order, will not have an end until the Messianic age to come.

God-born also means begotten "not of the will of a man",[246] just as Abraham could not beget the "only begotten Son of God" and eventually even had to sacrifice Isaac as his only son to get him back as the Son of God. Ton Veerkamp formulates this beautifully:[247]

> The only one, *monogenēs*, is the new Isaac, the only one begotten divinely. Whoever trusts in him will be "born of God" as well in this sense: He really sees light, is enlightened, remains alive amidst an order of death.

4) The children of God are in covenantal relationship with God.

If you mean that the God-born, i.e. those who trust in the Messiah Jesus, have a share in the covenant with God, then John understands this as a matter of course, so he does not even mention the concept of the covenant.

5) This covenantal relationship is understood in Jewish terms as manifested textually in the scriptures (Torah and prophets) and spatially in the Temple.

244 Veerkamp 30 (note 43 on the translation of John 1:13).
245 Veerkamp 30 (note 44 on the translation of John 1:13).
246 Veerkamp 30 (note 45 on the translation of John 1:13).
247 Veerkamp 34 (Birth, par. 19).

It is also a matter of fact that the covenant with God manifests itself in the Jewish Scriptures. In the temple, however, the God of Israel has his liberating NAME dwell only conditionally: During the wilderness wanderings, he chose the Tent of Meeting for this purpose. And John is convinced that after the destruction of the Second Temple, he has his NAME dwell in the Messiah Jesus and after his death in his Messianic community as the assembly of all Israel.

6) This is an exclusive relationship: one can be with God only through Jesus. Jesus is the only way to God. All other paths lead away from God. Jews who do not believe may believe they retain the status of God's elect people but in reality they have forfeited that status. In effect, they have been cast out of the vine of Israel tended by the divine vinegrower, to wither and burn.

In fact, Jesus announces severe judgment to those who are responsible for the Judean politics of his days, much as the Jewish prophets announced severe judgment to the kings of their days. John can be accused of misjudging Jesus—that he was in fact not the Messiah. But his testimony for Jesus as the Messiah he gave to the best of his knowledge and conscience as a Jew. The leading Judeans of Jesus' time are in his eyes collaborators of Rome, who made the Roman emperor their king in place of the God of Israel. Instead, according to John, this honor of the King of the Jews is due to Jesus alone as the Messiah whom the FATHER sent into the world to free it from the world order that weighs upon it.

7) (160-61) It is now the children of God who have access to and authority over the Jewish scriptures and their correct, divinely-mandated interpretation, and the Temple as God's house. The Sabbath and festivals become occasions for John's Jesus to demonstrate his divine origins and authority, and to proclaim his message to large crowds.

Again, your words presuppose the later view of the Christian Church that the children of God are Gentiles but who in your eyes have illegally gained access to and authority over all that belonged to the Jews. According to John, the children of God are not Gentiles by definition, but he hopes, like all the prophets of Israel, that at least a remnant of Israel will heed his words, despite and because he announced judgment. Of Gentile successors to the Messiah, he thinks only in exceptional cases, such as with the few Greeks of 12:20. And as the Messiah sent by the FATHER, Jesus has the right to interpret the Scriptures, to cleanse the temple, and to fill the Jewish festivals anew given the dawning Messianic time.

> In doing so, Jesus displaces the Jewish authorities, the Pharisees and the priests, as the ones who control what happens on the Sabbath and in the Temple precincts.

No, Jesus does not replace the Jewish authorities but—like the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah opposed the leadership of Judah in their time—he, as the Messiah sent by

God, accuses them of their apostasy from the God of Israel and their submission to the Roman emperor.

> The Jews, on the other hand, are displaced from the covenant, fail to understand their own scriptures, and become as slaves rather than sons in the father's house. Their rejection of Jesus demonstrates that, far from being God's children, they have Satan as their father.

At no point says John that the covenant no longer applies to Israel. But he accuses the teachers of Israel of failing to interpret the Scriptures correctly—not as an outsider's rebuke to Jews, but in an internal Jewish dispute over whether Jesus is indeed the Messiah of God.

And precisely because of their political enslavement to the Roman world order, Jesus refers to the Judean leadership (8:34) as slaves of error and (8:44) as sons of *diabolos*, namely the Roman enemy, the emperor. This may be too harsh language; we women in John's group do not like it if the men—probably out of disappointment at their failure to convince the Rabbis and the synagogue leadership—are hurling such insults. But in no way does John see the people of the Jews in general as children of a demonic devil, a prince of the underworld. He is after all concerned with the liberation of all Israel, not with the condemnation of all Jews!

8.3 Assumptions about the Historical Background of the Gospel of John

After all, you are very cautious about the reliability of your "historical conclusions," which you draw based on your "literal-critical" analysis and which you originally wanted to dispense with, since there is hardly any "external evidence ... for the late first century Mediterranean, which is the most likely setting for this Gospel." It was "colleagues and students" who felt that "the rhetorical analysis was valuable only insofar as it helped address historical questions of aim, audience, and historical context."

You build your "speculative efforts" on the historical background of John's Gospel on three assumptions.

8.3.1 Gentiles as the Main Target Audience of John's Gospel?

> (161) The first was that the Gospel was aimed in the first instance at Gentiles interested in Jewish matters and who therefore participated in the broader mission to the Gentiles that was already underway by the mid-first century CE. This does not preclude interested Jews but the thrust of the Gospel seems to presuppose an audience attracted to but not fully familiar with Jewish ideas and practices.

No, it is exactly the other way around. First, the Gospel emerges in an environment where there are disputes between Jewish Messianists and Rabbinic Jews. John is

rather skeptical about the Gentile mission, because he has already heard how the *goyim* increasingly set the tone in Paul's communities, and he suspects that this will not have a good end. Nevertheless, he is open to individual *goyim* who worship the God of Israel and want to get involved in following the Messiah Jesus.

8.3.2 The Hostility toward Jews in John's Gospel as a Rhetorical Device?

> (161-62) The second was that the term *Ioudaios* had primarily rhetorical rather than denotative meaning. The Gospel's rhetorical purpose is to associate opposition to its message with a specific known group even while the narrative provides evidence that not all members of that group were guilty of such opposition. The *Ioudaioi* are outside the circle of love promoted by the Gospel. The search for specific historical referents seems misplaced as well as futile. From the Gospel's vantage point, believers by definition are outside the group of *Ioudaioi*, a point reinforced by the fact that the term is not used for Jews who are part of the in-group (Jesus and the disciples). The seventy-fold repetition of the term, along with its predominantly hostile usage, would also have driven home the message that Christ-following children of God must see themselves as separate from and opposed to the *Ioudaioi*, who have Satan as their father.

Is this assumption—I hope to have understood it correctly—not simply nonsense? Suppose John was indeed using the term *Ioudaioi* for rhetorical purposes to distinguish all the more radiantly the religious redeemer for whom he advertises from those who shamefully reject him. Would he not do his best to refrain from any differentiating view of the *Ioudaioi*?

But you write yourself that not all *Ioudaioi* reject Jesus. And you know that for John also Jesus is a Jew who celebrates Jewish festivals and is even buried according to Jewish rites. It is precisely this seemingly contradictory view of Jews and what is Jewish that is evidence of John connecting his rhetoric to very specific Jewish people he knows from his own experience.

Unfortunately, John very often uses the same word *Ioudaioi* for quite different Jewish sections of the population. Jesus sharply attacks priests, Pharisees, Zealots, and former disciples. The Jewish crowd is not clearly decided toward Jesus. In any case, there are Jews who ask for the Messiah, trust in him, and follow him. In particular, the accusation, formulated about Isaiah, that God has hardened the hearts of *the Ioudaioi*, shows that John does not exclude, but hopefully counts on the fact that nevertheless—as with the prophet Isaiah—a "remnant" of Israel is ready for conversion.

John also nowhere says that all Jews are "outside the circle of love." When Jesus accuses the *Ioudaioi* in 5:42 of not having *tēn agapēn tou theou*, the love of God in them, he reasons (5:43) that they do not accept him as God's Messiah. Since he ex-

presses this (5:39) within a dispute about the study of the Scriptures, it is clear that in the background is our conflict, as Messianic Jews, with Rabbinic Jews. We disagree about whether the Roman world order can be overcome by trusting in Jesus the Messiah and establishing subversive Messianic communities. Or is Jesus a charlatan and the Rabbis are right to retreat to the study of Torah in a niche of the Roman Empire?

8.3.3 Future-Oriented Rhetoric with Clear Demarcation of Believers from Jews?

> (162) The third was that the Gospel, like all rhetorical documents, is a forward- rather than backward-looking document. It does not address a situation in the past but aims to shape the future. My analysis of the Gospel's rhetoric suggests that it envisions that future as including a firm boundary between its adherents and the *Ioudaioi*. In positioning the compliant audience over against the resistant *Ioudaioi* the Gospel posits the mutual exclusivity of these two identities.

This assumption is correct in that John did not write his Gospel to deal with the alleged trauma of expulsion from the synagogue. Yes, it is a rhetorical document, it is aimed at the future. It aims at the dawn of the age to come, an age of liberation for all Israel, overcoming the enslaving world order through the *agapē*, solidarity, of Jesus the Messiah.

Our differences with the Rabbinic Jews over the Messiah Jesus are irreconcilable. And Jesus already speaks of such differences with the Jews of his time in 10:25-26, for example. But nowhere does Jesus intend to exclude, of his own accord, in principle, all *Ioudaioi* from his followers. So I strongly disagree with your assertion "that the Gospel's rhetoric pushes its audience to see such separation as essential to their own developing self-identification as children of God."

8.3.4 The Misuse of John's Gospel for Gentile Christian Cosmology

You certainly see (162) how "thoroughly Jewish" the Gospel of John is characterized, but you do not ask about the political background of the argument with "the *Ioudaioi*, who are blind to the identity of Jesus's identity as God's son." Since these backgrounds are already of no interest to the Gentile Christians who will very soon get their hands on our Gospel of John, what actually happens is exactly what you have just described. But only then. And we are appalled and deeply saddened by this development.

Since the Gentile Christians can no longer do anything with the Messianic effort to overcome the world order through solidarity, or do not want to, they think they have to interpret the Gospel on a "cosmological plane." The now predominantly Gentile followers of Jesus—no longer expecting the age of liberation for Israel to come, but seeking spiritual redemption—want to "experience rebirth as the children

of God and enter into covenantal relationship with God through their belief in God's son."

8.3.5 Was John Completely Disinterested in Specific Jews?

Once again, I must strongly disagree with your following assessment (162-63):

> Unlike modern scholars, the Gospel writer was unconcerned about whether the *Ioudaioi* constituted an ethnic group, a religious one, a political subgroup, or some other historically-verifiable entity. Nor was he interested in explaining why Jesus and the disciples, who by all objective criteria are Jews, are nevertheless never called *Ioudaioi*.

Nothing could be more wrong than this. At least for the original Gospel of John. You yourself are aware of the inconsistency in the use of the term *Ioudaioi*, and you have described it in detail. How then can you pretend that John means the same one enemy of the believers in Christ everywhere, when there are Jews who wonder if Jesus is the Messiah, many even who trust in him, Jews who comfort Mary and Martha? Do you not notice the different nuances in the argument with different factions of the opposing *Ioudaioi*, be it the Zealots who want to proclaim Jesus the Messiah King, or the Pharisees who deny his Messiahship, or the priests who hand him over to the representative of the Roman world order? Are you not aware that Jesus most severely attacks those who were previously his disciples and who have renounced him?

Why did John never call Jesus' disciples *Ioudaioi*? Perhaps because they are almost all Galileans? But he does not call them that either. He calls them all by name. That Jesus is nowhere called a Jew is not true, by the way—both the Samaritan woman and Pilate naturally assume his Jewish identity.

So, since the *Ioudaioi* are anything but a mere rhetorical construct of John, your conclusion from what you have just said cannot be correct either (163):

> But rhetorical constructs can become enfleshed once a text is released into the world. This is true especially when these constructs share the label of an actual group of people. The animus that the Gospel displays towards the rhetorical *Ioudaioi* may serve a rhetorical purpose that can be detached from human history, but it can be too easily translated into hatred of flesh-and-blood *Ioudaioi*.

I ask again: did John, then, invent the wicked Jews as children of the devil—either from pure malice or because he needed them as a negative foil for his new redeemer myth? And it should not have occurred to him, even while he was doing this, that there are real Jews in his environment to whom one could relate his rhetoric? This would be completely implausible.

No, there are already real Jews with whom we, who are Jews ourselves, are contending in our Messianic group around John. And we fight with hard verbal bandages. In political disputes, the sparks often fly. It should have become clear that by *diabolos* we mean the Roman butcher of men. And that we rarely call ourselves Jews—perhaps it is because we are indeed no longer welcome as Jews in many a synagogue. But we do not condemn any Jew to hell and we still hope for the liberation and peace of the age to come for all Israel!

8.4 Is John to Be Accused of Ethically Reprehensible Anti-Judaism or Was His Gospel Misused for Anti-Judaistic Purposes?

You headline the last section of your last chapter with the words "Ethics and Exegesis," and I subscribe with full conviction to the injunction that forms the center of these remarks (163):

> Should we not resist any rhetorical program that vilifies the "other" in order to construct the "self"?

Yes, we certainly should!

And at the same time, you should carefully examine whether John's Gospel actually engages in such rhetoric or whether it has not been used and abused in the sense of such rhetoric only by the church, which has become Gentile Christian.

At the beginning of your last paragraph, you describe again your attempt,

> to see with the eyes—or rather, hear with the ears—of a compliant listener, that is, of a fictional someone who would be persuaded by its rhetoric, and undertake the transformation that it proclaims as essential to fulfilling the desire for eternal life.

In presenting "Alexandra as a younger, less Jewish, and more compliant version" of yourself, you engaged in an intense encounter with John's Gospel that was for you "an intellectual rather than a spiritual journey." In noting that at the end of this journey you return to your "personal stance toward this Gospel and its message, which is marked not by compliance, sympathy, or engagement, but by resistance," you refer to your book *Befriending with the Beloved Disciple*,[248] in which you had left open the possibility of befriending John after all. Unfortunately, you seem to close the door to further encounters with him for good now.

I also understand this if you can only imagine listeners of the Gospel like a Gentile Alexandra who could indeed absorb John's rhetoric detached from her Jewish background, but inseparable from the later anti-Jewish rhetoric of the Church Fathers.

248 (165, n. 2) On the range of possible readings and readers, see Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple*.

I wonder if you could take me, Miriam, seriously as a Jewish Messianic hearer of John who became a disciple of Jesus the Messiah through his Gospel.

I wish you would—and only in order to be understood, not with the goal of our being in complete agreement. I do understand that for you as a Jew, there is no way to accept Jesus as the Messiah after all that has been done to Jews by Christianity, including a devastatingly distorting interpretation of John's Gospel to its misuse "to justify anti-Semitism, as recently as in the Nazi era."

I wish that justice could finally be done to John: That he precisely is not regarded as the Gentile-minded enemy of the Jews, who wants to snatch from the Jews their most precious traditions, but perceived as a Jew, who, like the prophets of Israel, with recourse to the Jewish Scriptures militantly advocates the overcoming of the Roman world order, which in his eyes can only succeed through trust in the Messiah Jesus.

Above all, I wish that Christians would finally understand this. If they understand John the way you do, then they should remove his Gospel from the Bible. Then it does not match the writings of the prophets, which are in the same book. If they want to take John's Gospel seriously, they need to immerse themselves in the Messianic controversies of the 1st century and pay attention to the allusions John makes to the Jewish Scriptures. They must understand that John thinks very Jewishly, not at all cosmologically in a spiritual sense, but very much cosmologically in the sense of overcoming this prevailing world order. Certainly, in this context, Christians would have to review their dogmatics, the Greek-influenced propositions about the two natures of Jesus or the Trinity of God. Why do the Christians keep the Jewish Tanakh and hold it in honor as the Old Testament if they do not understand Jesus as the Messiah from precisely these Scriptures?

In this context (164), Christians will also have to look closely at Rosemary Radford Ruether's book, *Faith and Fratricide*,[249] for she

> argues that anti-Semitism is not a veneer nor is it the product of later interpretation, but rather that it is inherent in New Testament christology as such. She is particularly critical of the Fourth Gospel, which, she argues, has given "the ultimate theological form to that diabolizing of 'the Jews' which is the root of anti-Semitism in the Christian tradition." She emphasizes: "There is no way to rid Christianity of its anti-Judaism, without grappling finally with its christological hermeneutic itself."

Ruether, too, does not perceive the political conflicts based on which John actually wrote his Gospel of Jesus the Messiah. But challenged by her, Christians could set

249 (166, n. 6-7) Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 116.

out and learn to read John's Gospel not as the founding document of a new religion of grace or heavenly salvation, but as a Jewish Messianic writing that deals above all with the conditions for the political overcoming of every ruling world order of violence and oppression.

In fact, I completely agree with Gregory Baum[250] in saying:

> "As long as the Christian Church regards itself as the successor of Israel, as the new people of God substituted in the place of the old, and as long as the Church proclaims Jesus as the one mediator without whom there is no salvation, no theological space is left for other religions, and, in particular, no theological validity is left for Jewish religion."

He is right because John never wanted to replace Judaism with a new religion of Christianity. He wanted to regather all Israel around the Messiah. And against Christianity, which has gathered around his Gospel, he would have found even much sharper words than against the *Ioudaioi* of his Gospel, because it has practically taken the place of the human murdering world order, which Jesus tried to overcome in his eyes—but exactly not to do it even worse than the pagan emperors!

Just for this reason, I maintain: that John himself is not yet to be blamed for the anti-Judaism of the emerging Christianity, which thoroughly misunderstood and misused his Gospel. Even though it seems laudable "to resist efforts to explain away or otherwise justify John's problematic statements," it is necessary for the sake of truth to explain problematic assertions in the context of an accurate setting. Suppose John indeed wrote an inner-Jewish political pamphlet to liberate Israel from the Roman world order. In that case, this does not justify every sharpness and exaggeration of his argumentation, which could later be exploited anti-Semitically. Still, neither is it appropriate to already impute to him later ecclesiastical anti-Judaism.

8.5 May I Hope for Your Further Engagement with John?

With this, I have ended Miriam's answer to the last chapter of your book, not without emphasizing again that I count myself among those Christians who believe as you do (164-65),

> that to be a faithful Christian or a faithful Jew does not require us to accept uncritically all of the views and attitudes that are present in our scriptures. Rather, we must continue to wrestle with our scriptures. Through such wrestling we may also come to recognize that certain positions which may have served a purpose when these texts were written are inimical to the values that are central to living a life of faith and integrity today.

250 (166, n. 8) Gregory Baum, "Introduction," in *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 5.

In the last paragraph of your book you "descend the winding staircase from the sticky heart of the Gospel's web, having seen many curious things."[251] You have escaped the spider and—as you told me personally[252]—you are "pretty well done with the Beloved Disciple." Still, you're not quite sure if at some point you may "ascend again." I would be pleased if my thoughts could be an impetus for you to engage with John's Gospel again after all, with the question of whether it might be appropriate to at least consider and closely examine the political reading advocated by Ton Veerkamp.

With humble regards
Helmut Schütz

251 See Mary Howitt's poem, quoted as an epigraph to the Introduction of this book.
252 In an email dated 08/19/2020.