

(2.9; 3.9). It too can picture Jesus as both shepherd and lamb (7.17) and call him the Logos (19.13). It has direct addresses of the risen Christ to the churches and in places these sound very similar to the way Jesus speaks in the Gospel, particularly his 'I Am' sayings (1.17-18; 2.23; 22.13, 16) and his talk of receiving authority from the Father (2.28). The only places in the New Testament where Zech. 12.10 is applied to the crucifixion of Jesus are John 19.37 (through citation) and Rev. 1.7 (allusively) and both writers exhibit a fondness for the number seven in the way they arrange material.

What might account for such similarities? Revelation is clearly linked to the seven churches in Asia Minor. If the Gospel and epistles also came from the Ephesus area, one could then claim that all these writings had a common church context. The problem is that the tradition about Ephesus as the place of origin of the Gospel and letters is late second century and there is nothing in those documents themselves to support this claim (see further under Setting below). In order to do justice to the similarities and to keep the association between Revelation and the other Johannine literature, some have suggested that Revelation represents an earlier product of the Beloved Disciple that was revised and circulated at a later date by one of his followers and that other followers were responsible for the Gospel and its final editing and for the epistles. This suggestion does not specify to what situation the original version of Revelation was addressed and in what ways it was revised for a later situation, and its speculation is not compelling. Given that there is so little sound external evidence available, one should probably be content with the more reasonable but also more general conclusion that the similar features of the Gospel and Revelation stem from extended contact at some point between the itinerant prophet who composed the latter and the Johannine churches and their teachers. On this view the seer and prophet of Revelation has a rather more distant relationship to the Beloved Disciple, the evangelist, the final editor, and the elder than they have to each other.

Further Reading

For discussion of issues of composition, see J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), esp. 76-101, 160-204. For a major and influential treatment of the relation of the Gospel to the Johannine epistles, see R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 14-35, 69-115. For opposing views on the relationship between the Gospel and Revelation, see E. S. Fiorenza, 'The Quest for the Johannine School: The Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 23 (1977), 402-27 and S. S. Smalley, *Thunder and Love: John's Revelation and John's Community* (Milton Keynes: Nelson Word, 1994).

THE GOSPEL'S PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTOLOGY AND THE RELATION TO JUDAISM

Clearly this is not the place for anything like a comprehensive discussion of the theology of the Fourth Gospel. Limitations of space mean that it is necessary to be highly selective and to focus on two topics that have been to the forefront of recent interpretation of the Gospel and of both positive and negative evaluations of its theological contribution, namely, its presentation of Jesus and its stance towards Judaism. Here the attempt will be made to set out briefly the Gospel's own perspective on these matters. The following two sections of the Introduction will explore the setting that produced such emphases and highlight the questions they raise.

Christology

As would be expected from an ancient biography, the Fourth Gospel's focus is on its subject, Jesus of Nazareth. What would not necessarily be expected from an ancient biography, but what immediately becomes clear, is that its subject is so closely related to the God of Israel that the focus on Jesus of Nazareth also becomes a focus on this God. What are reflected in the narrative's actions and symbols are convictions not only about Jesus but about God, so that Christology and theology are intimately interwoven.

Whatever the tensions between the Gospel's genre of ancient biography and its distinctive view of its subject, it is important to appreciate that the two are held together. The evangelist takes for granted that he is interpreting the life of a fully human figure. In doing so, as will be seen, he emphasizes Jesus' divine qualities, so much so that these overshadow his subject's human traits. One scholar in particular has argued that the resulting portrait of Jesus takes 'the form of a naïve docetism' in which John changes the Galilean teacher into the God who goes about on earth' (Käsemann 1968: 26, 27). Though overstated, this depiction has a point. Certainly the emphasis on Jesus' sovereign knowledge and control over his own mission means that he sometimes appears to act without normal human sympathies and limitations. Yet, even in the Lazarus story, where Jesus shows a strange form of love by waiting for Lazarus to die in order to be able to demonstrate his glory (11.5-6) and where he prays, not because he needs to but for the sake of the crowd (11.41-2), he can also be portrayed at his most human as he weeps and becomes angry (11.33, 35, 38). Jesus' humanity is not stressed elsewhere, however, because this would have been common ground in the disputes that the narrative

reflects. What was challenged was the nature of Jesus' relationship to God and so inevitably this is the aspect of Jesus' mission that the evangelist's portrait underlines. The aspects of Jesus' humanity that do become explicit are somewhat more than the minimally necessary costume of a heavenly visitor to earth, but the resulting presentation as a whole, when divorced from its original context, has the potential for producing a view of Jesus that significantly undervalues his full humanity. For this reason it is crucial to underscore that the evangelist's choice of the genre of biography and his dependence on the Synoptic traditions indicate that the unquestionably human life of the Jew Jesus of Nazareth, is the indispensable presupposition for his elaborately developed portrait.

Some of the dynamics of the Gospel's dominant interest in the relationship between Jesus and God emerge from one of the major categories employed for Jesus' mission, that of agency. Again and again Jesus describes himself as sent by God or the Father or speaks of God as the one who sent him. The verbs πέμπεῖν (25 times) and ἀποστέλλειν (17 times) are used interchangeably in such contexts. Drawing on Jewish and Graeco-Roman conventions about messengers or envoys, this language conveyed notions of commissioning and of authorized representation. Agents had behind them the full authority of those who sent them, whose message they were to communicate and whose interests they were to promote, so much so that the somewhat later rabbinic literature can speak of a person's agent as the equivalent of that person (cf. *m. Ber.* 5.5; *b. Naz.* 12b). In this way, to honour or to dishonour the one sent was also to honour or dishonour the sender. Jesus, then, is viewed as God's authorized agent, who fully and reliably represents the intentions and cause of the one who has sent him (cf. 4.34; 7.28-9; 8.29), who in his own person is the human equivalent of the divine sender (10.36; 12.45; 17.3), and who, having carried out his commission, returns to his sender (cf. 7.33; 16.5). People's response to Jesus as the sent one is therefore also their response to God as his sender (cf. 5.23-4, 38; 12.44; 13.20). The use of the sending language gives Jesus' claims and deeds divine legitimation; they are not simply made or performed on his own initiative (cf. 5.30; 7.16; 8.16; 12.49). At the same time it makes clear that all that happens in the mission of Jesus points to the person and purposes of its divine originator (cf. 5.36; 12.45).

Other aspects of the narrative draw out the implications of the unique relationship in which Jesus as the sent one fully represents God as his sender. Its prologue establishes the identity of the one who is sent. His relationship with God is so intimate that he can be regarded as the Logos, which, in the light of Jewish Wisdom literature, means that he is God's self-expression, God's immanent presence within the creation, which now takes human form (1.1-4, 14). As the Logos, he is also the light, who illuminates the world with the true knowledge of God, but

whose coming into the world produces a crisis or judgement, with either positive or negative consequences (1.4-13; cf. also 3.18-21). What is at stake in Jesus' mission is his glory or reputation, which is like that which an only son derives from his father (1.14), and, since only God can reveal God, the sent one who makes the sender known is himself 'only God' (1.18).

In what follows two key roles for Jesus in the mission on which he is sent are those of witness and judge. In the climactic trial before Pilate Jesus himself underlines his mission as witness - 'For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth' (18.37). The truth to which Jesus testifies is primarily the truth about God and God's disclosure in Jesus' own mission. In witnessing to God, therefore, Jesus also bears witness about himself, and in testifying about himself, he bears witness to God. This testimony to the truth takes place through his deeds and words, the signs and discourses, and supremely in his death.

The witness of Jesus' 'works', which include his signs, points both to himself and to his representation of the Father who sent him (cf. 5.36; 10.25). In the LXX the term 'sign' was particularly employed of divine actions through Moses at the time of the exodus that attested to Moses as the divine agent, judged the Egyptians and their gods, and brought about the liberation of Israel (cf. e.g. Exod. 4.1-9, 28-31; 7.1-7; 10.1-2; 12.12-13). In the prophetic writings signs also attested to the prophets as God's agents, confirmed their message, and frequently also served as a vehicle for conveying that message (cf. e.g. Isa. 20.1-4; Ezek. 4.1-4; 12.8-16). Jesus' signs also attest his divine agency. Their nature, however, underlines the unique status of this agent as the giver of life in abundance, who, in overturning death, disease and death, exercises the divine prerogative, particularly that of the bestowal of life, and anticipates the positive outcome of the process of judgement in the experience of eternal life. In regard to his works, such as healing on the sabbath, the Son's witness is the Father's witness and vice versa, because the Son does only what he sees the Father doing (5.19).

The witness of Jesus' words is also formulated in terms of his relationship to God and his sending by God. As the fully authorized agent, he speaks the words of the God who has sent him (cf. 3.33-4). Like all human witnesses, Jesus speaks of what he has seen and heard, but there is a striking difference, because what Jesus has seen and heard and what becomes the content of his witness are heavenly things (3.11-12). The portrayal of Jesus as both human and divine affects the way this witness is presented. As a human witness Jesus accedes, at least formally, to the legal demands that there should be more than one witness in his case (cf. 5.31; 8.17). But even when Jesus lists more than one witness or talks of the Father as the second witness, these are not the sort of witnesses the law or his accusers had in view and only serve to highlight that ultimately

Jesus is testifying about himself and his relation to God. Despite the law, such testimony is to be deemed to be true because of Jesus' unique identity (8.14). Because of his divine origin and destiny his witness is self-authenticating. In the nature of the case only God could confirm such testimony and from the evangelist's perspective Jesus is one with God. At the same time the complete dependence of the Son as agent on the Father as authorizer enables their witness to be depicted as a collaborative one – 'I Am the one who witnesses about myself and the Father who sent me witnesses about me' (8.18).

Jesus also represents the one who has sent him in his role as judge. The nature of Jesus' witness as self-authenticating entails that it is also the criterion of judgement and that as witness he is also judge. Indeed in the trial scene of chapter 8 Jesus' testifying and his judging are intimately connected (8.13–18), and, after pronouncing the judgement that his interrogators will die in their sins unless they believe, he claims that his negative judgement has the backing of the one who sent him (8.21, 26). Again, however, it should be emphasized that the primary goal of the process of judgement is not condemnation. Its overall purpose is the reversal of alienation and death and the establishment of well-being and life. Jesus' mission statement – 'I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance' (10.10) – is in complete harmony with the preceding mission statement about judging – 'I came into this world for judgement, so that those who do not see might see and those who see might become blind' (9.39), because the goal of the judging is the positive verdict of life. Only where there is wilful refusal to receive this life and its light is there the secondary outcome of a judgement of death and blindness (cf. also 12.47b–8). In regard to the relationship between Jesus and God, a similar pattern is at work in judging as in witnessing. Because in his judging Jesus is doing the will of the one who sent him (cf. 5.30; 12.48–9), responsibility for judging can be attributed to either Jesus or God or both. Jesus can say that the Father judges no one but has given all judgement to the Son or the Son of Man (5.22, 27) but then state that God is the ultimate judge (8.50) and he himself judges no one (8.15). Immediately the latter statement is qualified by the dynamics of the sending relationship – 'even if I do judge... I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me' (8.16). Jesus' role as God's authorized agent produces a collaborative unity within the work of judgement.

Jesus as the sent one represents and points to God as the sender not only in the course of his mission but in its completion in his death and resurrection. Again this can be seen in regard to the particular roles of witness and judge. That Jesus' passion and death are of a piece with his witness, and indeed form its culmination, is signalled from the start, where the first words of Jesus explicitly designated as testimony include the assertion that the Son of Man must be lifted up (3.14). This is then

made clear by the major mission statement about his having come to testify to the truth (18.37) being placed in the context of the trial whose outcome Jesus already knows will be the sentence of death. That context is also one of a dialogue about power and kingship and of a struggle for power between Pilate and the Jewish religious authorities. The mission statement subordinates the issue of royal power to that of truth, makes clear that Jesus' witness eschews the use of this-worldly force and, along with the crucifixion account, indicates that the apparent weakness of death is essential to his mission. As a witness to the truth, Jesus gives his life for that truth, and his suffering and death become the paradigm for his witnessing followers. The dynamics of agency entail that the divine sender is so passionately committed to the mission of the one who has been sent that the latter's witness in death means that the former can be identified as 'the crucified God'.

Jesus' crucifixion is also the death of the judge. By the time of the trial before Pilate Jesus' activity as judge has been so clearly depicted that here it can be established primarily by irony that the accused whose mission is to witness to the truth is also the judge. He holds centre stage between Pilate and 'the Jews', whose words and actions expose both to judgement. He is mocked as King of the Jews, with all the associations of that messianic title with just judgement, and in all probability, as part of the mockery, seated on the judge's bench. The one sent to pronounce the verdict of life or death on others is himself then sentenced to death. His death on the cross is the point at which his mission of judging is completed and the divine verdict is rendered. From the evangelist's perspective, the world's judgement of Jesus is in reality his judgement of the world and its ruler (cf. 12.31; 16.11, 33). In the death of the judge who is judged the negative verdict of death is absorbed and from Jesus' side flow blood and water, the symbol of the positive verdict of life (19.34). In this process the one who has sent Jesus is revealed through his representative to be not an aloof sovereign judge but a judge who in love for the world is prepared to undergo the sentence of death in order to secure for that world restoration of its well-being and life.

The story line about the divine agent concludes, however, not with his death but with his resurrection. Since both sender and sent one are sources and bestowers of life, this Gospel can speak distinctively of Jesus as active in his own resurrection. The resurrection confirms the witness of the one who has promised not only to lay down his life but also to take it up again (10.17–18; cf. also 2.19) and who has claimed to be the embodiment of resurrection and life (11.25). In terms of the mission of judging, Jesus has claimed that the two aspects of divine judgement – the giving of life and condemnation – have been delegated to him and that he has the authority both in the present and future to pronounce the verdict of life (cf. 5.19–29). The future aspect will involve the bodily

resurrection of the dead and so his own resurrection is both a vindication of his mission and an anticipation of that future judgement. He embodies ahead of time the positive verdict of life in the overall process of divine judgement. In this way both his death and his resurrection are essential to the completion of Jesus' mission and the establishing of his identity. In the ascent of the crucified Jesus in a resurrection body to the Father (20.17), the sent one returns to his sender in a form which bears the marks of the judgement's sentence of death as well as displaying its verdict of life (20.20).

The various titles given to Jesus express further aspects of his identity as the divine agent. This Gospel, along with the rest of early Christianity, holds Jesus to be the Messiah, the anointed one of Jewish expectation, but whereas in the Synoptics this designation is rarely used of Jesus in his lifetime, here Messianic titles are employed from the beginning of his mission. John the Baptist denies that he is himself the Messiah and points instead to Jesus as the one coming after him (1.20, 27, 30; 3.28), while Andrew announces Jesus as Messiah (1.41) and Nathanael sees him as Son of God and King of Israel (1.49). The Samaritan woman expresses the messianic expectation – 'I know that the Messiah is coming' – and the 'I Am' of Jesus' response has 'the Messiah' as its implied predicate (4.25–6). The signs Jesus performs are the signs of the messianic age, so that many believe and rightly ask, 'When the Messiah comes, will he do more signs than this man has done?' (7.31), and Jesus himself, when asked to state clearly whether he is the Messiah, says that he has already done so and that his works testify to who he is (10.24–5). When the Galilean crowds want to make Jesus king, he distances himself from them (6.15). By the time of his entry into Jerusalem, however, Jesus is willing to accept the Jerusalem crowd's greeting of him as King of Israel, because he can make clear the nature of his kingship by immediately seating himself on a donkey (12.13–15). A similar reinterpretation of this messianic category takes place in Jesus' dialogue with Pilate, when he makes clear that his kingship does not have its origin in this world and subordinates his role as king to that as witness to the truth (18.36–7). For the evangelist, confessing Jesus to be the anointed divine agent was basic to a correct evaluation of him, but it needed to be understood in the light of the nature of Jesus' mission as a whole and by itself it did not go far enough. For Jews to hold that a particular figure was the Messiah may have been controversial, but in itself it would not have been the cause of excommunication from the synagogue, despite the wording of 9.22. R. Akiba believed Simon bar Kochba was Messiah at the time of the second Jewish revolt (132–5 CE) and other Jews accepted other messianic claimants without running the risk of expulsion. It was what they believed about the nature of this Messiah that produced conflict for Johannine Christians and so in particular the evangelist wants to persuade his readers to echo

Martha's faith and to believe that Jesus was not only the Messiah but also the sort of Messiah who was Son of God (11.27; 20.31).

What is involved in confessing Jesus as Son of God is seen not just in the evangelist's uses of this title but, because Sonship is such a dominant category, also in the whole range of ways in which Jesus' relation to God as Father is depicted. In the Jewish Scriptures 'son of God' could be applied to specific individuals in a limited way – to the king (cf. 2 Sam. 7.14; Ps. 2.7) and to the righteous man (cf. Wis. 2.10–20; 5.5). The Qumran writings indicate that the expected royal Messiah could also be linked with the notion of God's son (cf. 1QS^a (1Q28b) 2.11–12; 4Q174 (4QFlor) 1.10–12). In the broader Graeco-Roman world legendary heroes, rulers and even famous philosophers could be called sons of God. Among early Christians it was on the basis of the resurrection that the term began to be employed of Jesus (cf. Rom. 1.3; Acts 13.3), but for the Fourth Gospel, as its most pervasive Christological title, it had come to stand for all that was unique about Jesus' relation to God (cf. also 1 John 4.15; 5.5).

'Son of God' or simply 'Son' are used interchangeably in this Gospel, and the terminology of Son and Father has already occurred frequently in connection with our discussion of the use of 'sending' language for the relation between Jesus and God. The use of the family metaphor in this context intensifies the notion of Jesus as authorized representative by adding the dimension of personal intimacy. The sent one as Son is in a uniquely close relation of special trust and favour to the sender as Father; he is loved by the Father (cf. e.g. 3.35; 5.20; 15.9; 17.24). Jesus is not just any commissioned agent but comes from and will return to the presence of the Father in heaven (cf. 6.38–9; 8.42; 10.36; 14.12; 16.10). The earthly mission of Jesus is an extension into history of a pre-existent relationship and in it the Son exercises the Father's prerogatives of giving life and judging (5.21–2). What is more, the Father remains present with the Son during this mission (8.29; 16.32) and their relationship is so close that it can be spoken of in terms of mutual indwelling (10.38; 14.10–11; 17.21). The Father and the Son are completely one in the work of salvation (10.30), though the Son retains an element of subordination (14.28; cf. also 10.29). However, the language of dependency of the Son on the Father – 'the Son can do nothing on his own' – stresses not so much the subordination of the former to the latter as the total alignment of the wills and activities of the two (cf. 5.19, 30; 8.28; 12.49–50).

The Fourth Gospel maintains a consistent distinction between Jesus as 'Son' and believers as 'children' of God (cf. 1.12; 11.52; cf. also 1 John 3.1–2, 10; 5.2). The uniqueness of Jesus' Sonship is underlined by the use of the term *μονογενής* – he is the only Son of God (1.14; 3.16, 18). This uniqueness prompts reflections on Jesus' own divinity as will be discussed below, but it is worth noting here that, on the most probable reading of

the text of 1.18, the one who is the only Son of 1.14 can also be called 'only God', using the same adjective, *μονογενής*, and depicted as in the most intimate possible relationship to the Father – always in the Father's lap.

Jesus not only is presented as the Son, but also, as in the Synoptics, speaks of himself as the Son of Man. In the Synoptics this self-designation is found in three main contexts – in references to Jesus' present ministry, in references to the necessity of suffering and death, and in references to future glory and a role as judge at the parousia. In the Fourth Gospel such traditions have been reshaped to serve the evangelist's distinctive emphases. The judging activity of the Son of Man is now both present and future (cf. 5.27–9; 9.35, 39). The Son of Man designation is closely linked to the Gospel's cosmic framework involving heaven and earth and therefore to notions of ascent and descent. As the ladder on which the angels ascend and descend, he forms a bridge between heaven and earth (1.51). He himself originates in the heavenly realm, with God, descends into the earthly realm, and will ascend after the completion of his mission (cf. 3.13; 6.62). These two references clearly imply the pre-existence of the Son of Man, a notion absent from the Synoptic sayings. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus' suffering and glory are telescoped together. Where that happens in the double meaning of the 'lifting up' sayings (3.14; 8.28; 12.34), it is not surprising that it is of the Son of Man that such a lifting up in crucifixion and exaltation is predicated. The other major aspect of the reshaping of the tradition is that Son of Man language tends to become assimilated to the more dominant Son of God or Son terminology. So, for example, within the same passages belief in the Son of Man brings life (3.15; 6.27) but also belief in the Son brings life (3.16; 6.40), and in 5.25–7 Son of God, Son and Son of Man stand parallel and without any significant difference in their meaning or function. In this way Son of Man can also take on some of the connotations of this Gospel's distinctive Son of God Christology.

The distinctiveness of this presentation of Jesus as the divine agent who is also the divine Son lies primarily in the elevated claims it makes about what these roles mean for Jesus' own divine status. Two of the most striking aspects of the depiction of Jesus' relation to God are found in the way he is linked to the divine glory and in the way he employs the formula of God's own self-identification. In the Jewish Scriptures glory (*XX δόξα*) has connotations of the splendour or radiance of the divine presence and also of the honour and reputation of the divine name. The Fourth Gospel's prologue indicates that this divine glory was present in Jesus for those with eyes to see it ('we saw his glory' – 1.14). Glory sums up the life of the incarnate Logos and, as noted in the discussion of the Gospel's structure, this can be seen in the shaping of the narrative about him. In his public mission the signs in particular manifest Jesus' glory

(cf. 2.11; 11.4, 40) and towards its end there is the announcement that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (12.23). During the mission Jesus asserts that it is the Father who seeks his glory and indeed glorifies him (8.50, 54) and the reason the divine prerogative of judging is delegated to Jesus is that all may honour the Son. So bound together is the honour of Jesus with that of God, such that 'anyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father' (5.22–3). The second half of the main narrative then depicts Jesus in the hour of his glory and makes clear that his departure from the world in death by crucifixion, which in normal evaluation would be seen as the greatest humiliation and shame, is in fact to be regarded as the supreme moment of that glory (cf. 13.31–2; 17.1). A standard objection from other Jews to Jewish Christian claims about Jesus was to point to the absence of evidence of the divine glory that should have accompanied the Messiah and the bringing in of the messianic age and to hold such claims to be completely undermined by the fate Jesus had actually met, the ignominy of death on a Roman cross. A typical Christian response, based on the Synoptic tradition, might be to explain that the Messiah came first in humiliation and had to suffer and that only after the suffering could there be vindication and glory, partly through the resurrection and exaltation but fully at the parousia when he would come again in glory. In fact his followers had been given a preview of that future glory on one particular occasion when Jesus was transfigured before them. The Fourth Gospel's response is rather different and tackles the premises of the objection. It claims that a proper evaluation of Jesus would have recognized the divine glory all the way through his mission and far from considering the crucifixion as the point of deepest shame would have perceived in it the fullest revelation of God's glory. The problem lies not in Jesus' mission but in the opponents' judgement, which has become so influenced by merely human conceptions of honour and glory that it fails to use the right criteria and therefore fails to see the glory when it is before their eyes (cf. 5.44; 7.18, 24; 12.43). In line with this perspective, there is, of course, no account of the transfiguration. In a mission suffused with glory, the transfiguration would simply not stand out sufficiently. There is also no account of the anguish of Jesus in Gethsemane. In the Johannine equivalent the one hint of suffering – 'Now is my soul troubled' – is immediately turned into a recognition of its glory: 'for this reason I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again' (12.27–8), underlining again that not only Jesus' but God's reputation is at stake in Jesus' mission. In accomplishing Jesus' glory, God secures God's own honour (cf. also 13.31–2). It is no surprise to learn from Jesus' prayer that the glory revealed in his mission on earth is the same glory he enjoyed with his Father before the world was made and will enjoy again with him after his departure (17.4–5, 24).

Jesus does not lay aside his divine glory in coming to earth and dying; rather his incarnation and death become vehicles for its expression.

The other remarkable aspect of this Gospel's perspective on Jesus' identity is found in its placement of 'I Am' pronouncements on Jesus' lips. These are the sayings which involve the emphatic Greek construction ἐγώ εἰμι. Normally only the verb would be required to express 'I am ...' so that, literally, the force of the emphatic formulation is 'I myself am ...'. In some of the uses, however, it soon becomes clear that something other than mere emphasis on the speaker is being conveyed. There are in fact three types of use of the formulation. The most straightforward are the references in which 'I am' is accompanied by a predicate (6.35, 51; 8.12, 18; 10.7, 9, 11, 14; 11.25; 14.6, 15.1, 5). These include claims on the part of Jesus to embody the significance of major Jewish symbols or expectations, such as the bread of life, the light of the world, the resurrection and life, the good shepherd and the true vine. More puzzling initially are the references in which 'I am' has no predicate and appears to be used in an absolute sense (8.24, 28, 58; 13.19). Here Jesus' audience is meant to believe or know that 'I Am' or is simply told. Before Abraham came to be, 'I Am'. The clue to their force is provided by the way in which the Septuagint has translated the divine self-identifications in Deut. 32.39; Isa. 41.4; 43.10, 25; 45.18-19; 46.4; 51.12; 52.6 with the use of ἐγώ εἰμι. Of particular interest is the fact that the Isaiah references occur in the context of divine lawsuits with Israel and the nations, in which God's claim to be the only God, who is sovereign over history and acts to save God's people, is at stake and Israel is called to be a witness to the reality of this claim, to testify that 'I Am'. The divine self-identification functions as the equivalent of the divine name. There can be no doubt that this LXX usage lies behind the references in the Fourth Gospel. It is not only the 'I Am' formulation itself but also the language of believing and knowing that 'I Am' which has been drawn from this source (cf. Isa. 43.10 LXX). So, just as God in the Jewish Scriptures identifies Godself by this self-predication, now Jesus utters the same self-predication, indicating that Jesus and God are to be seen as sharing the same identity. It is not surprising that the response of Jesus' audience to the utterance of 8.58 is to attempt to stone him for blasphemy.

Once this implication of the absolute sayings has been observed, it colours the force of the sayings with predicates. Jesus can claim to be the light of the world or the truth or the life only because of the unique relationship with God conveyed by the introductory 'I Am'. Knowledge of the LXX background is also decisive for the interpretation of a third group of 'I Am' sayings – those with an implied predicate and therefore a double meaning (cf. 4.26; 6.20; 18.5-6). In response to the Samaritan woman's assertion of the expectation of the Messiah, Jesus responds, 'I Am, the one who is speaking to you.' This could be taken simply as an

acknowledgement that he is this Messiah, but knowledge of the LXX rendering of Isa. 45.19 and 52.6, where God proclaims 'I Am the one who speaks', indicates that more is going on and that Jesus is including but transcending the messianic title in his announcement. He is the sort of Messiah who is one with God. The other two references involve playing with the possible ordinary meaning of 'I am he' or 'It is I' and the more profound connotations of the formulation. In the case of both the walking on the water and the arrest by soldiers further clues are provided in the context that show the incidents are to be taken as theophanies, appearances of the divine with the typical accompanying phenomena – the command not to be afraid and the response of falling prostrate on the ground. The way in which the divine self-predication functions as an equivalent to the divine name in the Jewish Scriptures suggests that, when Jesus claims to have been given God's name and to have made it known in his mission (cf. esp. 17.6, 11, 12, 26), these remarkable 'I Am' sayings may be particularly in view.

Does the Fourth Gospel go further still in its presentation and actually call Jesus God? The answer is in the affirmative. The very first verse of the prologue describes the Logos, who is to become incarnate, as God, employing *θεός* without the article (see the commentary) and on the most likely reading of its final verse holds that the one who has made God known is himself 'only God' (1.18). Significantly, during Jesus' mission the man born blind is depicted as paying homage to or worshipping him (the Greek verb *προσκυνεῖν* can have a spectrum of meanings), a response, which in the context of his preceding confession and of the Gospel as a whole, suggests an action which might normally be expected to be directed solely to God. But the portrayal of Jesus as God is made even more explicit in Thomas' confession, which is at the same time an acclamation of worship – 'My Lord and my God!' (20.28). Readers might well be expected to set such an acclamation over against imperial claims, such as those made about Domitian in terms of *dominus et deus noster*, 'our Lord and our God' (Suetonius, *Dom.* 13.2). But if Jesus is a rival to other would-be gods, he is not a rival to the God of Israel. The title Lord (*κύριος*) is a designation for this God in the LXX, and its combination with God (*θεός*) in acclamation of the risen Jesus, conveys this Gospel's high evaluation of Jesus as the divine agent. The words of Jesus' prayer summarize the evangelist's perspective on what this entails – 'Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (17.3). Although Jesus as God's uniquely authorized agent is clearly depicted as one with God, this is not seen as detracting from the monotheism that holds the God of Israel to be the only true God. How then is knowledge of Jesus as well as of God necessary for life? How does Jesus share the divine glory and identity himself by means of God's self-identification, and how is

he worshipped and designated as God without becoming a second god? Since in the words of the prayer there remains only one true God, Jesus, as the incarnate Logos and in his relationship of Son to the Father, must somehow be intrinsic to this one God's identity. As the prayer's petition goes on to indicate, he always has shared in the glory and identity of the one God from before the foundation of the world (17.5). The notion of the divinity of Jesus, in the sense of his full inclusion in the identity of the one God of Israel, is not, then, a later invention of or development within patristic debate but is already part of the witness of the Fourth Gospel. Within that witness its force is also a practical one. It drives home the conviction that the mission of Jesus is no take-it-or-leave-it affair; it does not even involve a decision merely about the message of a prophet or the identity of the Messiah. That mission is of critical import, involving issues of life and death, because, if Jesus is in God's self-revelation in the world, one's judgement about Jesus is at the same time a judgement about God. Given this evaluation of Jesus' identity, it is not surprising that this Gospel includes on the lips of Jesus the claim to exclusive access to God that is so disturbing to modern sensibilities – 'No one comes to the Father except by me' (14.6).

Relation to Judaism

Equally disturbing to modern sensibilities are this Gospel's frequent use of the term 'the Jews' in a negative or hostile sense and the fierce polemic between Jesus and his opponents that sometimes accompanies such use. Indeed, some interpreters allege that these two disturbing features are inextricably connected and that the Gospel's claims about Jesus' divinity are un-Jewish and necessarily lead to a perspective on Judaism that is anti-Jewish. Is this Gospel, which is so profoundly influenced by the Jewish Scriptures and developments within second temple Judaism, at the same time antagonistic to Judaism, and, if so, in what ways?

The use of the term 'the Jews' (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) is certainly a prominent feature of the Fourth Gospel, where, if the three references to the term in the singular are also included, it is found 72 times in comparison with five times in Matthew, six times in Mark and five times in Luke. However, some popular misconceptions about this usage need to be dispelled. First, by no means all the references have negative connotations. The usage is varied. Sometimes the reference is primarily to Jewish feasts and institutions, so that, for example, there is talk of the purification rites, the festival, the Passover or the burial customs 'of the Jews' (cf. 2.6, 13, 5.1; 19.40). Jews do not have dealings with Samaritans (4.9) is a straightforward description and, while some of the other references of this sort can have a distancing effect, they are certainly not in themselves negative. In other

places there is a divided response among 'the Jews', with some having at least what appears to be an initially positive reaction to Jesus (cf. e.g. 8.31; 10.19–21; 11.45; 12.9). In 4.9 Jesus himself is designated as a Jew and in the passion narrative is portrayed as 'the King of the Jews'. Even more positively, in 4.22 salvation can be said to be from 'the Jews'. At the very most, only just over half the references have in view those Jews who have an unbelieving or hostile attitude to Jesus. This includes a spectrum of responses from, at one end, 'the Jews' who ask for a sign and then misunderstand Jesus' response after the temple incident (2.18, 20) to, at the other, those who are seeking to kill him (e.g. 5.19) or who demand his death at the Roman trial (e.g. 19.14–15). Second, it is not the case that all the negative references have the religious authorities in view. This may be true of the majority of such references, but a significant number refer to the crowds or general populace, who in some cases are explicitly distinguished from the authorities (cf. e.g. 6.41, 52; 7.35; 8.22; 11.45–7). Third, although a number of scholars espouse this view, 'the Jews' should not be replaced in translation by 'the Judeans'. This is wrong on two major counts. It does not fit the data in the Gospel, where in 6.41, 52 the term refers to the Galilean crowds, and it is not the way the expression οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι was used at the time. Although in its earlier usage the term primarily applied to Judeans, from the mid-second century BCE it was used to denote a broader national, religious and political grouping by no means any longer limited to those who lived or had parents who lived in Judea. Indeed, Diaspora Jews were also generally known as οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι and had no problems in accepting this designation for themselves.

So the sense of the term is the broad one of the Jewish people as distinct from other ethnic groupings but it can then have a variety of specific referents. As the designation of a group of characters in the narrative, like the depiction of nearly all the characters, it frequently serves a representative function. The response of 'the Jews' indicates different types of belief and unbelief. A hostile and unbelieving response is primarily associated with 'the Jews' as the Jewish religious authorities, but similarly negative responses can also come from 'the Jews' as members of the more general Jewish population. But, as indicated above, among 'the Jews' can also be found a somewhat different response, primarily from members of the general populace, though also from some leaders, in which there is greater openness to Jesus' mission, positive assessments are made when there is a division of opinion, and a hovering between belief and unbelief appears to be taking place. Among this group are Nicodemus (cf. 3.1–10; 7.52; 19.39), the authorities who believe but will not confess their belief (cf. 12.42–3), the crowds in Galilee who have acclaimed Jesus as prophet-king and followed him because of the feeding miracle but then take offence at his teaching (cf. 6.14–15, 41, 52), and those of the Jerusalem crowds who are designated as 'the Jews who believed in him'.