

possesses the stigmata, hails him not only as Lord but as God (20:29, *Kyrios* and *theos*). The other disciples, having already seen Jesus and received the Spirit (verses 19–23), already possess this knowledge and can make this fully adequate confession of Jesus. As far as the disciples are concerned, they now meet the description of them in Jesus' Great High Priestly Prayer (chap. 17), a description for which their previous behavior had not prepared the reader. As for Jesus himself, the confession of him as God means that the narrative and the reader have now come full circle, for what was said of the *logos* in 1:1, namely, that the word was with God and the word was God, is now confessed by Thomas as representative of the disciples. The reader may infer, moreover, that Thomas' confession in 20:29 is prior to, or the basis for, the quasi-liturgical statement of 1:1. That is, what is said in 1:1 about the word is based on postresurrection knowledge and confession of Jesus.

e Death as glorification

The resurrection of Jesus, which of course presupposes his death, is the precondition and basis of revelatory knowledge about him. But apart from the death of Jesus there is no resurrection, and therefore no revelation of God. The death of Jesus is of crucial importance for John, as it is for Paul, Mark, and the earliest Christian preaching, but in a somewhat different and distinct way.²¹

Paul, in citing an early kerygmatic formula, says that Christ *died for our sins* according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3). Mark's account of the eucharistic words of institution, followed by Matthew and Luke, portrays Jesus speaking of his blood as poured out for many (or for his disciples), an obvious allusion to his death upon the cross, understood in cultic sacrificial terms (Mark 14:24). Paul's tradition of the Lord's Supper has a similar cup word (1 Corinthians 11:25), showing again that the

²¹ On the death of Jesus in John, see J. Terence Forestell, *The Word of the Cross: Salvation and Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, *Analecta Biblica* 57 (Rome, 1974); Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN, 1991); and Godfrey C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent – Ascent Schema*, *SBLDS* 53 (Chico, CA, 1983).

interpretation of Jesus' death as a *vicarious sacrifice* was quite primitive. Paul, of course, develops the idea of Jesus' death as sacrifice in his own theological terms (cf. Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 1:18–25), while not concealing its more ancient, traditional basis (cf. Romans 3:24–25, as well as 1 Corinthians 15:3). We find this cultic sacrificial concept of the effect of Jesus' death also in 1 John (1:7; 2:2), as well as in the Revelation to John (1:5; 5:9; 7:14). Therefore, it is all the more surprising that such an understanding and interpretation of Jesus' death does not find a larger place in the Gospel of John. Yet several passages in the Gospel clearly allude to the primitive Christian interpretation of Jesus' death as a vicarious sacrifice: he is greeted as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29; cf. verse 34); out of his love God gave him (3:16; cf. Romans 5:8); Jesus gives his flesh for the life of the world (6:51); Jesus is said to die for the people (*hyper tou laou*), that the nation (*ethnos*) not perish (11:51). Moreover, the eucharistic language in 6:52–58 strongly suggests the participants' partaking of the redemptive benefits of Christ's death, and thus of his real humanity. It is noteworthy, nevertheless, that this language does not occur in the context of the passion narrative, as in the Synoptics and even Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23). Also in John's chronology alone, Jesus dies the afternoon of Nisan 14, while the Passover lambs are being slain. In the other Gospels, Jesus eats the Passover with his disciples. Yet John does not explicitly develop the idea of Jesus as Passover sacrifice (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7).

Because John's interpretation of the death of Jesus does not develop the cultic sacrificial imagery more explicitly, it may seem that for the evangelist the death is not as important theologically as it is for Paul, Mark, and other New Testament writers. Nevertheless, in a somewhat different way and for different reasons, the death of Jesus is of fundamental theological importance in the Fourth Gospel. The Fourth Gospel seems to presuppose the more primitive view of the vicarious sacrificial effect of Jesus' death, as the related Epistle and Revelation suggest, but to express the vicariousness of that death by different means (see below, pp. 118–120). Compared

to Paul, John focuses less upon issues having to do with how the specific mode of Jesus' death effected salvation on the analogy with cultic sacrifice, and more upon the nature of that salvation as revelation made possible through Jesus' death. Here John differs not only from Paul, but from the Letter to the Hebrews, which in important ways has affinities with, but differs from, both. Hebrews, more than any other New Testament book, explains *how* the death of Jesus is analogous with, but displaces, the sacrificial cult.²² For John it is also important that Jesus displaces this cult, but this motif appears in the Fourth Gospel as Jesus' displacement of the temple generally (1:14; 2:19–22; 4:21–24), without specific mention of the cult or use of the sacrificial terminology.

John's perspective on, and presentation of, Jesus' death is directly related to his understanding of it as the key to the revelation of God in Jesus, the acceptance of which effects life eternal for the believer. John views that revelation as principally complete, seeing it in its totality and not focusing specifically on the mechanics (or, to a later perspective, mythology) of how that salvation took place. John's perspective, in which the revelation is complete, is at the same time an aspect of his so-called realized eschatology. For Paul, the believer is justified, but must await salvation (note the future tenses in Romans 6:5 and cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12–28); for John the believer has passed from death to life (John 5:24).

What, then, is the distinctive role of Jesus' death in the Fourth Gospel, and how does the evangelist express and underscore its importance? On the one hand, although it is evident that the evangelist knows the more ancient and traditional vicarious, sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death, he accomplishes a representation or reminding of this perspective. On the other hand, the death of Jesus is important for John as the moment of his glorification, and this view of his death is quite different in purpose and function, while at the same time fundamental for John's understanding of revelation. Through

²² See Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 86–98 especially.

his death Jesus brings life, but only after his death is its significance known.

The vicarious nature of Jesus' death, in the sense that he died for, and instead of, his followers, is more than once made clear. At his arrest Jesus identifies himself to the arresting party and tells them to let the others, his disciples, go (18:8). Presumably he will die in their stead. As Jesus instructs his disciples to love each other as he has loved them (15:12), he gives concreteness to the nature of this love by defining its extremity as laying down one's life for one's friends (verse 13). This, of course, is exactly what Jesus himself will do. Probably the basic, salvific meaning of Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet is that it symbolizes his vicarious death for them.²³ The foot-washing is the most humble service, usually performed by a slave, and certainly not performed by the superior upon his inferiors or servants. Nevertheless, Jesus performs this humble service for his disciples. Peter cannot abide this seeming status reversal, and his initial rejection of Jesus' offer requires the Lord's stern remonstrance to be overcome (13:6-10). There is a remote, but nevertheless striking, affinity between this episode and the confession of Peter in Mark's Gospel (8:27-33), for there Peter recoils from Jesus' prophecy of his coming death and Jesus rebukes him sharply.

John's most extensive presentation of Jesus' death as a vicarious sacrifice occurs in the so-called parable (Greek: *paroimia*) of the good shepherd (10:1-16), which culminates in Jesus' identification of himself with this figure. Of course, this good shepherd is the one who lays down his life for his sheep. The discourse is typically Johannine, not only because it contains the predicative *egō eimi* saying ("I am the good shepherd", verses 11, 14), but because it is at first cast in enigmatic language that only the insider could understand. Of course, the Johannine Christian, or anyone with knowledge of the Christian message, would know that Jesus is here not talking about a

²³ See now John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, JSNTSS 61 (Sheffield, 1991), pp. 94f., citing C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London and Philadelphia, 1978), p. 441.

mere willingness to sacrifice his life. Rather, these statements are made with his specific sacrificial death in view. By the time the Gospel was written Jesus had already died for his sheep. The vicarious, self-sacrificial character of Jesus' death is clear enough; what is missing is the cultic language of the sacrificial altar. Apparently, John has chosen to present the old message in a new and different mode. Possibly he does this because at the time of his writing the temple was already gone from the scene, destroyed by the Roman army in AD 70. Whether or not this was the case, both the traditional roots of John's thought and his imaginative reworking of them are very much in evidence.

John's distinctive understanding of Jesus' death comes most clearly to expression in his presentation of it as Jesus' being glorified (*doxazein*) and lifted up (*hypsoun*). Jesus' death is the hour of his glorification (7:39; 12:16; 12:23; 13:31, etc.), in which his glory and the glory of God are revealed. Glory is an eschatological theme in the New Testament: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne" (Matthew 25:31). That is, it is associated with the end-time as conceived in apocalyptic thought. The idea of being lifted up, exalted, is in John integrally related to glorification. Instead of saying repeatedly that the Son of Man must suffer, as the Synoptic Gospels do, John speaks to the same purpose of the Son of Man's being lifted up (3:14; 8:28; 12:32). Thus the concepts of glorification and exaltation are used of Jesus' ignominious death in a manner that can only be called paradoxical. This is altogether typical of the insider language of the Fourth Gospel: the Christian reader will understand Jesus' or the evangelist's references to the hour of his glorification or exaltation as allusions to his approaching death. When this is understood, the theme of Jesus' death, far from being a mere vestige of tradition, is seen to pervade the Gospel (cf. 1:11; 1:29; 2:4; 2:17-22; 3:14-16, etc.).

The traditional term for the time of Jesus' death, the "hour" (Greek: *hōra*), recurs throughout the Gospel (2:4; 4:21; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23). In the Synoptic tradition Jesus in Geth-

semane prays that he may be delivered from "the hour" of his coming trial (Mark 14:35), but with the approach of the arresting party, he knows that the hour has come (verse 41). Later, as the moment of the actual crucifixion arrives, the third, sixth, and ninth hours are tolled (Mark 15:25,33,34). The term "hour" is not, however, used in Mark of Jesus' death until the Gethsemane scene. By way of contrast, its use in John from the very opening episode of Jesus' ministry is a means of narrating the whole ministry from the perspective of Jesus' death, or with the death in view.

While it is true that John does not describe Jesus' death as his suffering (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:12; Hebrews 12) or humiliation (cf. Philippians 2:6-11, especially verse 8) any more than he makes use of the sacrificial language of the altar, the evangelist's presentation is best understood as assuming such a natural human understanding but going beyond it, because he intends to present Jesus' death as the revelation of God's glory. Theologically perceived, Jesus' death is the crucial moment of God's revelation and judgment in and through him, shedding light upon his own ministry, so that it can be properly understood, even as it opens the way to the future as the time of the risen and ascended Christ (cf. 20:17) and of the Spirit-Paraclete who continues and extends his revelation. It is no happenstance that John's precise description of the moment of Jesus' death differs from the Synoptics by virtue of its deliberate ambiguity. In a neat play on words Jesus is not said simply to expire or breathe his last (Mark 15:37; Greek: *exepneusen*), but to give up (or give over) his (or the) Spirit (John 19:30; Greek: *paredōken to pneuma*). The allusion to the coming of the Holy Spirit can hardly be missed.

The early traditional and Pauline theological theme of the crucifixion of Christ as the point and means of God's redemption of humanity is then not lost in John. Rather, it becomes an underpinning of his distinctive view and presentation of Jesus' whole ministry as the revelation of God's judgment and of his gift of eschatological life: judgment against those who reject him (chaps. 2-12; cf. especially 1:11; 3:19; 9:39; 12:37-41, 48), but life for those who believe (1:12-13; 3:16-18; 12:44-47, 49-50).

As we have already noticed, it is certainly not by coincidence that Jesus' restoration of Lazarus to life (11:1-44), anticipated in Jesus' earlier eschatological discourse (5:25), is followed immediately by the priests' plotting against Jesus' own life (11:45-53). By this narrative connection the Christian conviction of the life-giving character of Jesus' own death is subtly but unmistakably suggested. Jesus' life and his life-giving work culminate in his own death, but only because of and through that death is Jesus able to give life. Moreover, that death is the prism through which Jesus' life and work can be seen for what they are, and thus it is the critical point of the revelation of God through Jesus Christ his Son. The description of Jesus' death as exaltation and glorification is a way of underscoring its revelatory character.

Thus the concept of glory (Greek: *doxa*) in the Fourth Gospel is intimately connected with revelation and with Jesus' death. Of course, in the Bible generally, glory is an attribute or quality that belongs to God. Isaiah is said to have seen the divine glory (12:41), obviously an allusion to the theophany scene of Isaiah 6:1-13.²⁴ When John writes of the incarnate word (Jesus Christ) that "we have beheld his glory" (1:14), it is amply clear that he is alluding to the divine aspect of his being and to its revelation as such. When Jesus himself says that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (12:23), he is pointing ahead to his own death, now viewed as imminent (cf. verses 24-25), and to his death understood as revelatory event: "Father, glorify thy name" (12:28). Glory is the quality of God as God. In the Old Testament the glory of the Lord is his impressive manifestation, even the physical phenomena associated with his presence (Exodus 24:15-18). Particularly in the Exodus tradition the glory of the Lord is associated with his revelation of himself as God, so that Moses can pray "to see thy glory" (Exodus 33:19).

This background and the revelatory connotations of glory are therefore evident in the Fourth Gospel, and particularly in

²⁴ On John's use of Isaiah, see F. W. Young, "A Study of the Relation of Isaiah to the Fourth Gospel," *ZNW* (1955), 215-233. G. Kittel, *doxa*, *TDNT*, II, pp. 2328f., notes the association of the term with revelation in the Old Testament.

the prayer of Jesus in chapter 17. In this so-called Great High Priestly Prayer Jesus asks God to glorify him even as in his earthly ministry Jesus has glorified God (17:1, 4). Moreover, Jesus asks to be glorified in God's own presence "with the glory which I had with thee before the world came to be" (verse 5). The glory which Jesus receives from God, and with which he glorifies God, is ultimately passed on to his disciples (17:22). Jesus has given the glory to his disciples by manifesting God's name to them. The name of God, like his glory, is God's reality, his real presence, as it is manifest to humankind. The crucial factor in this manifestation is the ministry and death of Jesus himself.

So Jesus redefines glory, even the glory of God. In his words and deeds he reveals God's glory (2:11), as his enigmatic statement to his newly gathered disciples indicates he will (1:51), and in his death he covers himself with God's glory even as God gives him glory (12:23; 17:1). In his death as glorification Jesus revises the meaning of glory and glorification, for God's glory is found precisely in Jesus' death. Thus when he gives his disciples his God-given glory, he unites them with himself and with God (cf. 17:22). This is not a union of being abstractly conceived, but a union of mission: as God has sent Jesus, so he sends the disciples (20:21). The nature and content of that mission are defined by Jesus himself in his amplification of the love commandment (15:12-13), for as Jesus has loved his followers unto death (cf. 13:1), so they are to love one another (13:34; cf. 1 John 4:7-12). The iconoclastic Jesus of the Synoptic tradition overturns the conventions and expectations of his contemporaries, but the revolutionary Jesus of the Fourth Gospel goes even farther by redefining in a thoroughgoing way what is meant by the glory of God. Furthermore, John makes the astonishing claim that Jesus' death reveals the glory of God – the revelatory manifestation of God – and that this glory has existed from the foundation of the world (17:5, 24). John's concept of glory is at once traditional and radical doctrine, that is, traditional doctrine placed in a radically new light by the death and resurrection of Jesus.