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“No One Has Ever Seen God” (John 1:18): Not Seeing Yet Believing in the Gospel of John

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"NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN GOD" (JOHN 1:18): NOT SEEING YET BELIEVING IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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To the One who died and rose that all might see truth, freedom, and love.

ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν. ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι' αὐτοῦ. ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεὸν ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν. θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται. ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστίν.

1 John 4:7-12

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ABBREVIATIONS[1]

ACT	Ancient Christian Texts
ATI	*American Theological Inquiry*
BBC	Blackwell Bible Commentaries
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BCBC	Believers Church Bible Commentary
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibLan:G	Biblical Languages:Greek
BSR	Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose
BETS	Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society
ConC	Concordia Commentary
ConcJ	*Concordia Journal*
CPC	The Church and Postmodern Culture
CS	Cistercian Studies Series
ECC	The Eerdmans Critical Commentary
ERT	*Evangelical Review of Theology*
ETS Studies	Evangelical Theological Society Studies Series
FN	*Filologia Neotestamentaria*
LBS	Linguistic Biblical Studies
LiBT	Library of Biblical Theology
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies

[1] Abbreviations not listed here may be found in Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), §8.

NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTRG	New Testament Reading Guide
NTTh	New Testament Theology
NTTSD	New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents
PCP	Perspectives in Continental Philosophy
PiNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
ProCom	Proclamation Commentaries
ProEGL&MBS	Proceedings: Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
ReNBC	Readings: A New Biblical Commentary
SHE	Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TBT	Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann
TKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
WDNTR	The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric
WeBC	Westminster Bible Companion

ABSTRACT

Armbrust, Kevin L. " 'No One Has Ever Seen God' (John 1:18): Not Seeing Yet Believing in the Gospel of John." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2014. 242 pp.

Only a few New Testament texts explicitly state that Jesus is θεός ("God"). John explicitly indicates that Jesus is God not once or twice, but three times. These three statements appear at the beginning of the Gospel's prologue (1:1), at the end of the prologue (1:18), and just before the Gospel's conclusion (20:28; cf. 20:30–31). John's strategically placed statements thus form an end-to-end double inclusio. References to Jesus as God over against God (the Father), whom Jesus reveals, first frame and inform the prologue. Then such references frame and inform the narrative that follows. The striking and absolute statement "No one has ever seen God" (1:18a) introduces a key consideration that is revisited again and finally at the Gospel's end (20:29). Standing at the midpoint of the Gospel's end-to-end double inclusio, John 1:18a confronts the Fourth Gospel's reader with a truth that might initially surprise. There is one who always has been the one and only one who makes known the God who has never been seen (1:18b). Thus, John 1:18a links the beginning of the narrative of the Gospel with its informing end, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus (20:29) that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Only a few New Testament texts explicitly state that Jesus is θεός ("God"). Therefore, when one does so, the text in which such a rare statement appears is worthy of close and careful consideration. Of the few texts that do so, the greatest number of these are in the Gospel of John. John explicitly indicates that Jesus is God not once or twice, but three times. These three statements appear at the beginning of the Gospel's prologue (1:1), at the end of the prologue (1:18), and just before the Gospel's conclusion (20:28; cf. 20:30–31). John's strategically placed statements thus form an end-to-end double inclusio. That is, references to Jesus as God first frame and inform the prologue. Then references to Jesus as God frame and inform the entire narrative. Informing the prologue's conclusion and the narrative that follows, the strikingly absolute statement "No one has ever seen God" (1:18a) introduces further a key consideration that is revisited again and finally at the Gospel's end (20:29).

The Thesis

Standing at the midpoint of the Gospel's end-to-end double inclusio (see 1:1 and 18; see also 1:18 and 20:28–29), the statement "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18a) links the beginning of the narrative of the Gospel with its informing end, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

The Current Status of the Question

The question as posed contains elements that are both new and not new. Scholars have long noted that the New Testament rarely states explicitly that Jesus is God. They have also often noted that the Gospel of John offers such a statement three times. Few, however, have observed that John's statements form an inclusio(s). Though the prologue has been studied extensively, only very few have noted that the statement "No one has ever seen God" has in the Gospel a strategically situated and important role to play in advancing the plot line of the Gospel.

The strategically placed statement "No one has ever seen God," which most see rightly as a reference to the Father, introduces an evident tension into the prologue's conclusion that the remainder of the prologue's final verse resolves (in part) when it states that, though none have seen the Father, "the Unique One (cf. 1:14), God, the One Who Is . . . has made (him) known."[1] Ending here, the prologue segues to the narrative that follows, where in final terms the Gospel's greater manner of resolving the tension introduced in 1:18a plays itself out. None, however, have attended adequately either to the tension introduced in 1:18a or to the Gospel's greater manner of resolving that tension. None have attended to the role that 1:18a plays at the shared midpoint of the Gospel's end-to-end double inclusio to link further the beginning of the Gospel with the end of the Gospel, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when only sees with flesh and blood eyes but when one believes in response to words from and about Jesus (20:29) that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

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[1] This dissertation will read the text of John 1:18 as μονογενὴς θεός. This agrees with the critical editions of the New Testament, as well as Johannine usage. Both μονογενὴς and θεός are substantives, part of a three-fold title for Jesus, which concludes with the phrase ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός. This is consonant with D. A. Fennema, "John 1:18: 'God the Only Son,' " *NTS* 31 (1985): 5, who reads μονογενὴς and θεός appositionally, which "is consistent with the fact that the following clause ascribes a third characteristic of the Logos and is appositional to the preceding terms." See also Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 134; and further below. The text critical and translational issues of the prologue's final verse will be addressed in chapter 2.

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

While scholars have neglected to attend to certain crucial aspects of both the tension introduced in 1:18a and the Gospel's greater manner of resolving that tension, many have contributed significantly to the foundation that undergirds and informs this dissertation's select focus. Specifically, many have contributed especially to the critical study of (1) who according to John Jesus is, (2) what an inclusio is and where in John's Gospel one finds them, and (3) what initially John means by and why it is that he says that "No one has ever seen God."

Who according to John Is Jesus?

Scholars widely acknowledge that the Gospel of John contains three verses that explicitly refer to Jesus as θεός.[2] This is noteworthy, since, in the rest of the New Testament, only very rarely does one encounter such statements.[3] Still others have observed that the frequency with which John says such a thing is all the more noteworthy, since John's remarks appear at

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[2] E.g., B. A. Mastin, "A Neglected Feature of the Christology of John," *NTS* 22 (1976): 50–51, concludes that "in comparison with the other books of the New Testament the Fourth Gospel uses the term θεός of Jesus not only with greater frequency, but also with considerably more care. John 1:1, 18; 20:28 have been examined and it has been claimed that in each case Jesus is called 'God' by the Evangelist."

[3] Raymond E. Brown, "Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?" *TS* 26 (1965): 545–73, concludes that Heb 1:8–9, John 1:1, and 20:28 are the three clear instances in the New Testament where Jesus is called God. Brown includes 1:18 in the list of 5 passages which have nothing more than a certain probability of calling Jesus God, due to its textual difficulty (see further the discussion of this difficulty in this dissertation's chapter 2). Brian James Wright, "Jesus as Θεός: A Textual Examination," in *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence* (ed. Daniel B. Wallace; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2011), 229–66, lists John 20:28 as the "one text that undoubtedly calls Jesus θεός in every respect" (p. 265), and lists John 1:1, 18; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 5:20 as those with a similar degree of certainty. Murray J. Harris, *Jesus As God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1992), 271, concludes that John 1:1 and 20:28 certainly apply the title God to Jesus and that Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8, and 2 Pet 1:1 probably apply the title God to Jesus. Kikuo Matsunaga, "The 'Theos' Christology as the Ultimate Confession in the Fourth Gospel," in *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute VII* (ed. Masao Sekine and Akira Satake; Tokyo: Yamamoto Shoten, 1981), 125, argues that "In the New Testament there are very rare passages in which Jesus was identified with 'theos' explicitly. Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:8f.; 2 Peter 1:1; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20 and John 1:1, 18; 20:28 are the few cases in which Jesus was called 'theos.' " Günter Reim, "Jesus as God in the Fourth Gospel: The Old Testament Background," *NTS* 30 (1984): 159, finds that only Hebrews (1:8–9) and the Fourth Gospel (1:1, 18; 20:28) present Jesus as God. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to John: An Introduction and Commentary with Notes on the Greek* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 477, states that "Christ is called θεός only in John and in the Pastorals."

structurally key junctures in the text of the Gospel: at the beginning and end of the prologue (1:1 and 1:18) and just before the Gospel's conclusion (20:28; cf. 20:30–31).[4] Only a few have concluded that the placement of such statements in John's Gospel encourages its reader to pay close and careful attention not just to where in his Gospel John offers such statements but also to why it is that he does so at such structurally crucial places.

What Is an Inclusio and Where in John's Gospel Does One Find Them?

Scholars widely acknowledge also that the author of the Fourth Gospel employs inclusios as framing devices throughout his Gospel. Barnabas Lindars defines an inclusio in helpful terms as a device that rounds off a thought "by bringing it back to the beginning, which is frequent in John."[5] The presence of inclusios throughout John's Gospel alerts the Gospel's reader to its

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[4] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 284, observes that "all three Johannine instances of a christological use of θεός are strategically placed and essential to the flow of thought. The Fourth Gospel begins (1:1) as it ends (20:28), the Prologue begins (1:1) as it ends (1:18) with an unequivocal assertion of the deity of Christ which is crucial to the argument being developed."

[5] Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; England: Oliphants, 1972; repr., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 76. Alternatively, David E. Aune, "Inclusio," *WDNTR*, 229, describes the designation "inclusio" as "a modern literary term referring to two very similar phrases or clauses placed at the beginning and end of a relatively short unit of text as a framing device." Charles H. Lohr, "Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 408–9, defines an inclusio as "a feature of oral technique in which a word or phrase occurring at the beginning of a poem is repeated at its close. . . . Because *inclusio* focuses the attention of the audience back from the conclusion of a passage to its beginning, it can be used to interconnect the parts of a story. Its function at this stage of a tradition is to provide a frame, which will link more or less self-contained passages—episodes, similes, descriptions and digressions—to the web of the narrative." M. E. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue* (trans. Carisbrooke Dominicans; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1957), 76–77, describes the device as an example of "Semitic inclusiveness." For Boismard, "a certain word, emphasizing a certain idea, is repeated at the beginning and at the end of a literary development, as if the thought, after describing an entire circle, returned to the point of its departure." Boismard then lists the frame formed by 1:1 and 1:18 as an example. Boismard later describes this as "construction by envelopment" and states, "Th[is] form of construction is relatively frequent in St. John's writings" (p. 78). Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:338, observes that "The prologue is especially Christology, as expressed by the *inclusio* of 1:1, 18." In a note (n. 68), Keener offers the helpful observation that "An *inclusio* surrounding a poem appears in a widely read Greek classic, Homer *Od.* 1.1–10, where 1.1–2 and 1.10 invoke the Muse to tell the story while 1.2–9 summarizes the whole book's plot." George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (AnBib 117; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Istituto Biblico, 1987), 93, notes that "This literary procedure of enclosing a literary unit between two important and identical words or phrases at the beginning and end of the unit is frequently found in the Fourth Gospel." Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 29, describes an inclusio as "the technique whereby a passage ends where it began, a form of ring composition in which the closure of a text picks up the language of its opening sentences. In the Prologue, this is visible in the way the narrator returns at the end of the passage (v. 18) to the subject with which it began (vv. 1–2)." Raymond E.

author's fondness for utilizing such structuring and repetitive devices for rhetorical effect. Therefore, to read well, one must take careful note of the inclusios employed by the Gospel's author, seeking to understand their role in the shape, in the contours, of the narrative.

To many, the Gospel offers a first clear indication of its structural interest in the framing of its narrative with a prologue (1:1–18) and an epilogue (21:1–25).[6] Others have called attention, as this dissertation has and will, to similarities between the prologue and the narrative's final chapter (20:1–31).[7] Still others have noted John's repeated employment of additional, complementary inclusios from the beginning to the end of his narrative. Several have directed important attention especially to John's use of inclusios to mark the boundaries of the narrative's first and second half.

Paying close and careful attention to the Gospel's repeated references to the person and the significance of the Baptist, Mathias Rissi was in 1983 one of the first to argue for an understanding of the Gospel of John's structure based on the journeys of Jesus who, roughly speaking, makes his way in John's Gospel from north to south (to Jerusalem and to its environs)

Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. Francis J. Moloney; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 287, lists the device as a characteristic of John's style, as does Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (trans. Kevin Smyth et al.; 3 vols.; Freiburg: Herder, 1965–1975; repr., N.Y.: Crossroad, 1990), 1:116. Saeed Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2/120; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 151, observes without much explanation that "Closely associated with chiasm is the use of 'inclusio,' a common symmetrical feature in the Old Testament which is evident in the Fourth Gospel as well." See also Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001), 71. Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 28, includes inclusio as an example of John's "cyclical repetitive quality."

[6] Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 295, suggests rightly that an inclusio can "enclose a word, phrase, or short passage," or it can define "the borders of a [much larger] literary unit." James L. Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design and Point of View in John* (Biblical Interpretation Series 56; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 171–72, describes the plot of John's Gospel in terms of a "U" shape. John 1 and 20–21 are both "stable" and "upward," while the intervening narrative contains the "low points." Unfortunately, this requires the identification of the crucifixion as the low point, and even a "disaster" (p. 171). Resseguie makes the additional observation that this format places the Gospel of John in the category of comedy.

[7] E.g., see Alicia D. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus: A Rhetorical Analysis on the Fourth Gospel's Use of Scripture in Its Presentation of Jesus* (LNTS 458; New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 173–74.

on four separate occasions.[8] According to Rissi, Jesus' first three journeys (see 1:19–3:36; 4:1–5:47; 6:1–10:39) make up the first half of the Gospel, and his fourth and final journey (10:40–20:31) makes up the second half of the Gospel. In Rissi's scheme of things, the Baptist serves as a pivotal figure both at the beginning of the Gospel's first half (1:19–37) and at the beginning of its second half (10:40–42).

Alternatively, Bruce Schuchard's understanding of the Gospel's structure[9] focuses also on the four journeys of Jesus, but rightly finds in the narrative's first and last references to the person and significance of the Baptist a frame for the first half of the Gospel (1:19–10:42).[10] Schuchard additionally finds that references to a "troubled Thomas" (first in 11:16, then in 20:24–29) and to a dead man rising (first Lazarus, then Jesus) frame further the second half of the Gospel (11:1–20:31).[11] Just as the Baptist appears first in the prologue (1:6–8, 15),[12] so also

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[8] See Mathias Rissi, "Der Aufbau des Vierten Evangeliums," *NTS* 29 (1983): 48–54. See also Jeffrey Staley, "The Structure of John's Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel's Narrative Structure," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 241–64, whose dissertation *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (SBL Dissertation Series 82; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988), 50–71, likewise focuses on Jesus' "ministry tours," the third ending at 10:42. The related study of Fernando Segovia, "The Journey(s) of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel," *Semeia* 53 (1991): 23–54, argues instead for a threefold structure. Robert J. Karris, *John: Stories of the Word and Faith* (NCP Bible Commentaries; New York: New City, 2008), follows Segovia.

[9] See Bruce G. Schuchard, "The Wedding Feast at Cana and the Christological Monomania of St. John," in *All Theology is Christology: Essays in Honor of David P. Scaer* (ed. Dean O. Wenthe et al.; Fort Wayne, Ind.: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2000), 101–16.

[10] Segovia, "The Journey(s) of the Word of God," 39, observes that the texts concerning the Baptist (1:19–34; 3:22–26; 10:40–42; see also 5:33–36) not only signify the beginning and ending of narrative units, but also decrease in length. "In other words, by their very length these three narrative sections show how, as the ministry of Jesus begins to unfold, the ministry of John comes to an end." This same waxing of Jesus' ministry in contradistinction to the waning of John's ministry (3:30) is present first in the four days of 1:19–51.

[11] Bruce G. Schuchard, "Form versus Function: Citation Technique and Authorial Intention in the Gospel of John" (A paper presented at a themed session on The Use of Scripture in the Johannine Literature for the Johannine Literature Section of the Society of Biblical Literature at its 2012 gathering, November 17–20, in Chicago). Schuchard notes in his paper the considerable additional use of inclusios elsewhere in John's Gospel in support of its impressively extensive design.

[12] See further the analysis of 1:1 and 1:18 below.

Thomas appears last in the epilogue (21:2).[13] Just as Jesus is said to be God in 1:1 so also is he said to be God in 1:18 and in 20:28.

John 1:1 and 1:18. Throughout the history of scholarship, many have noted the compositional uniqueness of John's prologue, with various conclusions. Many have marked the similarity between the beginning and the end of the prologue.[14] Others have argued for its chiastic structure.[15] For these, observes Culpepper, "The correspondence between the beginning and the end of the prologue is probably the most widely accepted point in the hypothesis of a chiastic structure."[16] Though the attempt to fit every word of the prologue into a tight chiastic

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[13] Both Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 390–93; and Andrew Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John* (BNTC 4; New York: Continuum, 2005), 509, note the inclusio formed by the theme of witness from the Baptist's witness in John 1 to the witness of the Beloved Disciple in John 21.

[14] "Just as in 1:1 the Word is called God," observes Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 1:36, "so also in 1:18 he is called God. Just as in 1:1 he resides in God's presence, so also in 1:18 he dwells in his bosom." See also Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. George R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964; repr., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 83; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:280; Keener, *John*, 1:426; Carson, *John*, 135; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 48; Grant R. Osborne, *The Gospel of John* (Cornerstone Biblical Commentaries 13; Carol Streams, Ill.: Tyndale, 2007), 27; Robert Kysar, "Christology and Controversy: The Contributions of the Prologue of the Gospel of John to New Testament Christology and Their Historical Setting," *CurTM* 5 (1978): 356; Mlakuzhyil, *Literary Structure*, 96; Francis J. Moloney, *John* (ed. Daniel J. Harrington; SP 4; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 46; Stibbe, *John*, 29; Michael Theobald, *Im Anfang war das Wort: Textlinguistische Studie zum Johannesprolog* (SBS 106; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 48; Elizabeth Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (JSNTSup 107; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 92; Jey J. Kanagaraj, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary with Elements of Comparison to Indian Religious Thoughts and Cultural Practices* (Secunderabad, India: OM Books, 2005), 62; Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (NSBT 24; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2008), 50; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 66; D. A. Fennema, "John 1:18: 'God the Only Son,' " 129–30; Robert M. Jr. Bowman and J. Ed. Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2007), 138; and Lindars, *John*, 99.

[15] For a helpful summary and evaluation of the various attempts to identify particular structures within the prologue, see Jan G. van der Watt, "The Composition of the Prologue of John's Gospel: The Historical Jesus Introducing Divine Grace," *WTJ* 57 (1995): 311–18.

[16] R. Alan Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1980–1981): 9. Culpepper's chiastic view of the prologue (A=1–2, B=3, C=4–5, D=6–8, E=9–10, F=11, G=12a, H=12b, G^1=12c, F^1=13, E^1=14, D^1=15, C^1=16, B^1=17, A^1=18) reflects, in basic form, the work of previous scholars, who observe parallel thoughts or words in a chiastic pattern from the beginning to the end of the prologue. Nils Lund, "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels," *AThR* 13 (1931): 27–48, and Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 79–80, advocated similar chiastic readings of the prologue. The most obvious difference between these early treatments was the exclusion of the Baptist material (Lund) and its inclusion (Boismard). Common between Lund and Boismard, and many others to

structure has proven tenuous, the observation of remarkable similarity between the beginning and end of the prologue remains helpful. First, in both verses, and only in these verses of the prologue, the λόγος/μονογενής is referenced as one who is θεός[17] and who is distinct from yet in close relationship with another one who is called θεός.[18] Second, 1:1 and 1:18 present one who is first called θεός, who is not the λόγος/μονογενής. Explicitly named the Father in 1:18, in 1:1, this is the one with whom the λόγος is. It is in the Father's bosom that the λόγος dwells. Also in these two verses, the λόγος/μονογενής is also named θεός. The prologue begins and ends with the fellowship between the two who are properly called θεός. In light of this, the Gospel's reader is led to seek the close association between the λόγος/μονογενής and θεός both within the prologue

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follow is the observation that the prologue begins and ends in similar fashion. While many opinions exist concerning the exact details of the intervening chiasm, seeming consensus exists that the last verse of the prologue ends the chiastic structure with remarkably similar subject matter as the beginning verses of the prologue. For other scholars who also view 1:1 and 1:18 as parallel statements within a chiastic (or parabolic) structure of the prologue, see Stephen Voorwinde, "John's Prologue: Beyond Some Impasses of Twentieth-Century Scholarship," *WTJ* 63 (2002): 28–32; Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," 1–31; M. E. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 73–77; Staley, "The Structure of John's Prologue," 244–49; Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1984), 20–21, 27; Eoin de Bhaldraithe, "The Johannine Prologue Structure and Origin," *ABR* 58 (2010): 57–60; Watt, "The Composition of the Prologue of John's Gospel," 329–30; and Talbert, *Reading John*, 66–67.

[17] Martin Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 272, helpfully observes, "The Word in John 1:1 is not a philosophical first principle; rather, the Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος expresses *the eternal being of the Word right from eternity* in inseparable communion with God: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, he was associated with God from eternity, before all time." See also Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (ed. Francis Noel Davey; London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 137, who states, "The Word of God is the Word *of* God. It is His meaning and will, and, for this reason, it is the meaning of the whole universe, which is the creation of God by His Word. The Word of God is, however, no second entity, like Him, but less than He. Therefore, if it be said that the Word is with God, it must immediately, and in the same breath, be said that He *is* God"; Jan van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 46–49.

[18] Hengel, "The Prologue of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," 272–73, adds, "At the same time, God's Word is given *an inalienable personality*: it is with the Father, one with him in will and being, but not simply identical with him"; Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 95, describes that "Christ is distinct from the Father in so far as he is *the Word* (and the Word was with God), just as he is distinct from the Father also in so far as he is *Son* (the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father)"; James Parker, "The Incarnational Christology of John," *CTR* 3 (1988): 37–38, comments on 1:1, "It is absolutely clear to the reader of John that the Word shared in the nature of Deity. He did not mean, however, that the Word and God were simply interchangeable words. While the Word is fully Deity, the concept of God embraces more than the Word. John does not explain it further."

and throughout the Gospel's narrative. At the same time, the λόγος/μονογενής is θεός and there is another who is called θεός. There are not, however, two Gods, as John's Gospel is fundamentally monotheistic.[19]

In order to return the reader to the opening theme of the identification of the λόγος/μονογενής and θεός, 1:18 closes the prologue with a clear recapitulation of 1:1.[20] Köstenberger and Swain observe, "The final reference to God completes the panorama from the eternity of God in 1:1 to the invisibility of God in 1:18 (cf. 5:37; 6:46)."[21] θεός in 1:1b is equated with πατήρ in 1:18. The λόγος is the μονογενής who is in the Father's bosom, makes him known. Borchert comments on the inclusio formed by 1:1 and 1:18:

> The mention of the Father and the stress on the uniqueness of Jesus reminds the reader of the opening verse of the Prologue. The discussion has thus come full circle, and in doing so it presents a tightly constructed, complex introductory theological rationale for reading the Gospel… [T]he purpose of the incarnate Logos and the purpose of the entire Gospel are one in focus because the Gospel was written to engender believing in this Jesus to the end that readers might experience the transformation of life (20:30–31).[22]

Thus, the inclusio formed by 1:1 and 1:18 is an important device employed by the author to assist the reader in the pursuit of the goal of what follows. Far from being a mere restatement of the truths of 1:1, 1:18 adds something, moving the Gospel's hearer forward into the narrative for the purpose of seeking a resolution to the simple yet complex statement "No one has ever seen

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[19] Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 5, notes, "Theologically, the Gospel presupposes important aspects of Jewish tradition. It is understood that there is only one true God (17:3). Whatever the Gospel says about Jesus' heavenly origin occurs within the basic framework of monotheism."

[20] Bhaldraithe, "Johannine Prologue," commenting on the chiastic structure of the prologue, observes, "V. 18 then seems to be composed as a conscious parallel to v. 1–2. Some believe that since those instances occur at the beginning and end of the passage, they may be more in the nature of an 'inclusion.' The function of an inclusion would be to signal the end of a passage by echoing the beginning. Here, the fact that there are 'several inclusions' does seem to indicate the conscious decision to build a more elaborate chiasm."

[21] Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 50.

[22] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11* (NAC 25A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 125.

God," especially in light of the prologue's concluding suggestion that "the Unique One"[23] "has made (him) known."

John 1:1 and 20:28. Thus, the Gospel begins with the framed assertion that Jesus is θεός in 1:1 and 1:18. Yet Jesus is not again referred to as θεός until 20:28. Does, then, the latter recall 1:1, 1:18, or both? Many have pointed first to the explicit identification of Jesus (the λόγος) as θεός in 1:1. Within her discussion concerning John's use of inclusios, Sandra Schneiders labels the inclusio between 1:1 and 20:28 "the great *inclusio*."[24] J. Ramsey Michaels observes that the explicit identification of Jesus as God in 1:1 and in 20:28 forms "an admirable pair of bookends framing the whole Gospel."[25] Benjamin Burkholder too argues that "It is hard to see Thomas's testimony calling Jesus θεός as anything less than a masterly woven conclusion where the opening verses of the Prologue introduces this subtle theme only to reintroduce it at the end as some kind of crescendo to the Gospel."[26] Comparing Thomas' confession in 20:28 to 1:1, C. K.

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[23] The translation "Unique One" or "One and Only" for *μονογενής* is preferable to "only begotten son." See Parker, "The Incarnational Christology of John," 39, who states, "While exegetes differ as to its meaning, it appears most likely that *monogenes* means something like 'alone of its kind'—the only one of that genus. It would therefore be used to heighten Jesus' unique 'one of a kind' qualitatively different sonship." See further Donald A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1996), 30–31; R. L. Roberts, "The Rendering "Only Begotten" in John 3:16," *ResQ* 16 (1973): 2–22.

[24] Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 28.

[25] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 1018. See also George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (2d ed.; WBC 36; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 386; John H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (ed. A. H. McNeille; 2 vols.; ICC; New York: T&T Clark, 1928), 2:683; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21* (NAC 25B; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 314; Köstenberger, *John*, 579; Moloney, *John*, 537; Gerard S. Sloyan, *John* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 226, Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), 753; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Kampen, Netherlands: Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1987; repr., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 35; Watt, *Introduction*, 46. See also Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), 346, who says, "Thus this wonderful Gospel beings and ends with the same article of faith."

[26] Benjamin J. Burkholder, "Considering the Possibility of a Theological Corruption in Joh 1:18 in Light of Its Early Reception," *ZNW* 103 (2012): 72. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 394, observes that "Thomas's confession thus corroborates the prologue to the Gospel: 'the Word was God.' In John's Gospel it plays the climactic part that is played in Mark's record by the

Barrett also finds, "There can be no doubt that John intended this confession of faith to form the climax to the Gospel."[27] Therefore, the Gospel ends as its prologue begins, with a clear statement of the divinity of Jesus. Whereas 1:1 carries forth the confession of the narrator concerning the divinity of Jesus, Thomas' confession in 20:28 is the first occurrence of a character within the narrative confessing what the reader has known from the beginning; Jesus is θεός. As the structure of the narrative traces the journeys of Jesus to Jerusalem, so the reader has read of the journey to faith. Thomas the Twin is one who is brought from misunderstanding, confusion, and even disbelief to belief through the words from and about Jesus. Though most agree concerning the inclusio between 1:1 and 20:28, others have preferred to highlight the connection of 20:28 to 1:18.

John 1:18 and 20:28. Noting Jesus' stated identity at both the end of the prologue to the Gospel's end, some have argued for the existence of an inclusio formed by 1:18 and Thomas' confession of Jesus as "my Lord and my God" in 20:28.[28] The focus of such findings, however, has been where one would expect it to be: on 1:18b. Little to no attention has been paid to the importance of 1:18a. The question left unaddressed when observing the inclusio between 1:18

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centurion's comment: 'Truly this man was the Son of God!' (Mark 15:39)." Carson, *John*, 659, agrees, "The thoughtful reader of this Gospel immediately recognizes . . . Thomas' confession . . . is the crowning display of how human faith has come to recognize the truth set out in the Prologue: 'The Word was God . . .; the Word became flesh' (1:1, 14)." See also Moloney, *John*, 537.

[27] Barrett, *John*, 477. See also Harris, *Jesus As God*, 128; D. Moody Smith, *John* (ANTC; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1999), 383; James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975), 5:324.

[28] See Smith, *John*, 62. See also idem, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (NTTh; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22; Koester, *The Word of Life*, 25, 106–7; Köstenberger, *John*, 579; Ridderbos, *John*, 648; William Bonney, *Caused to Believe: The Doubting Thomas Story as the Climax of John's Christological Narrative* (BibInt 62; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 4; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1998), 243; Keener, *John*, 1:335 n. 34; R. A. Falconer, "The Prologue to the Gospel of John," in *The Expositor* (ed. W. Robertson Nicoll; Fifth Series 5; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897), 233; Borchert, *John 1–11*, 125; Harris, *Jesus As God*, 284–86; Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John* (BibInt 93; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 210–11; and Ben Witherington III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster, 1995), 344–45.

and 20:28 is, what is the necessity of 1:18, or what does 1:18 add to the understanding of John's structure and theology? The overall inclusio between 1:1 and 20:28 identifies Jesus as θεός at both the beginning and end of the Gospel. It is precisely 1:18a, we will see, that facilitates a necessary understanding of John's intention for connecting the inclusios formed by 1:1 and 1:18, and by 1:18 and 20:28.

John 1:1, 1:18, and 20:28. While a great many have noted that John explicitly identifies Jesus as God three different times in his Gospel, only very few have linked the three in terms of their literary and theological importance.[29] Andreas Köstenberger observes the critical role of Thomas' confession in 20:28 as the final verse in John's inclusio, when he writes that "This climactic confession forms an *inclusio* with the ascription of deity to Jesus as the Word–made–flesh in 1:1, 14, 18."[30] Not surprisingly, those finding a double inclusio in 1:1, 1:18, and 20:28 have done so when examining the greater number of places in the New Testament where Jesus is called θεός.[31] In his study of the instances in the New Testament where Jesus is called θεός, Murray Harris makes the helpful observation that "Not only the Prologue, but the Gospel as a whole, is enclosed by these literary 'bookends.' The Prologue ends (1:18) as it begins (1:1), and the Gospel ends (20:28) as it begins (1:1), with an assertion of the deity of Jesus."[32] What

[29] Michaels, *John*, 1018, notes that the reader is introduced to Jesus as God in 1:1 and 1:18, and mentions 1:1 and 20:28 as "bookends," but fails to account for 1:18. See also J. N. Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to John* (ed. B. A. Mastin; BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 438; Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 112.

[30] Köstenberger, *John*, 579.

[31] James D. G. Dunn, "Let John Be John: A Gospel for Its Time," in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien: Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982* (ed. Peter Stuhlmacher; WUNT 28; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 322, links 1:1, 18, and 20:28 in the context of John's desire to define "Son of God" as Jesus being truly God. See also Brown, "Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?" 564; Parker, "The Incarnational Christology of John," 45; and Michi Miyoshi, "The 'Theos' Christology as the Ultimate Confession of the Fourth Gospel," in *The Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* (vol. 7; ed. Masao Sekine and Akira Satake; Tokyo: Yamamoto Shoten, 1981), 127–29, who lists 1:1, 18, and 20:28 as the explicit instances where John calls Jesus θεός, and bases his thesis of a θεός Christology on the congruency of the rest of the Gospel with these verses.

[32] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 128.

remains lacking, even in these studies, however, is both a proper understanding of the Gospel's double inclusio and an adequate explanation of the role of 1:18a at its shared midpoint.

What Does John Mean by and Why Does He Say That "No One Has Ever Seen God"?

The statement "No one has ever seen God" begins the verse that ends the prologue. This verse (1:18) forms an inclusio with the first verse of the prologue (1:1) and the end of the narrative (20:28; see also 20:29). In spite of this, many have suggested that the first clause in 1:18 is unexpected and incongruous over against both its immediate context[33] and perhaps even the subsequent narrative.

The suggestion of a disconnect deserves comment. This dissertation will examine 1:18a not as an unexplained aporia, but as an intentionally shocking statement made by the author in order to push the reader to seek resolution throughout the subsequent narrative for the tension here introduced. Yet the author's assertion in 1:18a does surprise the informed reader. Not only does 1:18a interrupt the flow of the prologue, the logical progression of thought in the prologue does not naturally lead to the statement, "No one has ever seen God." Peter Phillips therefore puzzles over 1:18a, wondering why it

> seems to go against the flow of the argument through the Prologue. The readers have been encouraged to (qualitatively) identify λόγος and θεός in the λόγος–θεός–ζωή–φῶς matrix. Readers have also been told that "we have observed his glory" (v. 14). . . . [H]ow can the paradoxes stand? How can λόγος and θεός be identified, and the readers encouraged to watch λόγος and, at the same time, the text insist that no one has ever seen God?[34]

Not only is the statement "No one has ever seen God" seemingly at odds with the rest of the prologue, for some it is also difficult to reconcile with the following narrative. This tension has

[33] Elizabeth Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 92, suggests that it is best to read 1:18 as "entirely self-contained" instead of analyzing 18 in terms of parallelism with 1:17.

[34] Peter M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading* (JSNTSup 294; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 217.

been observed by Margaret Davies, who asks, "But is not the plain assertion 'No one has ever seen God' contradicted by the story which follows? Does not the story insist that Jesus has seen God, and that the disciples, in seeing Jesus, have seen God?"[35]

Since 1:18a begins with the emphatic fronted θεόν, it is essential to identify its referent and to understand John's theology especially pertaining to θεός. In 1975, Nils Dahl declared that "God" was the most neglected factor in New Testament theology.[36] Following this pronouncement, scholars sought to rectify this neglect in New Testament studies in general[37] as well as within the more specific study of the Gospel of John.[38] In his recent study, *God in New Testament Theology*, Larry Hurtado notes that "in the ancient world of the first Christians, the words for god (e.g., the Greek word θεός) designated one of many kinds of divine beings."[39] Yet the New Testament does not share this use of θεός. Instead, the religion of the New Testament, just as in the Old Testament, is monotheistic. The only proper worship is monolatry.[40] The one

[35] Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 120. See also Tord Larsson, *God in the Fourth Gospel: A Hermeneutical Study of the History of Interpretations* (ConBNT 35; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001), 244, who, commenting on the view of God as hidden based on 1:18a, suggests that "In this context, the prologue should be seen as an attempt to explain something contradictory." See also G. L. Phillips, "Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel," in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Frank L. Cross; London: A. R. Mowbray, 1957), 83, who remarks, "The Fourth Gospel, which makes so many uses of the Greek words for seeing, is also the gospel which states most emphatically that no man has seen God at any time."

[36] See Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology," *Reflections* 75 (1975): 5–8 (reprinted in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine* [ed. Donald H. Juel; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1991], 153–63).

[37] See especially Larry W. Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology* (LiBT; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2010).

[38] See, e.g. Larsson, *God in the Fourth Gospel*; and Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001).

[39] Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, 27.

[40] Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 31, discussing the OT practice of monolatry, present also in Christianity, concludes, "For devout Jews, the core requirement of Judaism was the exclusive worship of Israel's God."

God, who alone is deserving of worship, is, then, the God of the Old Testament.[41] D. Moody Smith summarizes, "The fundamental question of the Fourth Gospel is the question of God, not whether a god exists but who is God and how God reveals himself. . . . Should one answer for John that the God revealed is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as Moses and David, that answer would be correct as far as it goes."[42] In John's prologue, the equation of John's intended referent for θεός and the God of the Old Testament is explicit.[43] We should expect, then, the God of John's prologue to be consistently one with the God of the Old Testament. After drawing parallels between the hiddenness of Jesus in John and the hiddenness of Yahweh in the Old Testament, Mark Stibbe concludes, "One of the characteristics of Yahweh, as we have seen, is his hiddenness and his transcendent elusiveness. John's portrait of God preserves these features; three times John stresses that 'no one has ever seen the Father' except Jesus (1.18; 5.37; 6.46)."[44]

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[41] Discussing the Jewish belief in one God in the midst of Greek philosophy, Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 6, states, "Their self-conscious monotheism was not merely an intellectual belief about God, but a unity of belief and praxis, involving the exclusive worship of this one God and exclusive obedience to this one God. Monolatry as the corollary of monotheism is an important aspect of Jewish monotheism ." Koester, *The Word of Life*, 27, states, "John presupposes that there is only one true God, who has already made himself known through the law and the prophetic writings (5:44; 17:3). When the Gospel speaks of 'god' in the singular, it refers to the God of Israel's tradition."

[42] Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 75–76. See also Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 141, who says that John does not make propositional statements about God because "John simply assumes that the god who is to be known in Jesus of Nazareth is the God of Israel, to whom the Scriptures bear witness." God is a key component to John's Gospel. For the debate on whether this should be discussed as theocentric or Christocentric, see Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*; and Barrett, "Christocentric or Theocentric?" in *Essays on John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 1–18. The importance of the object θεόν is explicit in 1:18a due to its emphatic position as the first word of the clause.

[43] C. Marvin Pate, *The Writings of John: A Survey of His Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011), 39, after listing God's qualities as found in John (including invisibility), concludes, "All of this is pretty much standard Old Testament theology. But what is striking in John is that nearly all of the preceding attributes and actions of God are shared by Jesus Christ, because he is God! In fact, Jesus makes the invisible God visible (1:18)." See also Mark W. G. Stibbe, "The Elusive Christ: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 44 (1991): 36, who observes, "One thing is certain: that Yahweh, the Father, has become visible in Jesus. Consequently, John's Jesus takes on the characteristics of the Old Testament God."

[44] Stibbe, "The Elusive Christ," 36.

Since "the most common designation of God in John is 'Father,' "[45] the study of God in the Fourth Gospel has primarily focused on the Father and has recently received considerable attention.[46] This literature has directed renewed attention to 1:18, yet the focus of these studies has continued to be on the second part of the verse (μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο) and not on the first (θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε). Typical of this is Marianne Meye Thompson who, noting the importance of 1:18 for the interpretation of John, writes that John's concluding purpose statement (20:31) "comes at the climax of a Gospel that opens with a description of that same 'Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,' who has 'made God known' (1:18). Unless, then, one comes through the Gospel to an understanding of who that God is whom Jesus, the Son of God, has revealed, the Gospel will not have achieved its purpose."[47] In spite of this observation, little to no attention is afforded the first part of the same verse.

Essential to the understanding of 1:18a is the understanding that the one that no one has ever seen is the Father. Thus, the work of the μονογενής is to reveal him.[48] Elizabeth Harris never

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[45] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 57. Thompson continues, "John uses 'Father' about 120 times, more often than all the other Gospels combined." Earlier, Thompson (p. 50), labels "Father" as a "particularly distinctive epithet for God in the Gospel of John." See also Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, 39, who labels references to God as Father "particularly characteristic of GJohn"; and Koester, *The Word of Life*, 47.

[46] See Larsson, *God in the Fourth Gospel*; Christopher Cowan, "The Father and Son in the Fourth Gospel: Johannine Subordination Revisited," *JETS* 49 (2006): 115–35; Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 112–15; Paul W. Meyer, " 'The Father': The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black; Louisville: Westminster, 1996), 255–73; Gail R. O'Day, " 'Show Us the Father, and We Will Be Satisfied' (John 14:8)," *Semeia* 85 (1999): 11–17; Adele Reinhartz, "Introduction: 'Father' as Metaphor in the Fourth Gospel," *Semeia* 85 (1999): 1–10; Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*; Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God* (BZNW 121; New York: de Gruyter, 2004); Mark W. G. Stibbe, "Telling the Father's Story: The Gospel of John as Narrative Theology," in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (ed. John Lierman; WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 179–93; Merrill C. Tenney, "Topics from the Gospel of John Part I: The Person of the Father," *BSac* 132 (1975): 37–46; Marianne Meye Thompson, " 'God's Voice You Have Never Heard, God's Form You Have Never Seen': The Characterization of God in the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 177–204; idem, "The Living Father," *Semeia* 85 (1999): 19–31; and D. Francois Tolmie, "The Characterization of God in the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 69 (1998): 57–75.

[47] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 14.

[48] Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 219–20, concludes, "At the end of the Prologue, then, the reader is encouraged to accept the witness of the text that Jesus has made God known . . . in the words of the

specifically identifies the Father in 1:18a, yet understands him to be John's intended referent, as she suggests,

> The emphatic "no one" of v. 18a, with its negation of all human aims and claims for salvation, could prepare for the positive assertion that Jesus has seen God (6:46), since God was his Father, and for the communication to believing disciples of precisely this vision of the Father through "seeing" Jesus (14:9), which vision is closely related to but not derived from, knowledge of the Father (14:7). Likewise to the Jews who are without belief Jesus says that, despite the witness to him of the Father who has sent him, they "have never seen his voice nor seen his form."[49]

Bowman and Komoszewski rightly identify the referent in 1:18a in their study on the deity of Jesus, when they state that in 1:18 "the first occurrence of 'God' (*theon*) refers to the Father. The second occurrence of 'God' (*theos*) refers to the Son."[50] This important observation aids in the proper reading of John's statement in 1:18a and the subsequent narrative, which finds its conclusion in 20:28–29.

Scholars who have paid at least some attention to 1:18a have noted that the opening phrase of this verse is a challenge. The immediate context of 1:18a causes the careful observer to question the intent of the statement in 1:18a. Elizabeth Harris observes, "The negative proposition with which the verse begins, v. 18a, that no one has seen God at any time, is curious. It does not seem to be connected either with what has been stated in v. 17, nor with what is to follow in vv. 19–28, or indeed with the rest of the verse, v. 18b. And, it raises acute questions of the background and the origin of such a sweeping and absolute statement."[51] Indeed, what is one

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Prologue itself. He has made God known through his journey, by his character, by the association of ideas with him. He has made God known by his identification with and relationship with God . . . Jesus is the only one, God, at the Father's side. He has made him known." See also Herman C. Waetjen, "Logos πρὸς τὸν θεόν and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," *CBQ* 63 (2001): 286.

[49] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 100.

[50] Bowman and Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 141. See also Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 48.

[51] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 91.

to make of the Old Testament experience of Moses and others who are said to have seen God? Does John really mean "No one"?

He Brooks No Exceptions. Due to John's immediately prior interest in Moses and the giving of the Law at Sinai (1:17),[52] scholars often have linked 1:18 with Exodus 33–34.[53] While the connection is important, it often also has led to confusion rather than to clarification of John's intention. The Old Testament experience of Moses and others who are said to have seen God, in fact, has encouraged many either to pit John again the Old Testament[54] or to soften 1:18a somehow. Others, however, have seen rightly no contradiction, for the God whom Moses and others saw was not the Father but was instead the Logos of 1:1.

Scholars have suggested that the statement "No one has ever seen God" reflects a prevalent Jewish teaching[55] and reiterates the Old Testament teaching that no one can see God and live

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[52] Alexander Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, and Truth: Ratification of the Sinaitic Covenant according to the Gospel of John* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 35, suggests, "Scholars typically interpret [1:18] in reference to their stand taken on 1:14–17 and their view of the message of the Gospel as a whole." Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (NovTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 175, links 1:18 (and 5:37; 6:46) to 1:14, and suggests that all these verses refer to the theophany at Sinai.

[53] See, e.g. Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, "John 1:14–18 and Exodus 34," *NTS* 23 (1977): 90–101; Henry Mowvley, "John 1:14–18 in the Light of Exodus 33:7–34:35," *ExpTim* 95 (1984):135–37; C. Traets, *Voir Jesus et le Pere en Lui Selon L'Evangile de Saint Jean* (Analecta Gregoriana 159; Rome: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1967), 56; Bowman and Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 139; and Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, and Truth*.

[54] See, e.g., A. J. Droge, " 'No One Has Ever Seen God': Revisionary Criticism in the Fourth Gospel," in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. Craig A. Evans; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 169–85.

[55] See Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium* (2 vols.; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 1:73, who writes, "Der einleitende Satz ist eine Feststellung, die in biblisher Tradition allgemein Gültigkeit hat." Barrett, *John*, 169, labels God's invisibility, or at least the danger in seeing him "a general Old Testament assumption." Bernard, *John*, 1:30, comments, "That God is invisible to the bodily eye was a fundamental principle of Judaism." Michaels, *John*, 91, labels this teaching "classically Jewish." Moody Smith, *John*, 62–63, seems reticent to make a clear statement about the Old Testament background for this statement, but instead calls it "an assumption that is apparently based on Scripture." James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 87, in his discussion of Col 1:15, describes God's invisibility as "a central Jewish theologoumenon."

(Exod 19:21; 33:20; Deut 4:12; Judg 13:22; 1Ki 19:13; Isa 6:2).[56] David Redelings suggests, "While accepting the reality of theophanies, Judaism of the first century regularly denied that, in an ultimate sense, anyone could really *see* the unseen God."[57] In spite of this, some in the OT are said explicitly to have seen God and lived.[58] Noting the divergence of views found in the Scriptures concerning the visibility of God, George Savran concludes, "Taken together, the double tradition of invisibility and palpable presence highlights the ambivalence of the biblical writers about representing God."[59] Taken at face value, John declares that, even for those in the OT past who were given to see something, "no one has ever seen God."

The vast majority of commentaries offer similar suggestions concerning 1:18a and its relationship to Exod 33:20.[60] C. K. Barrett is typical of many scholars. He writes, "That God is

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[56] Borchert, *John 1–11*, 124, suggests, "In the Old Testament to see God would have been tantamount to signing one's own death certificate. Accordingly, a great sense of fear or dread accompanied any experience that even approached a proximate 'seeing' such as described in encounters like those of Gideon with an angel or Isaiah with a vision of the train of God's robe." See also Arno Clemens Gaebelein, *The Gospel of John* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1936), 26; Köstenberger, *John*, 48–49; Robert Kysar, *John* (ACNT; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1986), 33; R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary* (ed. C. F. Evans; Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 88; Lindars, *John*, 98; John Marsh, *Saint John* (The Pelican Gospel Commentaries; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), 111; Sanders, *John*, 85; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:278; Augustus Tholuck, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (trans. Charles P. Krauth; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1859), 80; Hartmut Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology* (trans. Keith Crim; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981), 207–8, who does not view 1:18a as a general observation, but specifically addressing the OT theophanies.

[57] David A. Redelings, *The Epistemological Basis for Belief according to John's Gospel: Miracles and Message in Their Essentials as Nonfictional Grounds for Knowledge of God* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011), 187. Redelings, however, offers little support for this statement. He offers one citation from Philo, who offers a quotation of Herod Agrippa, and several New Testament passages, including John 1:18.

[58] See, e.g. Jacob (Gen 32:24–30), Moses (Exod 33:11; 34:6; Num 12:8; Deut 34:10), Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu with the seventy elders (Exod 24:9–11), Job (42:5), and Isaiah (Isa 6:5).

[59] George Savran, "Seeing Is Believing: On the Relative Priority of Visual and Verbal Perception of the Divine," *BibInt* 17 (2009): 322.

[60] Boice, *John*, 1:121, writes, "No one in the ancient world would have disagreed with the first part of that statement. ... Even the Jews would have thought this way, for they knew that God had spoken to Moses in the Old Testament saying, 'Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live' (Exod 33:20)." Lawrence R. Farley, *The Gospel of John: Beholding the Glory* (The Orthodox Bible Study Companion; Ben Lomond, Calif.: Conciliar, 2006), 22–23, observes, "God remained invisible; indeed, no one has ever seen God. Throughout all Israel's history, God never revealed Himself to the eyes of men, for no one could see that blinding and blasting glory and still live (Exod 33:20). But God has now revealed that glory through human flesh, for the only-begotten . . . , the One who is in the bosom of the Father and who is inseparable from Him, has come down and has explained all." William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids,

invisible, or at least that it is irreverent and unsafe to see him, is a general Old Testament assumption."[61] Jeremias states the contradiction plainly, "God is invisible. Nobody has ever seen him, nobody is able to see him. The man who looks at God must die, for God is the Holy One, and we are defiled by sin."[62] Yet the inherent contradiction in this observation does not garner much attention.[63] A. J. Droge is one of a rare few who notes the seeming inconsistency. Droge observes, "Were we to presume the author of the Fourth Gospel was familiar with these passages, especially those concerning Moses, then we would have every reason to think that the assertion 'No one has ever seen God' is not only *not* in accord with 'a general Old Testament assumption' but also that it is an outright and deliberate *subversion* of a general OT assumption that God may be—and has been—seen."[64] Charles Gieschen, when discussing 1:18a, asks, "How could anyone who has read the Old Testament write this statement?"[65]

Mich.: Baker, 1953), 89–90, says, "Not only had the law been given through Moses, but the latter enjoyed the great privilege of speaking with God 'face to face.' Nevertheless, even Moses did not *see* God; i.e. *he did not get to know God in all his fullness* (Exod 33:18). For him as well as for all others the words of Job 11:7 remain true: (89) 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty *unto perfection*? Is it high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?' " Mowvley, "John 1 in the Light of Exodus 33–34," 137, commenting on 1:18a, asserts that "we may say that the reference is primarily to Exod 33:20. Both Exodus and John agree on this matter." Ridderbos, *John*, 58–59, comments, "What has just been said about Moses resonates with the statement that 'no one has ever seen God.' Although the Old Testament speaks in different ways concerning the vision of God (cf. Exod 33:11, 20; Num 12:8; Deut 18:16), the persistent view is that for no one, not even for Moses, can God be an object of direct observation and that the human person cannot even exist in God's unveiled presence." Osborne, *John*, 27, suggests, "When Moses asked to see God's glory, he was told to stand in the cleft of a rock as God passed by so that God could cover his face lest he look upon God's face and die. John's statement, 'no one has ever seen God,' does not mean people have never seen visions of God (as does occur in Exod 24:9–11; Isa 6:1–13; Ezek 1–3). Those visions were partial, however, and no one has ever seen God as he truly is."

[61] Barrett, *John*, 169. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 167, says, "Orthodox Judaism assumed that the vision of God is impossible to men in this life, and that it is a blessing reserved for the Age to Come."

[62] Joachim Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 86.

[63] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 49, lists invisibility as a Hellenistic influence on John's characteristics of God, since it is inconsistent with an OT understanding of the visibility of God.

[64] Droge, "No One has Ever Seen God," 172.

[65] Charles A. Gieschen, "The Real Presence of the Son before Christ: Revisiting an Old Approach to Old Testament Christology," *CTQ* 68 (2004): 109.

In spite of these observations, the majority of scholars treat John 1:18a as little more than a recapitulation of the story of Moses in Exod 33–34, or as reflecting a general Old Testament truth. Though a noteworthy similarity links John's prologue and the events at Sinai in Exodus, many have failed to appreciate the distinct nature of the statement made in 1:18a. Typical of this is George Beasley-Murray, who writes, "In view of the Exodus associations of vv 14 and 17, 'No one has ever seen God' will have in view not only deliverers and prophets of Hellenistic religions and of the OT generally, but most especially Moses. He witnessed the theophany at Sinai, but his request to look directly on the glory of God was denied: 'No mortal may see me and live' (Exod 33:18–20)."[66] In his study of the visions of Yahweh, Jan Joosten notes that the OT presentation of the vision of God is dialectical and writes, "seeing God is perilous, but also desirable in certain situations. The inherent danger does not make the seeing of God impossible in practice . . . God has an anthropomorphic or corporeal form that can be seen."[67] John 1:18a, however does not present the reader with a dialectical seeing of God. The statement is absolute, and is to be read as such, without negating the presentation of Moses' theophanic experiences in Exodus. The previous context of Exod 33 in John's prologue does suggest some correlation between 1:18 and Exod 33, yet the event portrayed in Exod 33–34 (and Exod 24) explicitly discusses a vision of God, whereas 1:18a expressly denies that anyone has ever seen God. Carson observes, "John writes, as if to remind his readers not only of a commonplace of Judaism, but also of the fact that in the episode where Moses saw the Lord's glory (Exod 33–34), to which allusion has just been made (1:14), Moses himself was not allowed to see God (Exod 33:20)." He later observes, "The fact remains that the consistent Old Testament assumption is

[66] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 15.

[67] Jan Joosten, "To See God: Conflicting Exegetical Tendencies in the Septuagint," in *Die Septuaginata: Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten* (ed. Martin Karrer and Kraus Wolfgang; WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 288–89.

that God cannot be seen, or, more precisely, that for a sinful human being to see him would bring death."[68] Though Carson (like many others)[69] seems content to allow these two mutually exclusive realities to exist without explanation, the absolute statement in 1:18a stands in seemingly startling contradiction to the experience of Moses, who is explicitly mentioned in the previous verse (1:17). A more satisfactory explanation of this dichotomy and resolution of this tension is needed.

Either God has never been seen, or he has been seen. This incongruity is noticed by Jerry Sumney, who observes, while commenting on Col 1:15, "Furthermore, claiming that God by nature is invisible sets this passage in significant tension with a number of statements in the Old Testament. The central point this clause makes is that Christ is the means by which God reveals Godself to the world."[70] If God is visible, and there is danger is gazing upon him, then the reader should be rather surprised to read that he is indeed invisible. If God is invisible, and there is a warning against seeing him, then either the vision of God is mysteriously multifaceted, or there exists a truth about the vision of an invisible God which needs explanation. Scholars typically have written as though the invisibility of God and the visibility of God can be reconciled somehow without further explanation. John does not, however, address the dangerous consequence of seeing God as taught in the Old Testament. Instead, he simply states that "No one has ever seen God."

Recently, Alexander Tsutserov has posited that the clause "full of grace and truth" (1:14) is an allusion to Exodus 34:6 and thus 1:14–18 is to be read in light of this allusion. Therefore, the concept of *doxa* in the prologue and the narrative of the Gospel is to be interpreted in light of the

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[68] Carson, *John*, 134.

[69] See, for example Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 64–65, 139.

[70] Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 63–64.

Sinai covenant.[71] Of special interest is the author's interaction with 1:18 and his suggestion that a direct correlation exists between the prologue and the events of Exod 33–34. For Tsutserov the OG/LXX is John's source[72] and the theophany of Exod 33 (and Exod 24) is a vision of God's *doxa*. As is common in the LXX, the theophany in Exod 24 is softened from וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל to καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἱστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ισραηλ.[73] Therefore, the absolute statement of 1:18a is softened by Tsutserov to mean that "no one had been capable of dwelling in the presence of God."[74] The remarkably common inclination of scholars to minimize or ignore the absolute statement of 1:18a is repeated, as the statement "No one has ever seen God" is read as though John is suggesting that the people of the Old Testament saw God, but only saw him incompletely. The absoluteness of John's statement and the role of this statement for the interpretation of the Gospel remains unexamined.

Still maintaining that John alludes to Exod 33, a minority of scholars have noticed the lack of total agreement between what John states and the experience of Moses and others.[75] Murray

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[71] Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, and Truth*, 38.

[72] For John's thoroughgoing use of the OG, see further Bruce G. Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John* (SBLDS 133; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

[73] For more on the tendency of the LXX to avoid explicit theophanic experiences, see below.

[74] Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, and Truth*, 176.

[75] See, e.g., Shannon Elizabeth Farrell, "Seeing the Father (Jn 6:46, 14:9) Part 1: From Non-Seeing to Rational Seeing," *ScEs* 44 (1992): 3, who observes, "The whole concept of non-seeing could be undermined by certain biblical references to a vision of God"; Camilla Hélena von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord in Early Jewish Interpretations of Genesis* (BZAW 412; New York: de Gruyter, 2010), 359, who observes, "the assertion in verse 18 that no one has ever *seen* God appears to be a flat contradiction of Jacob's words in Gen 32:31"; Riemer Roukema, "Jesus and the Divine Name in the Gospel of John," in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity* (ed. George H. van Kooten; TBN 9; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 208, who, after listing 1:18, 5:37, and 6:46, observes that they "seem to contradict several Old Testament texts that deal with some way of seeing God"; Anthony J. Kelly and Francis J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 53, who suggest that John 1:18a would be "an affront to the Jewish piety of the day"; and David J. MacLeod, "The Benefits of the Incarnation of the Word: John 1:15–18," *BSac* 161 (2004): 188, who, after suggesting that John is refuting those who claim Moses saw God in Exod 33, states, "There were other occasions in Old Testament times when people are said to have seen God (e.g., Jacob, Gen 32:30; Moses and the leaders, Exod 24:9–10; and Isaiah, Isa 6:5). But all those theophanies or Christophanies were partial, visionary, and evanescent. They did not see God in His actual being." See also John F. McHugh, *A Critical*

Harris has observed, "That God as he is in himself cannot be seen by the physical or even the spiritual eye was axiomatic in Judaism. At the same time, no Jew would have denied that on occasion, through self-disclosure, God permitted himself to be seen in some 'form,' that is, indirectly or partially."[76] Elizabeth Harris astutely observes

> It may be that the statement in 1:18 that no human being has seen God at any time could include a reference to the Old Testament in its scope and involve a denial of Old Testament statements; but if so the reference is likely to have been wider than Exodus 33–34. For readers acquainted with the Old Testament could well have recalled Exod 24:9–11, where not only Moses but his three companions and all the elders of Israel are said to have seen the Lord without paying any penalty, and there were prophets and seers for whom the same could be claimed.[77]

What Harris fails satisfactorily to address, however, is how this inconsistency is addressed and/or resolved in 1:18 or in the body of the narrative. Once again, it seems as though scholars have little confidence in the author of the gospel. The presence of various suggestions concerning what he really meant to say (instead of what he actually said) reveals the disjunctive quality of this statement. A more fruitful approach is to understand the statement as written, and to seek understanding for this difficulty in the narrative that follows.

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and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4 (ed. Graham N. Stanton; ICC; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 69, who suggests that the lack of the article before θεόν implies that no one has ever seen "God *qua* God," though they might have "seen" him under shadows and figures at Mamre, the burning bush, or in a vision; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 11, who contrasts Moses' limited vision with Jesus' full vision; Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 113, who, after discussing "seeing God" in the Old Testament and Jewish literature notes that, "In spite, then, of the biblical assertions that various individuals 'saw God,' both within the OT itself and in later Jewish tradition, those assertions are qualified so as to deny that anyone actually sees God directly, or face to face." R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 106, writes that no one actually saw Jesus in the OT either. Culpepper's observation misses the message of the Prologue. The import of the Prologue is that in the Logos in the flesh, Jesus is the one who enables those who believe in him to see God the Father. To see Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31) is to see the Father (John 14:6–9).

[76] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 93. See also Osborne, *John*, 27, who states, "John's statement, 'no one has ever seen God,' does not mean that people have never seen visions of God (as does occur in Exod 24:9–11; Isa 6:1–13; Ezek 1–3). Those visions were partial, however, and no one has ever seen God as he truly is."

[77] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 23.

Still others have sought a different solution, noting that John makes use of intentional rhetorical and literary techniques. Alicia Myers' recently published dissertation seeks to analyze the rhetorical role of Scripture throughout John's Gospel. In so doing, she compares the rhetorical techniques employed by John to the *topoi* found in rhetorical handbooks and *progymnasmata*. Specifically, Myers proposes the presence of *synkrisis* in the prologue wherein Jesus is presented as superior to two honored historical figures, John (the Baptist) and Moses. "1:18 also insinuates Jesus' superiority by denying Moses a clear vision of God and instead reserving the Father's bosom for Jesus. . . . In other words, because of his unique origins, 'upbringing,' and deeds, Jesus is able to make God known."[78] While Myers' observations are helpful and do seek to reckon with the obvious incongruity between 1:18a and the experience of Moses, she fails in the end to understand the role of not-seeing both in the prologue and throughout the narrative.

Another suggestion that has been offered proposes that John reflects a progression in Old Testament theology exhibited in Deut 4:12, 15, which recapitulates the Sinai experience in Exodus, yet states that God was not seen. Some assert that the Deuteronomist had a higher view of Yahweh, and thus removed the reference to seeing Yahweh. Moshe Weinfeld contends that

> Deuteronomy has . . . taken care to shift the centre of gravity of the theophany from the visual to the aural plane. . . . Indeed, the pre-deuteronomic texts always invariably speak of the danger of *seeing* the Deity: "For man shall not see me and live" (Exod 33:20) and similarly in Gen 32:31: "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved" (cf. Judg 13:22; Isa 6:5). The book of Deuteronomy, on the other hand, cannot conceive of the possibility of seeing the Divinity.[79]

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[78] Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 70.

[79] Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972; repr., Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 207. Weinfeld further notes this difference in First Isaiah and Ezekiel (which contain visions of God) and Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah (which lack visual elements). See also Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, 207, who suggests that the "old Sinai material . . . wanted to stress the revelation to Israel that the elders saw God, while the Deuteronomic theology teaches that the one who reveals himself cannot be seen (Deut 4:12, 15–24), and in later times the invisibility of God is generally assumed (Sir 43:31). Lindars, *John*, 98, after noting the OT

This shift is viewed as an overall progression of Israel's view of Yahweh. Shannon Farrell suggests, "As the faith of Yahweh's chosen people evolves, the radical idea of a face-to-face vision of God is avoided. Expressions such as God's 'glory' or 'angel of God' often replace references to a more direct type of seeing. If a reference to seeing God is maintained, the form of the verb to see is often changed."[80] Others have observed that the Targums reflect the desire to minimize or change the language of theophany.[81]

The translators of the Septuagint also displayed a tendency to change the language of the Hebrew text so that the appearance of God is either minimized or removed altogether. Anthony Hanson observes, after his examination of six theophanic passages in the LXX, "We may safety conclude, that within the LXX itself we can trace the beginning of the exegetical tradition, which, no doubt under the influence of Greek rationalism, softened down anthropomorphisms and modified cruder notions of how human beings may know God."[82]

The perceived incongruity between the record of the people in the OT who experienced theophanies and the absolute statement in 1:18a has also been explained as evidence for John's rebuttal of Jewish mysticism. Evidence for the presence of mysticism (both *merkabah* and

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teaching that direct sight of God was dangerous, observes, "The view of later Jewish piety, however, was that it is beyond man's capacity to see God."

[80] Farrell, "Seeing the Father Part 1," 3.

[81] This is discussed briefly in Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 112.

[82] Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, "The Treatment of the LXX of the Theme of Seeing God," in *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and Its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings, Manchester, 1990* (ed. George J. Brooke and Barnabas Lindars; Septuagint and Cognate Studies 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 566. See also Joosten, "To See God," 289–90, who suggests not only a move away from seeing God in the text of the OT, but especially in the transmission and translation of the MT. One example of the Septuagint's tendency to remove an explicit vision of God is Exod 24:10. The MT reads וַיִּרְאוּ אֵת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (and they saw the God of Israel). The Septuagint translates καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἱστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ισραηλ (and they saw the place where the God of Israel stood). For further discussions of the anti-anthropomorphisms in the Septuagint, see Charles T. Fritsch, *The Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch* (Princeton Oriental Texts; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), who attributes the tendency to edit out anthropomorphisms to the influence of Palestinian Judaism.

hekhalot) as a popular religious teaching exists in the literature of Second Temple Judaism.[83] April DeConick defines the core of early Jewish and Christian mysticism as "belief that God or his manifestation can be experienced immediately, not just after death or eschatologically on the last day."[84] Concerning John's interaction with Jewish mysticism, Gieschen argues,

> the Gospel of John is polemically addressing Second Temple Jewish mystical ascent traditions that developed concerning the revelation experienced by the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, as well as the prophets Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Against the testimony to the *ascent* experiences of such individuals and subsequent ascent practices of some Jews, the Gospel points to the repeated *descent* of the Son of Man—climactically in the incarnation and death of Jesus—as the exclusive source of divine revelation.[85]

1:18 plays a key role in this polemic.[86] John asserts that no one has ever seen God, not even those who some claimed had mystical ascent experiences and visions.[87] Peder Borgen suggests that John agrees with Merkabah mysticism, but teaches that Jesus is the One who sees God, and it is only in him that others have a vision of God.[88] Nils Dahl links John's polemic against the Jewish

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[83] See April D. DeConick, ed., *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (SBLSymS 11; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006). For a brief overview of recent research on these sources as they pertain to John, see Charles A. Gieschen, "Merkavah Mysticism and the Gospel of John", 1–4.

[84] April D. DeConick, "What Is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?" in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (ed. April D. DeConick; SBLSymS 11; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 5.

[85] Gieschen, "Merkavah Mysticism," 1. See also Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (ed. Pieter Willem van der Horst and Peter J. Tomson; CRINT 12; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 131, who concludes, "The goal of the apocalyptic seer and the visionary is the glimpse of God enthroned in glory (1 En 14) to be found in Jesus (1:18; 6:46; 12:41; 14:9)"; also Werner H. Kelber, "The Authority of the Word in St. John's Gospel: Charismatic Speech, Narrative Text, Logocentric Metaphysics," *Journal of Oral Tradition* 2 (1987): 114–15; also Werner H. Kelber, "The Birth of a Beginning: John 1:1–18," *Semeia* 52 (1990): 138–40.

[86] April D. DeConick, " 'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen' (John 20:29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Chrsitian Discourse," in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years, Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 382, commenting on the discussion of the role of mysticism in John's Gospel, observes, "Discussions of 1:18 have served to advance this investigation . . . [T]he Fourth Gospel contains several rebuttals against those mystics who claimed they knew God apart from the revelation of God in Jesus."

[87] Rowland, *The Mystery of God*, 124–25; Also William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 17, who comments on 1:18a, "St. John is no mystic in the strict sense of that word; indeed he is the most strongly anti-mystical of all writers. Anything resembling a direct vision of God is absolutely ruled out."

[88] Borgen, *Bread from Heaven*, 177, says, "John's affinities to the Merkabah mysticism are especially apparent

Merkabah mysticism with a Christological interpretation of the Old Testament theophanies, "But John stresses that no one has ever seen God, and no one has ascended into heaven (1:18; 3:13; 6:46). The Christological interpretation of the Old Testament visions and theophanies, therefore, seems to have a polemical note directed against a type of piety which made the patriarchs and prophets heroes of mystical visions of the heavenly world."[89]

A minority of scholars, however, have held rightly that John's statement, "No one has ever seen God" provides a Christian interpretation of the theophanies of the Old Testament. Especially Jerome Neyrey, Anthony Hanson, and Charles Gieschen[90] find John to be saying that the God whom Moses and others saw was not the Father, but was instead the Logos of 1:1.[91] In his commentary on the Gospel, Neyrey comments, "The initial claim ('no one has ever seen God') prepares us for the later argument that neither Abraham in his visions, nor Jacob at Bethel, nor Moses at Sinai, nor Isaiah in the Temple ever saw God. They saw Jesus. This clarifies Jesus' role as unique and exalted mediator: He alone has access to God's words and wisdom."[92] Anthony Hanson in an article exploring the role of Exod 34 in the background for John 1:14–18, states, "Moses really did see Adonai. . . . [A]ccording to John, on those occasions in Israel's history when God is described as being seen, it was not in fact God who was seen, but the Logos. John says this *totidem verbis* in 12:41 . . . [I]n other words, Jahweh Sabaoth is the Logos."[93]

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in connection with the idea of the vision of God. Thus the thought that heavenly Son (and agent) of God is the One who has seen God, John 1:18 and 6:46."

[89] Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Johannine Church and History," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper* (ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Synder; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 141–42.

[90] This dissertation will employ an interpretation of 1:18a which is in full agreement with Gieschen's article, "The Real Presence of the Son before Christ".

[91] See also Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Johannine Church and History," 132–33.

[92] Jerome Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 46. This observation is further explained in idem., "The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 586–605.

[93] Hanson, "John 1:14–18 and Exodus 34," 95–96. See also Sanders, *John*, 300, who, while discussing 12:41,

Martin Hengel includes Moses and later Isaiah in those who saw the glory of the preexistent Logos, "Solely the only-begotten, who, himself in the substance of God, as the *Son*, 'rests in the Father's bosom' like a beloved child, has made visible the Father's countenance, his essence determined most inwardly by love."[94] Noticing both the Old Testament background and the difficulty in 1:18a, Charles Gieschen observes, "God is seen repeatedly, but it is 'the Only Begotten God'—the Son—who is seen and has revealed the mystery of Yahweh, not only *after* the incarnation but also in the *before* Christ (BC) events reflected in the Old Testament. . . . The God, therefore, who is heard and seen in the Old Testament after the fall in Eden is the Son, who is the visible 'image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15)."[95]

Far from being a recent development, John 1:18a's role in the Christological view of the theophanies of the OT was a dominant interpretative understanding of the early Church.[96]

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states, "John, who denies that any man has ever seen God (1:18), asserts that what Isaiah then saw was the glory of the Logos; for, like Philo, he believed that the Old Testament theophanies were appearances of the Logos. See further Aage Pilgaard, "The Qumran Scrolls and John's Gospel," in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives. Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel in Århus 1997* (ed. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen; JSNTSup 182; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 134, who, discussing the Temple Scroll at Qumran suggests, "If we compare the endings of the first and second sections of the prologue (John 1:18 and 1:51), we can see that John 1:18 is oriented towards the Sinai covenant in Exodus 33–34, whereas John 1:51 is oriented towards the covenant with Jacob in Gen 28:10–22. In this way the two covenants are combined, as is the case with the Temple Scroll, and in both John 1:18 and 1:51 Jesus is presented as the real content of the revelation. It is therefore not unlikely that John wishes to suggest that it was in reality the pre-existent Logos that Jacob saw."

[94] Hengel, "The Prologue of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," 287.

[95] Gieschen, "The Real Presence of the Son before Christ," 109. See also idem., *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 273, where the observation is made that in conjunction with 6:46, 1:18 implies that the Only-Begotten was seen not only in the incarnation, but also before the incarnation, specifically in the theophanies of the Old Testament. See also Warren Carter, "The Prologue and John's Gospel: Function, Symbol and the Definitive Word," *JSNT* 39 (1990): 47, who says, "John's reinterpretation that Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah encountered brief glimpses of the logos was consistent with, and buttressed, his own claims that Jesus, the logos become flesh, was the exclusive revealer and manifestation of God."

[96] Kari Kloos, "Christ the Revealer: Patristic Views of the Mediation of Christ in the Old Testament," in *Papers Presented at the Fifteenth International Conference of Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2007* (ed. J. Baun et al.; *Studia Patristica* 44; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 315, states, "Early patristic authors, especially before the Council of Nicea, typically read the theophany narratives of Genesis and Exodus as manifestations of the Son." See also W. Berry Norwood, "The Church Fathers and the Deity of Christ," *ATI* 3 (2010): 17–18, who observes, "The Church Fathers are often accused of seeing Christ in the Old Testament where He is not really present or revealed. Actually, their christological or logocentric hermeneutic allows them to learn about Jesus through Old Testament theophanies and prophet allusions, even though lesser scholars may not see Christ there."

Charles Gieschen observes, "When God is seen or heard in the Old Testament Justin and several other Ante-Nicene fathers identified this divine form as the Son."[97] Irenaeus employs John 1:18a in order to teach that the Father is knowable even though he is invisible. The Logos is the one whom Moses was permitted to see in Exod 33.[98] Christman observes that in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, Eusebius (of Caesarea) states that "in the numerous Old Testament theophanies the Word, not the unbegotten God, was present. Eusebius strings together quotations of a number of these, especially from the Pentateuch, as examples of the Logos' manifestation."[99] From the beginning of the history of interpretation, many who encountered the statement in 1:18a read it as a comment or clarification on the theophanies of the OT. The Father remains unseen. It is the Son who was seen, and who reveals the Father. Not only does this interpretation fit the Christological nature of the Scriptures, but it is especially in concert with the teaching of John's Gospel. This dissertation embraces the poignant summary observation by Paul Miller, who rightly observes, "John's hermeneutic could be stated briefly like this: *Scripture is the enduring record of those who saw the activity of the divine Logos prior to its appearance in Jesus and then testified to what they had seen.*"[100]

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[97] Gieschen, "The Real Presence of the Son Before Christ," 111. Gieschen then quotes Justin Martyr's *Dialogue* 127.4 as a clear example of the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament theophanies. While no explicit use of 1:18 is present in this quotation, the theology is congruent with other Fathers who do employ 1:18a as testimony to the Father's invisibility. See also John Behr, "The Word of God in the Second Century," *ProEccl* 9 (2000): 91–107, for a discussion of Justin, Ignatius, and Irenaeus.

[98] See *Adv. Haer.* IV.20.6, 9, 10. Irenaeus also suggested God's similitudes were visible in different dispensations. For further comment see Angela Russell Christman, *What Did Ezekiel See? Christian Exegesis of Ezekiel's Vision of the Chariot from Irenaus to Gregory the Great* (Bible in Ancient Christianity 4; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 66–67.

[99] Christman, *What Did Ezekiel See?* 71. Eusebius defends the same doctrine in *Proof* 5.18.

[100] Paul Miller, " 'They Saw His Glory and Spoke of Him': The Gospel of John and the Old Testament," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 134. Also Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ*, 91, who observes, "Throughout John's Gospel, one emphasis appears again and again: Jesus is the one 'about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote' (1:45). For the Fourth Evangelist, Jesus is the embodiment of the reality spoken of in 'shadows' in Israel's Scriptures. He is the fulfillment of the aspirations of the prophets and the realization of the hope embedded in salvation history. Johannine allusions to and echoes of the Old Testament Scriptures are the Evangelist's means of

He Instead Extols the Singular Aid of "the Unique One." The Father in 1:18a cannot be seen and indeed cannot be known apart from the aid of the Logos. Thus, others rightly note that John's striking statement in 1:18a highlights the inaccessibility of the Father so that the remainder of the prologue's conclusion might extol the Logos of 1:1 for a singular kind of aid that always has been and so still is the distinguishing work of the "Unique One." Elizabeth Harris therefore observes,

> Hence the contrast is not between what human beings have hitherto been unable to do and what Jesus Christ is to do, but between the incapacity of human beings in the created order ever to see God, and the unique salvation and active presence of God himself to the created order in the person of the μονογενής, who is alone qualified to make available to humankind the eternal gifts of God from God.[101]

Therefore, others rightly suggest the same. Concerning the exclusive role of Jesus as the revealer of God, Warren Carter observes,

> The unique origin, identity and role of this figure are emphasized in relation to his role as the only revealer of God. Only this figure (ἐκεῖνος, v.18c) has "made [God] known" (ἐξηγήσατο) since no human being has seen God (18a). Only one being has shared his heavenly world with God . . . Only the non-created one who had existed from the beginning with God, the one through whom creation came into being, could come as revealer to the human sphere. The comprehensive negative statement of 1:18a (Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε—"No one has ever seen God") tolerates no other claimant. Only (μονογενής, 18b) the one who has seen God and knows God intimately can make God known (ἐξηγήσατο).[102]

Thus, C. K. Barrett observes that in John "The whole truth about the invisible and unknown God is declared in the historical figure to which John points (who) . . . makes sense when in hearing him you hear the Father, when in looking at him you see the Father, and worship him."[103] Even

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supporting this assertion."

[101] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 101. A. Feuillet, *Le Prologue du Quatrième Évangile: Étude de Théologie Johannique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1968), 129, writes "C'est assez dire qu'en Jn 1, 18 l'évangéliste n'entend pas contredire l'aspiration à voir Dieu, une des marques les plus éloquentes de la noblesse de la nature humaine. Mais il denounce implicitment tous les soi-disant révélateurs païens du monde divin, et il leur oppose le Christ."

[102] Carter, "The Prologue and John's Gospel," 38.

[103] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 16.

those who first believe in Jesus are unable to comprehend fully who he is. God remains unseen. The full and true identity of Jesus is not given until later by the Spirit (20:22) to those who believe (20:28). Seeing is in no way to be equated with believing. In fact, seeing with one's flesh and blood eyes often distracts from the need to perceive the truth.[104] Especially helpful is Mark Stibbe's suggestion that "The portrait of the Christ who is *absconditus atque praesans*, the elusive discloser, is John's creative way of handling the paradox of the visibility of the invisible God in Jesus."[105]

The prologue to the Fourth Gospel (1:1–18) provides its reader/hearer with a preview of the theological intentions of the Gospel's author.[106] C. K. Barrett observes that a major theme of the Gospel is that "the work of Jesus is represented as revelation. . . . The theme thus sounded in the Prologue is repeated in the body of the Gospel. . . . Jesus himself is directly visible to the physical eye, but truly to see him (as not all men do) is to see the one who otherwise is invisible."[107] The prologue presents Jesus[108] (1:17) as the eternal Logos (1:1, 14), the Christ (1:17), the Son of God (1:18), the One Who Is, who exegetes the unseen God (1:18), and God

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[104] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 143, states rightly that "Because in this world the Son makes the Father known, one truly 'sees' God: but only indirectly, and in hidden ways. The *hiddenness* of the glory of the Father in the Son informs every scene of the Gospel. One cannot simply read the glory of God off the surface of Jesus' life or from his miracles, as though it comprised a revelatory halo around his words and deeds. Even the signs of Jesus are manifestations of the hidden glory of God in Jesus."

[105] Stibbe, "The Elusive Christ," 36.

[106] See Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 107; Bruce, *John*, 28; Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," 2; Voorwinde, "John's Prologue," 44, who writes that "If the prologue indeed provides a lens through which the Gospel is to be read, then it also provides the reader with significant clues as to the identity of its main character"; Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 33–34, who comments that 1:18 "functions as the transition from the prologue to the main body of the Gospel"; and Morna D. Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," *NTS* 21 (1974): 45, who observes, "The most puzzling Johannine discourse is immediately illuminated by a re-reading of the Prologue."

[107] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 7–8.

[108] Concerning the prologue, Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 75, states, "John rather delays the moment of identification by first putting together the enigmatic web of identity relations, to which he attaches new links successively, until he finally displays the fixed point of orientation in v. 17, where the proper name Jesus (Christ) eventually puts things into their right place."

Himself (1:1, 18). James Resseguie observes, "The Prologue (1:1–18) is a compendium of the gospel's ideology that is expressed at the phraseological level. For example, 'the Word became flesh… and we have seen his glory' (1:14) is an ideological perspective that becomes a source of conflict for numerous characters. The glory is seen in the flesh and cannot be seen apart from the flesh; yet many of the conflicts in the gospel occur precisely because some see only flesh and miss the glory."[109] Commenting on 1:18 as the conclusion to the prologue, Rissi observes,

> The blunt "no man . . . ever" (1:18) has a polemical sound and is directed against the arrogant claims of certain pious ones to possess, alongside Jesus the eternal Word, yet another direct access to God, and thus to be independent of God's history in Jesus Christ. Neither Hellenistic-Jewish longing for an ascent to God, nor modern attempts of religions or pseudo-religious movements to press on past Jesus to God, can succeed! The living God is known only to him who is "in the bosom of the Father." Only he can "interpret" him to us.[110]

The prologue's interest is recapitulated in the Thomas episode (20:24–29) and in the conclusion that follows (20:30–31). The intervening narrative tells the story of the person and work of the incarnate Son that points to the crucifixion of Jesus as his exaltation (8:28; 12:32) and the culmination of his exegesis of the Father. It points also to the Thomas episode as that moment in time when the true identity of Jesus was finally confessed by those who thus far had failed to see this in him (20:28–29). Marianne Meye Thompson observes, "Like the prologue, then, the entire Gospel points both to the one who is 'with God' and who 'is God.' The narrative of the Gospel demonstrates how the Father who seeks true worshippers finds them in the people who join in Thomas's confession of Jesus as 'My Lord and my God.' "[111]

He Segues to What Follows. Thus, scholars frequently have commented on John 1:18a in light of the Old Testament. Christopher Rowlands correctly observes,

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[109] Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel*, 15.

[110] Mathias Rissi, "John 1:1–18 (The Eternal Word)," *Int* 31 (1977): 401.

[111] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 55.

> The vision of God, the heart of the call-experiences of Isaiah and Ezekiel and the goal of the heavenly ascents of the apocalyptic seers and rabbinic mystics is in the Fourth Gospel related to the revelation of God in Jesus. All claims to have seen God in the past are repudiated; the Jews have "neither heard God's voice nor seen his form." (5:37): even when, as in Isaiah's case, Scripture teaches that a prophet glimpsed God enthroned in glory, this vision has to be interpreted in the Gospel as a vision of the pre-existent Christ (12:41). No one has seen God except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father (6:46). The highest wisdom of all, the knowledge of God, comes not through the information disclosed in visions and revelations, but through the Word become flesh, Jesus of Nazareth.[112]

Few, however, have addressed the implications of 1:18a for the interpretation of the remainder of the Fourth Gospel. Since 1:18 forms an inclusio with both the beginning of the prologue and the end of the narrative that follows it, it is prudent to examine the role of 1:18a in the reading of all of John's Gospel, paying special attention to its concluding episode.

The confession of Thomas in 20:28 returns the Gospel's hearer to the same truth found in the prologue (1:1, 18).[113] In the same way, the blessing of Jesus in 20:29 also recalls the statement of not-seeing in the prologue (1:18a). N. T. Wright has observed that John's resurrection narrative in John 20 also completes the prologue's teaching of new creation in Jesus,

> This highlights the way in which Thomas' confession of faith looks back to 1:18. The explicitly high Christology of the prologue reaches its culmination here: nobody has ever seen the one true god, but "the only-begotten god" has unveiled and expounded this god, has shown the world who he is. We watch in vain, throughout the rest of the gospel, for characters in the story to wake up to what is going on. Jesus "reveals his glory" to the disciples in various ways, but nobody responds with anything that matches what is said in 1:18.[114]

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[112] Rowland, *The Mystery of God*, 124–25.

[113] Benjamin J. Burkholder, "Considering the Possibility," 72, observes, "Not only does John 1:1 open with the statement that 'the Word was God (θεός),' but immediately before the summary of the Gospel in 20:30–31, the narrative of the Gospel seems to reach its pinnacle with the confession of Thomas who exclaims, 'My Lord and My God (ὁ θεός μου)' (John 20:28). It is hard to see Thomas' testimony calling Jesus θεός as anything less than a masterly woven conclusion where the opening verses of the Prologue introduces this subtle theme only to reintroduce it at the end as some kind of crescendo to the Gospel. Its shocking appearance at the end of John suggests that calling Jesus θεός was not abnormal for the author of the Fourth Gospel but instead part of a theme meant to bookend the various stories and teachings of the Gospel."

[114] Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question*

The intervening narrative thus carries both themes and moves its hearer to believe in the unseen θεός as one believes in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God.

The statement "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18a) therefore appears in a verse that itself serves in the Gospel of John as an instrumental pivot. Heretofore, scholars have noted that, concluding the prologue, John 1:18 segues to the narrative that follows[115] and forms an inclusio with the prologue's first verse. Scholars have had very little to say, however, regarding the pivotal contribution that John's initial statement makes in furthering a double inclusio with both the Gospel's beginning (1:1) and its conclusion (20:28–29). To date, there has been no attempt at a sustained reading of the Gospel in light of 1:18a. It is precisely the theme of not-seeing, however, that both ushers in the narrative and provides its final words.[116]

John 1:18a states plainly that "No one has ever seen God." This statement's role in the prologue, narrative, and conclusion of the Fourth Gospel is yet to be mined. This dissertation will fill this void by providing a thorough understanding of the role of not-seeing yet knowing and/or believing in John's Gospel, particularly as regards the role that 1:18a has as an instrumental

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of God; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 667–68; See also *idem, The New Testament and the People of God* (*Christian Origins and the Question of God* 1*;* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 417, who writes, "Thomas finally puts into words what the whole book has been sketching out, ever since the prologue spoke of the incarnate *logos* as 'the only-begotten God': 'My Lord and my God' "; Harstine, "Un-doubting Thomas," 440–41, who finds congruencies between the Thomas episode and Nathanael in chapter 1. He notes, "Another similarity found in these two passages includes the focus on seeing."

[115] O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 33, identifies 1:18 as a "pivotal point." See also Harris, *Jesus As God*, 74, who states that "Probably no verse has a more strategic position in the Fourth Gospel than 1:18, looking back as it does over the Prologue from its peak and also forward to the expansive plain of the Gospel narrative"; Sloyan, *John*, 20, who suggests that the understanding of 1:18 "is the whole meaning of the document before us"; Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 92, who states, "1:18 serves a dual purpose," when "[i]n the first place it acts as a climax to the whole prologue," but then it "may also introduce something new that is crucial for the correct understanding of the rest of the Gospel"; and James D. G. Dunn, "Biblical Concepts of Divine Revelation," in *Divine Revelation* (ed. Paul Avis; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1997), 20, who labels 1:18 "thematic for the whole Gospel." Bernard, *John*, 1:33, concludes his comments on the prologue, "The last words of the Prologue (v. 18) set out briefly the theme of the Gospel which is to follow."

[116] John 21 stands as an epilogue to the Gospel. The narrative of the Gospel itself ends with John 20. Just as the Prologue stands before the narrative, the epilogue is situated following the narrative.

pivot furthering a double inclusio with both the Gospel's beginning (1:1) and its conclusion (20:28–29).

In spite of these evident connections, scholars have scarcely addressed the meaning of 1:18a as it relates to the inclusio around the narrative of the Gospel. Harris notes that the interpretation of 1:18a "has received curiously little attention from the commentators."[117] This inattention is startling in light of the evident importance of the verse's beginning. Concerning 1:18a, Edwyn Hoskyns observes that, "In this sentence the whole historical relationship of men to God is set forth."[118] In his study of the recognition scenes in the Gospel of John, Kasper Bro Larson assigns a similar importance to 1:18a. Discussing the semiotic condition of religious language, he states, "It is in this tension between the premise of 1:18a and the claim of 1:18b that the epistemological narrative unfolds, governed by John's overall purpose to promulgate belief in the divine identity of Jesus."[119] To date, however, scholars have had very little to say regarding the pivotal contribution that 1:18a makes in furthering the interest of the Gospel of John in the Father who cannot be seen.[120]

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[117] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 94. Harris notes that Raymond Brown does not comment at all on 1:18a. See also Hanson, "John 1:14–18 and Exodus 34," 95, who states, "Any adequate exposition of John 1:14–18 must include an explanation of why the author lays such stress on the invisibility of God in verse 18." He then laments that La Potterie's study of 14–18 "totally ignores this phrase throughout the article."

[118] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 152. See also Feuillet, *Le Prologue du Quatrième Évangile*, 127, who states, "Ce verset est une clé pour qui cherche à comprendre les tendances doctrinales du quatrième évangile."

[119] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 5. See also the discussion of "God" in Koester, *The Word of Life*, 25, in which he states, "The Gospel insists that the point of Jesus' coming is to make the unseen God known (1:18) . . . The story climaxes when Thomas encounters the crucified and risen Jesus and confesses, 'My Lord and my God' (20:28). The Gospel was written in order that readers might make a similar confession. In the crucified and risen Jesus, they are called to see the face of God." O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 34, highlights the importance of 1:18 to show the reader that the question of how God is known is intrinsic to the composition and function of the Gospel. Typically, however, O'Day neglects any specific mention of 1:18a in the discussion of the importance of this verse.

[120] Farrell, "Seeing the Father Part 1," 6, does suggest that "non-seeing is a very important part of the Johannine concept of seeing." Typically, however, her series of articles assumes and explicitly seeks to trace levels of seeing with non-seeing as the "First Level" which comes before seeing. Such an understanding fails to take seriously the blessing found in 20:29.

To be sure, just as scholarship has neglected the study of 1:18a, the beatitude found in 20:29b has also received little more than scant attention. Raymond Collins observes,

> In the vast amount of literature on the Fourth Gospel . . . little attention has been paid to its beatitudes, John 13:17 and 20:29. In the course of the past eighty-five years . . . only a pair of articles have been written which focus specifically on the beatitude with which the body of the Gospel narrative comes to its close . . . The lack of concentrated attention on the significance of John 20:29b is especially remarkable when consideration is paid to its narrative function and its literary form.[121]

This lack of attention reflects the overall neglect of understanding and appreciation for the role of not-seeing in John.[122] Reading the entire narrative of the Gospel in light of the inclusio formed by 1:18a and 20:29 promises to shed considerable light on the role of not-seeing throughout the narrative.

Derek Tidball has written briefly on the links between the prologue and the post resurrection appearances of Jesus in John 20.[123] Noting the few scholars who have marked in limited terms what links the two, Tidball observes, "In spite of these evocative suggestions, it seems that no thorough, systematic treatment of the way in which the chapters resonate with each

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[121] Raymond F. Collins, " 'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen': John 20:29," in *Transcending Boundaries: Contemporary Readings of the New Testament* (ed. Rekha M. Chennattu and Mary L. Coloe; BSR 187; Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 2005), 174–75.

[122] One possible exception is Alan Richardson, *The Gospel according to Saint John: The Meaning of the History of Jesus* (TBC; London: SCM, 1959), 45, who links 1:18a with 20:29 in his comments on 1:18a: "The invisible God has been revealed in Christ. The Fourth Gospel makes the considerable play upon the idea of 'seeing' with the natural eye (or reason) and 'seeing' with the eye of faith; e.g. John 9:37–41; 14:9; 20:29. St. John denies that 'seeing is believing'; he would say rather that believing is seeing." Though brief (the previous quotation is his entire comment on 1:18a), his comments reflect the overall movement of this dissertation. It is disappointing, however, that Richardson's comments on 20:29 contain no reference to 1:18a, nor the unseen. See also Ralf Stolina, *Niemand hat Gott je gesehen: Traktat über negative Theologie* (TBT 108; New York: de Gruyter, 2000), 111–23, who posits a connection between these verses in the context of negative (apophatic) theology. Simon Ross Valentine, "The Johannine Prologue: A Microcosm of the Gospel," *EvQ* 68 (1996): 298, mentions that 20:29 forms an inclusio with the Gospel's beginning, but does not mention the theme of not-seeing. Instead, the inclusio mentioned is one of "his original point, that of belief and faith."

[123] Derek Tidball, "Completing the Circle: The Resurrection according to John," *ERT* 30 (2006): 169–83. Tidball concludes (p. 183), commenting on the inclusio between chapter 1 and chapter 20, "all the initial claims made in the Gospel's majestic opening words find their confirmation there too."

other has been attempted. The issue has all but been ignored by the standard commentaries"[124] Tidball proceeds to argue for a connection between 1:14, 18 and 20:29, in a section that appears promising at first, yet ultimately fails to offer the thoroughgoing treatment that he rightly had identified as needed. Repeating the history of the many, Tidball ignores the "not-seeing" in both 1:18a and 20:29 and focuses entirely instead on the "seeing" of 1:14 and 20:29. Whereas Tidball began this section of his discussion with an explicit mention of 1:18, he nowhere mentions the verse again, nor does he observe the unseen in the blessing of 20:29. It is this pervasive oversight throughout scholarship which this dissertation seeks to correct. Thomas does indeed confess faith in the one that he sees, but his is a faith in what remains unseen. Blessed are Thomas and all who believe in that which flesh and blood eyes can in no way see.

The overwhelming majority of scholars interpret the blessing of 20:29 in the context of future hearers of the Gospel only. Contrasting Jesus' words to Thomas in the first half of the verse, which confirm faith in what Thomas sees, scholars interpret Jesus' words in the following phrase to be shifting addressees and issuing a blessing to those who are not afforded the same "opportunity" as Thomas.[125] A notable exception is April DeConick, who views Thomas as Judas (not Iscariot), portrayed as a fool throughout John 14 and 20. She suggests that the blessing in 20:29 is a polemic against Thomas' desire for a mystical vision of God, stating, "Clearly, a conflict is set up here between the false hero, Thomas, who insists that a *visio Dei* is necessary,

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[124] Tidball, "Completing the Circle," 171. See Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (vol. 1 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God;* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 417, who observes that John 20 "picks up the prologue at point after point. . . . The close fit between 1:1–18 and chapter 20 is, indeed, further reason for suggesting that they were composed with each other in mind, rather than the prologue coming from a different source and being attached to the book at a late stage"; and *idem*, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 666.

[125] For example, see Peter J. Judge, "A Note on John 20:29," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. Van Segbroeck et al.; 3 vols.; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2190; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 386; and Udo Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie im Johannesevangelium: Eine Untersuchung zur Stellung des vierten Evangeliums in der johanneischen Schule* (FRLANT 144; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 158–59.

and John's hero, Jesus, who rebuts this in favor of faith."[126] DeConick's concentration upon John's supposed polemic against the Jewish mystic ascent theologies is helpful in so far as she notices John's concentration on seeing and not-seeing. However, the presupposition of the Johannine community's anti-mystical polemic leads DeConick to view seeing and faith in opposition. John's presentation of seeing, not-seeing, and believing is complementary, instead of adversarial. Seeing is only the enemy of faith when the desire to see conflicts with the necessity of faith. For the blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed in the God whom flesh and blood eyes can in no way see.

Martin Hengel notes rightly in his examination 1:18, "The summit of religious experience transcending all possibilities, the *visio Dei*, is given in the faith in Jesus, for in him the Father is present. Faith in him that is also confessing knowledge of him becomes identical with the vision of God."[127] And yet, as close as Hengel and others have come, none have attended adequately to the Gospel's subsequent manner of furthering the interest of the prologue's conclusion. None have attended at all to the role that 1:18a plays at the midpoint of the Gospel's end to end double inclusio to strengthen the informing matrix that links the beginning of the Gospel with the end of the Gospel, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees but when one believes in Jesus (20:29). The truth of the strikingly absolute statement in 1:18a remains. No one has ever seen God. The unseen Father is seen through faith in Jesus who reveals the Father.

[126] DeConick, "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen," 395.

[127] Hengel, "The Prologue of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," 287. It is especially interesting to observe that Hengel notes a connection with 20:29 (in n. 102). Unfortunately, Hengel continues only to see this blessing as intended for future generations.

The Methodological Procedure to Be Employed

The dissertation will employ a historical-grammatical interpretive approach to the received form of the Gospel of John and will read it as a narrative written by a single author.[128] Thus, its text will be read in its final form as a unified and coherent self-interpreting whole. In his seminal work, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, R. Alan Culpepper laments, "Johannine scholars have generally approached the text [of the Gospel] looking for tensions, inconsistencies, or 'aporias' which suggest that separate strains or layers of material are present in the text."[129] Instead of finding in the Gospel signs of redaction or of inconsistent authorship, this dissertation will argue for the fourth evangelist's considerable storytelling skill.

The statement, "No one has ever seen God" has a traceable role to play in John's Gospel not only as a summarizing statement at the close of the prologue but also as a prelude to the narrative that follows. The initially perplexing statement intentionally disrupts in order to draw the attention of the Gospel's hearer first to the significance of the prologue's end. The Gospel's initial manner of resolving the tension created by 1:18a with the rest of the prologue's end segues nicely to the narrative that follows where the Gospel's manner of resolving in final terms the difficulty of 1:18a plays itself out. At the midpoint of the Gospel's end to end double inclusio, the statement "No one has ever seen God" furthers the informing matrix that links the beginning of the Gospel with the end of the Gospel, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees but when one believes in Jesus.

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[128] As stated by Bruce G. Schuchard, *1–3 John* (Concordia Commentary; St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 1, "The words of John are not the expression of a community whose voices were many. Rather, they represent the singular voice of an extraordinary theologian."

[129] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 3.

The Outcome(s) Anticipated

In contrast to the relatively infrequent occurrence of unambiguous statements in the New Testament in which Jesus is called God, the Gospel of John clearly states that Jesus is God three times. In 1:1, the λόγος is in the beginning, is with God, and is himself God. In 1:18, the same one, ὁ λόγος, is also μονογενής (1:14), God, not "with" but "in the bosom of" the unseen one. This one, the seen One Who Is (ὁ ὤν, LXX Exod 3:14),[130] always has been and therefore in the flesh (1:14) especially is one who makes the unseen one known. Therefore, in 20:28 Thomas confesses the seen one to be one with the unseen one. Thus, Thomas shows himself to be one of "the not-seeing yet believing ones" (20:29), who see with the eyes of faith what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see (cf. 14:9).

Therefore, these three points in John's text shape and inform the intent of his Gospel. The first two occur at the beginning and end of and so form an inclusio around the prologue (1:1–18). The second and third occur at the beginning and end of and so form an inclusio around the narrative (1:18–20:28). These boundary markers establish John's interest in furthering not just Jesus' identity but also his salvific role in making God known. Between 1:1 and 20:28–29 stands 1:18, pointing back to 1:1, and forward to 20:28, so that John's end-to-end double inclusio might facilitate much more than a mere linking of John's "Jesus is God" statements. "Not seen yet known" in 1:18 links further with "not-seeing yet believing" in 20:29, so that all may know where believing comes from, and why, and, believing, have life in the name of the one who exclusively makes God known.

The statement "No one has ever seen God" therefore occurs at a critical position in the Gospel and has an all-important role to play. At the midpoint of the Gospel's end-to-end double

[130] See further chapter 2.

inclusio, John 1:18a stands at the end of the prologue and helps to segue into the body of the narrative. The reader is encouraged to consider 1:18a in light of the prologue, and to anticipate a reading of the subsequent narrative in light of what follows it in 1:18b. The strategic position of John's statements betray their importance for both the prologue and the narrative.

In the statement, "No one has ever seen God," θεός refers to God the Father. Beginning with 1:1, the reader of the Gospel is confronted with the λόγος and the Father, who are both differentiated and equated. In 1:18, the verse's first clause states that God (the Father) cannot be seen. The μονογενής, equated with the λόγος in 1:14, whose glory has been seen, reveals the Father, who cannot be seen. Thus, the μονογενής, who both is God and resides in the bosom of God (the Father), exclusively makes God known. References to God the Father therefore appear both at the beginning and at the conclusion of verse 18.

Therefore, implicit in the statement "No one has ever seen God" is a tension for the reader. How are we to know a God who cannot be seen? The resolution to this tension is partially introduced in the rest of the verse. The μονογενὴς, θεός, ὁ ὢν in the bosom of the Father, he alone has made (him) known. It is through this work of the μονογενής (λόγος) alone that one knows the Father. Yet another tension is introduced for the reader of the Gospel who is familiar with the Old Testament. How can John make such a seemingly absolute statement in light of the various recorded instances of Old Testament theophanic appearances of God, in which persons explicitly are said to have seen God? How is this possible? Who was it that was seen? John's answer is ὁ ὢν.

The narrative of the complete revelation of the unseen God is yet to be given. The reader is brought into the following narrative in order to read of the full resolution to this tension. The conclusion to the narrative (20:24–29) brings final resolution to the tension. Yet in 20:28, there is

no mention of the Father. Instead, the Father remains unseen; the truth of 1:18a stands. Flesh and blood eyes cannot see the unseen. Yet with Jesus' pronouncement regarding "the not-seeing yet believing ones" Jesus declares that those who look upon him in faith, as Thomas has, see with eyes of faith what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. Those who see with Spirit–wrought faith, confessing the seen one to be one with the unseen one, see God. For to see as one the seen and the unseen is to see in the seen the unseen (cf. "whoever sees me sees the Father,"14:9). Veiled in flesh the Godhead is seen.

Thus, the statement "No one has ever seen God" informs a trajectory that contributes greatly to the course and shape of the narrative that follows, so that it might inform both the telling of the story and how that story finds its end in the confession of Jesus and in the completion of his work. The statement "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18a) at the pivot of the Gospel's end-to-end double inclusio strengthens that which links the Gospel's beginning with its informing end, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one, in response to words from and about Jesus, sees with the eyes of Spirit-wrought faith what otherwise cannot be known about the Son of God (20:30–31).

An abundance of work has been done in the study of the prologue to the Fourth Gospel,[131] causing at least some to wonder whether everything that could have been said has been said.[132]

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[131] For a representative summary of scholars' views of the source(s) behind the prologue, see Watt, "The Composition of the Prologue of John's Gospel," 311–18. See further Brown, *John*, 1:22. This dissertation will pursue a reading of the prologue congruent with the one advocated by Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," 2, who states, "This study assumes that the hand which left the gospel in its present form gave the prologue its present form (or at a minimum left it in its present form). If this assumption is granted, it is the present form of the prologue, not an earlier, hypothetical one, which has the potential of revealing something significant about the message of the entire gospel. Even if the prologue contains an earlier hymn, attention needs to be paid to the structure of the present text apart from source analysis."

[132] See Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," 1, who rightly laments that, "The prospect of writing anything further about the prologue of John reminds one of the verdict quoted by W.C. van Unnik in a similar context some twenty years ago: 'the new things he said were not true and the true things were not new.' "

Although the closing verse of the prologue (1:18) too has received its fair share of scholarly attention, most of this has focused on the difficult text-critical issue occasioned by the verse's description of Jesus as μονογενὴς θεός/υἱός. The meaning of the phrase ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός and the word ἐξηγήσατο has also generated considerable study.[133] But only very limited attention has been paid to 1:18a.

This dissertation's unique contribution will have especially to do with the pivotal role that the statement "No one has ever seen God" (1:18a) plays in the Gospel of John in furthering the end-to-end double inclusio that it helps to form with 1:1 and 20:28–29. The double inclusio and the identification of the Father as the referent of θεός in 1:18a will aid in the offering of a unique interpretation of the conclusion to the Thomas episode, including Jesus' beatitude in 20:29. This dissertation will propose a more nuanced understanding of Jesus' beatitude as directed not to *some* believers, but to *all* believers, including Thomas, none of whom have seen God, yet all of whom know him. For the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one only sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus (apart from which the Holy Spirit does not work) that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὢν in the flesh, through whom access to the Father alone is had (14:6). Schnackenburg therefore rightly concludes that " 'To see' Jesus in faith points to the peculiar character of Christian revelation, namely, that men 'see' the Father in him, and only in him (14:9)."[134]

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[133] See, e.g., Ignace de La Potterie, " 'C'est lui qui a ouvert la voie': la finale du prologue johannique," *Bib* 69 (1988): 340–70; and the majority of Luc Devillers, "Exégèse et Théologie de Jean 1:18," *RThom* 89 (1989): 181–217. See further chapter 2.

[134] Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:565.

While many have undertaken to study the role of seeing in John's Gospel, especially in relation to signs and to faith, no one has paid careful attention to the recurring theme of *not-seeing*. John mentions not-seeing in thematically and theologically critical moments in his Gospel. The prologue ends with a statement of not-seeing (1:18a); and the narrative proper also ends with a statement of not-seeing (20:29). Both of these instances of not-seeing describe a general rule that holds at all times for all people.

Another common characteristic of the Gospel is the prominence of its statements concerning the divinity of Jesus. Although 1:18b presents a textual critical challenge, commentators have acknowledged that all available readings support the deity of Jesus. The blessing of 20:29 to all who have not seen and yet have believed follows closely the highest confession of Jesus' deity. Thus, John's narrative both begins and ends with a statement of not-seeing in direct contextual relationship with a strong affirmation of Jesus' divinity.

Thus, there is an everyday seeing that is done with flesh and blood eyes. But the true seeing of who Jesus really is and what he has done alone is done with the eyes of faith by the power of the Spirit in response not only to what has been seen but also and especially to what has been heard from and about Jesus. Craig Koester notes,

> The words about the risen Jesus must be made effective by the risen Jesus. The Spirit that is given to the disciples after Easter, is the means by which Jesus does this. It is the Spirit who brings about the new birth into faith (1:12–13; 3:5–8, 16–18), and the Spirit carries out its work through the witness that began with the earliest disciples (15:26–27). The words Jesus speaks during his earthly ministry become effective through the Spirit (14:26), and it is through the Spirit that the risen Jesus continues to address people (16:13–15).[135]

[135] Craig R. Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection, the Signs, and the Dynamics of Faith in the Gospel of John," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer; WUNT 222; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 51.

The Father is invisible (1:18a). The Spirit is invisible (3:8). And, properly understood, the Second Person of the Trinity is also invisible (20:28–29), for "veiled in flesh" is he. Therefore, Thomas confesses about Jesus what his flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. No one has ever seen God. Yet through the Spirit, and through appointed means, apart from which the Spirit does not work, through words from and about Jesus, Thomas comes to believe what his first set of eyes can in no way see. Words from Jesus are joined with those of Moses, the prophets, and the Father too (12:28–30), in order that, by the power of the Spirit, the informing and empowering Word of God might teach us all what otherwise cannot be known.

The predominant tendency of scholars has been to understand the relationship between seeing and believing in the Gospel in terms of a progression from a "sign's faith" to a more mature discipleship.[136] This perspective, however, is not congruent with the message of the Fourth Gospel. The Fourth Gospel knows not of levels of faith. Instead, it advances a faith based not on a seeing with one's flesh and blood eyes and no more, but on the sole sufficiency of the Word of God, which alone suffices to inform and empower.

The Gospel therefore begins with the statement, "no one has ever seen God" and ends with the confession of one who first sees Jesus and then confesses that he is "Lord and God" not that one might conclude that "seeing is believing," but that all might know, beginning with Thomas, that the blessed are those who walk by faith and not by sight. To believe is finally to see in Jesus what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. Craig Koester appropriately observes,

> [I]t is initially surprising that the figures in the Gospel who exhibit genuine faith do so after an experience of hearing rather than seeing. Not everyone who hears a word from or about Jesus comes to faith, but the people who manifest authentic faith do so

[136] See especially Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 99. See also Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976), 70–73; Brown, *John*, 1:195; Robert Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989; repr., New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 247–50; Tidball, "Completing the Circle," 178; Jeffery A. Trumbower, *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (HUT 29; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 110.

> after an initial experience of hearing. In some cases hearing leads to faith without any attendant miracle… In other cases hearing and seeing are related in a twofold way. On the one hand, the initial faith that is evoked through hearing can be confirmed and deepened by signs, since the actions Jesus performs demonstrate the truth of which he speaks. On the other hand, the initial faith elicited by hearing provides the context in which the people can perceive the sign properly.[137]

Therefore, seeing with the eyes of faith is not only the goal for the later hearer of the Gospel; it is the journey on which the persons of the narrative are said to travel. This Jesus confirms in response to Thomas' confession when he commends Thomas for believing what his eyes could in no way see and so offers a gracious pronouncement that is for us all.

[137] Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 138. See also Michaelis, *TDNT*, *ὁράω*, 5:364, who likewise concludes that believing finally occurs through hearing.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INCLUSIO AROUND THE PROLOGUE

In order to usher the reader into the narrative of the Gospel, John provides a prologue (1:1–18) whose first and last verses frame it. In this chapter, we will examine the similarities, differences, and development between these two verses. The inclusio around the prologue segues to a further inclusio surrounding the entire narrative (1:18–20:28–29). Understanding inclusios and the role of these verses will aid the reader in understanding both the prologue and the narrative that follows.

The author states the purpose of his Gospel at the end of its narrative: "These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31). In order to prepare the reader for the truth of the Gospel, the author provides a prologue in which truths regarding the abiding significance of the Son are presented. These truths revealed to the reader are, however, inaccessible to the human characters within the Gospel narrative until the end (20:28). The prologue (1:1–18) focuses the reader on the identity of Jesus Christ as the eternal λόγος who is both differentiated from θεός (1:1b) and identified as θεός (1:1c). The λόγος enfleshed reveals the glory of God (1:14) and gives the right to be the children of God to those who receive him by faith (1:12). The subsequent narrative (1:19–20:31) records the witness of the evangelist to the identity of Jesus. Through this witness and revelation, the reader is encouraged to seek θεός, who is not seen (1:18a), yet is revealed through Jesus (1:18b). Due to the author's use of literary structural devices, especially inclusios, the reader is encouraged to read the end of the prologue both in terms of its beginning (1:1) and in terms of the Gospel's end (20:28–29).

The Front End of the Inclusio (1:1)

Close attention will be paid to the principal aspects of John 1:1 that contribute to its explicit suggestion that Jesus is θεός and the seemingly contradictory teaching that Jesus is simultaneously in close fellowship with θεός. Understanding John's presentation of the λόγος in 1:1 is essential to further one's understanding of the inclusio formed with 1:18 at the end of the prologue. John 1:1 immediately introduces the λόγος, whom the prologue later identifies as Jesus (1:14, 17). In 1:18, Jesus is presented not as the λόγος, but as the μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν. In both verses, 1:1 and 18, the identification of both Jesus and the Father as θεός is prominent: the Father is first identified as θεός, Jesus is also explicitly and secondly identified as θεός, and the fellowship of the two who are θεός is emphasized. The commonalities between these two verses are important to understand the rhetorical and structural design of the inclusio surrounding the prologue. This understanding will further aid in understanding the author's use of inclusio surrounding not just the prologue, but the entire narrative of the Gospel. Once an appreciation for the author's intentional rhetorical structuring is attained, the reader will be able to further understand both the meaning of the inclusios and the narrative in between the inclusios. The similarities and dissonances between 1:1 and 1:18 shape the fuller comprehension of the prologue, and encourage the reader to seek fuller understanding of the subsequent narrative through thoughtful consideration of the inclusio formed between 1:18 and 20:28–29. Thus, in order to understand the meaning and function of 1:18, it is essential to understand the content and implications of 1:1.

The first verse of the prologue returns the reader to the first verse of the Old Testament and asserts that "in the beginning" the "God" who "created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1) was ὁ λόγος. "The beginning major section sets forth a first and fundamental relationship between the

Word and God," states Fernando Segovia, who proposes a threefold structure to and an inclusio for 1:1–2: "While the outer components introduce and locate the character of the 'Word' (1:1a; 1:2), the central component introduces the character of 'God' and outlines the relationship between these two figures (1:1b–c)."[138] The identification of the λόγος as θεός (1:1c) is juxtaposed with the identification of another as θεός (1:1b). Thus, 1:1c makes explicit what is implicit in 1:1a. The balance of the prologue and the subsequent narrative are to be read and understood in light of these striking statements made in the opening verse.

"In the Beginning Was the Word"

The first words of the Gospel, "In the beginning," echo the first words of the Old Testament.[139] That John does so is generally acknowledged.[140] What is striking, however, is his use of λόγος rather than אֱלֹהִים (θεός) at the end of 1:1a.[141] "The author provides a surprise," observes Peter Phillips, "for those readers experienced in a Jewish milieu. These readers, expecting a reference to God, now have to come to terms with something other than God."[142] The reader of the Gospel is therefore confronted with a bold assertion concerning the λόγος.[143] Stan Harstine observes:

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[138] Fernando Segovia, "John 1:1–18 as Entree into Johannine Reality," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John* (ed. John Painter, R. Alan Culpepper, and Fernando Segovia; St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice, 2002), 37.

[139] "In the beginning," observes Carson, *John*, 113, "immediately reminds any reader of the Old Testament of the opening verse of the Bible."

[140] Jan van der Watt and Chrys Caragounis, "A Grammatical Analysis of John 1:1," *FN* 21 (2008): 99; Brown, *John*, 1:4, who suggests that this is John's own translation of Gen 1:1, which is identical to the LXX; and Lincoln, *John*, 94.

[141] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10, notes that "the subject is surprising; one expects to read 'In the beginning . . . God,' but it is 'the Word.' " Harris, *Jesus As God*, 54, observes, "But whereas the first verse of the Torah continues, 'God created,' John follows with 'the Word [already] existed.' " Borchert, *John 1–11*, 102, says, "The reader might well anticipate that John's first statement would be an affirmation that links God and the beginning. The surprise is that he began by linking the Logos (Word) with the beginning." See also Köstenberger, *John*, 25.

[142] Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 149.

[143] Ernst Haenchen, *John* (ed. Robert W. Funk and Ulrich Busse; trans. Robert W. Funk; 2 vols.; Hermeneia;

> When the audience of the Fourth Gospel, authorial, actual, or implied, is confronted with the three letters forming the word "God" in English, or four letters θεός in Greek, the audience has a preconceived notion of the signified referent for the arrangement of those specific symbols. Thus, prior to any dimensions introduced by the text the reader has an informed view of that representation. The text then affirms or alters that informed view throughout the text. For example, John 1:1: "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, indeed the Word was God." Based on the words *in the beginning* the reader will determine who/what *the Word was*, without any prompting by the text and its later identification of the Word and God.[144]

Attributed to the λόγος is that which is reserved for θεός.[145] "John intends," asserts Barrett, "that the whole of his gospel shall be read in light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous."[146]

In the place of God, John places the λόγος. If John asserts that the God who created the heavens and the earth is the λόγος, then how is one to conceive of the person and the work of the one (the Son) in relation to the other (the Father) in the rest of the Old Testament? If the λόγος is the referent of אֱלֹהִים/θεός in Gen 1:1, then who is the referent elsewhere? Who is it exactly that walked and talked with Adam, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or with Moses and the rest of the prophets? Where, if ever, does John explicitly offer an answer? Does he ever offer an explicit answer?

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 1:109, observes, "The hymn thus does not begin with God in his creation, but with the existence of the Logos in the beginning. The Logos is thereby elevated to such heights that it almost becomes offensive." Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 150, states, "This text begins with a phrase that can be read in so many different ways—a sign of authorial strategy that opens up a text to a wider audience, but one which also seeks to teach the reader a new language and invites them into a new community. This strategy begins by unsettling the text's readers and making them unsure of what they think they are reading."

[144] Stan Harstine, "The Fourth Gospel's Characterization of God: A Rhetorical Perspective," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John* (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; LNTS 461; London: T&T Clark, 2013), 136.

[145] Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 173, concludes, "Therefore, ἐν ἀρχῇ is not said of an act done but of a state of existing in supra/pre-temporality. It speaks not of a beginning, but of something without a beginning. Here eternity is implied. Thus ἐν ἀρχῇ itself evidently presupposes God Himself—who else could be spoken of as supra/pre-temporal?"

[146] Barrett, *John*, 130.

Grammatically, the first verse's first phrase confronts its reader with a less than clear construction. How is one to read the anarthrous ἀρχῇ? Is it definite ("the beginning") or indefinite ("a beginning")? The prologue refers not to one beginning among many beginnings. Neither does it refer to the beginning of the λόγος. Rather, it affirms the eternality of the λόγος, who was there in the beginning and was the beginning of all things, when all things were made. Grammatical and contextual clues suggest that the anarthrous ἀρχῇ may be and should be understood as definite. Not only does congruence with Gen 1:1 suggest a definite reading, but Greek usage also reveals ἀρχῇ as consistently definite even when anarthrous.[147] The remainder of the prologue, especially with its immediately following verses, explicitly identifies the λόγος as the one responsible for the world's beginning. It is thus best to read John's first two words as a direct and deliberate reference to Gen 1:1. As early as the Gospel's very first clause, John's λόγος is the referent of θεός.

Though congruence with Gen 1:1 is evident in this first clause, there is also dissimilarity. J. Ramsey Michaels observes:

> In any event, the words "In the beginning" unmistakably echo Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth." Yet the differences are more striking than the similarities. God is the solitary Creator in the Genesis account, while in John creation is jointly the work of God and the Word. Genesis, moreover, is interested in God's *act*, not God's being or existence, which is simply presupposed: "God *made*

[147] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 247, cites John 1:1 as an example of the anarthrous object of a preposition as definite, suggesting that ἀρχῇ is monadic, "giving it additional reason to be definite." In Watt and Caragounis, "Grammatical Analysis," 100, Caragounis concludes, "Finally, ἐν ἀρχῇ as such is indefinite. However its close relation to a noun or a verb, of which noun or verb (action) it is the beginning lends to it a certain definiteness. Thus, the absolute ἐν ἀρχῇ (in John 1:1), referring to the state that existed before the beginning of creation (Gen 1:1), can never be understood merely of '*a* beginning' (as though there were many beginnings) but 'of *the* beginning'. It may be said that the phrase has almost crystallized into a set formula or even that it has acquired a kind of adverbial force."

> the heaven and the earth." John's Gospel, by contrast, focuses on *being* in three clauses.[148]

Whereas Gen 1:1 focuses on the beginning of time, John 1:1 focuses on the λόγος.[149] Creation claims the focus of Genesis; John focuses on its creator. John uses the verb ἦν three times in this first verse in order to establish the eternality of the λόγος.[150] "The deliberate choice of the imperfect form of the verb 'to be,' " observes Francis Moloney, "places the Word outside of time, without any controlled 'beginning' of his own. The first use of the imperfect form of the verb 'to be' indicates the Word's preexistence."[151] Therefore, the λόγος has always been, for he was present in the beginning as its creator, the one in whom all things find their beginning.[152] This one's existence is in concert with the existence of θεός, for, in the beginning, not only was the λόγος with θεός the λόγος was θεός. Thus, creator and his creation occupy both the remainder

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[148] Michaels, *John*, 46–47.

[149] Brown, *John*, 1:4, comments, "This is not, as in Genesis, the beginning of creation, for creation comes in vs. 3. Rather, the 'beginning' refers to the period before creation and is a designation more qualitative than temporal, of the sphere of God." Harris, *Jesus As God*, 54, notes that "in John the existence of the Word is anterior to 'the beginning.' In itself John 1:1a speak only of the pretemporality or supratemporality of the Logos, but in his conjunction of Ἐν ἀρχῇ and ἦν (not ἐγένετο) John implies the eternal preexistence of the Word."

[150] Hengel, "The Prologue of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," 272. Also Barrett, *John*, 126, comments, "The continuous tense is to be contrasted with the punctiliar ἐγένετο of v. 3 (creation), v. 6 (the appearance of the Baptist), and v. 14 (the incarnation). It indicates that by ἀρχῇ is meant not the first point in a temporal sequence but that which lies beyond time." Lindars, *John*, 82, understands ἦν as "past continuous, and so virtually timeless, different from the historic 'was' of verses 3 and 6." Brown, *John*, 1:4, states, "Since Chrysostom's time, commentators have recognized that each of the three uses of 'was' in v. 1 has a different connotation: existence, relationship, and predication respectively. 'The Word was' is akin to the 'I am' statements of Jesus in the Gospel proper." See also McHugh, *John 1–4*, 21, who notes that Cyril of Alexandria agreed that the verbs in 1:1 refer to eternity, whereas that of v. 6 refers to the Baptist.

[151] Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel, John 1–4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 28. Wilson Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1–18)* (European University Studies Series 23/820; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2006), 26, notes, "Though nothing has yet been said about creation, creation is implied by ἐν ἀρχῇ. John's point is that at the time of creation, the Logos already existed; He was already there with God (vs, 1b, 2)."

[152] Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 7, further links the eternality of the Word here with Jesus' "I am" statement in 8:56–58. Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 173, affirms the eternality of the Logos through allusion to Prov 8:23 (πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ) wherein the beginning is not the beginning of the world, but parallel with eternity.

of the prologue and the narrative, notwithstanding John's focus on the identity of the λόγος (Jesus) as the creator.[153]

The first of three instances in the prologue's first verse of the arthrous substantive[154] "the Word" rounds out its first clause. The author's fondness for triplets will become increasingly apparent as the reader proceeds.[155] Three occurrences of "the Word" (ὁ λόγος), of "was" (ἦν), and of "God (θεός)" complete John 1:1–2. He who was in the beginning (1:1a), who was with God (1:1b), and who was God (1:1c), was with God in the beginning (1:2). The observation and appreciation of this author's repeated employment of both triads and inclusios will aid the reader in comprehending John's intention.[156]

Much has been written concerning the possible sources for John's use of λόγος in his Gospel. Craig Keener observes, "Because John wrote in Greek to Greek-speaking (mainly) Jewish Christians in a specific milieu, John bound himself to use language his hearers could understand. Once cannot investigate lexical possibilities or the nuances of other terms John employs without asking the sense in which he employed 'Logos,' given the many potential meanings of the term."[157]Andrew Lincoln observes concerning the word λόγος, "Its general use to indicate an instance of a person's self-expression in verbal activity should remain determinative

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[153] Barrett, *John*, 152, observes, "It is true that Ἐν ἀρχῇ means that in Jesus one encounters what is beyond the world and time (Bultmann), but it might be even better to say that what is beyond the world and time is known in Jesus."

[154] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 56, identifies λόγος as a "substantive that here functions as a proper noun."

[155] Herbert K. Lea, "La Structure Littéraire de Jean 1:1 à 18," *RRef* 205 (1999): 60, observes, "Ainsi, les affirmations du verset 1 préfigurent tout le Prologue, non seulement de par leur contenu, mais aussi de par leur structure. Quatre fois, dans le Prologue, il y a une affirmation en trois volets, qui concerne l'*existence*, la *relation* et la *nature*."

[156] "The solemn repetition—Word, Word, God, God, Word," observes Michaels, *John*, 47, "captures the reader's attention from the outset by giving the language a poetic or hymnic quality."

[157] Keener, *John*, 1:339.

even when we are forced, as here, to see the term employed analogously or metaphorically in relation to the divine. In other words, the basic force of 'the Word' is God's self-expression."[158] While there exist many possibilities for the background of the term,[159] especially pertinent to any discussion of the λόγος is the role of the Old Testament in shaping John's theology.[160] As in

[158] Lincoln, *John*, 95.

[159] Harold W. Attridge, *Essays on John and Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012), 59, concludes his helpful article culling the parallels between Philo and John with the observation, "Whether or not the Fourth Gospel read Philo, it knows something very much like this theme and plays on many of the motifs at work in it throughout the gospel (light, name, Man/son of Man, divine begetting, shepherd). Finally it is true to the positive Philonic impulse: God is knowable through the Word. At two particular points the Gospel resembles crucial moves that the philosopher makes. (1) Both insist on the 'particular' pole of the universal-particular dichotomy, but John in a more radical way. Philo's angelic Logos comes to the soul as a surprise, as an invader from without. The Gospel's word comes to the believer in the person of Jesus who challenges acceptance. (2) Like Philo, the Fourth Gospel finds that knowledge is intimately connected to action: one knows who God is by obeying. For Philo obedience is to Torah; for John it is to the command to love displayed on the cross." Dodd, *Interpretation*, 277, states, "While therefore the statements of the Prologue *might* be understood all through on the assumption that λόγος is the Word of the Lord in the Old Testament sense, yet it seems certain that any reader influenced by the thought of Hellenistic Judaism, directly, or at a remove, would inevitably find suggested here a conception of the creative and revealing λόγος in many respects similar to that of Philo; and it is difficult not to think that the author intended this." Dodd later (p. 280) states, "The opening sentences of the Prologue are clearly intelligible only when we admit that λόγος, though it carries with it the associations of the Old Testament Word of the Lord, has also a meaning similar to that which it bears in Stoicism as modified by Philo, and parallel to the idea of Wisdom in other Jewish writers. See also Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 214, who states, "The religious-historical origins of the Johannine concept of λόγος cannot be given a monocausal explanation." Keener, *John*, 1:340, after discussing Bultmann, Reitzenstein, and Conzelmann's suggestions for a gnostic/Hermetic background for the λόγος concludes, "Given the alternatives available, the later date of developed Gnosticism and the relative lack of prominence in gnostic texts themselves (where it does occur it may depend on John's Logos), a background in Gnosticism is not probable."

[160] Köstenberger, *John*, 27, lists four reasons for defending the Old Testament as the background: "(1) the evangelist's deliberate effort to echo the opening words of the Hebrew Scriptures by the phrase 'in the beginning'; (2) the reappearance of several significant terms from Gen 1 in John 1 ('light,' 'darkness,' 'life'); (3) the prologue's OT allusions, be it to Israel's wilderness wanderings (1:14; 'pitched his tent') or to the giving of the law (1:17–18); and (4) the evangelist's adaptation of Isa 55:9–11 for his basic Christological framework." Lindars, *John*, 83, concludes, "The origins of John's use of 'the Word' are not to be sought outside of biblical tradition. This, however, does not yet explain his choice of the term." Lindars opines that the background of the Logos is the Wisdom of the OT. Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture*, 11–12, notes, "Scholars have amassed an impressive amount of evidence which suggests that the Logos of John's Prologue is to be understood in terms of the Wisdom of God. It should be no surprise, then, that the quintessential witness to the Logos speaks in a manner reminiscent of a disciple of Wisdom. Indeed, the language of 1:23 seems to suggest that all those who heed the exhortation of the Baptist will become, like the Baptist, disciples of Wisdom." Also John Painter, " 'The Light Shines in the Darkness . . .' Creation, Incarnation, and Resurrection in John," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer; WUNT 222; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 23–24, who states that the relationship between the λόγος and wisdom shapes John's view of God. This understanding of God is "fundamental for John's story of creation, lying the foundation for the account of the incarnation and resurrection, which is fundamental for his story of Jesus." Lincoln, *John*, 95–96. Also Talbert, *Reading John*, 68–71, who presents twelve similarities between the Johannine λόγος and Wisdom in the Old Testament. However, see Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 271, who observes

John's Gospel, in the Old Testament the Word of God is responsible for both creation (Gen 1:3; Psalm 33:6)[161] and revelation (Jer 1:4; Ezek 1:3; Amos 3:1).[162] In both the Old Testament and in John's Gospel, the Word exists as a hypostasis. After establishing the eternality of the λόγος, John states baldly that this eternal λόγος took on flesh (1:14).[163] The movement from the one who creates to dwelling inside of creation may be shocking to the reader of the prologue, yet the incarnation of the Word of God is far from foreign to the theology of the Old Testament. F. F. Bruce lists Isa 38:4 and Ps 107:20 as instances wherein the word of God is a personification of God. He concludes his discussion by observing, "But it is recognizably a development of the prophetic conception of God's Word as his messenger, unerringly fulfilling his commission as in

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that Wisdom is doubtful as John's source, since "no text, however, speaks of her becoming incarnate and nowhere is she ever called 'God.' " Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 82, states, "Today we are recognizing more and more that St. John for the main line of his thought is indebted to the great streams that traversed and gave life to the Old Testament. Because the coming of the Christ took place to fulfill the promises of the old Covenant, St. John sees his Christianity in terms of the great traditional biblical themes. That general law holds good also for the Word of God: St. John has neither borrowed it from Greek philosophy nor from Philo of Alexandria; he holds it directly from the Old Testament, from his own experience of the historic Christ, of that Jesus of Nazareth with whom he had lived for some years." Thomas H. Tobin, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 254, states, "Yet significant elements in the hymn cannot be explained simply on the basis of texts from Jewish wisdom literature." Tobin continues to elucidate that the logos never replaced wisdom in Jewish literature and that the "function and attributes of the logos go beyond what is found in Jewish wisdom literature. . . . In addition, the *logos* is described as 'God' (*theos*, John 1:1), 'an only son' (*monogenes*, John 1:14), and those who receive the *logos* are given the power to become 'children of God" (*tekna theou*, John 1:12). None of these attributes are ascribed to wisdom in Jewish literature. A helpful summary of the intersection of wisdom traditions and the word of the Lord in the Old Testament is provided by Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, 30, who concludes, "In an oversimplified way of summarizing a long history, wisdom was personified, then tied in and harmonized with the earlier tradition of the Word of God."

[161] Ridderbos, *John*, 24, agrees with Borgen that the Logos is "probably an interpretation of and substitution for the repeated 'and God said' in Genesis 1." See Peder Borgen, "Creation, Logos, and the Son: Observations on John 1:1–18 and 5:17–18," *ExAud* 3 (1987): 92; and Lincoln, *John*, 95–96.

[162] Barrett, *John*, 127. Bruce, *John*, 29, suggests that "The 'word of God' in the Old Testament denotes God in action, especially in creation, revelation, and deliverance." See also Harris, *Jesus As God*, 54–55, who states, "But, given John's demonstrable dependence on the OT for his formative ideas, one should assume that his Logos concept is informed principally by OT teaching concerning the 'word of the Lord' as God's agent in creation (Ps 33:6), revelation (Jer 1:4–5, 9), and salvation (Ezek 37:4–6), especially since the Prologue proceeds to emphasize precisely these three spheres as the areas in which the Logos is mediator."; "For us, of course, the identity of the Logos will become clear only in the light of what is said about him," observes Bultmann, *John*, 19. "And the first thing we see is that he is a divine figure, at once Creator and Revealer." Bultmann, however, denies the Old Testament background for the Logos.

[163] Painter, "The Light Shines in the Darkness," 26, states, "The Prologue portrays the Logos in a hypostatized relation to God already 'in the beginning.' "

Isa 55:11."[164] After reviewing the research on the background for the λόγος, John McHugh concludes,

> Neither Philo nor the Gnostics is able to supply a convincing background which will account for all the attributes with which, according to John, the Logos of the Prologue is endowed: eternal, creator, sovereign Lord of all history, light of all humanity, and the Word made flesh. The OT, by contrast, can express all these attributes with the term "the Word of our God." To understand the term Logos in the Prologue, it is necessary only to study the meaning of the term in the OT, both Greek and Hebrew.[165]

Yet this Gospel cannot be restricted to only Jewish readers.[166] The use of a term that was familiar to Greeks as well reflects the desire of the Gospel to communicate to all readers, and is congruent with the interest of Jesus in the narrative (see 12:21).[167]

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[164] Bruce, *John*, 30. Köstenberger, *John*, 25, says, "Psalmists and prophets alike portray God's word in close to personal terms." Moody Smith, *John*, 49, notes, "In John, Jesus is his Word, there is an ancient Targum in which God's speaking is personified, or reified, as his *Memra* or Word." Borgen, "Creation, Logos, and the Son," 92, notes that Philo discusses the Logos in Gen 1:3 in terms of personal qualities. Hendriksen, *John*, 70, states, "Already in the Old Testament the Word of God is represented as a Person. Note especially Ps 33:6." Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 280, summarizes, "The exegetical circles in which the author was involved had undoubtedly reflected upon the identity of the Glory, YHWH's visible manifestation, and knew this hypostasis to be the Name as well as the Word. Indeed, the use of the Word in John may reflect concern for treating discussion of the Name with due respect. This usage could also mirror an effort to ground speculation about the Word in the biblical concept of the Name. It is most probable, however, that the Word was used in the Prologue because it had already become a more popular designation for the angelomorphic Glory within Hellenistic Jewish groups, as well as an established title for Christ among some Christian groups." Bultmann, *John*, 20–21, however, denies that the Word ever became a hypostasis in the Old Testament.

[165] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 94–95. Also Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 154, who, writing on the use of the Word, asserts, "Apart from the first half of v. 14, 'and the Word became flesh,' the very confident use of the Word rather than the Wisdom of God, and the clear ascription of personality rather than the mere literary personification of the Word (Wisdom)—apart from these things, the thought, phraseology, and even the rhythm of the prologue can be closely paralleled in the language of the Jewish Scriptures."; Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 93, notes the role of the λόγος in Greek Stoic philosophy, but concludes, "The primary source of John's confession that Jesus was the Logos was probably reflection of the Wisdom tradition of Israel."

[166] Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue of John," *HTR* 94 (2001): 257, after discussing the similarities between the Memra of the Targums and the Logos, writes, "These examples lead inductively to the conclusion that the *Memra* performs many, if not all, of the functions of the Logos of Christian Logos theology (as well as of Wisdom), and an *a priori* case can be made, therefore, for some kind of connection between these two, after all, etymologically cognate entities in non-rabbinic Judaism."

[167] Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 139, posits that "the intertextuality of λόγος lies not so much in specific texts, as in a religious/philosophical milieu in which the word represented a host of (similar) concepts. . . . The issue is not which of these the Prologue is drawing upon, but that it is drawing upon them at all. The author of the Prologue could be making a claim that λόγος is a universal concept and so refers to them all." Phillips exaggerates the universal use of λόγος in the Prologue, and denies that there is any λόγος doctrine in the Gospel. Barrett, *John*, 127, notes that common Greek expression "made λόγος a very convenient term for describing any

Though John does indeed rely most heavily on the Old Testament as his source for his Gospel, he did not write in a vacuum. His readers (intended, implied, and real) do not read without influence from philosophies and cultures in which they dwell. It is prudent, therefore, to understand and acknowledge the presence of the λόγος in Hellenistic thought at the time of the composition of the Fourth Gospel.[168] Craig Keener observes, "The questions of temporal priority which plague any comparison of Johannine and gnostic texts do not affect a comparison of John's Logos with that of Stoic thought."[169] Hellenistic thought and philosophy of John's day was influenced by the Stoicism prevalent in Greek thought. The Stoic philosophers, founded by Zeno, taught a λόγος doctrine influenced by both Heraclitus and Socrates.[170] Elizabeth Harris observes that the concept of the Logos is found in Greek religion and philosophy as long ago as Heraclitus (500 BCE), who used the term as another name for primal Fire.[171] She continues to note that the term "played no part in the theories of other pre-Socratic philosophers, nor in those

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kind of self-expression." Later (p. 129), Barrett states, "It would however be wrong to suggest that John accomplished his task by making a neat amalgam of earlier notions of mediation and applying it to Christ; he begins with Christ, the eschatological fulfillment of God's purposes, and with the fundamental conviction that Christ himself is the Gospel, the Word which God has spoken." Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10, concludes his discussion of the logos, "As Paul stood on Mars Hill and declared, 'that which you worship but do not know, I now proclaim' (Acts 17:23), so the Evangelist set forth to the world of his day thoughts familiar to all about the Logos in relation to God and the world, startlingly modified by the affirmation of the Incarnation, and then went on in the Gospel to tell how the Word acted in the words and deeds of Jesus and brought about the redemption of the nations." See also McHugh, *John 1–4*, 96.

[168] Adesola Joan Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John* (LNTS 505; London: T&T Clark, 2014), 129, notes, "The term λόγος has a large philosophical and theological semantic range. Greek and Jewish philosophers used λόγος in a special way; equivalent terms for this word appear in both Jewish scripture and rabbinic literature."

[169] Keener, *John*, 1:341. Keener provides a summary of Heraclitus and Cleanthes' view of the λόγος in classical Greek thought, as well as its development in Stoicism and beyond. Keener concludes his observations (p. 342), "Because the Logos doctrine became pervasive and influenced Jewish formulations, it had at least an indirect influence on the relevance of John's Logos language in the prologue. It is not, however, the most direct background for the prologue; its sense is in fact quite different."

[170] Sanders, *John*, 68–69 denies any direct Ephesian influence between Heraclitus and John, but suggests that the Stoic view of the Logos influenced Hebrew Wisdom literature which, in turn, influenced John's use of the λόγος.

[171] See also Keener, *John*, 1:341, who notes that six of the 130 fragments of his work mention the λόγος, with four of them containing the "technical sense of being eternal, omnipresent, the divine cause, and so forth."

of Plato or Aristotle, it re-emerged in Stoic philosophy."[172] The influence of the Stoic λόγος can be seen in later writers who commented on John's Gospel, giving credence to the idea that this influence would have been alive and well at the time of the Gospel's writing. In the notes to his translation of Cyril's commentary on John, David Maxwell observes that the Stoics held to a "distinction between λόγος ἐνδιάθετος, a 'word' or thought which is conceived in the mind, and λόγος προφορικός, a spoken word."[173] Eunomius and other heretics used this distinction to describe the λόγος in John's Gospel. Cyril, expressing the orthodox position in opposition to the heretics, also used this distinction to discuss John's Christology.[174] Yet there is no evidence for any direct tie between John's use of the λόγος in the prologue and Stoicism's use of the λόγος. David MacLeod observes:

> Greek philosophical usage, however, was not the background of John's use of the term λόγος. Yet because of that usage it constituted a bridge word by which some unbelievers schooled in Greek philosophy became interested in Christianity. The average person might not have known the precise significance that philosophers attached to the λόγος any more than people today know all the details of nuclear fission or the theory of evolution. Yet they talked about it, and John's teaching would captivate the interest of individuals reading John 1:1 and 14. The λόγος of God—the controlling power of the universe—became a man.[175]

The most prominent and probable source and influence for John's use of the term λόγος remains the Old Testament, the source to which John frequently alludes and often directly quotes.

Rather than attributing the origin of the term to any specific source or background, Carson suggests an appreciation for the intent of the author and his use of the term. He writes,

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[172] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 198–99.

[173] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John: Volume 1* (ed. Joel C. Elowsky; trans. David R. Maxwell; ACT; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 20 n. 85.

[174] Cyril, *John*, 20 n. 85.

[175] David J. MacLeod, "The Eternality and Deity of the Word: John 1:1–2," *BSac* 160 (2003): 55.

> The wealth of possible backgrounds to the term *logos* in John's Prologue suggests that the determining factor is not this or that background but the church's experience of Jesus Christ. This is not to say that this or that background is irrelevant. It is to say, rather, that when Christians looked around for suitable categories to express what they had come to know of Jesus Christ, many that they applied to him necessarily enjoyed a plethora of antecedent associations. . . . Many of the terms they chose, including this one, had semantic ranges so broad that they could shape the term by their own usage to make it convey, in the context of their own work, what they knew to be true of Jesus Christ. In that sense, as helpful as the background study may be, it cannot by itself determine exactly what John means by *logos*. For that information, while thinking through the background usages, we must above all listen to the Evangelist himself.[176]

The hearer's encounter with the λόγος in the first verse of the prologue invites the reader to expect further explication[177] of who and/or what the λόγος is throughout the remainder of the author's work. Ed. L. Miller asserts, "I propose that *Logos* here is a peculiarly Johannine idea, and that its Christological development may be traced from the many Christologically 'transparent' uses of *logos* and *rhema* in the Fourth Gospel 'proper', to a more self-conscious Christological significance in the First Epistle, to the full-blown Christological title in the Prologue. It means 'Word,' the saving truth which is revealed in and is Jesus Christ."[178] Proper

[176] Carson, *John*, 116. Barrett, *John*, 127, observes, "By introducing this theological term without explanation John indicates that it was not unfamiliar to his readers." Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 130, states, "Personally, I believe that the evidence points toward a common background shared by both Philo and John of working out biblical motifs in a partially Jewish, partially Greek world where Hellenistic thought has taken root." See also Sanders, *John*, 67–68, who suggests that the term logos was familiar to John's readers, and adds, "The gospel of Jesus Christ was also *logos*, and to the proclamation of this *logos* the Church, the new creation, owed its existence."

[177] Perhaps λόγος is best read as an occurrence of catachresis. John appears to delight in employing difficult or unexpected vocabulary and grammar when providing references to Jesus as God (see 1:1, 18; 8:58; 20:28; cf. Rev 1:4).

[178] Ed. L. Miller, "The Logos Was God," *EvQ* 53 (1981): 67. See also Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 93, who observes, "Logos is used as a title only in the prologue to the Gospel, but Jesus acts and speaks as the Logos throughout the Gospel. . . . Jesus both acts and speaks as the Logos who has descended from above. He fulfills the Law, and he continues the creative, revelatory, and redemptive work of the Logos."

understanding of the λόγος is found not just in the person Jesus Christ but also in the words Jesus speaks and the words about Jesus from Moses and others.[179]

Therefore, it is the λόγος (Jesus) who fills the prologue, narrative, and epilogue of the Gospel of John. The author's intention is to direct all attention to the person and the work of the λόγος in the creation.[180] Thus, the role of the λόγος (not the other who is called θεός) is highlighted with the startling statement that not God but the λόγος was in the beginning. Where the reader expects to hear of θεός, the reader instead hears of the λόγος. John's intention is to drive home for the reader that the agent of God in calling into existence the heavens and the earth was the λόγος. "Indeed," concludes Peter Phillips, "so successful is this use of the lexeme, to denote God's chief agent, that it completely disappears after the Prologue."[181]

The concept of a God who acts through his Word is neither unique nor unprecedented theology. In the Old Testament and in John's Gospel, God works through and is identified with the creative word of the speaking Word.[182] What is perhaps surprising is the role of Jesus as the

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[179] See Behr, "The Word of God in the Second Century," 87, who warns that error arises when "through familiarity with the dogmatic distillation of centuries of bitter controversy, the term 'Word,' *Logos*, as applied to Jesus Christ, is thought of in isolation from the word which he speaks and the words which speak of him ." Lincoln, *John*, 96–97, notes, "Already in early Christian thought the Word had become an important concept. Paul used it for the gospel, the message about Jesus, and he also appears to identify the message about Christ with Christ himself, so that he can talk of preaching Christ and not just the message about Christ. Given early Christian belief in the pre-existence of Christ, it was only a short move from Christ understood as the word preached to the prologue's conception of Christ as the pre-existent Word who had become incarnate."

[180] Keener, *John*, 1:365.

[181] Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 140. See also Voorwinde, "John's Prologue," 19, who, commenting on the exclusivity John's use of λόγος to the prologue says, "The word λόγος is indeed not used as a christological title after these opening verses, and yet the way it is used here is consonant with the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. Furthermore, λόγος is used in succeeding chapters in ways that presuppose the occurrences in the prologue (e.g., 4:41,50; 5:24; 8:31,37,43,51, 52; 12:48; 14:24; 15:3; 17:6, 14, 17)."

[182] Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1986; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 10–11, demonstrates the consistency of the work of God through speaking. Gruenler observes God speaking the creation into being, and suggests that this speaking is "a social act of the Triune Society." He continues, "The Fourth Gospel also declares Christ to be the original Speaker, the Expression, the Logos who is with God and was in the beginning with God." Watt, *Introduction*, 49, suggests that "In the ancient world the word *logos* was often used as a description for a mediatory

one who from the beginning and ever since always has been this Word. He himself is the one who has always effected the works of God. Edwyn Hoskyns observes,

> Because of their essential unity the Evangelist is pressed from the plural to the singular, from 'words' to word, and from a series of words to the Word. The business of the world depends upon the Word of God both for its creation and for its salvation. In thus substituting the singular for the plural—Word for words, God for men—the Evangelist does not, however, lose himself in an abstraction. He too is concerned with words, for it is his purpose to portray a Jesus who spoke.[183]

And so it is only through him that God's purposes come to fruition.[184] The God who speaks the creation into being in Genesis, and the one who reveals himself to his people through his word, is fittingly described as the λόγος. The speaking/acting God is the λόγος. He is the God who speaks and the spoken Word. He continues to speak and act in the person of Jesus Christ.[185] Yet also God is one who speaks and is not the λόγος. The one who is not the λόγος yet is also θεός exists in relation with the λόγος. John Painter observes that it is "clear that the creation of all things by the Logos arises from the relationship of the Logos to God. That is the point of the emphatic double use of *πρὸς τὸν θεόν* in 1:1–2, which underlies the statement that all things without exception were created by the Logos."[186]

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figure, the one who is responsible for the communication between the transcendent reality and the earthly world. The word is used in a similar way in 1:1–2."

[183] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 136.

[184] Neyrey, *John*, 42, helpfully observes, "In the beginning was the unique Word (1:1), who alone makes God known (1:18; 6:46)."

[185] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 141, notes, "God is apprehended by men through His works. Attention is therefore first directed to the speech and action of God in the initial act of creation; but it is so directed as to prepare the way for what is announced in v. 14. . . . What was manifested at the Beginning was not Law, as the Pharisees held, not reason or thought, as the Greek philosophers and later the Gnostics tended to suppose, but the creative power of the Word of God."

[186] Painter, "The Light Shines in the Darkness," 27. See also Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 133, who concludes that the term "points to the λόγος as a divine being in relationship with God in the following areas: (1) divinity/preexistence, (2) creative power/authority, (3) divine sonship/relationship, and (4) emissary/mediator of the divine message. In the Prologue, therefore, the symbolic import of the term λόγος is that it draws particular attention to the divinity of the Son, his mission, and his relationship with the Father in the Johannine narrative."

"And the Word Was with God"

After introducing the reader to the λόγος in the first clause of 1:1, the author introduces in the second clause another who is also properly called θεός. It is the relationship between these two which highlights the middle clause of the first verse. Concerning 1:1b, Fernando Segovia observes,

> The narrator proceeds to unveil a second character also present in this . . . beginning, "God," and posits a relationship between the two. This relationship, while addressed, proves problematic, involving as it does identification as well as differentiation between the two characters. Such ambiguity is directly reinforced by the mixed and complex use of the articular and anarthrous forms of God.[187]

The juxtaposition of the middle clause of 1:1 with the first and third clauses of 1:1, in which the Word is presented as θεός, encourages the reader to explore this relationship between one who is not the λόγος yet is called θεός and one is both the λόγος and θεός.

The conjunction καί links the second of three clauses in verse one to the first clause. Though not adversative, the author introduces a truth startlingly dichotomous with what is implied in the first clause. Instead of simply asserting equality with God, as might have been expected from the first clause, here the author reveals that the λόγος is not himself the only one who can be properly called God. The λόγος exists in fellowship with another who first (as the λόγος is not explicitly referred to as θεός until the third clause) is the proper referent of θεός. In her study of the Father-Son relationship in the Gospel of John, Adesola Akala notes, "The event of the λόγος being with God in vv. 1–2 introduces the following important Johannine realities:

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[187] Segovia, "John 1:1–18," 37–38. See also Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 137, who states, "The Word of God is the Word *of* God. It is His meaning and will, and, for this reason, it is the meaning of the whole universe, which is the creation of God by his Word. The Word of God is, however, no second entity, like Him, but less than He. Therefore, if it be said that the Word is with God, it must immediately, and in the same breath, be said that He *is* God. In Jesus, the Word came forth from God. This going forth carried with it, however, no diminution. The Word was not thereby separated or liberated from God. The Word is and remains the Life and Light and Glory of God."

(1) the close relationship or fellowship between the λόγος and God, and (2) the divinity of the λόγος, who is also called God."[188] Though the author first asserts the divinity of the λόγος through association with the divine act of creation in the first phrase of 1:1, he reserves the explicit pronouncement of θεός for another with whom the λόγος is. With this one, who is another one called θεός, the λόγος was. The relationship between these two who are both properly θεός will in some measure fill the remainder of the prologue and narrative.

The second of three instances of both the arthrous substantive (ὁ λόγος) and the verb (ἦν) that first appear at the end of the verse's first clause here mark the beginning of its second clause. This is an example of step parallelism and will continue into the verse's third clause as well.[189] Step parallelism will aid the reader through the first two verses of the prologue in order to add more information and understanding to the relationship and existence of both the one who is λόγος and the one who is not the λόγος but is θεός. Further information concerning the Word is given, and the reader's conception of God the Creator is enhanced. The second clause reveals that the λόγος is not the only one who is properly called God. John 1:2 states that both the λόγος and the other one who is θεός were both in the beginning.

The first clause of 1:1 presented the λόγος in pre-existence before creation. Now in this second clause the λόγος is with God. The translation of πρὸς τὸν θεόν is uniform throughout the

[188] Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 148.

[189] Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 5, comments on the three clauses of 1:1, "In spite of the unvarying pattern of the phrases, St. John has avoided monotony by coupling the clauses together according to a device in vogue among the Semites: the first word of the second and third phrases take up the last word of the preceding one (Word—Word . . . God—God . . .). In this way the thoughts seem to soar boldly, as in a spiral flight." Brown, *John*, 1:19, labels this " 'staircase' parallelism, whereby a word prominent in one line (often the predicate or last word) is taken up in the next line (often as the subject or first word)." Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 46, labels this as a "step-structure" and observes this phenomenon throughout 1:1–5; Moody Smith, *John*, 47, observes this pattern in 1:1–5 and 1:9–11. See also Barrett, *Essays on John*, 8; Hendriksen, *John*, 38; Bultmann, *John*, 15; Lincoln, *John*, 94. Urban C. Von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (3 vols.; ECC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 2:19, labels this construction "catchword connections."

popular translations,[190] yet the phrase is anything but common or completely comprehensible.[191] Chrys Caragounis suggests that this construction is a late development within Greek (the same phrase within the same context does not occur in the LXX) and grammatically identical with the construction *παρά* + dative (see *παρὰ σοί* in John 17:5).[192] Similarly, Barrett states, "*πρός* with the accusative can hardly mean 'in the presence of' in classical Greek, but this meaning is unquestionable in New Testament Greek."[193] The λόγος and God exist in relationship.[194] Mary Coloe observes, "The imperfect *ἦν* and the preposition *πρός* establish a dynamic intimacy between the Word and God through all time."[195] The λόγος was with God.

"With God" raises the question of the theological implications of such a statement. What can it possibly mean that the Word was with God? George Beasley-Murray suggests that this phrase might be read with the sense of 'in the presence of God,' 'in the fellowship of God,' or 'in union with God.'[196] Understood in light of the inclusio formed by 1:1 and 1:18, La Potterie

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[190] Watt and Caragounis, "Grammatical Analysis," 100. Watt characterizes the translation of this phrase as "evident and indisputable." He provides a list of the translations which contain the translation "with God" (n. 31), and concludes, "Except for paraphrases, there are basically no exceptions."

[191] Borchert, *John 1–11*, 103, cautions that this phrase is difficult to translate into English. More than mere association is intended.

[192] Watt and Caragounis, "Grammatical Analysis," 110. But see 6:46, *παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ*. See also Lincoln, *John*, 97.

[193] Barrett, *John*, 129. See Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 174–76 for a summary of the most important opinions for the interpretation of *πρός*. Sadananda discusses (1) "spoke to," (2) "having regard to God" (Abbott), (3) "with," indicating no movement, and (4) "dynamic relation to," indicating not just movement, but relation and direction.

[194] Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 28, finds the relationship between the Word and God expressed in the verb *ἦν* in this clause. He also suggests a mutual turning of both the Word toward God and God toward the Word. Painter, "The Light Shines in the Darkness," 26, observes, "In 1:1 the Prologue tells us that the Logos was *πρὸς τὸν θεόν* and the Logos shared in the divine being (*θεός*). Further, *this* divine status or being (*οὗτος*) was not acquired but was in the beginning with God (1:2)."

[195] Mary Coloe, "The Structure of the Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1," *ABR* 45 (1997): 47.

[196] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10. Brown, *John*, 1:4–5, suggests either "with God" or "towards God."

observes the parallelism between πρὸς τὸν θεόν in 1:1 and εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς in 1:18.[197] The intended parallel is between the identity of Jesus as God in both 1:18 and 1:1 and the differentiation between Jesus and the Father in the same verses. Within this framework there is fellowship and intimacy in 1:1b and 1:18b. M. Harris suggests that " 'the Word was in active communion with God' seems to be the import of John's statement, whether or not πρὸς bears a dynamic sense, for when πρὸς describes a relationship between persons it must connote personal intercourse rather than simply spatial juxtaposition or personal accompaniment. Used of divine persons, this preposition points to eternal intercommunication."[198] Yet this does not fully answer the theological questions which arise with the use of this phrase in 1:1.

The Word is in the beginning, where one expected God from Gen 1:1, and yet John quickly positions the Word as one who is not identical with another who is also to be known as the referent of θεός. The pre-existent Word is with God. The two coexist within coordination and differentiation. Moloney states, "There are two parties involved, both individuated by the use of the definite article: *ho logos* and *ho theos*."[199] There exists relationship and fellowship.[200] Yet the one is not the other, and *vice versa*.

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[197] La Potterie, "La finale du prologue johannique," 367.

[198] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 57. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:234, discusses both the partnership of the Word with God in the creation as well as the personal union between the Word and God before concluding, "When the evangelist is passing from the prologue to the Gospel proper, he has a formula which comprises both aspects: 'he who is in the bosom of the Father' (1:18)." See also Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 176.

[199] Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 28.

[200] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 9, observes, "Perhaps the difference between interpretations should not be pressed too hard, for if the Logos was 'with God,' it must have been in some relationship *to* God, and it is obvious that this cannot have been a local or spatial relationship in a material sense." He later (p. 10) suggests, "Thus, v. 1b might be represented in English as 'The Word was very close to God,' with all the ambiguity these words contain." See also Hendriksen, *John*, 70, who defends his translation "And the Word was face to face with God" by commenting, "The meaning is that the Word existed in the closest possible fellowship with the Father, and that he took supreme delight in this communion."

God (the Father) and the Word (the Son) both exist in the beginning, and are not in competition nor in isolation from each other, but the Word is with God. This relationship opens the door for inspection to further understand the dynamics of how the Word is "with God."[201] John's Gospel, observes Craig Keener, "is really clear in affirming Jesus' deity (1:1c, 18; 8:58; 20:28) and in distinguishing him from the Father."[202] The theological reality of the Word as a separate person, yet one who is of the same substance as the Father, expands both previous and subsequent statements. Martin Luther observes, "The evangelist clearly differentiates between the Word and the Person of the Father. He stresses the fact that the Word was a Person distinct from the Person of the Father, with whom He was. He was entirely separate from the Father."[203]

The identification of "God" in 1:1b is essential for a coherent reading of both the premier (1:1) and ultimate (1:18) verses of the prologue. For in both verses, there is one who is God and yet is not the Word. Murray Harris states, "For several reasons, there can be little doubt that ὁ θεός in 1:1b designates the Father." The primary reason for this statement, notes Harris is "John 1:18 expresses a thought similar to 1:1b, using the term *πατήρ*: the Logos, depicted as μονογενὴς θεὸς, is said to reside εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς."[204] The one whom the Word is with is the "invisible Father of all," observes Edwyn Hoskyns, who further says, "The Word is distinguished

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[201] "John may already be pointing out," observes Carson, 116–17, "that the 'Word' he is talking about is a person, *with* God and therefore distinguishable from God, and enjoying a personal relationship with him."

[202] Keener, *John*, 1:370. Bruce, *John*, 31, says, "The Word of God is distinguished from God himself, and yet exists in a close personal relation with him; moreover, the Word shares the very nature of God, for 'the Word was God.' "

[203] Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 1–4* (vol. 22 of *Luther's Works*; ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan et al.; trans. Martin H. Bertram; St. Louis: Concordia, 1957), 15.

[204] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 55. It is of note that Harris' reasons for this statement are that "in Johannine usage ὁ θεός customarily denotes the Father; and (4) the articular θεός could not refer to the divine essence ('the Word was with the divine nature' is nonsensical) or to the Trinitarian God (since ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν is predicated of the Logos-Son and the Spirit is not mentioned or alluded to elsewhere in the Prologue)." Earlier (p. 53), Harris notes that of the 83 uses of θεός in John, only three refer to Jesus as θεός (1:1, 18; 20:28).

from the Father, without, however, thereby introducing any suggestion of lack of complete union between them. . . . The emphasis upon the transcendent dependence of the Word upon the Father conditions the whole narrative which follows. As the incarnate Word or Son of God, the words and actions of Jesus are the manifestation to men of what He has seen with the Father."[205]

Unfolding throughout the prologue and the subsequent narrative, the accessibility of the Word through the witness of eyewitnesses is remarkable. Yet the Father, who is other than the Word, shares the same substance with the Word. Jan van der Watt succinctly observes, "However 1:1 does not only state that Jesus *was* God, but also that he *was with* God, suggesting not only identification, but also distinctiveness (see 1:18 where the Son—God—is at the heart of God, the Father). Jesus was God, but simultaneously he was orientated towards and indeed with God. This becomes the challenging enigma of John's Gospel—'God and also with God.' "[206]

Thus, the reader is led into the climax of this first sentence of John's Gospel. Bultmann observes, "Whereas the statement ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν could have made us think that we were concerned with the communion of two divine persons, the statement is pushed to its opposite extreme: θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος."[207] The one who is in the beginning and is with God is once again the subject of the next phrase, one which challenges monotheism and any facile understanding of either God or the Word.

"And the Word Was God"

At the pinnacle of this first verse stands a concise yet complex statement. "And the Word was God." The brevity of the phrase betrays its audacious and comprehensive declaration. The

[205] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 141–42. Sanders, *John*, 70, comments, "As John will show more clearly later, when he uses 'Father' and 'Son' instead of 'God' and 'Logos,' the Logos is more than a personified abstraction, an entity, indeed a person, distinct from God, though not different in nature from him."

[206] Watt, *Introduction*, 46.

[207] Bultmann, *John*, 34.

weight of the claim contained in this brief phrase deserves and mandates explanation, urging the reader forward through the prologue and to the end of the narrative. Marianne Meye Thompson writes, "Like the prologue, then, the entire Gospel points both to the one who is 'with God' and who 'is God.' The narrative of the Gospel demonstrates how the Father who seeks true worshippers finds them in the people who join in Thomas' confession of Jesus as 'My Lord and my God.' "[208] The Word who was in the beginning and who was with God was himself God.

Linked, as the previous clauses, with the conjunction "and," this phrase builds on the preceding ones and makes explicit the opening statement of the Gospel. Roland Meynet suggests that the first verse is written around the two instances of "and," with the three linked clauses forming a "segment trimembre."[209] This linking of the clauses leads the reader to comprehend the three phrases of the first verse in concert with one another. What was mysteriously implied with the two first clauses is here clearly proclaimed. The one who was in the beginning (where one expects only God) and the one who was with God (not the Word, but the Father) is finally and fully explicitly also equated with God. Robert Kysar observes:

> This sentence of the Prologue introduces the reader immediately to a basic view of Christ in the Fourth Gospel: The Logos is a distinct being, yet identical with God. That is, there is both *individuality* and *identification* in the relationship between God and Logos (or Christ). . . . [H]onest interpretation of the passage necessitates our understanding that the author is introducing us here to a paradox at the heart of the relationship of Christ and God. How can there be individuality and identity at the same time? The author does not tell us. One can almost hear Johannine laughter in the wings as we try to stretch our minds to get them around the meaning of these words.[210]

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[208] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 54.

[209] Roland Meynet, "Analyse Rhétorique du Prologue de Jean," *RB* 96 (1989): 487. See also Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 178, who suggests that the linking "and" links the Logos as with God to the Logos who is God, creating a dynamic relationship between the two.

[210] Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, 32.

The Word was God. Which invites an all important question: If the Word is the one who created, then which of the two (Father or Word) is the one who otherwise appeared to Moses and the Prophets? This question the prologue will not further address until v. 18. What may have been feared by any strict monotheist is here stated. The Word was God.[211]

Once more, the substantive "God" that appears at the end of the preceding clause here marks the beginning of the verse's third and final clause (more step parallelism). God was first introduced in the second clause of the opening verse, giving priority to the Logos. Though this is striking and may be even offensive or counter-intuitive, it is the order of things in John's Gospel.

Whereas in the previous clause "God" denotes the Father, here "God" denotes another. The Word was with God and was God. Thus, the Word is not the Father, and the Father is not the Word, and "God" refers to both. Andrew Lincoln finds similarity between Philo and John in the use of arthrous and anarthrous use of θεός, "Philo shows he can happily call the Logos God without infringing his monotheism, and it is precisely the absence of the article that is important for his formulation."[212] While it is improper to suggest, based on the anarthrous use of θεός, that the Logos is somehow less divine than the referent of the arthrous use of θεός, the distinction between the Father and the Son is maintained.[213] Discussing 1:1c, Boismard observes, "Later theology would explain that the Word (the Son) and the Father are distinct and opposite Persons, but are one in the indivisibility of the divine nature. Christ himself sketched the first outline of

[211] Köstenberger, *John*, 28, observes that "Clearly, calling Jesus 'God' stretched the boundaries of first-century Jewish monotheism."

[212] Lincoln, *John*, 96.

[213] Borchert, *John 1–11*, 104, notes, "The meaning of John 1:1 is not merely that the Word has divine characteristics but that the Word participates in the reality called God. That Word was *true deity*, and John wanted there to be *no doubt* about it."

this mystery when he insisted to the Jews: 'My Father and I are one' (John 10:30)."[214] The substance cannot be divided, yet the persons are.[215] This is evident in the two persons present in John 1:1, yet both are the proper referent of θεός.[216]

As is customary, the definite, preverbal predicate nominative here appears without the article.[217] In his article examining the anarthrous predicate nouns in John 1:1 and Mark 15:39, Philip Harner suggests alternatively that there are "two general principles concerning predicate nouns that are usually accepted as axiomatic in NT study. The first is that a predicate noun in Greek is anarthrous when it indicates the category or class of which the subject is a particular example. . . . The second principle is that a predicate noun is arthrous when it is interchangeable

[214] Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 9.

[215] Cf. the Athanasian Creed's teaching concerning the persons and substance of God: "And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. As there are not three Uncreated nor three Incomprehensibles, but one Uncreated and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords."

[216] Lincoln, *John*, 98, observes, "The questions John 1:1 provokes in the light of the rest of the prologue are those which later creedal and doctrinal formulations attempted to answer and contemporary Christology continues to explore. Often scholars attempt to distance their exegesis of the prologue as much as possible from later Christian confessions. In fact, it might well be claimed that most of the Christological affirmations of an ecumenical confession, such as the Nicene Creed, are already implicit in the prologue read within the Gospel as a whole."

[217] E.C. Colwell, "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," *JBL* 52 (1933): 20. Colwell expresses two rules, with the second containing four sections (a–d), namely, "(1) Definite predicate nouns here regularly take the article (2) The exceptions are for the most part due to a change in word-order (a) Definite predicate nouns which follow the verb (this is the usual order) usually take the article (b) Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article, (c) Proper names regularly lack the article in the predicate, (d) Predicate nominatives in relatives clauses regularly follow the verb whether or not they have the article."

with the subject in a given context."[218] Whether the anarthrous θεός is definite[219] or qualitative,[220] the thrust of the statement in 1:1c is clear. The Word was and is God.[221]

While θεός could be read as indefinite ("a god"), such an understanding is foreign to the theology of both the Old Testament and the Fourth Gospel.[222] The Fourth Gospel, which teaches

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[218] Philip Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," *JBL* 92 (1973): 75. Thus, the absence of the article avoids here the suggestion that "Father" and "Son" are interchangeable designations. The first option is not acceptable as it ignores the theology of the prologue and John's christology found throughout the narrative. God is not a category into which Jesus fits, nor is he part of a larger whole. Jesus is θεός and not simply a subset of this whole.

[219] Yet there is no instance of John using θεός elsewhere to mean anything other than "God." Thus, James Hope Moulton, *Prolegomena* (vol. 1 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek;* 3d ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), 83, argues that θεός is definite. Not only does the immediate context of 1:1 suggest a definite reading of θεός in all three instances found in 1:1–2, but it is also noteworthy that 1:1 is one of the three occurrences in the Gospel in which Jesus is called θεός. Looking at those three verses (1:1, 18; 20:28), Jesus is identified as θεός with instances of the noun that are both anarthrous (1:1, 18) and arthrous (20:28). In all three instances, John is proclaiming the same thing about Jesus. He is the God of the Jews, the God of the Old Testament Scriptures.

[220] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 269, argues that θεός is qualitative. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns," 83, too arrives at a qualitative understanding of θεός in 1:1. Harner's approach compares the Johannine usage of the construction in which the anarthrous predicate nominative precedes the verb. He notes that of the 53 times this construction occurs, "in 40 of these cases the qualitative force of the predicate is more prominent than its definiteness or indefiniteness. In 26 of the 53, the predicate is clearly not definite, and in 11 it could be definite but there is no clear indication that it is." Thus, he concludes (p. 85), "There is no basis for regarding the predicate *theos* as definite." *Theos* in 1:1c is qualitative and "means that the *logos* has the same nature of *theos*."

[221] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 269, states concerning the translation "divine," which he deems to be the best, that the term is acceptable only if it is understood as "a term that can be applied only to true deity." Because in modern English we use the same term "with reference to angels, theologians, even a meal," it is too easily "misleading in an English translation." Thus, Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, 32, observes also that, while the absence of the definite article before 'God' suggests to some "that the identity of the Logos and God is not intended to be complete" and that it therefore "means something like 'the Logos was divine,' " such an interpretation likely makes too much of the absence of the definite article. See also Rom 9:5; Tit 2:13, where Jesus is referenced as θεός without the article. Noteworthy too are the New Testament instances where the Father is referenced as θεός without the article in Rom 1:7 and Phil 2:6. Commenting on the understanding of John Chrysostom, Weinrich *John*, forthcoming, therefore notes that the absence of the article "does not necessarily suggest any diminution of rank or status. . . . The use of θεός in both John 1:1b and John 1:1c . . . must have the same significance."

[222] Thus, von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 2:3, argues too that John "equates the Word with God. Although for many English readers the word 'divine' would seem to say the same thing, this is not what is said in the Greek (since there was a Greek word for 'divine' [*theios*])." Bultmann, *John*, 33, states, "There is therefore no talk of subordination; the status of the λόγος is one of equality with God: he was God. For it cannot be taken as meaning: he was a god, a divine being, as if θεός were a generic concept. . . The word θεός is intended in its strict monotheistic sense; furthermore what comes afterward shows that all polytheistic conceptions and emanationist theories are foreign to the text. And one can hardly translate 'of divine being,' 'of the divine species'; for in that case, *why was not θεῖος used?*"

faith in the monotheistic God of the Old Testament, cannot and does not profess a polytheistic or ditheistic view of God. As Watt notes, "Jesus is not bringing a new or different religion, but stands in continuation with the history of the creator God of Israel (1:2–3). He does not reveal any god but the true and only God (17:3), initially worshipped in Jerusalem, but now worshipped in Spirit and truth (4:24). This God is his Father with whom he stands in an intimate relationship."[223] This of course, has not been accepted by all. The authors of the Arian movement based their christological views on the language of the λόγος found in the prologue. T. E. Pollard observes that Eusebius of Caesarea taught that "below the Supreme God is the Logos, who was not the transcendent God himself, but a second God."[224] What is remarkable, however, is that, as Pollard later observes, "From the very beginning of the [Arian] controversy it was St. John's Gospel, the pre-eminent New Testament witness to the divine Father-Son relationship, which provided Arius' opponents with their most powerful arguments."[225] Athanasius stands as the church father who defended the orthodox teaching of the divinity of Christ in the face of the Arian controversy. He did so primarily from John 1:1–3, by proving that the λόγος is the necessary agent of God for creation. The λόγος is not created, but is the one through whom God created all things. This is shown from John 1:1–3 which echoes Gen 1 and 2. Thus, the λόγος is

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[223] Watt, *Introduction*, 45. Also Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 177, states, "In the Johannine context θεός could apply only to the supreme being, not to an inferior divine being or emanation, as simply generic θεός."

[224] T. E. Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (SNTSMS 13; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 123.

[225] Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, 146. For a modern interpretation which denies the equality of Jesus with God, and reads the prologue in light of subordination, see G. H. Boobyer, "Jesus as 'Theos' in the New Testament," *BJRL* 50 (1968): 247–61, who suggests that θεός is applied to Jesus in the New Testament in order to equate him with the working of God, but not as describing his being as divine. Boobyer fails, however to adequately address the role of Jesus with the Father as the source of all creation and the worship of Jesus in the New Testament (especially John 20:28).

not a creation of God, but the means through which all things come to be.[226] For Athanasius, it is also important to note that if Jesus were a creature, he would not be worthy of worship, which he receives from Thomas in 20:28.[227]

Jesus teaches not that there is more than one God, but that he and the Father are one God (John 10:30; 20:28). Adesola Akala notes, "*πρὸς τὸν θεόν* denotes accord and agreement because *πρὸς* places the Son in the presence of, and in union with, God. The repetition in vv. 1–2 stresses the unity and divine qualities shared in the Son-Father relationship, which continues in v. 3 where the *λόγος* is united with God in the work of creation."[228] Framing his prologue with equivalent assertions, John affirms the same confession in both places, as he also maintains the distinction established in 1:1b.

The anarthrous *θεός* could theoretically be translated adjectivally[229] as "divine or god-like."[230] However, this understanding of the anarthrous *θεός* is inconsistent with the context and contrary to the evident content of the prologue. Miller observes, "It is unthinkable from a stylistic standpoint that in three consecutive statements—*καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν*—*theos* means 'God' in the first and third while the

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[226] For a fuller discussion of Athanasius' refutation of the Arian position especially focused on the *λόγος* as creator, see Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, 192–217.

[227] Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, 206.

[228] Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 156.

[229] See Haenchen, *John*, 1:110–11. But Carson, *John*, 117, states, "A long string of writers has argued that because *theos*, 'God,' here has no article, John is not referring to God as a specific being, but to mere qualities of 'God-ness'. The Word, they say, was not God, but divine. This will not do. There is a perfectly serviceable word in Greek for 'divine' (namely *theios*). More importantly, there are many places in the New Testament where the predicate noun has no article, and yet is specific. Even in this chapter, 'you are the King of Israel' (1:49) has no article before 'King' in the original."

[230] Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 177, discusses the adjectival use, but rejects the interpretation as both unnecessary grammatically and inconsistent with John's theology.

adjectival 'divine' intrudes the second."[231] The inclusio formed by 1:1 and 1:18 similarly rules out the possibility of the adjectival interpretation. The motivation for interpreting θεός as adjectival or indefinite seems to stem from a desire to avoid or deny the Christian belief in Jesus as God portrayed in John's Gospel. Yet this teaching is evident both in John's works and in the rest of the New Testament. One can express doubt in the truth that Jesus is God, but there is no question that the New Testament authors, and chiefly John, fully embraced and taught the divinity of Jesus.[232]

Why, then, does the author not write ὁ θεός?[233] The concern of most commentators has been that ὁ θεός would imply that the Word is identical in every way with ὁ θεός in 1:1b, which cannot be.[234] "The fact that θεός is anarthrous" observes Barrett, "does not make it mean something less than God: the Word is not indeed the whole content of deity, yet he is (not divine in a secondary sense but) God. In the same sentence, however, he is differentiated from God, and this differentiation is underlined in 1:2."[235] The reasoning follows that John chose the anarthrous θεός in 1:1c in order to preserve the differentiation between ὁ θεός in 1:1b (Father) and the Word as θεός (Son) in 1:1c.[236] Thus, there is no confusion of the Father and the Son. As Raymond Brown observes, "For a modern Christian reader whose Trinitarian background has accustomed him to thinking of 'God' as a larger concept than 'God the Father,' the translation, 'The Word was God'

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[231] Miller, "The Logos Was God," 68–69.

[232] See Miller, "The Logos Was God," 65, 69; Hendricksen, *John*, 3.

[233] One manuscript, L019 reads the article.

[234] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 268.

[235] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 23.

[236] Barrett, *John*, 130, states, "The absence of the article indicates that the Word is God, but is not the only being of whom this is true; if ὁ θεός had been written it would have implied that no divine being existed outside the second person of the Trinity."

is quite correct. This reading is reinforced when one remembers that in the Gospel as it now stands, the affirmation of 1:1 is almost certainly meant to form an inclusion with 20:28, where at the end of the Gospel Thomas confesses Jesus as 'My God.' "[237] The Gospel of John itself has such a view of God, as does the entire New Testament.[238]

Therefore, there is no real dispute over the intention of the statement in 1:1c. John explicitly references the Word as God.[239] "And the Word was God" proclaims the full divinity of the Logos, while it simultaneously also maintains the differentiation between the Logos and the God with whom the Logos was in 1:1b. Martin Luther observes:

> Any attempt to fathom and comprehend such statements with human reason and understanding will avail nothing, for none of this has its source in the reason: that there was a Word in God before the world's creation, and that this Word was God; that, as John says further on, this same Word, . . . full of grace and truth, rested in the Father's bosom or heart and became flesh; and that no one else had ever seen or known God, because the Word, who is God's only-begotten Son, rested in the bosom of the Father and revealed Him to us. Nothing but faith can comprehend this. . . . In the end only the Holy Spirit from heaven above can create listeners and pupils who accept this doctrine and believe that the Word is God, that God's Son is the Word, and that the Word became flesh, that He is also the Light who can illumine all men who come into the world, and that without this Light all is darkness.[240]

The theology and understanding of this teaching is to be sought out in the prologue and the narrative of the Gospel.

"Although I believe that θεός in 1:1c is qualitative," observes Wallace, "I think the simplest and most straightforward translation is, 'and the Word was God.' It may be better to clearly

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[237] Brown, *John*, 1:5.

[238] The exploration of this doctrine in the Old Testament is beyond the scope of this project. However, it is this project's understanding that John read the Old Testament with such a view of God. See, e.g. John 5:39; 8:58; 12:41.

[239] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10–11, observes, "θεός without the article signifies less than ὁ θεός; but it cannot be understood as 'a god,' as though the Logos were a lesser god alongside the supreme God; nor as simply 'divine,' for which the term θεῖος was well known; nor as indicating the exercise of divine *functions* without possessing the divine nature; rather it denotes *God in his nature*, as truly God as he with whom he 'was,' yet without exhausting the being of God."

[240] *LW*, 22:8.

affirm the NT teaching of the deity of Christ and then explain that he is *not* the Father, than to *sound* ambiguous on his deity and explain that he is God but is not the Father."[241] It is precisely this tension that the rest of the Gospel is written to illuminate and explore in the identification of Jesus as θεός.[242]

The subject of the verse's third and final clause, a third and final instance of the arthrous substantive "the Word," rounds out the verse.[243] The one who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God will be the main subject of the remainder of the prologue and of the narrative of the Gospel that follows. Concerning 1:1, John McHugh notes:

> Ever since Chrysostom, commentators have remarked that the first clause (1a) asserts the pre-existence of the Logos, the second (1b) affirms that he was in a certain relationship with God, and the third (1c) states that he is in some sense to be identified with God. The threefold ἦν leads up to a climax: the Word was God. The three statements taken together are the foundation upon which the teaching of the Gospel rests.[244]

With all, then, that follows, beginning with the rest of the prologue, further explanation concerning the identification of the Logos as God and the Son of God (with God) is given. Alan Culpepper notes, "Jesus, the Christ, the Word, the Son of God, dominates the Gospel of John. The Gospel is thoroughly Christological. It is structured so as to bring the reader in to an intimate confrontation with Jesus, to which the reader will respond with faith."[245]

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[241] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 269 n. 31.

[242] Lincoln, *John*, 98, states, "Even though the framework of the prologue remains within the creational monotheism of the Jewish Scriptures, theological questions are still raised by the first verse. It confronts the readers with the paradox that the Word is to be identified with God and yet is distinct from God, the paradox that will be formulated in the rest of the narrative in terms of Jesus as Son being one with the Father and yet distinct from the Father."

[243] This intentional three-fold repetition of terms mitigates against the suggestion of Sanders, *John*, 69–70, that the verse should be punctuated with a full stop after καὶ θεὸς ἦν with ὁ λόγος beginning the next clause. See the refutation of this suggestion in Miller, "The Logos Was God," 67–68, who notes that none of the punctuated manuscripts preserve Sanders' suggested punctuation.

[244] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 10.

[245] Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 88–89.

John begins his prologue with a startling statement. The one who was in the beginning is not the one who is first called θεός, but the one who is the λόγος. The λόγος is with the other called θεός and is himself θεός. The prologue will continue to "flesh out" these fundamental and important statements, yet the subsequent narrative will prove necessary for a fuller comprehension of these truths. In order to assist the reader in the understanding of the prologue, the author structured these verses within an inclusio formed with 1:1 and 1:18. In both of these verses, and only in these verses, the prologue fully identifies two who are called θεός. These two are differentiated, and yet presented in a close, intimate relationship. These themes are introduced to the reader in 1:1, and will be furthered developed in 1:18. Yet the reader will be encouraged to seek further development of the themes in 1:1 and 1:18 in the subsequent narrative, which is also framed within an inclusio formed with 1:18 and 20:28–29.

The Back End of the Inclusio (1:18)

Any careful study of the Greek text of the Prologue of John inevitably must reckon with the many positions that have been taken in the textual critical study of John 1:18b.[246] Two basic readings present themselves: μονογενὴς θεός or μονογενὴς υἱός.[247] The textual issue requires the

[246] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 91, laments, "The beginning of the positive statement in v. 18b is a commentator's headache, since it contains one of the most complex textual critical problems in the New Testament, over which textual critics remain deeply divided."

[247] A third reading that has its own way of resolving the difficulty of John's language, ὁ μονογενής, is also discussed, but is largely dismissed. See, for example, Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 170–71, who writes, "The shortest reading, ὁ μονογενής, while attractive because of internal considerations, is too poorly attested for acceptance as the text." Harris, *Jesus As God*, 74–76, lists the support as vg^{mss} Diatessaron Aphrahat Ephraem Ps-Athanasius and notes three arguments in favor of this reading: (1) *lectio brevior potior*; (2) It may account for the rise of the other variants; and (3) Boismard's suggestion that the text has been further corrupted and that the original read Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε εἰ μὴ μονογενὴς εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. Harris also presents three arguments against this reading: (1) there are no Greek manuscripts that contain this reading; (2) this is the shortest reading, but not the most difficult; and (3) this reading could not have given rise to the variant μονογενὴς θεὸς. Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 123–24, accepts the reading μονογενής as original. "The shorter reading, without either 'God' and 'Son,' has the best claim to be regarded as the original reading for two reasons. First, it explains the

consideration of both internal and external evidence, for each has been cited in support of each of the readings. The following discussion will by no means seek to be exhaustive, but will concentrate on the evidence for μονογενὴς θεός as the original form of the text based on largely internal criteria, while noting also the external evidence.

The manuscript evidence presented in NA[28] reveals that the oldest manuscripts support the reading μονογενὴς θεός (P[66] P[75] ℵ (*,1) B C* L 33 sy[p.hmg]; Cl[pt] Cl[ex Thdpt] Or[pt] Did.)[248] while the reading μονογενὴς υἱός is supported by greater geographically diverse manuscripts (A C[3] K Γ Θ Ψ ƒ[1.13] 565 589 700 892 1241 M lat sy[c.h]; Cl[pt] Cl[ex Thdpt]).[249] The external evidence for μονογενὴς θεός is immediately impressive due to the age of the manuscripts, and the presence of P[66], P[75],

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variant between 'God' and 'Son' in the majority of manuscripts as attempts at further definition. It is impossible to explain why either 'God' or 'Son' was dropped from the text by Origen and others if either was original. Secondly, it makes better sense in the Johannine context, picking up the earlier reference to 'the only one with the Father' from 1:14. Nowhere else in the Gospel is 'God' contrasted with 'Father,' as it would be if the reading 'the only God' was accepted."

[248] Wright, "Jesus as Θεός," 241, cites in support of μονογενὴς θεός P66 ℵ* B C* L S* 423 Diatessaron[Arabic] syr[p, h(mg)] geo[2] Apostolic Constitutions Arius[acc. to Epiphanius] Basil Clement[gr/lat] Cyril[¼] Didymus Epiphanius Gregory-Nyssa Heracleon Hilary Irenaeus[lat 1/3] Jerome Origen[gr 2/4] Pseudo-Ignatius Ptolemy Synesius[acc. to Epiphanius] Theodotus[acc. to Clement] Valentinians[acc. to Irenaeus and Clement]. In support of ὁ μονογενὴς θεός are P75 ℵ[1] 33 cop[sa, bo] Basil[1/2] Clement[2/3] Clement[from Theodotus ¼] Cyril[2/4] Epiphanius Eusebius[3/7] Gregory-Nyssa Origen[gr 2/4] Serapion[1/2]. The article, though weakly attested (see below), supports a definite understanding of μονογενὴς. Harris, *Jesus As God*, 78, observes that the presence of the article would in the prologue "nullify the uniform reservation for the Father of an articular θεός as subject."

[249] Wright, "Jesus as Θεός," 241–42, cites in support of ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός A C[3] G Θ K T X Ψ W[supp] Δ Π 063 0141 0211 1 13 22 24 63 68 69 79 106 114 118 124 131 138 152 154 157 158 160 165 16 173 178 180 185 191 205 209 213 220 222 228 245 265 268 270 280 295 333 345 346 348 352[c] 357 370 377 382 389 391 397 401 423 430 472 482 489 508 513 515 537 543 544 555 557 565 579 589 597 649 679 683 700 709 713 716 720 726 731 732 733 736 740 744 747 775 787 788 792 799 807 809 821 826 827 828 829 833 841 851 863 865 873 874 878 883 884 888 889 891 892 899 904 931 968 969 979 982 983 989 992 994 1006 1009 1010 1014 1021 1026 1029 1038 1043 1071 1085 1087 1093 1113 1118 1128 1187 1188 1195 1200 1216 1230 1241 1243 1253 1292 1342 1344 1365 1424 1505 1546 1646 2148 *Byz* [E F G H] *Lect* it[a, aur, b, e, ƒ, ff2(2), l] vg syr[c, h, pal] arm eth geo[1] slav Alexander Ambrose[10/11] Ambrosiaster Athanasius Augustine Basil[1/2] Caesarius Irenaeus[lat 1/3] Irenaeus[lat 2/3] Clement[from Theodotus 1/2] Clement[1/3] Cyril[1/4] Chrysostom Hippolytus Origen[lat 1/2] Letter of Hymanaeus Eustathius Eusebius[4/7] Serapion[1/2] Gregory-Nazianzus Proclus Theodoret John-Damascus Tertullian Hegemonius Victorinus-Rome Hilary[3/7] Pseudo-Priscillian Faustinus Fulgentius Gregory-Elvira Phoebadius Jerome Varimadum Letter of Hymanaeus Nonnus Synesius Titus of Bostra Victorinus of Rome.

which establish the reading μονογενὴς θεός as existing by the beginning of the third century.[250] However, the evidence for μονογενὴς θεός is largely Alexandrian,[251] while the external evidence for μονογενὴς υἱός, though not as ancient, represents non-Alexandrian manuscripts.[252]

In addition to the geographically widespread support of the manuscripts, the arguments for μονογενὴς υἱός as the original employ internal evidence.[253] First, μονογενὴς υἱός seems to make good sense with what follows it: ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός. The use of Son complements the explicit mention of Father. Second, μονογενὴς υἱός is more in line with subsequent Johannine usage (3:16, 18; see also 1 John 4:9).[254] Third, ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός presents no difficulty grammatically. Fourth, Murray suggests three possible explanations for the rise of μονογενὴς θεός, if the original reading is ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός: either μονογενὴς θεός represents an accidental

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[250] Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 170, writes, "With the acquisition of P^{66} and P^{75}, both of which read θεός, the external support of this reading has been notably strengthened." David J. MacLeod, "The Benefits of the Incarnation of the Word," 189 n. 49, adds, "Most modern scholars agree that in view of P^{66c} and P^{75}, both of which have θεός, the scales have tipped against υἱός." See also Brown, "Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?" 554. "In our personal opinion," concludes Brown, "since the discovery of the Bodmer papyri, there is very good reason for accepting the first reading above as original—the reading which calls Jesus God." However, Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 79, disagrees, writing, "The discovery of the early papyri has done very little (in this instance) to change the character of the documentary alignments. . . . Even before the discovery of the papyri, scholars realized that the bulk of the Alexandrian tradition attested the reading, including witnesses that date back to the third century."

[251] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 102, notes that the Peshitta's support of the reading μονογενὴς θεός is significant, since it usually supports the Western and Byzantine traditions rather than the Alexandrian.

[252] Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 79, writes, "Here it must be emphasized that outside of the Alexandrian tradition, the reading μονογενὴς θεός has not fared well at all. Virtually every other representative of every other textual grouping—Western, Caesarean, Byzantine—attests ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός. And the reading even occurs in several of the secondary Alexandrian witnesses (e.g., C^3, Ψ, 892, 1241, Ath Alex)."

[253] This view is found in the minority of commentators. See Haenchen, *John*, 1:121, and Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:278, 280.

[254] Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 211. Therefore, Sadananda writes, "Here in v. 18 the Fourth Evangelist is not out to prove that Jesus is the θεός, instead he articulates and defines his mission as the unique Son!"

misreading of the *nomina sacra*, or it is an error in dictation, or it is an assimilation to John 1:1.[255]

Bart Ehrman views the reading μονογενὴς θεός as an orthodox corruption of the original reading, μονογενὴς υἱός.[256] He argues that the external evidence betrays an Alexandrian preservation of a theological change made by a scribe to avoid a possible adoptionistic understanding of the text which originally called Jesus the son of the Father, μονογενὴς υἱός. For Ehrman, μονογενὴς υἱός is more Johannine (see above). Ehrman suggests that, while the reading μονογενὴς θεός would have supported a later Christian understanding of the divinity of Christ, it would have made no sense to a first century monotheistic Jew[257] nor to John.[258]

Aside from the external evidence already mentioned (specifically, no proto-Alexandrian reading), at least four considerations speak against reading μονογενὴς υἱός. First, the three Johannine uses of μονογενής elsewhere to modify υἱός relate the resulting phrase to ὁ θεός, not to ὁ πατήρ. Thus, the presence of τοῦ πατρός in 1:18 does not commend the use of υἱός.[259] Second, if the *nomina sacra* were confused, this does not explain the omission of the article. Third, the idea that μονογενὴς θεός was an orthodox change is not supported in the Church Fathers.[260] Fourth, the

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[255] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 76–77.

[256] For Ehrman's argument, see *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 78–82.

[257] Büchsel, Μονογενής, *TDNT* 4:740 n. 14, agrees, writing, "An only-begotten God corresponds to the weakening of monotheism in Gnosticism. It derives from this, and came to the Egyptian texts by way of its influence on the theology of Alexandria."

[258] Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 80–81, admits that μονογενὴς θεός is the harder reading, writing, "The problem [of μονογενὴς θεός] is avoided, of course, with the reading that is more widely attested." He counters this by suggesting that the reading is hard for John, but not for second-century Christians who would have changed the reading.

[259] Contra Büchsel, Μονογενής, *TDNT* 4:740 n. 14.

[260] Benjamin J. Burkholder, "Considering the Possibility of a Theological Corruption in Joh 1:18 in Light of Its Early Reception," *ZNW* 103 (2012): 82, concludes, "In addition, even the sources that are extant do not conclusively

confusion of *nomina sacra* is "highly improbable,"[261] since θεός was one of the four earliest and most consistently rendered *nomina sacra* from the second century onward.[262] Therefore, the evidence for the reading μονογενὴς θεός is just as compelling, if not more so. First, μονογενὴς θεός is manifestly the harder reading, especially in light of the Johannine usage.[263] Only here does the combination appear in the entire New Testament. As noted above, the reading μονογενὴς υἱός is actually much easier. Second, μονογενὴς θεός forms an inclusio with the first verse of the prologue, and attributes deity to the μονογενής of 1:14, just as deity is ascribed to the λόγος in 1:1. The reading μονογενὴς θεός best accounts for the rise of all other readings.[264] An unintentional confusion of the *nomina sacra* could just as easily change the reading from θεός to υἱός as it could in the other direction. The early date of P^{66} and P^{75} show that the reading existed by the year 200. The change from θεός to υἱός is easy to understand in light of a scribe trying to reconcile the difficulty of 1:18b (both grammatically and theologically) in terms of Johannine usage elsewhere. Unfortunately, the scribe looked to 3:16 and 18 rather than looking to the immediately preceding 1:14.

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demonstrate that Joh 1:18 comprised an isolated support for a high Christology." Burkholder's article is an excellent study of the usage of 1:18 before the third century. Since P^{66} contains the reading μονογενὴς θεός, the supposed "corruption" (Ehrman) had to occur before c. 200. Bernard, *John*, 1:31, observes that "μονογενὴς θεός was an expression adopted by Arius and Eunomius as freely as by the orthodox Catholics, so that its occurrence in a Gospel text would hardly have been used for polemical purposes for either party." See also Murray, *Jesus As God*, 77.

[261] Wright, "Jesus as Θεός," 248. See also Larry W. Hurtado, "The Origin of the Nomina Sacra: A Proposal," *JBL* 117 (1998): 655–57.

[262] Hurtado, "The Origin of the *Nomina Sacra*," 655, 657.

[263] Brown, *John*, 1:17, states concerning μονογενὴς υἱός, "This combination appears in three of the other four uses of μονογενής in the Johannine writings, and its appearance here might have resulted from scribal tendency to conform." See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2.

[264] Bruce, *John*, 44–45, writes, "The tendency would inevitable be to replace [μονογενὴς θεός] by the commoner μονογενὴς υἱός, whereas, if the commoner reading were original, it would be difficult to see what could have impelled any scribe or editor to replace it by the unparalleled μονογενὴς θεός."

The reading μονογενὴς θεός best fits the prologue, which prepares its reader for the following Gospel narrative. Elizabeth Harris observes,

> It may be suggested that there is a progression of thought in the prologue with respect to μονογενής. It begins with the bare anarthrous titular sense in 1:14, and is developed in 1:18 with μονογενὴς θεός, which prepares not only for the theme of the unique . . . Son in the Gospel, but also for the work and claims of Jesus who is a divine one, his sonship being one aspect among others. He is the concretion of the divine being and divine functions, and as the Logos become flesh is the actualization of God in relation to creation and to humankind.[265]

The prologue's role in introducing the themes of the following Gospel narrative does not depend upon this reading (see further below), yet μονογενὴς θεός best fits the intention of the evangelist as his narrative unfolds. In spite of F. Büchsel's contrary suggestion that μονογενὴς θεός "can hardly be credited to Jn., who is distinguished by monumental simplicity of expression"[266] and a similar sentiment echoed by Ehrman, who views the phrase μονογενὴς θεός as nonsensical,[267] this dissertation will argue for the reading μονογενὴς θεὸς. This reading is in concert with Keener's conclusion that support for "the 'God' reading" may be found in "John's penchant for variation in the Christological titles, the probable *inclusio* surrounding Jesus' role introduced in 1:1c (and indeed in the body of the book, 1:18 and 20:28), and the shock value of the phrase."[268]

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[265] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 104.

[266] Büchsel, Μονογενής, *TDNT* 4, 740 n. 14.

[267] Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 81.

[268] Keener, *John*, 1:425–26. See also Lincoln, *John*, 108, advocating the reading μονογενὴς θεός notes, "The reading preferred here is not only the more difficult reading but has the stronger external support and yet is also in line with the use of 'God' without an article for the Word earlier in v. 1c."

"The Unique One"

John 1:18's second sentence begins with an emphatic, pendant string of three "distinct designations"[269] for Jesus, all in the nominative: μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὢν. The first of these, a second instance of the substantized adjective μονογενής (see 1:14; cf. 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9), refers again to the λόγος of 1:1 as the "Unique One."[270] Following the striking negative assertion in John 1:18a, the prologue concludes with the equally striking threefold naming of the Logos enfleshed (1:14), Jesus Christ (1:17), who, as he who exclusively resides in the bosom of the Father, uniquely reveals him whom no one otherwise ever has seen.

The first title in 1:18b is μονογενής. Hearkening back to the previous usage in 1:14, this title describes Jesus as the Unique One, who accomplishes what only he is able to do, or ever has done. "Unique One" exists as a descriptor of his being, but also and primarily describes his relation to the Father. This leads to the second and final reference in the prologue to Jesus as θεός (see 1:1), followed by the third title, ὁ ὢν, which echoes the Old Testament twice self-given name of God in LXX Exod 3:14.

Within the difficult textual discussion of the two readings μονογενὴς θεός or μονογενὴς υἱός, the one word that is not under discussion for a possible variant is μονογενής. Though the word is not questioned textually, there is a great deal of discussion about the meaning and use of the word. The KJV translates the term "only begotten," while the ESV and RSV prefer "only," and the NIV reads "One and Only." Does the word mean "unique," "only"? Or does the word carry

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[269] See Bernard, *John*, 1:31. See further below, .

[270] Van der Watt, *Introduction*, 46, agrees that Jesus is called "unique." There is no other like him (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) and never will be. Nobody has ever seen God (1:18), except Jesus was in the bosom of the Father and knows him intimately (1:18; 7:29; 8:54–55; 17:25–26). This intimate relationship puts Jesus in the position of being able to make the Father known (1:18; 14:7; 17:25–26). He not only has first-hand knowledge of the Father but the Father has also empowered him to reveal him to the world (3:35; 17:2)."

with it the meaning "only begotten"? "Only begotten" would seem a translation of μονογεννητός, while μονογενής bears a relationship to γένος and so means "one of a kind."[271]

The translation of μονογενής has occupied much scholarly attention and highlights the necessity of both a careful reading of the text and the usage of a term within an authorial corpus. John employs the adjective to reference Jesus four times in his Gospel (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). Though the translation "only begotten" is familiar to many due to the prevalence of the KJV,[272] scholars have shown that the correct understanding of the term, especially in John's Gospel, expresses the uniqueness of Jesus and his relational status with the Father. D. Moody Smith helpfully observes, "The meaning of μονογενής in the Johannine writings is an epitome of Christology."[273] Moody then identifies the uniqueness of the Son of God as the only revealer of God and redeemer of man. Regarding the relation of the μονογενής to the Father, Moody notes, "In John 1:18 this eternal relation between the Father and his only Son is so emphatic that John calls the Son of the God *monogenēs theos* (only God). Translators have hesitated to go all the way with the Greek here, but John is rising to such a high Christology, to such an emphasis on the deity of Christ, that he can say '[μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο].' "[274]

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[271] See BDAG, s.v. μονογενής: "pert to being the only one of its kind within a specific relationship, *one and only, only*" and "to being the only one of its kind of class, *unique (in kind)*."

[272] Brown, *John*, 1:13, suggests that the KJV translation reflects the Vulgate's use of *unigenitus* in response to the Arians.

[273] Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version," *JBL* 72 (1953): 218.

[274] Moody, "God's Only Son," 218.

Contemporary scholarship continues to echo what has been established by previous generations of scholarship.[275] The word *μονογενής* means "unique" or "one of a kind."[276] There is no idea of begetting with the word itself, as Schuchard states, "Many have demonstrated that the adjective *μονογενής* itself highlights uniqueness in status without requiring uniqueness in ancestry."[277] Therefore, the primary intention for the word in 1:18b is to suggest that the one called *μονογενής* is in a class by himself. The meaning of the word does not preclude the notion of familial and even paternal relations, but such implications are only gained through the contribution of context.

The word *μονογενής* is used exclusively in the New Testament with reference to the relationship of a child to that child's parent.[278] Luke's usage points to the idea of an only child, yet in Hebrews *μονογενής* describes Isaac, who is no only-begotten son of Abraham. Aside from Johannine usage, the word is used four times:

Luke 7:12, *μονογενὴς υἱός* (the widow's only son at Nain)[279]
Luke 8:42, *θυγάτηρ μονογενής* (Jairus' only daughter)

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[275] Gerard Pendrick, "ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ," *NTS* 41 (1995): 587, notes that recent scholars have advocated the meaning "only-begotten" against the historic and dominant view purporting the meaning "only" or "single."

[276] Moody, "God's Only Son," 213, states, "Since Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1886), students have known that *μονογενής* meant 'single, of its kind, only' and that the term denotes 'the only son of God' in the Johannine writings." Moody lists several other important lexicons that all translate *μονογενὴς* as only, single, or unique. Pendrick, "ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ," 687–88, recapitulates the etymological evidence for the meaning "unique" or "only" and refutes the suggestion that the word inherently means "only begotten."

[277] Schuchard, *1–3 John*, 439.

[278] Pendrick, "ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ," 588, observes, "In classical Greek literature *μονογενής* is applied to a broad range of entities other than human beings in the sense 'only one of its kind,' 'unique.' " Later (p. 590), Pendrick notes, "More commonly, however, *μονογενής* qualifies persons in their character as offspring." And further, (p. 592), he concludes, "As a designation for offspring the adjective ordinarily means 'only,' 'single.' Occasionally the adjective may have been felt to carry the connotation of birth or derivation . . . But if such a connotation had been *regularly* associated with *μονογενής*, it would be difficult or impossible to account for those instances (not negligible in number) where the adjective is used without any possible overtone of the notion of birth or derivation."

[279] Moody, "God's Only Son," 216–17, points to this verse to insist that *μονογενής* cannot mean "begotten," because that is a male function.

Luke 9:38, μονογενής μοί ἐστιν (a man's only male child is demon possessed; Jesus should come because he is his only son)
Heb 11:17, μονογενής (Isaac)[280]

John uses the word five times, twice within the Prologue, twice in the narrative of the Gospel (two verses apart), and once in his First Epistle:

John 1:14, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός
John 1:18, μονογενής
John 3:16, τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν
John 3:18, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ
1 John 4:9, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον

The New Testament usage may be tied to the LXX, wherein μονογενής translates the Hebrew יָחִיד in Psa 21:21; 24:16; 34:17. However, the LXX also uses ἀγαπητός to translate יָחִיד in Gen 22:2, 12, 16; Jer 6:26; Am 8:10; Zech 12:10. However, Aquila and Symmachus both employ μονογενής to refer Isaac.[281] Instead of necessarily referring to the begotten exclusivity of the child, it may be said that μονογενής refers instead to the irreplaceability of the child.[282] Plessis observes, "John is the only Evangelist who uses μονογενής to express the relation between God the Father and the Son."[283] Outside of the Prologue, μονογενής is always paired adjectivally with υἱός in John's

[280] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 98, notes, "The sense of μονογενής in Heb 11:17 is . . . 'this particular child, who was in a class by himself' (because of the divine promise)." Moody, "God's Only Son," 217, suggests, "No passage illustrates the meaning of μονογενής more clearly than Heb 11:17 when read in the light of the OT. It is said that Abraham was 'ready to offer up his only (μονογενής) son,' and it is impossible to say Isaac was the only son begotten by Abraham." See also Köstenberger, *John*, 43, who suggests that John is alluding to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in John 3:16.

[281] J. Du Plessis, "Christ as the 'Only Begotten,' " *Neot* 2 (1968): 23, also notes that Josephus (Ant. 1.13.1) also refers to Isaac as μονογενής. Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 140, comments on the connection between Jesus and Isaac as μονογενής, "In light of the Hebrew Bible allusion of Abraham's obedience to God's request for him to sacrifice Isaac's life, μονογενής may symbolize the Father's sacrifice of Jesus his beloved Son in the crucifixion. In sum, μονογενής signifies the Father's self-revelation, glory, and covenantal sacrifice, all manifested in the Son's mission in the world."

[282] Keener, *John*, 1:415, observes, "To be an only son was to be a uniquely loved son; the death of an only son could precipitate his parents' death from grief, because the death of 'only-children' was a particular tragedy."

[283] Plessis, "Christ as the 'Only Begotten,' " 24.

writings, and carries with it the notion of both the only Son and the beloved Son of God.[284] He is irreplaceable and accomplishes that which only he can fulfill.

The Johannine usage of μονογενής points to a translation that stresses the uniqueness of the one described.[285] In John 1:18, μονογενής is best rendered "One and Only One" or "Unique One," which fits the overall message of the Prologue and moves the reader forward into the unfolding revelation of who this Jesus is,[286] and who he alone has ever revealed. McHugh concludes that μονογενής means "quite unique," "in a class of his own." This is clear in the Creeds.[287] Jesus is the One and Only One, who is both divine and in the flesh. Because he uniquely resides in the bosom of the Father, he thus is alone the one who can make and has ever made God (the Father) known. Adesola Akala notes, "The author's use of μονογενής symbolizes that the filial relationship between Jesus and God, first described in vv. 1–2 as the λόγος-God relationship, is neither aloof nor abstract; rather it is characterized by intimacy and love."[288] After a thorough

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[284] Carson, *John*, 128, labels Jesus God's "one and only, best-loved Son."

[285] Keener, *John*, 1:416, observes that "Jesus is μονογενής not in the sense of derivation but as unique and the special object of divine love. What is extraordinary is that in him, this same love becomes available to all who are his followers (17:23)." Plessis, "Christ as the 'Only Begotten,' " 29, concludes regarding John's use of μονογενής that "1. The Monogenes is a specific manner of expression for the Son of God. 2. It shows the extent of God's love for mankind and in this it assumes his great love for his Son as a parallel, John 3:16, 18; 1John 4:9. 3. It reveals the unique and intimate relation between the Father and the Son, 1:18. 4. It is a predicate of value which serves to compare the glory of God which was revealed in the Incarnation of his Son, viz. in the visible revelation of his grace and truth, 1:14. 5. It is also a predicate of exaltedness: as beloved and true Son of God he is the only object of faith and the condition for salvation, 3:18. 6. Christ is indeed the only Son of God, but where John signifies him as the Monogenes he accentuates the idea of being unique rather than an only son."

[286] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 103, states, "It is thus not absurd to suggest that the meaning of μονογενής in Jn 1:14 is not *only-begotten*, or even *only son*, but rather *quite unique, in a class of his own*. This is the starting-point of the revelation in the Fourth Gospel, from which the nature of the Father and of Jesus' Sonship is gradually disclosed. . . . It was only when the need arose to formulate an unambiguous affirmation of his full divinity that the term μονογενής was applied to his eternal generation from the Father, long after the Fourth Gospel was written."

[287] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 101–2. Pendrick, "ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ," 597, further notes, "Additional support for the interpretation of the Johannine μονογενής as 'only' has been drawn from the evidence of the OL and Vg versions and from several fourth-century creeds."

[288] Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 140.

examination of μονογενής throughout the Old Testament, New Testament, specific usages within John, extra-canonical literature, translations, and the Creeds, μονογενής is best understood as signifying the uniqueness of the referent; specifically, the unique role that Jesus fulfills through his relationship with the Father.

"God"

For the second and final time in the prologue, Jesus is explicitly referred to as θεός. The second of the three distinct designations in 1:18b for Jesus here helps to form an inclusio with the opening verse of the Gospel, in which Jesus (there, the λόγος) is likewise named θεός. That the referent of θεός is different here than in 1:18a is clear by its appositional relationship to μονογενής[289] and by what follows (see below). The referent of θεός in 1:18b is not the Father, but the Son. Just as in the first verse of the prologue, the Father and the Son, we shall see, are in relationship with each other, and in each verse the use of θεός refers first to the Father, and then to the Son.

Thus, the last verse of the prologue returns to the first verse, wherein the Son is identified as θεός, alongside another who is also θεός. Lindars states that "the harder reading has the merit of bringing the thought back to verse 1, and so constitutes another case of the Johannine *inclusio*. 'God' here has the same meaning as 'and the Word was God' (1c)."[290] Schnackenburg notes further, "If one bears in mind how the language of the hymn is combined with Jesus's testimony to himself, the reading [μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο]' gains

[289] See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2–3. Also Köstenberger, *John*, 49.

[290] Lindars, *John*, 99. Köstenberger, *John*, 49, states, "By way of *inclusio*, the phrase 'one-of-a-kind Son, God [in his own right]' provides a commentary on what is meant in 1:1c, where it is said that 'the Word was God.' " See also Bernard, *John*, 1:31.

in probability. At the end of his prologue, the evangelist affirms once more the full divine dignity of the Son of God on earth, and also his unique capacity as the revealer."[291] The perceived gravity of the verse's textual critical considerations has frequently pulled attention away from the importance of its explicit reference to Jesus as θεός. Yet the use of θεός with reference to the λόγος/μονογενής/Jesus Christ bears great significance due to its infrequency and its position at the conclusion of the prologue, which segues to the narrative of the Gospel.

Situated at the center of the three divine designations assigned to Jesus in 1:18, which itself resides at the midpoint of the end-to-end double inclusio that frames the Gospel (see 1:1, 18; 20:28–29), θεός is the most striking[292] and straightforward declaration of Jesus' true identity. The content of the prologue is framed with two references to Jesus in his relationship to θεός as θεός. That which is said in between 1:1 and 1:18 is read in light of the truths of Jesus revealed in 1:1 and 1:18. In the same way, the narrative written between 1:18 and 20:28–29 is to be read in light of the truth of Jesus' relationship to the divine displayed in those texts. Thus, held in tension here and throughout the narrative is the unity of Jesus with the Father, who is also θεός (10:30), and the exculsive work that Jesus alone has done always, and so still does to make the Father known. Elizabeth Harris aptly summarizes:

> If μονογενὴς θεός is taken as the correct reading in 1:18 the most adequate rendering would seem to be 'a unique one, who is God'. In this creative expression the evangelist would seem to be summing up what has been said in vv. 1–17 in a seminal statement, which not only provided a climax to the whole prologue and to John's

[291] Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:280. Schnackenburg does, however, states that ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός "seems preferable." See also Bruce, *John*, 45, who states, "If μονογενὴς θεός is the original reading, then the Evangelist is repeating what he said of the Logos in the third clause of verse 1."

[292] Keener, *John*, 1:426, cites the "shock value" of θεός as further evidence for the preference of θεός as the original reading.

> testimony in it, but also supplied the reader with a principal clue to what was to be said concerning Jesus Christ, the Logos-Son figure, in the body of the Gospel.[293]

The central truth to the Gospel is the identity, is the work, of Jesus. The narrative which reveals the one who always has been and so still is the one who alone reveals the Father, forces the reader to reckon with the true significance of Jesus. Unique in his role and in his being, the one who was with the Father, and is one with the Father, exists as the one through whom salvation alone is found, as again and ever he reveals the Father. Only because Jesus is himself θεός can he fulfill such a role. No one has ever seen God. It is the Unique One alone, who is himself God, the God who spoke with Moses, who makes God known.

Therefore, what was introduced in the prologue's first verse is recapitulated and amplified here. There are two who are the proper referent of θεός. The Father and the Son are both θεός, yet the Father is not the Son; neither is the Son the Father; neither can the work of the Father be done apart from the Son. With what therefore follows in the last verse of the prologue, there is both differentiation in relationship/designation and in function. It is the μονογενής, we shall see, who reveals the Father, not the Father who reveals the Son. There is no one else who fulfills this role. Not only is the Son unique in his function, so also is he in his being. For there is no other who is also θεός in the flesh (1:14). The one who comes to reveal the Father comes also to reveal himself as Son of God who is one with the Father (10:30). Phillips provides an excellent observation regarding the first two terms of 1:18b:

> Both words have already been used in separate contexts to provide part of the matrix of characteristics for the Logos/Jesus. He is the 'only one' and he is "God." . . . [John's language] reminds the reader of the unique status of the Logos/Jesus and once again confirms the matrix which they have learned about through the Prologue. Moreover, by reminding the reader of the earlier references to the Logos as 'only one' and 'God,' the author encourages the cyclic learning process to be carried on

[293] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 108.

> through the rest of the Gospel. The reader is encouraged to follow through the process of revising what has been read and thinking again about what has been said.[294]

John's reader is ushered into this cyclical learning process as the Father is said to be revealed by His Son, who is revealed through words from and about Jesus.

"The One Who Is in the Bosom of the Father"

The last of three nominatives, the substantized participial phrase ὁ ὤν[295] (cf. the substantized use of the same phrase in 3:31; 6:46; 8:47; 18:37),[296] is again a nominative of apposition.[297] Just as the prologue began with a combination of triplets (three clauses, three instances of ἦν, three instances of λόγος, and in 1:1–2 three references to θεός), so also the prologue reaches its conclusion with a triad of its own: μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν.[298] The first two, as discussed above, designate this one as the Unique One, God. No other one properly called θεός has taken on flesh. No one else is God and man (1:14). The third nominative (ὁ ὤν) is a direct allusion to the Divine Name found in LXX Exod 3:14. It was this one, and this one alone, the μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὤν, who appeared to Moses and spoke with him.

Just as this last verse of the prologue identifies both Jesus and another as God, so also does the first. In both, the relationship between Jesus and the other who is also called θεός is

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[294] Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 217.

[295] M. E. Boismard, " 'Dans le Sein du Père' (John 1:18)," *RB* 59 (1952): 23, highlights the omission of ὁ ὤν from Sinaiticus, the latin manuscript Verceil, and saint Gall. This variant is not mentioned in NA[28] nor previous editions. See also Reuben J. Swanson, ed., *John* (vol. 4 of *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus*; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 8, who also notes the absence of ὁ ὤν in the original hand of ℵ.

[296] Cf. the only instance in which the phrase may function adjectivally in 12:17.

[297] Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with those of the Three* (London: Black, 1905), §§ 1938, 1964.

[298] See Schuchard, *1–3 John*, 65 n. 34, who rightly notes the many triplets in the Gospel's prologue, including its final one: "the threefold subject 'the One and Only, God, the one who is [ὁ ὤν] in the bosom of the Father' in John 1:18 (the identical phrase ὁ ὤν is in the LXX Ex 3:14!)." See further chapter 3.

highlighted. Thus, "in the bosom of the Father" (εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός) recalls and further informs "with God" (the Father) in John 1:1. Adesola Akala observes, "The relationship previously depicted in vv. 1–2, using the preposition πρός, is now depicted in v. 18 using the participial phrase εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός."[299] The Son exists not just "with" the Father but also in his bosom. The term chosen by John here describes a most intimate relationship,[300] a oneness.[301] They are parent/child; theirs is a profound and intimate sharing in common of all things in the familial household of the Father/Son.[302] In the Old Testament, κόλπος[303] refers to physical closeness of a husband and a wife (cf. our promised relationship to the Father's Son), as well as a child receiving nourishment from a mother.[304] In John's Gospel, the term is used only

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[299] Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 151. See also René Robert, "Celui qui est de retour dans le sein du Pere: Jean 1:18," *RThom* 85 (1985): 459, suggests an inclusio with 1:1, "aussi à divers titres le passage parallèle de 1John 1:2." See also de La Potterie, "La finale du prologue johannique," 380. However, Ignace de La Potterie, *Le Christ et la vérité; L'Esprit et al vérité* (vol. 1 of *La Vérité dans Saint Jean;* AnBib 73; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 220, suggests that ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς is parallel with παρὰ πατρός in 1:14.

[300] See also John 13:23 and Luke 16:22. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 66, notes, "In biblical language [such a phrase] always contains, implicitly, the idea of affection." Keener, *John*, 1:424, observes, "Holding an object to one's bosom declared the specialness of that object, and the image could be used to depict God's relation with the Torah."

[301] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (trans. Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl; 3 vols.; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 1:89, observes, "Although he may know in a unique way, he would be lacking the ability to teach if he were not to know wholly. Hence [John] adds a third point, namely, his consubstantiality to the Father . . . 'Bosom' is not to be taken here as referring to men in their garments, but it indicates the secret things of the Father." Cyril *John:* 1:72, states, "When the Son is said to be in the bosom of the Father, we will understand him to be from him and in him. When we carefully chew over the meaning of the term we will find it to be this and nothing else. . . He says 'bosom' instead of 'substance' of the Father as from a corporeal example because visible things are in a way types of spiritual things, and things among us lead us by the hand to understand things above us."

[302] Köstenberger, *John*, 49, suggests that the phrase εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός "refers to the unmatched intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the Father." Luther, *LW*, 22:149, explains John's meaning in this phrase as "He wants to say: We have received it from the only Son of God, who clings to the Father and rests snugly in His arms. John wishes to assure our hearts that the Word revealed by the Son must be absolutely trustworthy, since the Son rests in the bosom and in the arms of the Father, so intimately close to the Father that He is reliably informed about the decisions of His Father's heart." See also Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 214.

[303] BDAG, s.v. κόλπος, suggests the equivalents "bosom" or "breast" (John 1:18 is cited as an example), "the fold of a garment," or the "part of the sea that indents a shoreline," a "bay."

[304] Moloney, "John 1:18," 65, cites Deut 13:7; 28:54, 56; 2Kgs 12:8; 1Sam 3:20; Ruth 4:11; Isa 49:22. For an extensive study of this motif see Alicia D. Myers, " 'In the Father's Bosom': Breastfeeding and Identity Formation in John's Gospel," *CBQ* 76 (2014): 481–97.

twice, here and in 13:23, where the beloved disciple reclines on the bosom of Jesus, highlighting the closeness of the one loved by Jesus. The intimacy of the characters in question, what they share in common, is at the forefront. Here, the Son with the Father, and in 13:23, the Beloved Disciple with Jesus, share in each other as the image of love.[305] Such is the relationship of the Son to the Father and of Jesus to those whom he loves. Once again, the author unsettles the reader with language that may not be expected for Father and Son.[306] Equally unsettling may be the notion that those who believe in Jesus are also children of God and experience such intimacy with the Son, and with his Father as well.

While many interpret the clause εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός as describing the intimacy of the Father and the Son, some have suggested a more dynamic view of the use of εἰς in 1:18b. In an effort to interpret εἰς in a classical sense as compared with the more static ἐν, Boismard suggests the interpretation that Jesus leads us "to" the Father.[307] There is ample evidence, however, that in Koine Greek, a hard and fast difference between εἰς with ἐν cannot be maintained.[308] Movement

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[305] Moloney, "John 1:18," 68, notes, "To express this concept in a remarkably concise fashion, the Evangelist has chosen a word which was used regularly to speak of the closeness which results from a relationship of love, *ho kolpos*, and he insists that the whole of Jesus' life was marked by such a relationship." Harris, *Jesus As God*, 96, suggests several possibilities for this phrase, "festal, familial, or conjugal. Whatever the source of the image, its significance is clear. It denotes the exclusive privileged intimacy of a deeply affectionate interpersonal relationship." Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 214, suggests that, " 'Being in the bosom' speaks of an intimate relationship where one loses oneself to find the other." While Jesus does not lose himself to find the Father, he lays down his life for his sheep, because of his intimacy with the Father (10:15). Rudolf Meyer, "κόλπος," *TDNT* 3: 825, commenting on 1:18 in comparison with 13:23, states, "without the idea of a meal [κόλπος] expresses closest fellowship."

[306] Lindars, *John*, 99 notes that this is a "bold anthropomorphic metaphor."

[307] Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 66–68, 70. Bruce, *John*, 45, notes that this is improbable, but "does give the preposition εἰς its classical sense of 'into.' "

[308] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 360 states, "One cannot press the idea of motion here, as though the meaning is "who was into the bosom of the Father." Although a few scholars try to see a theologically rich concept here (either a dynamic and energetic relationship between Son and Father or the eternal generation of the Son), in Koine Greek the interchange of εἰς with ἐν, coupled with the overwhelming force of a stative verb with a transitive preposition, suggests otherwise. This is not to say that the relationship of Son to Father was not dynamic or energetic, just that this text affirms only their intimate relationship." See also Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:281; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 151; Barrett, *John*, 169–70; Morris, *John*, 114. However, see Moloney, "John 1:18," 65–

need not be indicated by the preposition εἰς, though some have pressed this preposition to imply ascent and descent theology in the prologue or entire gospel, while others have read into this preposition the necessity of the ascension. Yet the intent of the author is not movement nor ascension, but the intimacy of relationship. Craig Keener observes that even understanding the preposition with its original force, "may further emphasize the intimacy of the Father and the Son."[309] The Father and the Son exist in such a close relationship that they are intertwined. They are with each other much more than simply as companions or as associates. They are so close that the Son is in the bosom of the Father. He is with God; and as Jesus will proclaim later, he and the Father are one (10:30). Alicia Myers notes, "As the μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός and as God, Jesus reflects the same disposition as his Father. His is πρὸς τὸν θεόν, not only 'with' God, but also 'towards' God since before the beginning (1:1–2). He is εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (v. 18); that is, 'in' the Father's bosom, cherished by him, emanating from him, and embodying his glory in a way no other being can."[310]

Conclusion

The last verse of John's prologue contains a string of three pendant nominatives, the substantives μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὤν. These further identify Jesus as the Unique One, God, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father. The one who was introduced in the first words of the prologue (1:1a) is now more fully presented. John 1:18 explicitly asserts that Jesus is θεός just as in 1:1c, here, however in more amplified terms. The final verse of the prologue speaks of Jesus

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66, who concludes, "We may, therefore, further suggest that 1:18b has nothing to do with an 'indwelling' or 'consubstantiality' between the Father and Son. It appears to deal, rather, with some sort of dynamic relationship which exists between two quite different entities: the only begotten Son and the Father." Also Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 213–14.

[309] Keener, *John*, 1:425.

[310] Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 65.

as one who was and is not just "with" (1:1b) but also "in the bosom of" θεός. He is the one who reveals the glory of God (1:14), who makes those who believe the children of God (1:12–13), who brings grace and truth in fulfillment of the law revealed through Moses (1:17). Thus, all such assertions in John 1:18 help with the same interest in John 1:1 to form the inclusio around the Gospel's prologue.

The reader is encouraged to seek further explanation of this truth, of his relationship to the Father, and of his all-important work, in the rest of 1:18 and in the subsequent narrative.[311] Like the intervening verses of the Prologue, the intervening narrative of the Gospel will not explicitly refer to Jesus as God. Instead, the Gospel will bear witness to the purposeful identity of Jesus through words from and about him. The word is revealed first by certain witnesses, then by Jesus himself. The Word in 1:1 is further identified in 1:18 in terms that are congruent with the truths presented in 1:1. Thus, John forms an inclusio around the prologue, with the focus of the inclusio on the identification of Jesus as God over against God (the Father), whose one and only instrument he is.

The inclusio that surrounds the Prologue anticipates a similar inclusio that surrounds the narrative. The Gospel invites its reader to continue from the conclusion of 1:18 into the body of its narrative with the desire to understand further the statement that Jesus is θεός in the bosom of θεός, whose unique instrument he is, Keener observes, "The prologue thus culminates in a rehearsal of Jesus' deity, closing an *inclusio* that began with 1:1c; it also parallels the conclusion

[311] Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 225, helpfully observes, "Thus v. 18 shows itself to be a transitional verse applying the statements of the prologue to the forthcoming depiction of the history of Jesus Christ: what was accomplished in the deeds, words, and suffering of Jesus Christ corresponded from the beginning to the will of God. The exclusiveness of the Christ-event is thus doubly secured; Jesus Christ alone was able to give information about God, and his revelation is derived from the existence of the Logos with God from all eternity."

of the Gospel as a whole (20:28), forming an *inclusio* around the entire Gospel which proclaims Jesus' deity."[312]

The Father has spoken a word that can only be heard through words from and about Jesus. This one, the Unique One, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known. Though none have ever seen the Father, still the unique instrument of the Father is desirous and able to make him known. Indeed, he always has been the one and only one who makes him known, for the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus that Jesus is one with the Father (20:28), ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

[312] Keener, *John*, 1:426.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INCLUSIO AROUND THE NARRATIVE (1)

The last verse of John's prologue begins with a striking statement that is, for some, unexpected. The absolute statement "No one has ever seen God" brings to mind many questions for the reader who is familiar with the theophanic experiences of the Old Testament people of God. It also presents a dilemma for the reader who desires to know God. How can a God who cannot be seen be known?[313] How does this unseen God expect those who seek him to believe in him if he cannot be seen? The verse ends with a statement that there is one who reveals this unseen God. The position of this challenging yet promising verse at the end of the prologue encourages the reader to see in what follows the revelation of this unseen God. In order to understand and appreciate the trajectory of the not seen yet known and/or believed throughout the narrative of the Gospel, this chapter will examine the statement in 1:18a, the partial resolution to this statement at the end of 1:18, and the possible hermeneutical impact of such considerations both on one's understanding of both the theophanies experienced by Moses and the prophets and on the truth taught by Jesus in the narrative of the Gospel. Finally, this examination will lead in the chapter that follows this one to a fuller comprehension of the statements that appear at the end of the Gospel (20:28–29) and help to form the inclusio that surrounds its narrative.

[313] Marcus Dods, "The Gospel of John," in *Gospels and John* (vol. 1 of *The Expositor's Greek Testament;* ed. W. Robertson Nicoll; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1951), 692, commenting on 1:18a, equates seeing and knowing, "No man has had immediate knowledge of God: if he have knowledge of God it is through Christ."

The Front End of the Inclusio (1:18)

In order to comprehend the import of the brief statements that appear at the beginning and the end of 1:18, it is prudent to examine each of their words as they apply to the prologue and the narrative that follows. Most important is the role that 1:18 plays in the inclusio formed with not just 1:1, but with the end of the Gospel's narrative in 20:28–29. The not-seeing yet knowing in 1:18 anticipates the not-seeing yet believing in 20:29. Thus, the reader of the narrative is to bear this important trajectory in mind in order to understand fully what it means to see all that there is to see in the person and work of Jesus.

"No One Has Ever Seen God"

In contradistinction to what follows after it, the initial clause of 1:18 bears no significant textual variants.[314] The clause's wording is clear enough. But its meaning is less so. Both its location at the end of the prologue and its likely meaning suggest that John 1:18a is worthy of close and careful consideration.

The clause's direct object, θεόν ("God"), appears first in the Greek for the sake of emphasis. The absolute statements in the Gospel concerning the character of God are few. In her study on *The God of the Gospel of John*, Marianne Meye Thompson notes the absence in John of ontological statements concerning God's character, as well as the absence of the proper name "Yahweh." She writes,

> The Gospel of John, and indeed the NT as a whole, demonstrates a remarkable sparseness of descriptive language about God compared to Hellenistic Jewish texts. While there are references to "the name of God," there is no explicit mention of what

[314] NA[28] lists no variants for 1:18a. Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, 4:8, lists B[e] P^{75*} P^{75a} Ī K 28 as all containing ἑόρακεν instead of ἑώρακεν. Also, P^{75*} reads πώποτε ἑόρακεν where all other witnesses read ἑώρακεν (ἑόρακεν) πώποτε. Additional orthographic variants (not found in Swanson) are: οὐδις in 032 (correction), ἑόρακεν in 07 09 013 017 033 047 0211 ἑρακεν in 011 ἑώρακε in 021 030 034 TR αὐώρακεν in 063, and πόποτε in 013 030 063 0211.

> that name might be, and one does not find any explicit prohibition against speaking the name of God. In fact, "the name of God" seems to have become a complete phrase with no external referent. That is to say, when the NT speaks of the name of God it does not refer to the Tetragrammaton. Rather it uses "name of God" as equivalent to "authority" or "power" of God.[315]

In the prologue, θεός, here described as unseen by anyone ever (cf. "God is spirit," 4:24), is differentiated from another, who is also θεός. What is known thus far in the prologue about the one not seen is that he exists in intimate relationship with the λόγος/μονογενής (1:1, 18), and those who believe in the λόγος are his children (1:12–13). The prologue begins with a statement which equates the λόγος with the "God" of Gen 1:1. God is both the content and the intent of the Gospel. God is its goal and ultimate object. When it speaks of man or men, it does so in light of God. The existence and even the activity of God is assumed by the text, and the implied reader is one who knows God, at least from the Old Testament Scriptures.[316] God, then, occupies the prime position in the mind of the narrator, the implied author, the real author, and the implied reader. Yet God, who therefore must be known, cannot be seen.[317]

Thus the prologue features the role of the λόγος/μονογενής, who not only shares in God's nature (1:1, 18; cf. 10:30) but also exists in closest possible relationship to him (1:1, 18). Marianne Meye Thompson observes, "Terms for God, as well as the entire understanding of God, must now be delineated with respect to Jesus. The consistent repetition of the designation of God as 'the Father who sent me' not only underscores the identity of Jesus in terms of his

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[315] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 49.

[316] Moody Smith, *Theology*, 76, states that God in the Gospel of John is "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as Moses and David." Moody Smith continues to note that God is known through the Old Testament scriptures.

[317] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 3, in his essay "Christocentric or Theocentric," notes, "John is writing about, and directing our attention to, God. John directs our attention to God; but he does so by writing a Gospel. . . . The writing of a Gospel makes it clear that, for John, Jesus stands in the centre of his understanding of God. . . . John shares completely with the Synoptic Gospels their absolute concentration on the figure of Jesus."

relationship with God but also the reverse—God is most characteristically identified and named in relationship to Jesus."[318] The desire of the author is that faith in God, through Jesus who is God's Son and the Christ will occur in the real reader (20:30–31).

Linguistically, the New Testament's use of θεός often reflects the LXX's use of θεός as a translation[319] of אֵל,[320] אֱלֹהִים,[321] and יהוה.[322] It is noteworthy that while יהוה is used exclusively as the name of Israel's God in contradistinction to the gods of the nations, אֵל and אֱלֹהִים "can also, unlike יהוה, be appellatives designating deity as such or a particular pagan deity."[323] This corresponds greatly with the Johannine usage of θεός. Though θεός may be employed as a reference to any deity, most often in John θεός refers to the God of the Old Testament.[324]

Since θεός refers to the God of the Old Testament, John 1:18a encourages the reader to ponder why "No one has ever seen God." Does such a statement suggest an eternal quality of the transcendent God,[325] the uniqueness of the creator over against the creation,[326] or does it describe

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[318] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 51.

[319] Gottfried Quell, "θεός," *TDNT* 3: 79; Harris, *Jesus As God*, 22, notes that the LXX translates twelve different Hebrew words with θεός.

[320] See Harris, *Jesus As God*, 22: "163 times"

[321] See Harris, *Jesus As God*, 22: "more than 2,280 times"

[322] See Harris, *Jesus As God*, 22: "353 times, although by far the most common LXX rendering of יהוה is (ὁ) *κύριος*." See 20:28.

[323] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 25. See also Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 50, who observes, "The regular use of *theos* in the Septuagint to refer to the one God of Israel clearly influences the NT writers, although they can still on occasion speak, as Paul does, of 'many gods' (*theoi*) without thereby violating their monotheistic commitments." Later (p. 228), she concludes, "The God of the Gospel of John is the God of Israel."

[324] For a brief discussion of this, see Erich Zenger, "Gott hat niemand je geschaut (John 1:18): Die christliche Gottesrede im Angesicht des Judentums," *BK* 65 (2010): 87–93.

[325] See, for example, Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, 35–36, who writes concerning the New Testament's teaching on God, "Consequently, there is scarcely anything in the NT that amounts to metaphysics other than the conviction that 'God' exceeds the powers of human reason. In fact, there is very little extended discussion of 'God' at all. There is certainly no attempt in the New Testament to portray 'God unto himself,' or this deity's 'inner life,' so to speak, for the only trustworthy knowledge of 'God' is to be derived entirely from this God's own overtures toward the creation. In a classic OT passage, Moses asks to see 'God' but is refused any direct vision (Exod 33:12–23), and GJohn echoes this emphasis on the utter transcendence of 'God,' insisting that 'No one

a reality that exists between man and God[327] as the consequence of sin,[328] or some other causation? If transcendence is essentially what John has in mind, then it must be asked what Jesus' role is over against the problem. If God is wholly transcendent, then what is it exactly that Jesus is or does that is a source of life for those who believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God (20:30–31)? Any solution which mitigates against Jesus' full work as the Good Shepherd who rescues the sheep (John 10) fails to account sufficiently for the claim of the prologue that the Word is God. Belief in Jesus is belief in God. There remains differentiation between the Father and the Son; yet there also exists unity between the two. The Word's role in the creation equates the Word with God; and yet the incarnation (1:14) also describes the Word as belonging to the realm of the created. If sin or some other matter is responsible for the divide that separates God and man, then one would expect the rest of the Gospel to narrate Jesus' role in solving this

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has ever seen God' (John 1:18 NRSV). For Paul, likewise, 'God's' wisdom and ways are unfathomable (Rom 11:33–35), albeit now declared in the gospel." Hurtado concludes that the Old Testament and New Testament do not spend much time describing God as he is, not because he is assumed, but because he is known primarily through his acts. See also Olsson, "God in the Johannine Writings," 170, who, writing specifically about the Johannine corpus, observes, "However, transcendence is mentioned only in passing, as a foundational presupposition. It is God's immanence that fills the Johannine writings, and here we recognize the humane, personal God of the Old Testament, who is only described in his relation to people."

[326] Farrell, "Seeing the Father Part 1," 2, suggests that not-seeing is a "limitation experienced by all human beings, in that we are aware that certain things exist which cannot be seen." Later, God's invisibility is held to be congruent with God's role as Creator over/against man's state as a creature (p. 5).

[327] Tracts, *Voir Jesus et le Pere en Lui*, 55–56, suggests, "De ce fait, la pensée de saint Jean ne se porte directement vers l'invisibilité comme attribute divin: ce n'est pas tant une these métaphysique que nous avons sous les yeux, mais —et l'adverbe πώποτε en donne également une indication—le moment decisive de l'histoire entre Dieu et les hommes." See also Köstenberger, *John*, 49, who suggests that both reasons are valid "The reason for humankind's inability to see God is twofold: first, God is spirit (John 4:24); second, humankind fell into sin and was expelled from God's presence (Gen 3; Isa 59:2)." Harris, *Jesus As God*, 93–94, lists two possible reasons, "The former view stresses God's invisibility and incomprehensibility. No human being has ever seen God—or ever will—since only a divine being can sustain such a *visio*. The latter view emphasizes God's inaccessibility and hiddenness. God cannot be directly known by humans unless God himself takes the initiative in self-revelation." Harris prefers the first view.

[328] W. Michaelis, *TDNT* 5:332 concludes, "The basic principle of Exod 33:20b, namely, that he who sees God must die, is not thinking of death as a fixed penalty for violation of a corresponding prohibition, for no such prohibition is stated either here or elsewhere. Rather the holiness and majesty of God on the one side, and the unworthiness of man on the other, mean that man cannot see God without being completely destroyed, cf. Isa 6:5."

problem. Jesus stands as the only one who comes from God and therefore acts for God. John 1:18a brooks no exception.

John 1:18a leaves no room for exceptions. "No one (οὐδείς[329]) has seen God." Some have sought to soften this word, suggesting that Moses and others were allowed visions of God but that God allowed only partial visions of himself at certain times to certain people.[330] Others have sought to make this word even more definitive. Farrell for instance, comparing 1:18 with 6:46, contends that Jesus too is included in the statement that no one has ever seen God.[331] Jesus has seen the Father. But no one, not even Jesus, has seen God. In fact, no one *but* Jesus has seen the Father. Therefore, "in 1:18a there is no exception to the rule; in 6:46 there is an exception."[332] Farrell notes a difference between 1:18a and 6:46, but fails adequately to account for the fact that the λόγος is both πρὸς τὸν θεόν (1:1) and is God.

In order for Jesus to be excluded from the vision of θεός, the unity of Jesus and θεός, as well as the close relationship between Jesus and θεός, must be compromised, or ignored. Adesola Akala notes, "Finally, v. 18 states that as μονογενής, Jesus is the *only* one who has seen God, further emphasizing the Son's close and personal relationship with the Father."[333] Farrell's distinction also presupposes that θεός in John's Gospel is used to signify deity in general, and not

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[329] The vocable is used 53 times in the Gospel.

[330] For discussion of this view, see in chapter 1 those scholars who want to suggest that this statement is congruent with Moses seeing God in Exod 33–34, or that Moses and others were given only a partial glimpse of God. For an example of this, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 15, who suggests that Moses experienced an incomplete vision of God; the full vision is achieved in Jesus. While the focus on the fullness of revelation in Jesus is commendable, the softening of 1:18a fails to appreciate the full force of John's teaching. See also Steve Motyer, "Narrative Theology in John 1–5," in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (ed. John Lierman; WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 201, who rightly points to the role of Jesus, but negates the reality of Exod 33.

[331] Contra Roukema, "The Divine Name in John," 207.

[332] Farrell, "Seeing the Father Part 1," 6.

[333] Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 161.

a distinct person of the Trinity (the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit). The distinct persons of the Trinity are, however, consistently mentioned and distinguished in this Gospel. The Father and the Son are one (10:30), yet the Father is greater than the Son (14:28). The Father and the Son are united in purpose, yet the Father and the Son must draw men unto each other (6:44; 14:6). The Spirit is sent by the Father (14:26), and will lead people to the truth of Jesus (16:13–14). The three persons of the Trinity are differentiated, yet are assigned divinity. The Father and Jesus are both identified as θεός (1:18; 20:28), and the Spirit too is assigned divine activities (3:5, 8).

The remainder of 1:18 does not exclude Jesus from the vision of God, but explicitly places him in the exclusive position as the μονογενής. Fernando Segovia helpfully points out both the universality of John's claim and the exception which is Jesus, "A very sharp relationship of distance and separation is posited thereby between humanity and God. No human being, the narrator affirms, has ever had a direct vision of or insight into God. In other words, God lies behind, as conveyed by the metaphorical use of 'seeing,' the reach of the world of flesh. The narrator then supplies the exception to the principle,"[334] Namely, Jesus, the Unique One, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father. One of the things that makes him unique is his access to the Father. Thus, Bruce Schuchard, commenting on 1 John 4:12, notes, "Therefore, when John says that God has been seen by 'no one' and 'ever,' he really—that is to say literally—means *no one*, himself and the rest of the prophets and the apostles included, *ever*."[335] The statement in 1:18a therefore ends with a word that stresses its absoluteness. Robert Smith observes, regarding 1:18a, "The declaration, 'no one has ever seen God' is one of the most remarkable pronouncements in the entire gospel, but it does not stand alone. . . . This lapidary statement of John is equivalent to

[334] Segovia, "John 1:1–18," 50.

[335] Schuchard, *1–3 John*, 477.

saying that no one really knows God. No one has a correct understanding of God. No one can rightly describe or define God."[336] Absolutely no one has seen God at any time, ever, no one, that is, save the one who is also θεός. The one who is both θεός and man can alone see θεός.[337]

Scholars have frequently discussed the theme of seeing throughout the narrative of John's Gospel.[338] Shannon Farrell observes, "The unique contribution which the Fourth Gospel makes to the Christian scriptures is highlighted by its special development of the theme of seeing."[339] John presents faith and sight as integral considerations within his Gospel narrative.[340] Those who believe see, but those who see do not always believe. The testimony of the Beloved Disciple is based on what he has seen, and yet he also is said to believe what he does not see (20:8). The testimony of the resurrection is given by those who saw the risen Jesus. The faith is transmitted

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[336] Robert H. Smith, *Wounded Lord: Reading John through the Eyes of Thomas: A Pastoral and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Donna Duensing; Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2009), 13.

[337] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 110–11, notes, "There is, of course, one exception, and that is the Son, who has seen the Father . . . . The vision of God is thus restricted to the Son alone. . . . This distinguishes Jesus not only from his contemporaries who are said never to have seen God (5:38–39), but also from his disciples who have not seen God either, although they have seen the Son. Even so, Jesus' vision of God is qualitatively unique, of a different sort than that vouchsafed the disciples, for they see the Father in the Son, rather than seeing him directly as the Son does."

[338] See especially Farrell, "Seeing the Father," 1–24; Part 2: "Perceptive Seeing and Comprehensive Seeing," *ScEs* 44 (1992): 159–83; and Part 3: "Eschatological Seeing and Memorial Seeing," *ScEs* 44 (1992): 207–29. See also Jey J. Kanagaraj, *"Mysticism" in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background* (JSNTSup 158; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 214, who begins his discussion of "seeing" by observing, "The frequent use of the verbs ὁράω, θεωρέω, θεάομαι, βλέπω, and the cognate words in John show that the idea of 'seeing' is one of the dominant Johannine themes"; Keener, *John*, 1:247–51; Craig R. Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John," *Bib* 70 (1989): 327–48; Fernando Ramos Pérez, *Ver a Jesús y Sus Signos y Creer en Él: Estudio Exegético-Theológico de la Relación "Ver y Creer" en el Evangelio Según San Juan* (Analecta Gregoriana 292; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2004), 6–7, who says, "La realidad de la visión es tan fuerte en el cuarto evanglio que no se ha dudado en afirmar que 'la experiencia visual de Juan ha marcado su teologia, *teologia de la vision*.' " Here, Pérez quotes Henri van den Bussche, *Jean: Commentaire de l'Évangile Spirituel* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 21; as does Farrell.

[339] Farrell, "Seeing the Father Part 1," 2.

[340] Craig R. Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing," 327, states, "Faith and unbelief are central concerns for the Fourth Evangelist, and a major facet of the issue is the connection between seeing Jesus' signs and resurrection appearances. The problem has long been a disputed point among interpreters of the Fourth Gospel." For a full treatment, see Pérez, *Ver a Jesús*.

to future generations by those who have seen, and their witness is intended to produce faith in those who have not seen (20:30–31).

In his foundational study,[341] G. Phillips observes[342] that John is "so preoccupied with words of seeing and experiences of seeing that a scheme may be detected, by which the mounting significance of intensity of vision can be shown to culminate in faith."[343] An examination of these words and their usage in the Gospel reveals, however, that John uses them predominately as synonyms, with no hard and fast definition pertaining to the different words for sight. The goal, we shall see, is not a seeing that removes every need for believing, but a believing that finds in Jesus what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see (20:28–29).

The author of the Fourth Gospel employs four different Greek verbs for seeing:[344] βλέπω,[345] θεάομαι,[346] θεωρέω,[347] and ὁράω.[348] Of special interest to this dissertation is ὁράω, since it is the

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[341] See Brown, *John*, 1:501–3, whose discussion of the verbs for seeing is a summary of Abbott and Phillips' work. See also Miller, "They Saw His Glory," 134–36. Shannon Farrell's articles also closely follow the work of Phillips, but she departs from the order of Phillips' treatment. Phillips' order (followed by Brown and Pérez) is βλέπω, θεωρέω, ὁράω, θεάομαι. Farrell's order is βλέπω, θεάομαι, θεωρέω, ὁράω.

[342] Phillips' work is largely based on the findings in Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, 104–14 (§1597–1611).

[343] Phillips, "Faith and Vision," 83.

[344] Especially helpful are G. Phillip's study ("Faith and Vision,") and Shannon Farrell's three-part study ("Seeing the Father" parts 1–3) on the levels of seeing (with a special focus on seeing the Father in Jesus) in the Fourth Gospel.

[345] Following Abbott, Phillips, and Brown, Farrell, "Seeing the Father," 7–8, labels βλέπω as the Greek verb for physical perception, See Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, 112 § 1607; Phillips, "Faith and Vision," 84; Brown, *John*, 501. See also Michaelis, *TDNT* 5: 317. It is also notable that the verb βλέπω is not associated with mystical vision in Kanagaraj, *Mysticism*, 214–19. Phillips labels the verb as the "lowest on our scale of honour." (84) For a fuller treatment of βλέπω in the Septuagint, NT, and other Greek literature see Pérez, *Ver a Jesús*, 20–25. After briefly discussing the role of βλέπω in the Old Testament and the rest of the NT, Farrell concludes that the 17 occurrences of βλέπω in John's Gospel have a sharper focus than the varied meanings found in the rest of Scripture, since the verb is most often employed in John 9, which is concerned with the healing of the blind man ("Seeing the Father," 7–8). See also Pérez, *Ver a Jesús*, 18, who lists 17 uses of βλέπω (only present and imperfect), plus 4 uses of ἀναβλεπω (all aorist) and 2 uses of ἐμβλεπω (both aorist). Miller, "They Saw His Glory," 135, lists 15 occurrences, counting the 3 appearances in 9:39 as one occurrence. However, the verb also occurs in 5:19, where Jesus teaches that the Son does what he sees the Father doing. This seeing does not comfortably fit into a strict understanding of physical seeing, contra Miller, "They Saw His Glory," 135, who states, "βλέπω is perfectly adequate for negotiating the everyday reality of life, but not for apprehending deep spiritual truth." Also, John 11:9

verb found in both 1:18 and 20:28–29. When discussing ὁράω, Phillips asserts that the verb regularly describes an act in which, "the intellectual content of what has been seen" dominates.[349] Phillips suggests that this kind of seeing includes intuitive understanding, and finds its highpoint in the resurrection narrative, when the Beloved disciple saw and believed (εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν, 20:8). Michaelis highlights the use of ὁράω in the Old Testament for visionary-ecstatic seeing.[350]

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uses this verb in a statement of Jesus which encourages the disciples to see the light of day. This use of βλέπω also seems to describe more than simply a physical sight. John Painter notes, "Throughout John 9 βλέπω, which normally refers to physical sight, is used. But by linking sight and blindness with light and darkness the evangelist shows that he is using βλέπω in a double sense, of physical sight and the seeing of faith, suggesting that the seeing of faith is rooted in physical sight and that there is an inseparable link between the world, with its observable events, and faith. All seeing, rightly understood, points to the seeing of faith" (John Painter, "John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 28 [1986]: 43).

[346] The verb appears 6 times in John. Pérez, ***Ver a Jesús***, 18, notes this verb is used in the aorist, and perfect tenses. The final word for seeing in Phillips' examination is θεάομαι, which he describes as "where the dramatic and the symbolic note is dominant" (85). Michaelis notes that θεάομαι has been used from the time of Homer to denote astonished or attentive seeing, contains "a certain loftiness" and is used for visionary seeing (Michaelis, *TDNT* 5: 317–18). Farrell labels θεάομαι as a verb which "implies a seeing which is in some way related to God." (Farrell, "Seeing the Father," 22. The discussion of θεάομαι occurs in Farrell's discussion of "Relational Seeing."). She suggests that the Johannine use of this verb often involves a seeing of Jesus related to God. Using this logic, she concludes that within the verses in which Jesus is the subject of the verb (1:38; 6:44), the author intends to communicate that Jesus sees all things in relation to the Father (23). Especially important is the use of θεάομαι in 1:14. Brown follows Abbott's observation that this word is related to "theater" and may imply some kind of contemplation (Brown, *John*, 1:502–3. See also Keener, *John*, 1:251), but also notes that the verb is used for merely physical sight in 1:38 and 6:5 (contrary to Farrell's suggestion).

[347] The verb appears 24 times in John. Pérez, ***Ver a Jesús***, 18, notes that the verb is used in the present, imperfect, and aorist tenses. Miller, "They Saw His Glory," 135, again has a different count, 22, missing the double occurrences in 9:45 and 14:19. Phillips defines θεωρέω: "to look at with concentration, but not necessarily with a very high perception of the significance of what is contemplated" ("Faith and Vision," 84–85). Miller notes that this verb is often used in reference to seeing Jesus' signs, but failing to grasp their deeper meaning (p. 135). In her discussion of "Perceptive Seeing," Farrell discusses θεωρέω as the Johannine verb which is used in reference to the perception of works or a person's identity ("Seeing the Father," 166–68). See also Michaelis, *TDNT* 5: 318–19, for a discussion of the debate concerning the etymology of θεωρέω, including the peripatetic school, which believes the word is from θεός and concerns watching the gods. Brown, *John*, 1:502, agrees that there are instances where this verb does imply more than mere physical sight (βλέπω), yet also draws attention to the uses which denote mere physical sight (14:17; 20:12). Note, however, that 20:12 is a verse employed by Farrell to define this verb as connoting perception of a person's identity. See also Dodd, *Interpretation*, 167, who states that both ὁράω and θεωρέω are used with Christ as the object. Sometimes they denote a common seeing, and sometimes they carry a deeper meaning.

[348] The verb appears 67 times in John.

[349] Phillips, "Faith and Vision," 85.

[350] Michaelis, *TDNT* 5:329.

Farrell observes that the future tense of ὁράω is used in the Fourth Gospel[351] in reference to different aspects of eschatology.[352]

Since ὁράω occurs in 1:18a in the perfect, this use is of special interest to this project. Farrell suggests that the perfect tense of ὁράω[353] is employed to refer to the seeing of the Father.[354] The helpful suggestion is made that "through the instrumentality of his own person, Jesus establishes himself as a 'sign,' visible evidence of that which he alone sees. The seeing to which the disciples give witness is not that of Jesus' seeing of the Father, but that that of the disciple's seeing of the Father in Jesus. The disciple's seeing of the Father in Jesus is the vision which Christians are to pass on from one generation to the next."[355] While the conclusion that the Father is one who is seen in Jesus is to be appreciated, the logic that the perfect tense of ὁράω is used in order to denote this, and therefore these verses teach such, is assuming the conclusion in order to make the argument. John's use of the perfect of ὁράω in John 20 has the resurrected Jesus as its object; not explicitly the Father. The reader/hearer is not to only see the Father in the risen Jesus, but in Jesus throughout the entire Gospel, through both his words and his deeds, and especially on the cross.[356] Here again, the hypothesis of progressive seeing or "levels" of seeing leads to a misunderstanding of the Gospel's unique focus on seeing/not-seeing in connection with the disciples' continued misunderstanding of the true identity of Jesus (and of God).

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[351] The tense form appears ten times in John.

[352] Farrell "Seeing the Father," 314–15.

[353] This is especially pertinent, since the perfect of ὁράω is found in 1:18, 6:46, and 1 John 4:20. However, it is not the verb used in 1 John 4:12.

[354] Farrell "Seeing the Father," 326–27.

[355] Farrell "Seeing the Father," 326. It is noted by Farrell (p. 327) that the Septuagint uses the perfect in Job 42:5 when Job claims to have seen God.

[356] Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ*, 62 n. 123, summarizes, "The various Greek terms for 'seeing' are used in John interchangeably for both the physical perception and the faith perception."

While Phillip's study, reinforcing Abbott's earlier contribution, is valuable, the evidence reveals that John does not conform to one specific or consistent use for any of his synonyms for seeing. Miller cautions that we cannot "lock the Fourth Gospel into an unbending terminological straightjacket. John is too sophisticated for that. There is a fluidity to his use of seeing terms that resists a rigid one-to-one correspondence."[357] Brown agrees. He concludes his brief remarks concerning the verbs for sight by observing, "Those scholars who think that the verbs are synonymous have almost as many texts to prove their point as do the scholars who would attribute specific meanings to the verbs."[358] Cullmann observes, concerning ὁράω, θεάομαι, and θεωρέω, "l'usage johannique des trios verbes prouve que tous trois peuvent être employés indifféremment avec le même sens"[359] John's preference for employing some synonyms for seeing more than others should not be given too great weight. This author is notably careful in his choice of language for reasons not often appreciated. Euphony, repetition, and patterning are all of importance when examining the Evangelist's use of one word for seeing over against another. Tendencies do not suggest hard and fast semantic values for words. Instead, they suggest that the author is making careful, purposeful choices for other reasons This dissertation reads the verbs for seeing used by John as largely synonymous, and yet also takes seriously their patterned use, especially the repetition of a certain vocable within a pericope or within an observed structure (such as inclusios).

The adverb employed by John, πώποτε, meaning "not ever" or "never," is relatively rare. It appears 4 times in John (1:18; 5:37; 6:35; 8:33), once in 1 John (4:12), and once in the New

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[357] Miller, "They Saw His Glory," 136.

[358] Brown, *John*, 1:503.

[359] Oscar Cullmann, " εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν: La Vie de Jésus, Object de la 'Vue' et de la 'Foi' d'après le Quatrième Evangile," in *Aux Sources de la Tradition Chrétienne: Mélanges Offerts à M. Maurice Goguel à l'Occasion de Son Soixante-Dixième Anniversaire* (ed. P. Benoit et al.; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlê, 1950), 55.

Testament outside of the works of John (Luke 19:30). Moulton suggests that the perfect verb (ἑώρακεν, 1:18) used with πώποτε is aoristic, and denotes unbroken continuity.[360] Some have interpreted πώποτε as "not yet," including Suggit, who links πώποτε with the "not yet" (οὔπω) in 20:17.[361] As confirmed in 5:37, πώποτε is linked to οὐδείς in order to make clear that John's statement concerning the unseen God is in some sense absolute. Those in the past and those in the present are included. There has never been anyone who has seen God. Craig Keener writes, "The Gospel noted in 1:18, where it expounded on Exod 33–34, that no one has ever beheld God . . . (also using πώποτε and a perfect of ὁράω); 5:37 and 6:46 reinforce this point."[362] But if God cannot be seen, it would seem to follow that he then cannot be known. There is, however, a knowing that accompanies this not-seeing through the one who comes in order to reveal the one whom no one has ever seen. He alone can make known what otherwise cannot be known and show what cannot be seen, for he alone is God and man.

"That One Has Made (Him) Known"

The prologue's final verse resolves (at least in part)[363] the tension introduced by the statement "No one has ever seen God" when it states that, though none have ever seen the Father, the Unique One, who is from the Father, "that one has made (him) known." Thus, there is a knowing that is possible even when flesh and blood eyes can in no way see.

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[360] Moulton, *Prolegomena*, 143–44. Moulton also lists 5:37 and 8:33 as examples. See also McHugh, *John 1–4*, 69.

[361] John Suggit, *The Sign of Life: Studies in the Fourth Gospel and the Liturgy of the Church* (Cape Town, South Africa: Cluster, 1993), 148. But see Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 208–9, who suggests that this interpretation "goes against the perspective of the Fourth Evangelist."

[362] Keener, *John*, 1:658.

[363] Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 218, fittingly observes, "The Prologue ends unsurprisingly with an ambiguous verb."

"The Unique One, God, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father, that one has made (him) known" (John 1:18b). In order to convey the revelation of the Father through the person of Jesus, John employs the word ἐξηγήσατο at the end of the prologue. John 1:1–2 establishes a pattern of referents for θεός. The first use of θεός in 1:1b ("and the λόγος was with God"), we have seen, refers to the Father. A second use of θεός (1:1c) refers to the λόγος. A third use of θεός (1:2) refers again to the Father. A similar pattern is observed in 1:18. The referent of θεός in 1:18a is the Father. The referent of θεός in 1:18b is the μονογενής (1:14), or Jesus. A third explicit use of θεός is "missing" at the end of 1:18. Instead, an assumed verse-ending third and final reference to θεός recalls the referent of 1:18a: the previously referred to Father. The pattern in 1:1–2 is thus followed. Where the reader would expect a third use of θεός, John clarifies the distinguishing role of the Son as the revealer of the Father.

C. K. Barrett states that John uses the word ἐξηγήσατο to refer to the "publishing or explaining of divine secrets, sometimes by the gods themselves."[364] Beasley-Murray points to Josephus' use of the word as "the technical term for the exposition of the Law by the rabbis."[365] This word occurs nowhere else in John's writings, and therefore presents a problem for the one who seeks its precise meaning. The verb has no explicit direct object; however most suggest that the implied direct object is the Father (or God).[366] The only other New Testament author to use

[364] Barrett, *John*, 141.

[365] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 16. See also Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 153, who notes, "But whereas the Rabbis depend upon the law, Jesus, as the Son of God, depends upon what he has heard and seen with the Father."

[366] Brown, *John*, 1:17, notes, "The 'Him' is not expressed but is demanded if we translate the verb as 'reveal.' " Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 218, labels the use as intransitive. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 66, suggests both an understood indirect object (to us) and a direct object: "the Son relates that which he sees and men do not see, the secrets of God, the mysteries of the divine life: or, as many of the Fathers understood it, the Father's bosom, the mysteries of the Father's love." Bultmann, *John*, 83, states that ἐξηγήσατο "was used in a technical sense for the interpretation of the will of the gods by professional diviners, priests, and soothsayers, but which can also be used of God himself when he makes known his will." In contrast, see Büchsel, "ἐξηγέομαι," *TDNT* 2: 908 n. 4, who

this verb is Luke, who employs it in Luke 24:35; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19, each instance containing a direct object and describing the recounting of facts. Bruce notes that, in the other New Testament occurrences, the verb "means to tell or narrate and that is its meaning at the end of John 1:18: we might use an English word derived from the Greek verb and say that the Son is the 'exegete' of the Father."[367] Lindars concludes his discussion by noting, "In either case the verb implies the revelation of God by means of human speech, which fittingly represents the activity of him who is the Word of God. The suggestion of something visible is avoided. The revelation is meaning conveyed by the Word, to be apprehended by faith."[368] The Son's revelation of the Father is accomplished in the same manner employed by him to create the world. The speaking God once again speaks in order to reveal. Thus, once again, the reader is encouraged to read the prologue's end in terms of its beginning. As the narrative unfolds, the reader is encouraged again to seek another ending which functions as the end point of the inclusio begun by 1:18.

Yet the subsequent narrative is not the only direction suggested through the employment of ἐξηγήσατο. Just as other literary features and diction return the reader to the beginning of the prologue, so the last word of the prologue reminds the reader of the prologue's beginning. Just as the term λόγος in 1:1–2, 14 bears both Jewish[369] and Graeco-Roman freight, so also the last word of the prologue, ἐξηγήσατο, would have appealed to both Greeks and Jews. John Marsh states,

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states, "One can hardly supply Θεὸν as obj. from v. 18a, since God is not an obj. of explanation."

[367] Bruce, *John*, 45. Köstenberger, *John*, 50, suggests that "the entire Gospel to follow should be read as an account of Jesus 'telling the whole story' of God the Father." See also Michaels, *John*, 92–93.

[368] Lindars, *John*, 100.

[369] Büchsel, *TDNT* 2: 908, suggests that John 1:18 answers the question in Sirach 43:31: τίς ἑόρακεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐκδιηγήσεται καὶ τίς μεγαλυνεῖ αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστιν. He also suggests the Greek religious use of the word gives the sense of "reveal." See also Bultmann, *John*, 83; Rodney A. Whitacre, *John* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series 4; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 61.

> John has chosen a Greek word which is at once the technical term for the Jew in making known the Rabbinic interpretations of the Law, or for the revelation of divine secrets, and a term characteristic of Greek religion for the publication of divine truths. So to Jew and Greek, the evangelist would say, the incarnate Word brings from the very heart of God a full revelation of what is in his heart and mind for man and for his world. God remains invisible; the incarnation is not a chance to see God. But he is no longer unknown or unknowable; the mystery of his will and purpose has been made known in the Word who is the Son of God incarnate.[370]

The revelation of the Father through the Son also occurs in verses 14 and 17. Within his examination of "the Truth" in the Gospel of John, Ignace de La Potterie observes a parallel structure between verses 14, 17, and 18. Specifically, he observes that the end of verse 14 (πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας) is similar in thought to the end of verse 18 (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο), and the beginning of verse 17 (ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια) is likewise congruent with ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.[371] This observation helpfully draws together the statements in the prologue concerning the revelation of God through Jesus.[372] He is the one through whom the glory of God is seen. He is

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[370] Marsh, *Saint John*, 112. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 219, observes, "[T]he importance of this word is its multivalency and its cross-cultural importance. In both Jewish and Hellenistic religion, this word was used to signify the communication of divine secrets. . . . John ends the Prologue as he begins it, by using language intelligible and even familiar to the religious life of non-Christian readers" See also Feuillet, *Le Prologue du Quatrième Évangile*, 136, who states, "aux grecs: votre aspiration à connaître Dieu et même à le voir est tout à fait légitime, mail seul le Christ la combler, car il est ici-bas le seul Révélateur authentique des mystères divins." Barrett, *John*, 141, notes, "It is not without significance that the Prologue closes with this word, characteristic as it is of Hellenistic religion. The notion of revelation is of course biblical as well as Hellenistic; but clearly John means to use language intelligible and even familiar to readers accustomed to Greek literature rather than to the Bible. The invisible God has now in Christ been manifested in his glory, grace, and truth."

[371] Ignace de La Potterie, *Le Christ et la vérité; L'Esprit et al vérité* (vol. 1 of La Vérité dans Saint Jean; AnBib 73; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 211–12. See also Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, and Truth*, 177, who suggests that ἐξηγήσατο "corresponds to eyewitnesses observing the *doxa* (1:14f.), Jesus bestowing God's *hē charis kai hē alētheia* (1:17), giving God's *doxa*, manifesting/making God's name known, and pouring/breathing God's Holy Spirit onto believers."

[372] La Potterie, however, suggests that the true meaning of ἐξηγήσατο should be understood more precisely with a translation which communicates the idea of leading men to the Father. In order to facilitate this translation, he inserts words and removes words from v. 18, similar to Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 67, who also amends the reading of the entire verse. Hans Urs von Balthasar, "God Is His Own Exegete," *Comm* 13 (1986): 281, in agreement with La Potterie's interpretation states, "The Son turned toward: This means that the act of revelation is for John identical with its content: the Son as man discloses (through his being and doing) the essence of God the Father." See further Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, and Truth*, 177–78, who also sees direction inherent in this word, but instead of the movement of Jesus toward the Father, he interprets this phrase to mean that God has made his presence a reality among humans.

the one through whom grace and truth come. And finally, he is the only one who can reveal that which cannot be seen and so never has been seen.

The prologue begins with the λόγος in the beginning with God. Yet the λόγος does not remain removed from this creation as does the other in 1:1 who is called θεός. The λόγος became flesh (1:14), and subsequently the author labels the λόγος the μονογενής (1:14). It is the μονογενής who rounds out the prologue as the only way to know God because he alone comes from God. Yet the μονογενής is not just the revealer of God. He too is God in 1:18, just as the λόγος was in 1:1. Just as in the first verse of the prologue, the last verse presents two who are both to be known as θεός, and yet cannot be the same referent. The first clause of 1:18 presents the God who cannot be seen. No one has ever seen God. Yet in the second clause, the one who is God and is the one and only one from God is the μονογενής who is enfleshed. The God who cannot be seen is made known through the God who is in the flesh. Since the one has never been seen, humanity needs another one to reveal the first one. The only one who is able to reveal the invisible one is the one who comes from him as God and flesh. The Word enfleshed, the μονογενής, God, he alone is intimately united as one with the Father ("in his bosom," 1:18). Therefore, he alone, the μονογενής/λόγος, reveals and makes known the otherwise unseeable God. There exists, therefore, a not-seeing yet knowing.

In this, he, Jesus, is seemingly unique. The Gospel claims that Jesus is himself in his person the truth (14:6), and that the Spirit will come as a testimony to this truth (14:17; 15:26). This truth is the revelation of the Father. Without the revelation of the truth, the Father cannot be known. All who speak the truth testify to Jesus. And this truth is found in words spoken about Jesus and by Jesus. The truth revealed in Jesus therefore gives reliable knowledge of God. Though God remains unseen, he is known through words from and about Jesus, the word of

truth, by which relationship to him comes. David Rensberger notes that "one of the primary characteristics of this relationship is knowledge of God, a knowledge mediated through Jesus. Those who see Jesus see God; God is known in knowing Jesus. This is not just a matter of Jesus' ontological relation to God as the Logos made flesh. It is his words and deeds that make God known, because they are the words and the deeds of God. . . . The perception of Jesus and his words and deeds is thus fundamental to Johannine spirituality."[373]

Thus, the revelation of the Father occurs through the words of the narrative itself.[374] Stephen Voorwinde comments on the prologue's last two words (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο):

> Coming at such a decisive juncture in the Gospel, these two words form a strong link between the prologue and the account of Jesus' earthly ministry. In all that follows Jesus will be explaining God and making him known. Therefore, not only the didactic sections of this Gospel, but also the signs which Jesus performs, the accounts of his dealings with others, and—most notably—his passion and resurrection reveal and explain the Father. This two-word summation is intended as an all-embracing description of Jesus' ministry.[375]

As he does the Father's bidding, Jesus reveals the unseen God not just in his words and not just in his actions.[376] John Morgan-Wynne connects Jesus' revelation of the Father with the intimacy

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[373] David Rensberger, "Spirituality and Christology in Johannine Sectarianism," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper et al.; St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice, 2002),183.

[374] Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 26, states, "The prologue ends with the assertion 'No one has ever seen God.' What follows in the gospel . . . is an art that offers the conditions whereby the invisible, Jesus' divine glory, is made visible to an audience." Segovia, "John 1:1–18," 50, notes concerning the close of the prologue, "Thereby a perfect transition is provided to the public life of Jesus, the Word—the narration of this unveiling of God."

[375] Voorwinde, "John's Prologue," 32.

[376] Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God*, 215, observes, "In the Fourth Gospel ἐξηγήσατο is used only here but elsewhere Jesus is seen as 'revealer' (17:6) and 'teacher' (13:3). He is also spoken of as the one who gives the vision of the Father (14:7). Thus we may conveniently conclude that in v. 18 the Evangelist speaks of Jesus' 'historic life' as one that teaches, reveals, and gives visions of God with necessary interpolations!" Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 218, states, "Moreover, the aorist suggests that the introduction has been completed through a historical act. In other words, from the point of view of the narrator, Jesus has introduced the readers to God through his life and exaltation—he has shown them the way." Bultmann, *John*, 83, notes, "Thus the argument has come full circle; and so again we are told not to see Jesus as the Revealer of a kind of hierophant or mystagogue, who fades into obscurity beside his word; and in what is to come the Evangelist gives us not the teaching of Jesus, but his life and teaching as a unity."

of his relationship with the Father ("in the bosom"): "Out of that relationship and communion he can reveal the Father to men and women. What he says is entirely determined by (a) what he has heard from the Father, (b) what he has been taught by the Father, or (c) what he has been given by the Father."[377] Thus, the Father has a voice. His name is Jesus.[378] The reader is encouraged to see God in the words and actions of Jesus—actions which are only understood and believed through the words from and about Jesus. R. Alan Culpepper notes, "What does the Gospel of John reveal about the nature of God? Whatever we say in response to this question must be inferred from what Jesus says and does. . . . Both his signs and his words point beyond themselves, beyond Jesus, to the Father. They are the words and works of the One who sent Jesus. Whoever has seen Jesus, therefore, has seen the Father (12:45; 14:9)."[379]

Elizabeth Harris concludes her discussion of ἐξηγήσατο by observing that it is most fruitful to interpret the λόγος according to "the evangelist's own statement that the Logos was θεός (1:1), which is recapitulated in the closing statement that the Logos, who as Jesus Christ is μονογενὴς θεός, 'has communicated divine things.' For it is not only Jesus' speech that is covered by this statement. Jesus does more than speak. He performs significant acts, which along with his speech convey the divine glory, grace, truth, and light."[380] This communication of divine things is the content of the narrative to follow. As the Gospel unfolds, the Son is revealed through his words and actions. And in this revelation, the invisible Father is seen.

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[377] John Morgan-Wynne, *The Cross in the Johannine Writings* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011), 54.

[378] Morgan-Wynne, *The Cross in Johannine Writings*, 54–55, states, "To abide in Jesus and to abide in his words amounts to the same thing, for the Revealer and his word(s) cannot be separated."

[379] Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 94.

[380] Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 115.

But knowable should not be confused with visible. Marianne Meye Thompson writes, "Because in this world the Son makes the Father known, one truly 'sees' God; but only indirectly, and in hidden ways. The *hiddenness* of the glory of the Father in the Son informs every scene of the Gospel."[381] In the Heidelberg Disputation, Martin Luther states, "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."[382] Luther understood from the Scriptures that God was further hidden the more he was revealed in the man Jesus Christ.[383] That θεός is revealed in a man dying on a cross does not somehow make him easier to see. Instead, it serves to make God all the more mysterious. He is profoundly less comprehensible when one encounters him in the most unlikely of places—on a cross—in the most unlikely of vessels—a dying man.[384] Tord Larsson, reflecting Luther's reading of the Fourth Gospel, notes, "The most fervent and tense moment of revelation is when this man is dying on the cross. God is hidden behind a mask but still revealed to the eyes of faith."[385] Yet this is the revelation found in the John's Gospel. The one who looks the least like God, who is hungry, who is tired, who suffers and dies, and whose own followers

[381] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 143.

[382] *LW* 31:40.

[383] For a study of Luther's view of God in the Gospel of John, see Larsson, *God in the Fourth Gospel*, 22–60. Larsson (p. 239) summarizes Luther's view as "God makes himself even more inapprehensible when he reveals himself as the human being Jesus Christ." Larsson cites Luther's reading of 1:18 as support for this conclusion.

[384] Rensberger, "Spirituality and Christology," 183, notes, "Therefore, God is not only made known through the powerful miracles of Jesus but also is revealed in Jesus' utter humanity, his all-too-mortal flesh. The climactic deed of God that Jesus performs is the most Godlike of all acts, the giving of life, which he does by means of his own death. . . . To know God, to be in a relationship with God, means to see the glory of God in this moment of wretched mortality, and to receive the gift that God has chosen to give in only this way. To know God in the deeds of Jesus means seeing God in this utmost act of self-giving love."

[385] Larsson, *God in the Fourth Gospel*, 51. Thus, Birger Olsson, "Deus Semper Maior? On God in the Johannine Writings," in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives. Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel in Århus 1997* (ed. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen; JSNTSup 182; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 143, observes that "The one who actually makes it difficult for us with any great precision to describe God in the Johannine writings is Jesus."

deny and abandon him, is Lord and God. Mere flesh and blood eyes cannot perceive this. It can only be seen with the eyes of faith. This is the conundrum of the θεός of John's Gospel.

Thus, θεός is no mere philosophical notion or religious conception. He is a being who reveals himself to his own people through his own Son. Questions of transcendence and imminence are not mutually exclusive. Faith sees what otherwise cannot be seenin the creature who is the Creator, in the man who is God. While the Father makes no appearance in the telling of John's story (he is present only in the words that he speaks), he is nonetheless present in the person of Jesus.

It is only through the Son that the Father can be known. Not only is Jesus the μονογενής (Unique One) because of his essence as θεός, but he is also unique in his role as the revealer. There is no one else who can reveal the Father, for no one else knows the Father.[386] The Father is seen only when one truly sees Jesus (14:9), and one truly sees Jesus only when one truly listens to Jesus (14:24). The one who is with the Father and in the Father's bosom reveals what no man can see. Edwyn Hoskins notes, "So complete is the union of the Father and the Son that in the end the language of sight can be recovered. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (12:45; 14:9). Thus did Jesus veritably once and for all *declare* the Father. Sight comes to rest, not in psychological, mystical experience, but in the historical relationship between the disciples and the man Jesus."[387] His very being, actions, and words are the revelation of who he is and who the

[386] Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant*, 161.

[387] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 153. See also Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 151, who notes, "The Prologue, with the [Son-Father Relationship] established in the narrative, concludes with a last event—the Son's mission of revealing the Father; the intimate filial relationship in the [Son-Father Relationship] enables the Son to be the most qualified revealer of the Father."

Father is. Both these who are properly called θεός are revealed in the one who is θεός in the flesh.[388] Herman Ridderbos helpfully concludes:

> And thus the circle is completed. No one, of all the witnesses to God, has witnessed to God like the one who was from the beginning with God and was God. No one ascended to God but he who descended from him (3:13). He who comes from above is above all and bears witness to what he has seen and heard (3:31). That is the great thrust of the prologue, and it keeps returning in the Gospel. It is only in that light that we can understand what the Gospel will from this point say about the coming and work of Jesus Christ.[389]

The revelation of the Father is the mission of the enfleshed λόγος, and yet those who encounter Jesus fail to perceive in him the one whom he alone was sent to reveal. There is no one else able to make the Father known, for he is not seen, and apart from revelation through the one who has seen him, unknown. Fernando Segovia notes concerning Jesus' role as sole revealer, "This [one and only one] lay on the Father's breast, in effect a metaphorical claim for 'seeing' God. The narrator claims thereby a unique role for the Word."[390] Not only is the role that he claims for Jesus unique, first in the prologue then in what follows John's claim is that Jesus' role always has been his and only his to perform. Not only, then, has "that one" made God known, that one always has been the one and only one who makes God known.

That One Always Has Been the One and Only One Who Makes Him Known

If the last of 1:18's three pendant nominatives, μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὤν, serves as has been argued, then the participial phrase, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, does much more than describe Jesus in intimate relationship with God the Father. "The One Who Is" invokes the name of God

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[388] Keener, *John*, 1:424, notes that "while being in" (reading ὤν in 1:18 temporally) "suggests that Jesus revealed the Father while remaining in his bosom and the context confirms that this revelation coincides with his earthly life, while climaxing in the cross."

[389] Ridderbos, *John*, 59.

[390] Segovia, "John 1:1–18," 50.

that twice is given to Moses in Exod 3:14 LXX.[391] Not only, then, is the Unique One θεός, he is also the very same θεός who spoke with Moses from the burning bush. The one who, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth (see 1:1, 3), the incarnate μονογενής (see 1:14), the twice referenced θεός (1:1, 18), is here presented also as the one and only one who spoke with Moses. This one, who alone resides in the bosom of the Father, always has been the one and only one who makes God known (cf. "No one comes to the Father except through me," 14:6.).

At the end of the verse 18's triadic string of pendant nominatives[392] and just before its concluding ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός not only emphatically marks the conclusion of the prologue, it necessarily also segues to the narrative that follows, where the Gospel's greater manner of confirming who Jesus is and what he has done plays itself out. Through the Gospel's depiction of Jesus' word and deed ὁ ὢν is made known. Belonging to Jesus' many words to this effect are his many subtle, yet suggestive, "I am (he)" statements. Especially relevant are the instances of these in John 8:58 and 18:5–6. In these and other passages, the words ἐγώ εἰμι are employed to allude to the self-identifying speech of the one who first said to Moses ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν (see, e.g., Isaiah 43:10, 25).[393] Thus, the "he" in question when Jesus later says again and again "I am (he)" is none other than ὁ ὢν. Yet that which Jesus teaches

[391] Michaels, *John*, 92, lists as evidence for this understanding Philo, Josephus, and Revelation. Cf. the name given in Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5.

[392] La Potterie, "La finale du prologue johannique," 359, identifies this phrase as a "participale déterminative en apposition."

[393] E. M. Sidebottom, *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel: In the Light of First-Century Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961), 44–49, discusses the identification of Jesus as ἐγώ εἰμι and ὁ ὢν, fails to note this phrase in 1:18. Instead, Sidebottom equates μονογενής from 1:18 with the Divine Name. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 92, also equates Jesus' use of "I am" with allusions to the Divine Name in Exod 3:14, but points especially to Isaiah, "where the emphasis falls both on God's eternity and on God's unique identity as creator of all and sovereign over all."

concerning his identity and purpose remains elusive and hidden until after his resurrection (2:22; 13:19; 20:28).

The God of Israel revealed himself to Moses from the burning bush and there gave to Moses and all of his people his own, self-identifying name. The LXX translates Exod 3:14: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωυσῆν ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν καὶ εἶπεν οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ισραηλ ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς. θεὸς informs Moses who he is and how he is to be known by all. This revelation of God to Moses, and all those who come after, identifies him not once but twice as ὁ ὤν. John presents Jesus as ὁ ὤν who is with God (1:1b), who is God (1:1c), and who alone makes known his Father who cannot otherwise be known (1:18). The common perception that 1:14–18 alludes also to Moses' vision of God at Sinai in Exod 33–34 further informs the reading of ὁ ὤν as an intentional reference to the Divine Name. McHugh queries, "May not the words ὁ ὤν in v. 18 be a conscious allusion to Exod 3:14 'He Who Is'? The same participle occurs with this sense in the book of Revelation (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5)."[394] The one who speaks for God in John's Gospel is the one who always and alone has spoken for God. The one who reveals the Father is the one who always and exclusively has revealed the Father, the God, whom no one has ever seen. This One, the Unique One, who is himself God, was and ever is the one who alone speaks and acts to reveal God. The Old Testament patriarchs experienced repeated visions of God. Here John reveals that each of those episodes was an encounter with this one: the creator, the Unique One, who is himself God, who took on flesh, and was named Jesus. Such a bold claim at the end of the prologue compels the reader to search the remainder of the narrative to investigate such a claim. Can the one who appeared in flesh be the one and only one who appeared to the saints of old?

[394] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 72.

No one has seen God (the Father), ever. Not even Moses. No one has seen him, that is, except for the Unique One, who is himself God, and is alone able to reveal what cannot otherwise be known. He alone reveals the invisible God. He always has. Martin Luther states, "Look at Holy Scripture. From the days of Adam, Christ has always revealed God to mankind. He never ceased proclaiming such a knowledge of God: that through Him we derive grace and truth, that is, life eternal."[395] He continues to do so. The Unique One, God, the One Who Is, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and on Sinai is the one who always has and therefore reveals the Father still, who therefore also alone brings the salvation of the Father to his world (3:16). Anthony Hanson states, "It is therefore by no means farfetched to suggest that, according to the author of the Fourth Gospel, Yahweh was the Logos, and that consequently God, when he revealed himself to Israel of old, revealed himself as essentially the God of mercy."[396] He alone it is who appeared to the patriarchs, to Abraham (8:58), to Isaac, to Jacob (1:51), and to Isaiah (12:41).

The one identified as ὁ ὤν is the one previously referred to as the λόγος. What was implicit in John 1:1–5 is now explicit in 1:18. It follows that John is meaning to suggest that the consistent referent of "God" throughout the Old Testament has always been the λόγος. The God, then, of Genesis is the λόγος. The God of Moses is the λόγος. The One who sojourned with Israel and whom Israel worshipped is the λόγος. The God of the entire Old Testament record is the λόγος. John, we shall see, reinforces this theology throughout the prologue and his Gospel. The λόγος alone is responsible for the creation. The λόγος is the source of light and life, the light that overcomes darkness, and that cannot be overcome itself. The one and only vision of God is given

[395] *LW*, 22:157.

[396] Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* (London: S.P.C.K., 1980), 108.

through Christ alone. This teaching in no way diminishes the existence or importance of God the Father. The Father always has been the one who sent the Son; and the Son always has been the one and only one who reveals the Father.

The one who is μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν alone reveals the Father who must be known if any are to live in him. The Unique One, the One and Only One, the God of creation, the One Who Is, who spoke with Moses from the burning bush, this one alone reveals to man the invisible God. To believe in this one is to have life in his name. Andrew Lincoln concludes:

> The prologue's profound theological implications emerge from a radical reshaping of Israel's story. Israel's God, its Scriptures and its symbols are now reconfigured around the one who is the subject of the Gospel's own story. Genesis 1, Torah, Moses, Exodus 33 and 34, Wisdom, God's Word, glory, the identity of the people of God, covenantal grace and truth, all help to interpret the distinctive significance of Jesus, but in the process all are themselves reinterpreted in the light of what is believed to be the decisive revelation that has taken place in him.[397]

The God who is sought by the prophets, with whom the God of Israel spoke, is here identified as Jesus. Though unseen, his Father is not unknown. Known, he is seen through Christ alone (12:45; 14:9).[398] The Father's voice, the Word, Jesus Christ, the one who is, who uniquely reveals God, who himself is God, makes the unseen seen. His revelation of the Father is possible because he alone resides "with the Father" (1:1b) in his very bosom.

Revelation of the invisible God is thus possible because the revealer is in complete fellowship with the one revealed.[399] The Father and the Son not only share in the same nature, but also exist in loving relationship. Andrew Lincoln notes, "The unique relationship of the divine

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[397] Lincoln, *John*, 109.

[398] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 13, states, "The sense would be not 'Look at me because I am identical with the Father,' but 'Look at me for I am the one by looking at whom you will see the Father' (14:9), 'since I make him known' (1:18)."

[399] See Carson, *John*, 135; and Köstenberger, *John*, 49, who observes, "The phrase, 'in closest relationship' (εἰς τὸν κόλπον), refers to the unmatched intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the Father, which enabled him to reveal the Father in an unprecedented way."

Word to God the Father qualifies him to be the one who has made him known. The end of the prologue, therefore, brings us back to its beginning: the Word as divine is God's self-expression, the form in which God makes Godself known."[400] Just as one term in verse 1 (θεός) is expanded to three in verse 18 (μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν), so now the simple "with" is expanded to "in the bosom of." Noting the parallelism between 1:1b and 1:18b, Anthony Kelly states, "Because Jesus Christ alone is turned toward God as the Word (1:1b), and turned toward the Father as the only Son (1:18b), he embodies the gift of the truth and tells the story of God."[401] The One Who Is alone makes the Father known. The Father has spoken. The Word he speaks is Jesus, and it is through the words from and about Jesus that the Father is revealed. That which cannot be seen is revealed through the words from and about the one who is visible. Yet even properly seeing this one requires the working of the Spirit, who, we shall see, only and always works through the Word.

Therefore, the Gospel of John repeatedly employs allusions to the theophanic experiences of the patriarchs in order to affirm the truth that God reveals all things, including himself, through Jesus Christ alone. In concert with the statement, "No one has ever seen God." The Unique One, God, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father, that one has made (him) known," the narrative of the Gospel bears consistent and compelling witness to the exclusive revelation of the unseen God in the person of Jesus Christ. John employs various techniques and themes to confirm this truth. One trajectory of particular importance speaks to the role of Jesus in the theophanic experiences of the patriarchs, and of Moses and the prophets as well. John intends thereby to uphold both the continuity and the coherence of the revelation of God in his incarnate one with the revelation of God before the incarnation. Although many see comparison and

[400] Lincoln, *John*, 108.

[401] Kelly and Moloney, *Experiencing God*, 53.

contrast between the revelation given to Moses and that given through Jesus Christ (1:17), the rest of the Gospel emphatically points to the One and Only One as both the consistent source of all revelation and the one who gives it meaning (5:39).

The bearing of witness (1:6) pervades the Fourth Gospel. The prologue moves from the eternal reality of the Father's Word to the sending of a witness to that Word. John the Baptist, the twelve, the samaritan woman, the blind man, Mary Magdalene, Mary, Martha, and others all play prominent roles as witnesses. These voices are joined with those of the patriarchs and the prophets of old in testimony to what they have seen and heard. Those who hear the testimony believe in the one who makes God known. The result is eternal life for those who believe the witness of the Gospel (20:31).

In order to establish the consistent congruency of this witness, the Gospel invites its hearer to consider the patriarchs and the prophets who were blessed to "see God." The prologue ends with reference to Moses who was blessed to receive the Law from God whom he also was permitted to see. Yet the prologue ends with the statement, "No one has ever seen God." At first blush, this comment may seem impossible to reconcile with what the Old Testament otherwise indicates. Both Exod 24:11 and Exod 33:22–23 manifestly state that Moses did indeed see God. The former states that others did so as well. How can this be? The remainder of John 1:18 explains that "the Unique One, God, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father, that one has made him known." This one, who is himself God, who is in a One and Only One in closest possible relationship to God the Father, is the one and only one who was seen and, in the seeing of him, is the one and only one through whomGod the Father too may be seen (14:9). Thus, there is no vision of God apart from this one who is the one and only one who makes God known, who is then the sole instrument of the communication and accomplishment of the word and will of the Father. Without the mediation of this one, there is no vision of God. There is no word of God, no

promise kept by God. Apart from him, no one can ever hope to see God. The only vision of God available is the one that is granted through the mediation of the μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν. The prologue therefore features the μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν and the one whose word and will he was sent to reveal (and accomplish).

With the truth of the invisibility of God comes the obvious question of the one that patriarchs and prophets alike were blessed to see. John does not deal with all of the theophanies of the Old Testament. Instead, he recalls only those experienced by a select and prominent few: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Isaiah. Abraham is the father of God's people. Jacob, who received the name Israel, himself became the father of those who fathered twelve tribes. Moses is the royal prophet and redeemer of the people who became a nation. Isaiah was one of Israel's most prominent prophetic voices, who proclaimed to Israel the salvation that would come to it through God's Servant/Messiah, but whose voice, tragically, was not heard. It is exclusively the theophanic experiences of these that John employs to bear witness to the person of Jesus and the revelation of God.

The perhaps startling truth that John pursues for the benefit of his hearer is the identity of Jesus as the object of each and every one of the theophanies. Moses, Jacob, Abraham, and Isaiah all saw the one John identifies as λόγος/μονογενής/Jesus, when they "saw God." Indeed, even the signs that God worked through Moses find their true object and import in the person of Jesus (6:32). John presents in this way a comprehensive biblical theology or hermeneutical guide for his hearers. The entire witness of the Old Testament Scriptures points to the one who is the Word enfleshed, Jesus (5:37–39). He is the Son of God in whose name alone there is life.

This experience and belief John desires for his readers. In the words from and about Jesus, the Spirit works faith in Jesus as God and, as such, as the revealer of the Father who was, is, and always will be unseen. It is therefore exceedingly informing that there are recorded instances of

people in the Old Testament seeing God.[402] The Gospel of John does not deny those experiences. Instead, it highlights and explicates what actually occurred and who was truly seen in those theophanies. David Eaglesham observes, "It must follow, therefore, that when the grace of God came to men in olden times, [μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός] declared him."[403]

In order to comprehend fully 1:18a and its place in the narrative and the hermeneutic of its author, it is essential to investigate John's engagement of the theophanic experiences of four that we have mentioned: Moses, Jacob, Abraham, and Isaiah.[404] John informs his reader that it was Jesus who was seen on each of these occasions and, seeing the λόγος, the seers saw God. Apart from the revelation of God through the only one who can reveal him, God remains completely unknown.

At the burning bush, we have seen, God revealed himself to Moses as ὁ ὢν (Exod 3:14). This is the name by which God makes himself known; it is the identity of the one who appears in theophanies to others. This is the God of Israel, the one who commissioned Moses and who brought his people out of Egypt. In John's Gospel, this appellation refers to Jesus. He is ὁ ὢν who appeared to Moses. He always has been the one and only one who makes God known to all who hear him, and who receive the testimony of the eyewitnesses. This truth is fundamental to the content of John's Gospel.

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[402] Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), 109, comments, " 'No one has ever seen God.' This is in itself a challenging statement. It is only a truism to those who have been brought up (as were all the nineteenth-century commentators) on Greek philosophy with its emphasis on the intellectual, non-material nature of God. To a well-instructed Jew it would occasion surprise: men in OT times are recorded as having seen God."

[403] David Eaglesham, "Note on John 1:17," ExpTim 16 (1904–1905):428.

[404] Köstenberger, *John*, 86, notes that Jesus "will mediate greater revelation than Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Isaiah. Jesus is the 'new Bethel,' the place where God is revealed, where heaven and earth, God and humankind, meet."

Most identify the background to John 1:17 ("the Law was given through Moses") as Exod 33. There on Mount Sinai Moses asks to see God's glory. God's response (Exod 33:19–20) became a very important statement in the self-understanding of the Jews. God promises to cause his "goodness" (MT; LXX: "glory") to pass before Moses, as well as his name. Moses is not allowed to view God in his fullness, but must be hidden within the cleft of a rock. God, in his mercy, allows Moses to see his back(side)[405] as he passes by Moses, since no one can see God's face and live (Exod 33:20). Moses is allowed to see God, even though it is only his back(side). This is not the first time Moses has seen God. Exod 24:11 states explicitly that Moses and the elders of Israel "saw God" (MT; LXX: "appeared in the place of God"). Moses, as the one chosen by God to be his "sent one" before Pharaoh and all of Israel, was privileged to speak with God face to face. This one, and those with him, saw God and lived.

Anthony Hanson states, "Any adequate exposition of John 1:14–18 must include an explanation of why the author lays such stress on the invisibility of God in verse 18. . . . It must surely refer to some occasion when someone claims to have seen God. This means we must turn back to Scripture, the author's primary theological source."[406] Of all those in the Old Testament with a special relationship to God, Moses is unique in the way that the Old Testament describes his interaction with Yahweh. Moses met with God as a man meets with his friend face to face (Exod 33:11). Moses saw God (Exod 24:11) and was given a glimpse of God's back(side) in Exod 33–34. If anyone in the Old Testament is known to have seen God, Moses is the prime

[405] Luther refers often to God's revealing of his backside. For Luther, God intends for others only see his glory in Christ. See, e.g., *LW* 22:157, where Luther comments on 1:18, "To know God from the Law with His back turned to us is a left-handed knowledge of Him. Therefore walk around God and behold His true countenance and His real plan. God is seen properly only in Christ. There we learn that all who wish to be saved must confess that they are damnable sinners, and that they must rely on Him who is full of grace and truth. Thus they also attain grace and truth; this is the true mind of God. We must depend on Christ; this is the true knowledge of God. Look at Holy Scripture. From the days of Adam, Christ has always revealed God to mankind. He never ceased proclaiming such a knowledge of God: that through Him we derive grace and truth, that is, life eternal."

[406] Hanson, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*, 102.

candidate for such an experience. And yet it is immediately after mentioning Moses in 1:17 that John tells his readers that no one has ever seen God in 1:18. There is an exception given in what follows 1:18a, but it is not Moses. The one who is a unique exception is μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός. He has seen God and makes him known to those who cannot see God.

What, then, or who, did Moses see? While many have read the references to God in the Hebrew Bible as references to the Father, John suggests that they should be read not as references to the Father, but to the λόγος. John suggests that the one who is described as God in the theophanic experiences of Israel is not the Father, for no one has ever seen him. Instead, the one seen and conversed with is the λόγος, the second person of the Trinity, the Son. This is the one who always has been seen; this is the one who always has revealed the unseen God to those who cannot see. Therefore, Moses saw the λόγος; Moses saw the pre-incarnate Jesus. Moses met face to face with the Unique One.[407] Moses saw from his place of hiding in the cleft of the rock the glory (1:14) of ὁ ὤν.[408]

Many have examined the language of John 1:14–18 and found similarities between this passage and the events of Exod 33–34. In both passages, the glory of God is revealed, God is

[407] Keener, *John*, 1:51 states, "Moses was the greatest prophet because he knew God 'face to face' (Deut 34:10); Jesus himself is God's face (1:18)."

[408] Mowvley, "John 1 in the Light of Exodus 33–34," 137, suggests that what was visible to Moses was the glory of God, and this is still what is visible to those who believe in Jesus. "Like the OT Tent of Meeting (or Witness), therefore, the frail human Jesus is the locus where men may meet with God and hear his word, because he is the Word made flesh. That Word was God (or divine) and so Jesus is unique and divine, though flesh. On the mount Moses did not see God, though something of God's glory showed on his face when he descended from it. Nor was he allowed the grace of seeing God or his glory but only of seeing what followed him, as the glory passed by while his face was covered. Though Jesus is the divine word made flesh and so is uniquely divine, man is incapable of seeing the whole of the divine nature in him. He explicates God, however, and by grace, the believer is able to see as much of the divine nature as he is capable of seeing, namely his glory. The rest of the Gospel will demonstrate this through the signs and through the Cross while those who are his will, like Moses, be glorified through being with him and hearing him."

described as being full of grace and truth, there is a prohibition of seeing, and there is the opportunity to see.[409]

There are, however, differences that must be addressed. Chief among these differences for our purposes is the seemingly obvious contradiction between the absolute statement in John 1:18a that "No one has ever seen God" and the narrative in Exod 33–34 in which Moses is clearly portrayed as having seen God, even if what was seen was only partial. It is this difference between no one seeing and Moses' seeing which begs for an answer to the question of John's understanding of Moses' interaction with God at Sinai and the identity of the one that he saw. Contrary to the suggestions of some, John does not disparage Moses in his Gospel. Instead, Moses is one who has spoken words about Jesus which ever and always are true and point to the revelation of God in Christ. The Law is not contrary to Jesus, but is instead that which points ahead to Jesus, through whom grace upon grace (1:16) comes. Thus, it is not suitable to read 1:18a as denigrating either Moses or his experience with God on Mount Sinai. Instead, Moses is like all who believe in what their eyes can in no way see. Even though Moses saw God (the pre-incarnate Son) on Sinai, it remains true that no one has ever seen God (the Father). Yet in seeing the one Moses also saw *in* the one the other. At the end of the narrative, Jesus' blessing extends to all who believe without seeing, including Thomas, Moses, and the reader of the Gospel.

Yet Moses saw something or someone in Exod 33–34. John does not deny the vision to Moses, but invites the reader to explore the narrative as revealing the identity of the one whom Moses saw. This one, who later comes as God in the flesh will be seen by many who witness his

[409] Hanson, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*, 102, lists, "(a) Moses is allowed to see God, however partially; (b) this vision is represented as a vision of God's glory; (c) the content of the vision is described in terms of a revelation of God as (literally) 'full of mercy and truth'; and (d) the revelation is associated with, though not identified with, the giving of the Law through Moses. It would be impossible to find a Scripture passage which contains more fundamental elements in common with John 1:14–18. I find it inevitable to conclude that the one is the basis of the other."

earthly ministry. Those who see him in faith see God as Moses (and Jacob, and Abraham, and Isaiah) saw him. Yet the Father none have ever seen. There are many who see and do not believe; there are many who truly see and are blessed in their believing in what their eyes can in no way see. Those who see Jesus and believe that he is what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see are those who are blessed. For, with Moses, they see and, in their seeing, believe in what can never be seen.

John's mention of Moses' theophanic experience points to the giving of the Law (1:17) and the inability to see God (1:18a) that are highlighted. This is striking for the hearer. If the reference to Moses is intended to trigger a familiar story in the mind of the hearer, then the aporetic statement of 1:18a would cause the hearer to consider anew what they thought they knew. The narrative of Moses' encounter with God does not end with the inability of Moses to see God, but with God's gracious and suggestive giving of a seemingly remarkable opportunity to see God and live. It is with the revelation of him who cannot be seen that Exodus presents God to the reader. With the revelation in Jesus of him who cannot be seen John invites his hearer to seek the God of Moses. This combination of themes finds prominence in the conclusion of John's prologue so that the hearer pay particular attention to the theme of not-seeing yet knowing in the narrative that follows. Even Moses, who talked with God face to face, did not see God. But he did see the one who always has been the one and only one who makes the unseeable seeable. The only God who ever has been seen, the only seeable revelation of the unseen God, is the one who exists in closest possible relationship with the Father, the unique one, ὁ ὤν.

The narrative of the Gospel therefore begins (1:19) with one who has been sent by God to bear witness (1:6–8, 15). As is his commission, so are John's actions. To those who have been sent to him, he bears witness according to the one who sent him. The cause and content of his witness is the voice of the one who sent him (1:19–23, 31). Only through this revelation, can the

one who came to reveal be revealed. Once he is revealed, Jesus quickly gathers disciples to himself (1:35–51). Within the span of four days, Jesus has waxed, and John has waned. With the coming of Nathanael, before any sign has been performed, another theophany is mentioned. This time, the Old Testament recipient of the vision is not named, but the language used by Jesus (1:51) is that of Jacob's theophany at Bethel (Gen 28).[410]

Following Philip's call to Nathanael to "come and see" (1:46), Jesus proclaims Nathanael to be an Israelite in whom there is no guile and tells Nathanael that, even before Philip called him, Jesus saw him under the fig tree (1:48). Nathanael responds, proclaiming Jesus to be the "Son of God" and the "King of Israel" (1:49). Jesus responds first with a question: "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these" [51] (1:50). Then, he solemnly pronounces, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (1:51). The entire episode is brimming with Old Testament references, especially from the Jacob story in Genesis. Craig Koester notes:

> Jacob was the first to bear the name "Israel" (Gen 32:28), was noted for "guile" (27:35), and saw a vision of angels ascending and descending on a ladder to heaven (28:12). Jesus alludes to the story of Jacob by identifying Nathanael as "an Israelite in whom there is no guile" (Jn 1:47) and by promising that he and others like him would see "heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man" (1:51). In this exchange Jesus alludes to biblical texts without quoting them, interconnects several related passages, and reinterprets OT texts in terms appropriate to the characters in the gospel: Nathanael, like Jacob, is a representative of Israel, but his willingness to come to Jesus shows him to be without "guile"; Jesus in turned is identified as that on which the angels ascend and descend.[411]

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[410] Brown, *John*, 1:89, states, "Since the time of Augustine, exegetes have seen a connection between v. 51 and Gen 28:12." Similarly, see Lindars, *John*, 121; and Bultmann, *John*, 105 n. 3, who states, "There can be no doubt that there is an allusion here to Jacob's dream, Gen 28:10–17." Also Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:320, states, "The relationship to the vision of Jacob's ladder cannot be denied, since the words of Gen 28:12, 'the angels of God ascending and descending,' recur in the same order."

[411] Craig R. Koester, "Messianic Exegesis and the Call of Nathanael (John 1:45–51)," *JSNT* 39 (1990): 24. Koester also observes, "Similarly, Jn. 1:48 alludes to, but does not quote, Zech 3:10 . . . The primary connection

As in 1:17, John provides his reader not with a quotation from the Old Testament, but with an allusion to a theophanic event. The allusion connects the earthly ministry of Jesus with words about Jesus in the Old Testament. Just as Jesus is connected with Moses in that the revelation of God to Moses and words about him are interpreted as a vision of Jesus, so also at the end of the chapter 1 John presents Jesus as the God who appeared to Jacob at Bethel (cf. "And behold, the Lord stood above [cf. LXX: upon] it [the ladder] and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac," Gen 28:13). A further tie is 1:45, where Philip describes Jesus to Nathanael as the one about whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote.[412]

The vision of Jacob at Bethel is understood by John as another appearance of the pre-existent λόγος.[413] John declares in the prologue that God has never been seen apart from the μονογενής/λόγος, who reveals him. John Suggit observes, "The vision of God granted to Jacob (Gen 28:12) finds its fulfillment in Jesus (1:51), for, as 1:18 puts it, the only one who has truly seen God is the Son, who alone can reveal the vision to others: Jesus is truly 'man seeing God.' "[414] As the first chapter of the narrative ends, John invokes in his readers the memorable story of Jacob's vision of God. Just as the prologue ended with Moses' visionary experience interpreted

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between Zech 3:10 and John 1:48 is the action of one man calling his neighbor under a fig tree." See also Hanson, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*, 110–11, who suggests that the allusion to Gen 28 is not limited to 1:51, but finds evidence of the Bethel narrative in the activity of the Baptist revealing Christ to Israel. Specifically, Hanson points to 1:30–31, 33 (similar to Gen 28:16) and in 1:47, where Nathanael is called a true Israelite, to whom Christ is revealed.

[412] Carson, *John*, 159, notes that this "is the stance of this entire Gospel: Jesus fulfils the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. 5:39). The earliest disciples could not have identified Jesus as the promised Coming One, the Messiah, without believing that the Scriptures pointed to him, for that was part of the common stock of Jewish messianic hope."

[413] Hanson, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*, 111–12, states that the interpretation of the λόγος as the object of Jacob's vision was "almost commonplace in the early Fathers."

[414] Suggit, *Sign of Life*, 38. See also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 281, who notes, "Given these exegetical traditions [the Targumim, the *Prayer of Joseph*, and Philo] surrounding Gen 28:12, one can come to a fuller understanding of the saying of Jesus in John 1:50–51. Jesus is presented here as the angelomorphic Son of Man, namely the Glory who has 'the appearance like a man' (Ezek 1:26; Dan 7:13) and whom angels desire to see."

in terms of the λόγος, so also Jesus interprets Jacob's theophanic experience in such a way that he himself is the ladder, the instrument/one that bridges heaven and earth, things above and things below. In what follows, Jesus creates new wine from water, teaches Nicodemus that one must without exception be born from above, and offers the woman at the well living water. The one who is able to bring the things of heaven above to those who dwell on earth below is the Word enfleshed alone. The one who was in the beginning with God is he who alone gives the authority to those who believe in him to become the children of God. Not by natural birth, but born of the Spirit, through the will of God are they. Raymond Brown states, "[W]hether it is as the ladder, the *shekinah*, the *merkabah*, Bethel, or the rock, the vision means that Jesus as Son of Man has become the locus of divine glory, the point of contact between heaven and earth."[415]

This is the one and only one who reveals the God who cannot otherwise be seen. Jesus links heaven and earth in a way that no one else can, because he alone sees what others cannot see. Discussing 1:51, Edwyn Hoskyns states, "The sight of the disciples is still to be directed towards the visible, historical figure of Jesus, towards his flesh, towards the Son of Man; but it is to be directed thither in order that they may see that which is beyond historical observation."[416] Thus, Jesus knows what cannot otherwise be known. He reveals what cannot otherwise be revealed. Carson observes, "[T]he explicit parallel is drawn between Jacob and Jesus: the angels ascend and descend on the Son of Man, as they ascended and descended on Jacob. To *see heaven opened* is to be accorded a vision of divine matters. . . . It is no longer *there*, at Bethel, that God reveals himself, but in Jesus."[417] This is always the way it has been and will be. In order to know God the Father, one must see him in and believe in the one who was sent from God. He alone

[415] Brown, *John*, 1:91.

[416] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 183.

[417] Carson, *John*, 163–64.

reveals the Father. He is the one who reveals God to Moses, to Jacob, and to the reader of the Gospel. Anthony Hanson observes, "Jesus corresponds both to Yahweh, who stood at the top of the ladder, *and* to the ladder itself. The meaning of the logion in 1:51 will be that, after his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ will be the permanent place where God is to be found."[418] Just as Jacob sees God face to face in the vision of the Son of Man, so also does the reader of the Fourth Gospel see God in Jesus.

Gerald Borchert notes, "In the midst of Jacob's fearful crisis, Yahweh (the 'I AM' of Gen 28:13) had to teach Jacob that God was really present in the world. Here in the Nathanael story Jesus illustrated the meaning of the word becoming flesh and tenting in our midst by informing Nathanael that the rabbi he was facing was none other than the personal embodiment of Bethel."[419] Though Nathanael might not have understood the full of truth of Jesus statements when they were made, the reader knows the true identity of Jesus, and is to read Nathanael's interaction with Jesus in light of this knowledge. Koester observes, "Readers are prepared by the prologue to recognize a second level of meaning in the titles used by Nathanael. . . . The evangelist could assume that readers knew that 'Son of God' was more than a royal title, since Jesus was of divine origin . . . (1:1, 14, 18)."[420]

Jacob, whom God names Israel, sees a vision of the angels of God ascending and descending and God in the midst of them. Here, Jesus, who names Nathanael an Israelite in whom there is no deceit,[421] promises Nathanael that he will see angels ascending and descending and the Son of Man. As with John's references to Moses, here Jesus' identity is explicit. John

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[418] Hanson, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*, 111.

[419] Borchert, *John 1–11*, 148–49.

[420] Koester, "Messianic Exegesis," 27.

[421] Jesus describes Nathanael in John 1:47 as ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλίτης ἐν ᾧ δόλος οὐκ ἔστιν. Contrast this with Jacob, who is described in LXX Gen 27:35 as Esau's brother who μετὰ δόλου ἔλαβεν τὴν εὐλογίαν σου.

McHugh notes, "In John 1:51 the allusion to Gen 28:17 is not hard to discern: the primary meaning is that the disciples will come to perceive that Jesus as the Son of Man is the locus where the glory of the Shekinah is made manifest on earth."[422] Nathanael says to Jesus. σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (1:49). From the conclusion of the prologue to the conclusion of the calling of the first of the disciples, Jesus is revealed to be ὁ ὤν and Son of God and king. The one who was with God and is God at the beginning of the prologue is here again identified as the God of Israel and the Son of the Father. Yet God the Father remains unseen. Moses and Jacob share in the experience of those who saw and yet conspicuously also did not see. Andreas Köstenberger notes, "Jesus is the very culmination of all of God's revelatory expressions (cf. 1:14–18), providing a fullness of divine self-disclosure about which even Jacob (Israel) could only dream."[423]

The reader of John's Gospel sees the Father as one who cannot be seen, but still becomes the object of our believing through his Son who makes him known. As the relationship of the Father and the Son is, so it always has been; as it always has been, so it always shall be. He can only be seen through the one who reveals him. Jerome Neyrey therefore writes that "[Jacob's] vision inaugurates a pattern that will recur many times in the Gospel. Because we know that 'No one has ever seen God' (1:18), no one, not Moses, not Isaiah, not Abraham, and not Jacob ever saw God! For seeing God is the unique prerogative of Jesus. Then whom did the prophets see? Jesus."[424]

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[422] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 169.

[423] Köstenberger, *John*, 86.

[424] Neyrey, *John*, 60. See also Hugo Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel: Interpreted in Its Relation to Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1968), 40, who states, "The ὑψωθῆς of 1:51 is most naturally connected in the preceding with 1:18 and in the sequel with 6:46 and 14:7, 9."

In the narrative that follows Jesus heals an invalid on the Sabbath (5:1–9). In defense of the Law, the Jews therefore persecute Jesus for violating the Sabbath (5:16). The zeal of the Jews is great. Yet in their rejection of the one who came to reveal God, they reject the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jews know the Scriptures and seek life from them, but what they fail to understand and believe is that the object and content of the Scriptures is Jesus (5:39). Therefore, in John 5:37 Jesus solemnly declares, "Neither have you heard his voice, nor have you seen his form." Jesus convicts them not for sharing in that which describes us all ("No one has ever seen God," 1:18), but for refusing their only opportunity to hear or to see. Francis Moloney states:

> "The Jews" take it for granted that they have the word of God abiding in them, but their rejection of one whom God has sent makes such a belief presumptuous. Jesus is the *phōnē* and the *eidos* of God, but they do not hear or see him as such. Jesus is not the Father, but he is the one sent by the Father, and he tells the story of God in and through his story (1:18). The *phōnē* of God is the *logos* of Jesus.[425]

Just as John began his Gospel (1:1–5) depicting the λόγος as the exclusive agent of creation and the only source of life and/or light, so now Jesus upbraids the Jews for failing to comprehend that he, the true content and goal of the Scriptures, is the very voice of the Father, their only opportunity to hear in order that they might see ("that one has made [him] known," 1:18). Apart from the person and word of the Word, the Father cannot be known.[426]

As then in 1:18, so also here one reads of the Father in intimate relationship yet differentiated from the Son, the object of Moses's hope apart from whom the Father cannot be known. Because Jesus healed on the Sabbath, the Jews question his origins. How can he be from God if he violates the Law? Jesus' answer is not about keeping the Law or not, but about the

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[425] Moloney, *John*, 187.

[426] For Morna D. Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 45, "To fail to recognize Jesus is to fail to accept God's word."

work of the Father. Jesus equates his work with that of the Father.[427] Since the Jews think they understand the will of the Father from the Scriptures, Jesus addresses them in terms of what they think they know. They seek the Scriptures, believing that in them they have life. They believe that in the Scriptures they have the Father. In response to their charges against him, Jesus charges them for failing to honor their own Scriptures.

For the Scriptures are about Jesus.[428] They are about the Father only insofar as they are about Jesus, for, apart from him, there is no revelation of God. Jesus tells the Jews that they have never heard or seen the Father (5:37)[429] who must be heard in Jesus if he is also to be seen. Yet Moses and the prophets did see and hear someone.[430] Who then, did they see and hear?[431] Peder Borgen writes concerning 5:37, "From the context the meaning becomes clear: the Jews, who refuse to interpret the scriptures christologically and do not 'come to' Jesus, prove that they have no share in the revelation at Sinai. Since 6:46 declares that there is no vision of God apart from the Son, then it is even probable that God's 'form' appearing at Mt. Sinai, v. 37, is identified with the Son of God."[432] Morna Hooker observes:

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[427] For a discussion of Jesus' healing on the Sabbath and its implications, see Thompson, "God's Voice You Have Never Heard," 191–92. See also *The God of the Gospel of John*, 53, where she states, "Jesus not only admits to the offense but heightens it by claiming to exercise the distinctive divine functions of judgment and giving life, activities that God does on the Sabbath."

[428] Carson, *John*, 262–63, notes, "God had spoken to the Fathers 'at many times and in various ways' (Heb 1:1), but all of them had been anticipatory of the supreme revelation, the Son revelation (Heb 1:2), the Word incarnate (1:14) that narrated God (1:18). Jesus is the fulfillment of all the antecedent revelation. Failure to believe in Jesus is therefore compelling evidence that, however exacting the scholarship that was studying that revelation, the revelation itself had not been absorbed, understood, and obeyed."

[429] Keener, *John*, 1:659, says, "Jesus is God's word (hence his voice; 1:1–18) and his image (14:7–9)."

[430] Carson, *John*, 262, suggests that Jesus is indicting the Jews because they have not seen God's form nor heard his voice, unlike Moses who heard his voice in Exod 33 and Jacob who saw his form in Gen 32.

[431] Catrin H. Williams, " 'He Saw His Glory and Spoke about Him': The Testimony of Isaiah and Johannine Christology," in *Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future: Religious and Biblical Studies in Wales* (ed. Robert Pope and Geraint Tudur; Leominster: Gracewing, 2003), 55, notes the commonality between Jesus' words in John 5 and Philip's testimony to Nathanael in 1:43 that Jesus is the one written about by Moses in the Law and also the Prophets.

[432] Peder Borgen, "The Place of the Old Testament in the Formation of New Testament Theology: Response,"

> To those who know that the word of God, active throughout history, and speaking in the Torah, has now been made flesh, and that the God whom no man has seen has been made known by his Son, the claims of Jesus here are comprehensible, since it is obvious that the scriptures point to Jesus: those who have not understood what is set out in the Prologue are, in every sense, in the dark.[433]

As in 1:18, the import of 5:37–59 is that the voice of the Father has never been heard apart from the voice of the Son. The Old Testament appearances of God were not those of the Father, as some suppose, but were those of the λόγος /Jesus. Anthony Hanson concludes, "When we take all the evidence into consideration, we must surely conclude that what Jesus is implying in 5:37b is that on any occasion when someone is described in scripture as hearing or seeing God, it was not God the Father whom they heard or saw, but was the pre-existent Word. The conclusion is the same as that which we reached when discussing 1:18 above."[434] The Gospel offers no suggestion of an alternative. God is not active, God does not speak, apart from the the word and work of Jesus. Marianne Meye Thompson notes, "Their lack of knowledge virtually parallels the absence of God from the narrative. According to the Gospel, their only access to God is through Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, who speaks so that God is heard, and in whom they see the Father."[435]

In John 6:46, Jesus recalls again[436] the substance of 1:18 when he says, "not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father."[437] F. F. Bruce succinctly

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NTS 23 (1976): 72. See also Keener, *John*, 1:658–59.

[433] Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 47.

[434] Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel*, 80.

[435] Thompson, "God's Voice You Have Never Heard," 188.

[436] Otherwise said, the narrator in 1:18 reflects the teaching of Jesus (6:46) to which he bears witness in the prologue. Carson, *John*, 294, notes, "Some take this as a parenthetical remark by the Evangelist," but it is better seen as a source for the evangelist's own assertions in 1:18.

[437] This statement is remarkably set in a context thatcontrasts seeing and believing. In 6:26–29, Jesus attempts to move a crowd away from seeing in order to believe. The crowd respond by demanding a sign, so that they might see and believe (6:30). Seeing the son and believing in him results in life (6:40), yet many of those who see Jesus

observes, "Only the Son, the one who comes from God, has seen the Father, but those who see the Son for what he really is see the Father in him (cf. John 12:45; 14:9). But to see the Son for what he really is requires the eyes of faith."[438]

The explicit statement that no one has ever seen the Father in 6:46 shares not only the not-seeing of 1:18 but also the context of the theophanic experiences of Moses.[439] The thrust of this statement is not to draw a contrast between Moses and Jesus, but to inform Moses' experience. Moses received the Law not from the Father, but from Jesus. Moses and the prophets saw not the Father, but the Son. Thus, the Gospel states again and again that God cannot be seen, and the only way to see the Father is through the Son. As it was for Israel in the Old Testament, so it is for the contemporaries of Jesus. So also it is for the readers of the Gospel.

What is implied and assumed in 1:18 is made explicit in 6:46. The God who cannot be seen is explicitly identified as the Father. In 1:18, "God" is the one who cannot be seen. While the referent is implied by the mention of the Father in the second clause of 1:18, here Jesus makes it known that the one who is God yet who is unseen is the Father. In the naming of this unseen one, Jesus also references an intimacy first mentioned in the prologue (1:1, 18). Marianne Meye Thompson notes,

> The Father-Son relationship is crucial to "seeing" the Father, for it is a relationship in which the very identity of the one depends upon the relationship to the other. Inasmuch as the Father and Son cannot simply be collapsed into each other and

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refuse to believe. After extended teaching, many of his disciples are also offended by what they have heard (not what they have seen), and cease following Jesus (6:66). When Peter pledges (speaking for the other disciples) fealty to Jesus (cf. Peter's confession in Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; and Luke 9:20, which all occur at significant turning points in each narrative), it is not on the basis of what he has seen, but what he has heard, namely, the Word (6:68).

[438] Bruce, *John*, 157. Morris, *John*, 373, highlights the common theme of the intimacy between the Father and the Son in 1:18 and 6:46: "As in 1:18 it is insisted that no man has ever seen God. There the exception is described as 'the only begotten God', here as 'he that is from God'. Both expressions point to an intimate relationship between the Father and the Son shared by none else. No man has the vision of God, apart from the Son. The reality of intimate intercourse is stressed by the addition, 'he hath seen the Father.' "

[439] Keener, *John*, 1:686, writes, "[B]elievers ultimately see God's revelation only by means of the Son. . . . [T]his language may allude to the theophany at Sinai as in 1:14–18."

> always maintain their distinct identities, the vision that the disciples have of the Father is not identical to the vision that Jesus has. Jesus has seen God; but all others see Jesus, or God as manifested in and through Jesus.[440]

The intimacy of the Son and the Father, combined with the unique position of the Son as the only one who can see and has seen the unseen God leaves Jesus as the only conceivable revealer of God.[441] Those who desire to know and believe in God must know and believe in Jesus. Those who want to see God must come to understand that in seeing Jesus rightly, they see God. Craig Keener concurs. Jesus is "the only one in the Father's bosom and the one sent directly *παρά* God. In this case, Jesus as the only one from above is the one who causes others to be born from above and see God's kingdom. . . [B]elievers ultimately see God's revelation only by means of the Son."[442] The one who rightly sees the Son sees what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. Unable are the eyes of the flesh to see the fullness of who Jesus really is. Yet when one believes what he cannot see, he is blessed (20:29).

Jesus concludes his heated exchange with the Jews in John 8 with a reference to Abraham's vision of God. Though the reference is not as direct as in the previous references to Moses and Jacob, nor as the following one to Isaiah, Jesus explicitly says that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day (8:56).[443] Abraham "saw,[444] and was glad." What Abraham saw was not just Jesus' day, but Jesus and his day. Identifying the source of the allusion as Gen 18:1–15, Anthony Hanson states,

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[440] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 114.

[441] Cyril of Alexandria, *John*, 70, notes, "The Father is visible to the natural Son alone and not to anything else that exists. Therefore, one should conclude that the divine nature sees and is seen in a way that is fitting to God."

[442] Keener, *John*, 1:686.

[443] Morris, *John*, 472, notes the vagueness of the allusion and concludes that Jesus may be referring to Abraham's general attitude concerning the coming of the Messiah. But this interpretation minimizes the concept of seeing. Carson, *John*, 357, discusses various possible Old Testament allusions, but then refrains from preferring one over the others.

[444] It is important to observe that the text supplies no object for εἶδεν.

> The implication hidden behind all this slightly ambiguous language is that Abraham has met the pre-existent Word, not in paradise, as some commentators have desperately suggested, but in the course of Abraham's life. This must mean that John identified one of the three men who visited Abraham as described in Gen 18 with the pre-existent Word. Abraham prostrates himself before them and calls one of them "Lord." That was no doubt the pre-existent Logos in John's view. . . . Thus, according to John, Jesus speaking in the person of the eternal Word, had indeed seen Abraham at the oaks of Mamre.[445]

Again, John presents Jesus as the object of an Old Testament theophany. Abraham's vision of Yahweh was the seeing not of the Father but of Jesus and his day and Abraham rejoiced in who and what he saw.[446]

As with Moses' theophany in 1:17–18, this allusion to Abraham is tied closely to God's regular manner of identifying himself in terms reminiscent of his giving of the divine name to Moses in Exod 3:14.[447] The Jews object to Jesus' suggestion that Abraham previously rejoiced to see Jesus and his day, saying, "You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?" Jesus responds, saying, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί" (8:58). Bultmann observes, "The ἐγώ which Jesus speaks as the Revealer is the 'I' of the eternal Logos, which was in the beginning, the 'I' of the eternal God himself."[448] While some may reasonably question the validity of equating the "I am" statements of Jesus with the divine name, context suggests that the Jews still understand Jesus' statement as something akin to blasphemy, as they respond by picking up stones to kill Jesus (8:59). Jesus here claims to be one who was before Abraham was, the object

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[445] Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 126.

[446] Keener, *John*, 1:768, notes, "Jesus may imply a divine identity as he makes a more explicit assertion in 8:58. Abraham foresaw Christ's glory just as did Isaiah (John 12:41)." See also Brown, *John*, 1:487; and Bruce, *John*, 272.

[447] If this is so, then "I am (he)" means "I am ὁ ὤν."

[448] Bultmann, *John*, 327.

of Abraham's desire and the one whom Abraham saw. Concerning 8:56, Edwyn Hoskins observes:

> The verbs, *rejoiced, saw, was glad,* are firmly in the past tense; the verses which follow are meaningless unless an event is referred to which lies not only in the past, but in the distant past. . . . The reference is therefore to some witness of Abraham suggested in the Old Testament Scriptures. He foresaw the Advent of Jesus just as the Prophet Isaiah spake of Him *because he saw his glory* (12:41). . . . This is the Patristic interpretation of this passage and it is difficult to deny that it is correct.[449]

Again, John presents Jesus as the one seen in an Old Testament theophany. Hanson concurs: "For 'Yahweh' substitute 'the pre-existent Word' and we have John's christology."[450] The one who was seen is the one and only one who is seen, the μονογενής/λόγος/Jesus. What John states in 1:18a remains true. No one has ever seen God.

The Gospel's last reference to an Old Testament theophany leaves no doubt as to the identity of the God who was seen. In 12:41, John tells his reader that the God whom Isaiah saw in his vision of Yahweh enthroned in the temple in Isaiah 6 was not the Father, but was instead Jesus. Isaiah, concludes John, "saw his glory and spoke of him." That Jesus is here the referent of "his" is made clear with what immediately follows in 12:42. There, John adds, "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him." "His" in v. 41 can only mean Jesus, if "him" in v. 42 means Jesus. Barnabas Lindars observes, "John means that the theophany of Isa. 6:1ff. was a sight of the glory of the Logos. . . . John is in line with established Christian conviction that the OT prophecies all find their fulfillment in the Christ-event."[451]

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[449] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 347. Hoskins later (348) notes, "In the perspective of the Johannine writings the claim is not only that Abraham bore witness to Jesus, but that the Son of God, being in the Beginning the Word of God, saw Abraham and marked his faith."

[450] Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel*, 127.

[451] Lindars, *John*, 439. See also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 274, who observes, "Th[e] identification of Christ as the Glory is made explicit in John 12:39–40 (sic). There it states that Christ was the figure whom the prophet Isaiah saw in his call vision (Isa 6:1–3)."

In the year that the king (Uzziah) died, Isaiah experienced a vision of the true King, the Lord of Hosts, enthroned in the temple (Isa 6:1–5). Isaiah saw Yahweh Sabaoth glorified and praised by the Seraphim, who declared to him, "Holy, Holy, Holy." Yet it was not God the Father whom he saw. It was Jesus. The glory of Yahweh, even Yahweh Sabaoth, is none other than Jesus. The one whose glory filled the temple is the one who came in the flesh to reveal the selfsame glory of God (1:14).[452] Raymond Brown notes, "[T]he statement that Isaiah saw the *shekinah* of God may be interpreted in light of the theology of 1:14 where Jesus is the *shekinah* of God. The belief that Jesus was active in the OT is attested in 1 Cor 10:4."[453] There Paul declares regarding the rock in the wilderness from which Israel drank that "the Rock was Christ." All those who behold this in Jesus are those who are blessed to see God, even though the same God whose glory is revealed remains unseen. The blessed are those who believe what their eyes can in no way see.

Because Jesus is the object of Isaiah's vision and call, he is also the content of his prophecy.[454] Smith notes, "That Isaiah actually saw the glory of Jesus is an astounding assertion, but perhaps

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[452] Bruce, *John*, 272, observes, " 'The glory' or 'the glory of God' is a targumic circumlocution for the name of God, but John gives its word full force and says that the Lord whose 'glory' Isaiah saw was Jesus." Similarly, Morris, *John*, 605, notes that John's understanding of glory, "points at once to the supreme greatness of Christ and the cross as the supreme illustration of His greatness."

[453] Brown, *John*, 1:487. See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 217, who observes, "The glory of God that Isaiah saw in his vision (Isa 6:1–4) is identified with the glory of the Logos-Son, in accordance with 1:18 and 17:5."

[454] Carson, *John*, 449–50, suggests there are two possible interpretations of this verse. Either "It means that in his vision Isaiah saw (the pre-incarnate) Jesus," or "Jesus is the antecedent of the 'his' in 'his glory' and is thus the author of the judicial hardening in the rest of the passage." Carson's conclusion is that John had in mind the Suffering Servant from Isaiah 52–53, and that the glory of God is identified as Jesus in the passage. Catrin H. Williams, "The Testimony of Isaiah and Johannine Christology," in *'As Those who are Taught': The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the Society of Biblical Literature* (ed. Claire Mathews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull; SBLSymS 27; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 118, notes concerning the pairing of Isa 6:1 and 52:13 in John 12, "By reading these statements as two interdependent passages whereby the depiction of the Lord sitting upon a throne is to be understood in relation to the Servant of God whom John identified with Jesus, John would have been able to interpret Isaiah's vision as a revelation of Jesus, exalted Lord and Servant, seated on the divine throne." Williams, "He Saw His Glory and Spoke about Him," 76, states, "This makes [Isaiah] the paradigm of a true witness to Jesus, since the Prologue demonstrates that such testimony sums up the core of the Gospel: 'We have beheld his glory' (1:14). It is because Isaiah has beheld God's glory in Jesus' incarnate life and death that he, like the later believing community, can bear faithful witness to Jesus as the visible manifestation of God."

no more so than that Abraham would rejoice to see Jesus' day (8:56). Wilson Paroschi helpfully observes:

> Referring to Isaiah's vision of God in the temple, John plainly says that the glory the prophet saw was Jesus', not God's (12:41). Similarly, Jesus' enigmatic statement that Abraham saw his day (8:56), whatever its precise meaning, makes it clear that Jesus, not God, was the object of Abraham's vision. In their respective contexts, both statements make Isaiah and Abraham witnesses to Jesus against the Jews by making Jesus the object of the visions, thus confirming the claim that Jesus is, and always has been, the only authoritative revelation of the Father.[455]

This account of Isaiah's vision seems clearly a reference not to the text explicitly cited, but to its larger context, that is, the vision of Isa 6:1–10 in which Isaiah sees the Lord."[456] Isaiah saw and spoke about Jesus. Leon Morris observes, "Notice that John says Isaiah 'spoke of him.' Whatever other application the words of the prophets might have, for John the supremely important thing is that they point to Jesus."[457]

None of the Old Testament prophets or figures saw God, for "No one has ever seen God." Yet they did receive divine visions and revelations. Jerome Neyrey helpfully summarizes:

> The prologue established that Jesus is a timeless figure who existed in the past before creation and who later returns to God's heart, suggesting an eternal existence (1:18). Thus, the argument that Jacob, Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah saw Jesus in the past is not illogical, for Jesus enjoys an eternal 'is'; he was, and was active in, Israel's past and he will be at God's right hand, or 'heart,' when he returns to God's house. Second, the Gospel does not say that anyone *saw* with earthly eyes the vision described in 1:51. But many were exceptionally enlightened or received special revelations to discern Jesus' heavenliness: for example, Thomas ('My Lord and my God,' 20:28). Thus, insight, not sight, is the Johannine way to interpret this promise.[458]

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[455] Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant*, 160.

[456] Smith, *John*, 243.

[457] Morris, *John*, 605.

[458] Neyrey, *John*, 60–61.

God did not leave his people with no opportunity to see and thus know him. Even before the incarnation of Jesus (1:14), the preincarnate Christ or eternal λόγος was the one through whom God revealed himself.[459] Those who see God see him through the one and only one who makes him known. Those who truly see his Son see him. This was true for those of the Old Testament, those who were eyewitnesses of the person and work of Jesus, and is so even now for present-day readers of the Gospel.[460] To believe is to see. To believe is to be the children of God (1:12–13). To believe is to have the gift of life (20:30–31). Those who see what cannot be seen, confessing Jesus to be one with the Father, know God.

Following the narrator's comments concerning the vision of Isaiah in the temple (Isa 6), John records Jesus' cry (Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἔκραξεν καὶ εἶπεν) concerning the true object of all believing, as well as the source of his actions and source of his coming. Though Jesus is the one who is seen by saints old and new, he does not speak to promote himself. Though he seeks the faith of his followers, he does not do so for his own sake, but for the sake of the one who sent him (12:44). C. K. Barrett notes, "Faith in Jesus is not faith in a particular man, however holy. It is faith in God directed by a particular revelation. Otherwise it is no faith at all."[461]

The closest possible relationship, the unity, of the Son with the Father dominate Jesus' speech. As expressed in the beginning and end of the prologue, the relationship between the

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[459] Williams, "Testimony of Isaiah," 115, writes regarding 12:41, "That the figure whose glory Isaiah is here said to have seen is Jesus is not only supported by the fact that he is consistently the referent of the pronoun αὐτός in the surrounding comments (12:37, 42), but it is also demanded by the emphasis found elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel on the impossibility of seeing God other than through Jesus (cf. 1:18; 6:46)."

[460] Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, "John's Use of Scripture," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. Craig A. Evans and W. Richard Stegner; JSNTSup 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 365, notes, "John's exegesis of Scripture is not atomistic: he is not content to cite or echo individual texts from Scripture, isolated from their content and viewed simply as miraculous examples of prediction fulfilled. Scripture was being fulfilled in the career of Jesus, according to John, against the background of the saving events of the old dispensation, and those saving events are never quite forgotten."

[461] Barrett, *John*, 433.

Father and the Son is essential. As suggested in 1:18, this relationship is what makes the Son's revelation of the Father possible. "Thus faith in Jesus (v. 44) is not faith in a merely human agent, one more prophet, but faith in God mediated by God's supreme self-disclosure, the Word incarnate, the God/man, his unique Son—or else it is not faith at all. And so closely is the Son, the Word, identified with the Father (1:1, 18), that to see Jesus is to see the Father who sent him (cf. 14:9)."[462] Jesus reveals the one whom only he has seen, the one who sent him, the one with whom he shares unity (10:30). Those who see Jesus with the Spirit-wrought eyes of faith see the one who sent him, the one whom he came to reveal (1:14; 18).[463]

Because Jesus did not come to do his own will but the desire of the Father who sent him, he does all things in accordance with the Father's will. He speaks the words of the Father, and he delights in the will of the Father. O'Day and Hylen note, "Th[e] relationship between Jesus and God has been visible in his signs and his speech. Those who do not see the connection are judged to be those who do not know God."[464] He is the perfect envoy of the Father, the perfect revelation of the one who sent him. C. K. Barrett notes, "Precisely because Jesus is the obedient Son and envoy of the Father, to see him is to see the Father, just as to believe in him is to believe in God. Cf. 1:18; 14:9."[465] Yet Schnackenburg cautions against seeing this passage as denigrating Jesus, reducing him to little more than an emissary of the Father, "This is neither a weakening of the

[462] Carson, *John*, 452. See also Morris, *John*, 539–40, who observes, "The closeness of the Father and the Son is brought out; anyone who trusts Christ trusts not simply the Man of Galilee but God the Father. . . . Similarly anyone who steadily contemplates the Son contemplates him who sent him (cf. 1:18; 13:20; 14:9). The two are not to be separated." Noting the similarity between 12:44 and 13:20, Brown, *John*, 1:490, notes, "There is little difference between these three statements, since believing in, seeing, and receiving Jesus are all basically the same action."

[463] Whitacre, *John*, 62, suggests, "It is helpful to distinguish between three basic types of sight which include (1) physical sight; (2) rational sight, that is, perception through rational thought and inference; and (3) spiritual sight with the 'eyes of the heart' (Eph 1:18), that is, perception of the soul that comes through intuition, communion, faith, and love mediated by the Spirit to those who are willing to do the will of God (John 7:17)." Whitacre states that 1:18a is referring only to the first, physical, type of sight.

[464] Gail R. O'Day and Susan E. Hylen, *John* (WeBC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 130.

[465] Barrett, *John*, 433.

Christological faith of the fourth gospel nor a movement beyond it, but a pinpointing of its core and revelation of its essence. If Jesus is God's eschatological emissary, in whom God is wholly present, faith in him is a condition of fellowship with God."[466] Therefore, with chapter 12's closing verses, Jesus declares to his disciples, "whoever sees me sees him who sent me" (12:45). For to believe in him is to see with Spirit-wrought eyes of faith what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see.

Therefore, in John 14:9, Jesus says it again, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father." For the true vision of Jesus is the true vision of him who otherwise cannot be seen.[467] The absence of such means that God remains unseen and unknown.

The language of seeing in 14:9 recalls the language of not-seeing in 1:18.[468] In 14:9, however, the opportunity in 1:18 to know the unseen one through the one and only one who makes him known becomes the opportunity to "see" the unseen one when one rightly sees the one and only one who can be seen. Philip's request to see the Father therefore prompts Jesus to respond with "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father." The dilemma of 1:18, in which no one can see God is now fully resolved in Jesus. To see the God whom none can see one need only to look in faith to Jesus. Barnabas Lindars notes, "The whole life of Jesus has been the revelation of the Father,

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[466] Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:421.

[467] Köstenberger, *John*, 430–31, observes, "The subject of the present interchange is one of the central themes of John's Gospel: the unity of God the Father and Jesus the Son. What is at stake here is nothing less than Jesus' ability to provide firsthand revelation of God (cf. 1:18). References to Jesus' unity with the Father pervade the entire Gospel and surface regularly in Jesus' confrontations with the Jewish leaders. John's presentation clearly implies *ontological* unity; but the emphasis lies on *functional* unity, that is, the way in which God is revealed in Jesus' words and works."

[468] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 153, helpfully ties this to 1:18a, stating, "So complete is the union of Father and Son that in the end the language of sight can be recovered. *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father* (12:45; 14:9). Thus did Jesus veritably once and for all *declare* the Father. Sight comes to rest, not in psychological, mystical experience, but in the historical relationship between the disciples and the man Jesus."

who may not be seen by any other means (cf. 1:18)."[469] The seeing of Jesus is the seeing of the Father. He who sees Jesus rightly sees in him what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. F. F. Bruce helpfully concludes, "Philip's request betrays ignorance of the truth that the Son came into the world to reveal the Father, and has been doing so throughout his ministry. To know the Son is to know the Father; to see the Son is to see in him the otherwise invisible God."[470]

Yet Philip sadly does not see.[471] For the word and work of Jesus has not reached its informing, its enlivening, τέλος (13:1). Neither has the necessary aid of the equally invisible Spirit of Truth come (3:8; 7:39). No mere looking upon Jesus with nothing more than one's flesh and blood eyes will ever reveal or make known or otherwise cause one to see the unseen God.[472] For Philip and for the rest, the ability to see God in Jesus will not come until the Spirit does its own necessary work that it has not yet done. Barrett correctly notes, "Philip's question, natural as it is, has now lost its point, since all search for God must look to the decisive revelation in Jesus."[473]

Jesus therefore declares that what is sorely needed will indeed come:

> I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you in the age which is to come, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world is not able to receive, because it neither sees [the Spirit] nor knows [the Spirit]. You know [the Spirit], for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.

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[469] Lindars, *John*, 474.

[470] Bruce, *John*, 299–300. Bruce concludes his comments with a quotation of 1:18.

[471] Köstenberger, *John*, 431, suggests that "Philip here asks for some form of theophany" and links this request to the experiences of Moses and Isaiah. Morris, *John*, 571, also points to Moses' and Isaiah's theophanic experiences.

[472] Barrett, *John*, 459 notes, "Philips question is otiose and rests upon failure to understand the person and work of Jesus, which are declared as early as the Prologue to be directed towards the revelation of God (1:18)." While his question may seem "otiose," it is the work of the Spirit that will lead Philip into all truth (John 16:13). Köstenberger, *John*, 431, notes that this is another instance of Johannine misunderstanding. See also Morris, *John*, 571.

[473] Barrett, *John*, 459.

> Because I live, you also will live. In that day you [finally] will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you (14:16–20).

Jesus tells them when these things will be, namely, when he is risen from the dead and returns to them with the gift of the Holy Spirit (see 2:22; 12:16; 20:22). And he tells them how these things will be: "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:26). For the word of God, in the form of words from and about Jesus through which the Spirit works to enlighten the mind and the heart, is the word of truth (17:17), lest all die in their ignorance of both Jesus and his Father. So Jesus says it again, "When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me" (15:27). For Jesus' followers who have been with him from the beginning will be in the future those who both know and proclaim the truth to all the world (15:27; see also 17:18–21). Jesus must go (he must suffer and die), or the Spirit will not come (16:7); the Spirit must come (20:22), or none will live; none will come to know the truth that must be known (16:8–33) by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the solely sufficient and therefore necessary means of the enlivening and informing word of God, apart from which the Spirit does not do its work, apart from which none truly know either Jesus or his Father (see 6:63; 14:24; 15:15).

Conclusion

John 1:18 concludes the prologue to the Gospel of John. As John 1:18 leads into the following narrative, this verse functions as the front end of the inclusio around the narrative of John's Gospel. The back end of the inclusio encompassing John's narrative occurs at the close of the last narrated episode in the Gospel (20:28–29). Before ushering the reader forward to the narrative of the Gospel, 1:18 serves also as the back end of the inclusio around the prologue, returning the reader to the truths found at the prologue's beginning (1:1). The prologue's final verse restates truths found in 1:1, especially the identity of the λόγος/μονογενής as θεός and the

relationship between this one and the other who is also θεός. Yet 1:18 also adds truths to those already explicated in the prologue. These statements in 1:18 lead the reader to seek resolution and explanation throughout the Gospel's narrative.

Primary among the insights the reader gains through 1:18 is the strikingly absolute truth that no one has ever seen God, the Father. This one, at least initially, cannot be known, for he is not seen. The tension and the stark reality of distance between the reader and the unseen God begs resolution. This is offered, at least in part, with the remainder of verse 18.

Following 1:18's opening statement that "No one has ever seen God,", the remainder of the verse declares that "the Unique One, God, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father, "that one has made (him) known." Thus, the unseen God is knowable through the seen one who is enfleshed (1:14). Edwyn Hoskins writes:

> The preface to the Fourth Gospel ends as theologically it must end. It ends with a strong, unmistakable negation of mere historicity—*No man hath seen God at any time.* This negation is, however, at once shown to contain the paradox of faith and of history; for, nevertheless, Jesus, the Son of God, in His relation to the unseen God as Son to Father, has made God known. So the preface to the Fourth Gospel, with its movement from the Word to the Son of God, is both an introduction and a conclusion to the whole work.[474]

The μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὢν is the one who explains (ἐξηγήσατο) the Father. He is the only one who can fulfill this role, as he is unique in that he is both flesh and θεός. He shares an intimate relationship with the Father and reveals him to all who see him and heed his words. The visible voice of the invisible Father, "the Word" (1:1a), "makes (him) known." Carson states,

> The emphasis of the Prologue, then, is on the revelation of the Word as the ultimate disclosure of God himself. That theme is dramatically reinforced by the remarkable parallels between v. 1 and v. 18, constituting an *inclusio*, a kind of literary envelope that subtly clasps all of 1:1–18 in its embrace. Thus, "in the bosom of the Father" is parallel to "with God"; "the unique one, [himself] God," is parallel to "was God"; and

[474] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 140.

> to say that this unique and beloved Person has made God known is to say that he is "the Word," God's Self-expression.[475]

The μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὢν always has been the one and only one who makes God known. This truth may strike the reader as a new or startling statement, yet the Gospel narrative will demonstrate and defend this truth. In order to do so, the theophanic events of the Old Testament are revisited by the narrativeto bear witness to the truth of 1:18. This one, the μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὢν in flesh, is the one who appeared to Moses, Jacob, Abraham, and Isaiah. Jesus is the one who always has revealed and continues to reveal the Father. Faith in this revelation is wrought through the Spirit's work in and through words from and about Jesus.

The truths presented in 1:18 drive the reader to the unfolding of this revelation in the Gospel's narrative account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The front end of the inclusio around the narrative prepares the reader for a discerning reading of the narrative that follows. A reading of the narrative with the trajectory of not-seeing in mind reveals several key passages in which Jesus explicitly addresses the reality of not-seeing. Jesus teaches that God the Father has never been seen. He also proclaims that those who see Jesus see God.

The inclusio's front end prepares the reader also for the narrative's end, where the summary thoughts of the narrative's end are given. The inclusio around the narrative which begins with 1:18 will find its end at the close of the narrative where Thomas confesses what the prologue proclaims: Jesus is θεός (20:28). Yet in chapter 4 we shall see that there is more to this inclusio's back end than its third explicit reference to Jesus as θεός. Following Thomas' confession, Jesus will pronounce a blessing on all those who do not see yet believe (20:29). Returning the reader to the statement in 1:18 that no one has ever seen God, Jesus' blessing, we

[475] Carson, *John*, 135.

shall see, is directed first to Thomas so that Thomas and those with him might know that the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INCLUSIO AROUND THE NARRATIVE (2)

In the composition of the Gospel, John employs inclusios as a rhetorical device to aid his hearers in their comprehension of the structure and message of his Gospel. Thomas's confession and Jesus' response in John 20:28–29 return the reader to the beginning of the Gospel to recapitulate and expand upon its presentation of Jesus as the One and Only One who makes known the God whom no one has ever seen. What is known to the reader in the prologue is confessed finally by a character within the narrative of the Gospel following the death and resurrection of Jesus. The one who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who is God (1:1), is the Unique One, God, the One Who Is in the bosom of the Father (1:18). This one alone, Jesus, is God in the flesh (1:14). Just as Jesus is presented as θεός in John 1:18 (recalling and amplifying further upon 1:1), John 20:28 explicitly asserts for the third and last time in John's Gospel that Jesus is θεός. John 20:28, therefore, joins with John 1:18 to form an inclusio around the Gospel's narrative. Yet what connects the end of the prologue and the end of the narrative is even more. "Not-seeing yet believing" in John 20:29 also recalls the "not-seeing yet knowing" in John 1:18, contributing further to the inclusio formed by the repeated, explicit assertion of Jesus' identity as θεός in 1:18 and 20:28. Thus, both 20:28 and 20:29 connect with John 1:18 to form an inclusio around the Gospel's narrative.

The Back End of the Inclusio (20:28–29)

As the prologue ended, so does the narrative. With each conclusion, Jesus is explicitly θεός. Thomas's confession in 20:28 that Jesus is θεός not only concludes the speech of the disciples in

the narrative but also serves as the highest and most complete confession of Jesus' divinity in both the Gospel and the New Testament. Just as in 1:18, in 20:28 the claim that Jesus is God is made with a strong allusion to the name of God in the Old Testament. To call Jesus God is not blasphemous, but congruent with the monotheistic faith of the Old Testament prophets and saints. Thomas' confession thus serves as the climax of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. Jesus, introduced as God in the prologue, is finally and properly addressed by one of his former followers as θεός at the end of the Gospel's narrative. This chapter will examine the words of Thomas' confession in light of the Old Testament names of God and as the culmination of the designations that various characters have assigned to Jesus throughout the narrative of the Gospel. These observations will assist in understanding the way in which Thomas' confession (20:28) reflects back to the Gospel's beginning, thus working with John 1:18 to form the back end of the inclusio around the Gospel's narrative (1:18 and 20:28–29).

"My Lord and My God"

The three places where Jesus is identified as θεός in John's Gospel all significantly recall the Old Testament. John 1:1 identifies the λόγος as the θεός of Gen 1. This is an important statement for any monotheistic Jewish believer in the God who created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). John identifies Jesus as the one through whom all things were made (1:3). Again, in 1:18 Jesus is identified as the θεός of the Old Testament. Jesus is referred to as μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὤν. The substantive ὁ ὤν is the same name that God uses to identify himself to Moses in the burning bush episode in LXX Exod 3:14. Thus, at both the beginning and end of the prologue Jesus is identified as θεός, but neither in isolation from nor in contradistinction to the God of the Old Testament. Rather, we shall see that Thomas' confession of Jesus as ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός

μου recalls the Old Testament name of God[476] in the same way that ὁ ὤν does so in John 1:18. Thus, John references Jesus as θεός with precisely the sort of language that recalls God's self-identifying speech in the Old Testament Scriptures.[477]

Thomas' confession in 20:28 is made by an Israelite who knew the Scriptures, and used two important terms, the combination of which explicitly refers to the God of the Old Testament.[478] Keener observes, "The linkage of 'Lord' and 'God' may derive ultimately from the LXX, where the two terms recur together consistently, translating יהוה and אֱלֹהִים respectively. . . . One passage in the LXX even promises at Israel's eschatological repentance the confession 'You are the Lord my God' (Hos 2:25 LXX [2:23 MT])."[479] The combination of the terms κύριος and θεός leaves the referent neither ambiguous nor generic. Jesus is not simply divine, or god-like. Thomas' confession, like the descriptions of Jesus in the prologue, identifies Jesus precisely with the one true God who repeatedly appears and speaks in the Old Testament. C. Kavin Rowe observes regarding 20:28, "This homologia invokes language fundamental to Old Testament

[476] "In the OT, 'Lord' and 'God,' " notes Köstenberger, *John*, 579, "are frequently juxtaposed with reference to YHWH." See also Dean L. Overman, *A Case for the Divinity of Jesus: Examining the Earliest Evidence* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 21–25, who explores all of the New Testament references to Old Testament passages in which the New Testament writer writes *κύριος* in the place of Yahweh with reference to Jesus.

[477] Overman, *The Divinity of Jesus*,19, states, "The evidence presents a strong, cumulative case that the earliest confession of the Church in Palestine, namely, 'Jesus is Lord' (*κύριος Ἰησοῦς*), was not an innovation that came from sources outside the earliest Christian community. The New Testament contains many references to Jesus that equate him with *Yahweh*, the God of the Old Testament." Köstenberger, *John*, 580, notes the use of similar terms in the emperor worship of the period via Mediterranean cults, "Hence, the present reference may on a secondary level be designed to counter Roman emperor worship." For a list of recent studies which suggest the connection between the Christological titles in John and the emperor cults, see G. Van Belle, "Christology and Soteriology in the Fourth Gospel: The Conclusion to the Gospel of John Revisited," in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar* (ed. G. Van Belle et al.; BETL 184; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 456 n. 63.

[478] Hendriksen, *John*, 465. See also Brown, *John*, 2:1047.

[479] Keener, *John*, 2:1211. See also Harris, *Jesus As God*, 121, who suggests, "In his attempt to depict the significance of the risen Jesus for himself personally, Thomas used a liturgical form ultimately drawn from the LXX, which later came to serve admirably as the crowning christological affirmation of the Fourth Gospel, as a confessional formula in the church, and as a rebuttal of the imperial cult." Van Belle, "Christology and Soteriology in the Fourth Gospel," 456–57, agrees with much of what Harris says, and wants to add the association between the titles in Thomas' confession in 20:28 with the titles used in the evangelist's conclusion in 20:30–31.

'God-talk' both in terms of identity and in terms of worship. . . . Reading John 20:28 in conjunction with the divine grammar of the Old Testament brings forth a claim of ontological identity between Yahweh, the God of Israel and the risen Jesus Christ."[480] Thomas' confession does not simply express that he is impressed with the resurrection, or that he simply notes that the one standing with him is somehow his superior. Thomas' terms identify Jesus as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Foerster observes that the word κύριος is used to translate יהוה in the LXX 6156 times,[481] and, commenting on the LXX usage of κύριος, says, "As a rule, however, it is used as an expository equivalent for the divine name יהוה. It is thus meant to express what the name, or the use of the name, signifies in the original."[482] Thomas' confession in 20:28 falls into the titular usage of κύριος, and therefore would easily and most naturally be understood by anyone familiar with the LXX as an expression of the divine name.[483] While it cannot be said that every instance of κύριος invokes the divine name, the conspicuous pairing of κύριος with θεός in John 20:28, and the position of this text at the end of the narrative, imply more than just another instance of an everyday reference to Jesus. First, these two ascriptions joined together echo a precise Old Testament designation for God.[484] Second, this last statement by a disciple reflects and reminds

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[480] C. Kavin Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics," *ProEccl* 11 (2002): 302.

[481] Foerster, "κύριος," *TDNT* 3:1059.

[482] Foerster, "κύριος," *TDNT* 3:1058.

[483] See Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:333, esp. n. 110, 395–98. Carson, *John*, 658, notes, "*Kyrios* is an *early* post-resurrection title (e.g. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9–11), and because it is used of God in the LXX, in many of its occurrences it cannot be considered less elevated than *theos*." "Now there is ample proof" observes Neyrey, *John*, 331, "that Jesus is 'equal to God' and that he has God's two powers: creative ('God') and eschatological ('Lord'). See also Brown, *John*, 2:1046–48.

[484] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 120, notes, "Given the frequency of this OT formula . . . it is likely that OT usage influenced, either consciously or unconsciously, the particular choice of terms found in John 20:28." See LXX Ps 34:23: ἐξεγέρθητι κύριε καὶ πρόσχες τῇ κρίσει μου ὁ θεός μου καὶ ὁ κύριός μου εἰς τὴν δίκην μου. Later (p. 122), Harris notes, "Certainly κύριος here means more than 'sir' or 'master,' as the conjunction with θεός conclusively indicates."

the reader of previous passages (namely, 1:1 and 1:18), which explicitly identify Jesus as θεός. Robert Reymond observes, "since for John the glory of Christ is equivalent to the glory of Yahweh Himself, it is highly probable that, when John refers to Christ as 'Lord' (ὁ κύριος) in his Gospel narrative (cf. 4:1; 6:23; 11:2; 20:20; 21:12), he intends the title, used as it is in the Septuagint to translate the divine name Yahweh, in its most eminent, that is to say, in its divine, Yahwistic sense."[485] Thomas' use, then, stands as the fullest and most informed. He has heard the Word and, through the Spirit, believed.

The combination of κύριος and θεός is not simply a combination of two titles for Yahweh. For an Israelite, these two terms call to mind the Shema. The Great Shema (see LXX Deut 6:4: ἄκουε Ισραηλ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστιν) stands as one of the most important passages of the Old Testament for any Israelite. The words are confessed daily to profess the monotheistic faith taught in the Torah, the faith of Yahweh. It is important and noteworthy, then, when the titles found in the Great Shema are used in close proximity to each other, especially in a confession of faith. Regarding 20:28, Gerald L. Borchert notes, "The confession of Thomas is not unlike the attribution to 'my God and my Lord' in Ps 34:23. . . . But more pointedly, it also touches directly upon the daily Jewish reciting of the *Shema*, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Deut 6:4). The early Christians thus claimed for Jesus attributes akin to

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See also Barrett, *John*, 572; and Bruce, *John*, 394. Commenting on the use of the titles "Lord" and "God" ascribed to Jesus, Lindars, *John*, 615, states, "The fact that it is first attested in the use of quotations in the liturgical pieces based on the OT suggests that it arises from the frequent combination of 'the Lord God' in the OT, especially where the LXX is used, in which 'Lord,' *Kurios*, regularly replaces the divine name. But this means that the restraining influence of rigid Jewish monotheism is beginning to weaken, so that the word can be more generally applied to Jesus. It does not mean a fundamental change of doctrine. The confession 'Jesus is Lord' means more than the use of a title of honour. It means that Jesus is exalted to the throne of God, as his statement in the trial narrative implies (Mark 14:62), which was the basis of the High Priest's accusation of blasphemy." Moody Smith, *John*, 383, observes, "The confession is typical of early Christian theology and language as far as Lord (*kyrios*) is concerned, but uniquely Johannine in its ascription of the name of God (*theos*) to Jesus as well."

[485] Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1990), 308.

Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament."[486] It is inconceivable that a Jewish believer would assign these paired designations to anyone other than Yahweh, lest the Shema be violated.

Thomas confesses Jesus as the God of the Great Shema—of whom there is only one. John declares to his readers that the God with whom Moses and the prophets spoke, whom Moses and others saw, is none other than Jesus. Köstenberger and Swain observe, "Implicit in Jesus' inclusion in the identity of God is his right to receiving worship (5:23; cf. 9:38; 20:28)."[487] He is properly addressed with the words reserved for Yahweh by the prophets of old. Yet the reader of the Gospel knows that Jesus is not the only proper referent of θεός. Murray Harris notes, "As used by a monotheistic Jew in reference to a person who was demonstrably human, θεός will denote oneness with the Father in being, not merely in purpose and action."[488] As with its other references to the Old Testament, the connection of Thomas' confession to Deut 6:4 moves the reader of John's Gospel to understand that Jesus is here confessed to be the Yahweh with whom Moses and the prophets spoke.

Thomas' confession contains the same title assigned to Jesus by John the Baptist in the beginning of the Gospel. In John 1:23, John declares, ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ εὐθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, καθὼς εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας ὁ προφήτης. There, John references Isaiah 40:3, in which

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[486] Borchert, *John 12–21*, 315. See also Herbert W. Bateman, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2012), 370, where Paul's statement in 1 Cor 8:6 is analyzed in light of the Shema. See further Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 100–102, where he also discusses 1 Cor 8:6 and the Shema. Bauckham points out (p. 102), "Of the Jewish ways of characterizing divine uniqueness, the most unequivocal was by reference to creation. In the uniquely divine role of creating all things, it was, for Jewish monotheism, unthinkable that any being other than God could even assist God." This discussion is especially pertinent to Thomas' confession when read as an inclusio with 1:1. See Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 284, who asserts, "For a Jew to salute another man, however he might revere him, as 'Lord and God' (28) could only mean that he had come to the point of worshipping Him as deity."

[487] Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 44. See also Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 344.

[488] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 125.

κύριος is employed as a translation for יהוה. The Gospel presents John the Baptist as the forerunner of κύριος. John identifies the referent of the Lord in the Old Testament with Jesus.[489] John the Baptist was to prepare the way for Yahweh's coming. John Marsh observes, "His duty is to prepare for the coming of the Lord—the one God of the Old Testament religion who was shortly to be identified, to the bewilderment of the Jews, with Jesus of Nazareth."[490] In this Gospel, as in other New Testament writings,[491] the one for whom he prepares the way is Jesus.[492] The author presents κύριος as a reference to Jesus, a theme which is brought to fulfillment with Thomas' declaration of Jesus as κύριος in 20:28.

Another possibility exists. In the midst of their neighbors who worshipped foreign gods, the Israelites referred to God not just as God, but with the name Yahweh in order establish his unique identity. This is especially important in the exilic literature of the Old Testament, where the people of Israel were forced to dwell in a land of foreign and various gods. In this setting, the monotheism of Yahweh was emphasized by the prophets. Eight times in Ezek 45–48, the phrase κύριος θεός is used to translate אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה.[493] In this case, κύριος is more of a direct translation, and θεός is a more generic translation. Yet the divine name and title are both fully represented in a

[489] Williams, "The Testimony of Isaiah and Johannine Christology," 110, notes, "The exclusive focus on Jesus in the Baptist's testimony and activity strongly implies that Isa 40:3 is here subjected to Christological interpretation: the way of the Lord proclaimed by John the Baptist is none other than the coming of Jesus. . . . A Christological application of this kind, in the sense that the coming of God and his salvation is made visible in Jesus, points to Jesus being included as the referent of the title 'Lord' in the scriptural quotation, as well as clarifying what, according to John, actually constitutes the way of the Lord."

[490] Marsh, *Saint John*, 122.

[491] Barrett, *John*, 476, notes that κύριος "is a frequent Christian title for Jesus and appears in the confession of faith 'Jesus is Lord' (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3)."

[492] See Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–6. Keener, *John*, 1:438, notes, "All four gospels apply the Isaiah text to John, but only the Fourth places the citation on John's own lips.

[493] Ezek 45:9, 15, 18; 46:1, 16; 47:13, 23; 48:29.

phrase which confesses the one true God of the Old Testament, not the idols of the surrounding nations. The God of Israel is this one who appeared to Moses.

Thomas' confession reflects familiar terms from the LXX employed to denote the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who appeared to Moses and others. Especially pertinent is the occurrence of these terms in Exod 3:15. There God himself identifies himself as κύριος ὁ θεός. Just as with ὁ ὤν in 1:18, so now at the conclusion to the Gospel John provides a designation for Jesus from Moses' encounter at the burning bush. This is the name that God chooses for his people to use in order to identify him. Raymond Brown suggests understanding Thomas' words as the ratification of a new covenant, "The words that Thomas speaks to Jesus are the voice of this people ratifying the covenant that the Father has made in Jesus. As Hos 2:25 promised, a people that was formerly not a people has now said 'You are my God.' "[494] And according to John, this appellation is not only appropriately addressed to Jesus, but belief in this identity of Jesus is the faith that leads to eternal life.[495]

Jesus is properly addressed with many titles in the narrative of the Gospel that point to both "Lord" and "God."[496] Characters throughout the narrative of John's Gospel employ various titles when talking to or about Jesus, even when they have yet to come to a full understanding of his true nature. Raymond Brown observes, "In ch. 1 the first disciples gave many titles to Jesus, and

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[494] Brown, *John*, 2:1048. Rekha M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship As a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 165, notes, "The announcement of the disciples that 'we have seen the Lord' (20:25) and the confession of Thomas, 'My Lord and my God' (20:28), fulfill the hope of the knowledge of God promised in the age of the new covenant (cf. Jer 31:34). By confessing Jesus as his Lord and God, Thomas is taking up the covenant language of the OT."

[495] Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:333, explains, "Thomas' confession makes clear that the faith expected of the Church in Jesus the Son of God (cf. 20:31) implies Jesus' Godhead."

[496] "Thomas' confession," notes Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:333, "which takes its place in a whole series of confessions in John's gospel (1:49; 4:42; 6:69; 9:37f; 11:27; 16:30; 20:16) and forms their conclusion and climax, clearly shows the pen of the evangelist. With it, he achieves once more, a leading statement of a Christological kind in the light of the Easter confession."

we have heard still others through the ministry: Rabbi, Messiah, Prophet, King of Israel, Son of God. In the post-resurrection appearances Jesus has been hailed as the Lord by Mary Magdalene and by the disciples as a group. But it is Thomas who makes clear that one may address Jesus in the same language in which Israel addressed Yahweh."[497] While the characters in the narrative do not possess full understanding of the titles that they use, still the titles correctly describe Jesus. Gilbert van Belle states,

> The confession of Thomas, ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου, is not the only passage in which Jesus is undoubtedly designated, or more exactly addressed as God in the New Testament, it also represents the climax of a series of confessions that occur throughout the Fourth Gospel as a whole. The two Christological titles used to address Jesus in v. 28 should not only be read in relation to the conclusion of the gospel but also in association with the use of Christological titles elsewhere in John.[498]

Jesus is referred to as Lord many times throughout the narrative, with a greater concentration in the second half of the Gospel.[499] Regarding Thomas's confession, Craig Koester observes, "By calling Jesus 'my Lord,' Thomas affirmed what the disciples had said after the resurrection, when they announced that they had seen 'the Lord'; and by calling Jesus 'my God,' he corroborated what he had heard at the last supper, when Jesus told him that in seeing Jesus he would see God."[500]

Thomas' confession is the greatest, because it explicitly declares Jesus to be God. Murray Harris helpfully observes that "the apostle's exclamatory address has inescapable ontological

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[497] Brown, *John*, 2:1047.

[498] Van Belle, "Christology and Soteriology in the Fourth Gospel," 442. See also Christopher W. Skinner, *John and Thomas—Gospels in Conflict? Johannine Characterization and the Thomas Question* (PTMS 115; Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2009), 75, who observes, "Throughout the story, a remarkable host of characters utter partially true but incomplete confessions in identifying Jesus." Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 344, notes, "Thomas's response constitutes the climactic confession in a Gospel that provides a series of less and less inadequate confessions leading up to this one."

[499] 6:23, 68; 9:38; 11:2, 3, 12, 21, 27, 32, 34, 39; 13:6, 9, 13, 14, 25, 36, 37; 14:5, 8, 22; 20:2, 13, 15, 18, 20, 25, 28.

[500] Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 72.

implications. Even as it is expressed, the confession embodies less functional than ontological truth: Jesus was worshipped by Thomas as a sharer in the divine nature, not simply as mediator of divine blessing."[501] This confession also serves to summarize all the other titles of Jesus, and orient them in the understanding of his true identity.[502] It is well known that Jesus is only called God directly three times in John's Gospel (1:1, 18; 20:28). D. Moody Smith observes, "For the most part John withholds the designation *theos* from Jesus, but in the course of the narrative makes clear that this ascription of deity to Jesus is indeed correct and unavoidable (5:18; cf. 5:19–24; 10:30; 14:8–11). While Thomas may have [refused initially to do so], he has now made the confession that is essential and true. Jesus is Lord and God."[503]

Nominatives standing in for the vocative[504] (20:28) offer a third and final reference in John's Gospel to Jesus as θεός. D. A. Carson suggests, "The overwhelming majority of grammarians rightly take the utterance as vocative address to Jesus: *My Lord and my God!*—the nouns being put not in the vocative case but in the nominative to add a certain sonorous weight."[505] While some have suggested that Thomas was addressing Jesus as κύριος and the

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[501] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 125–26.

[502] See Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:333, who compares Thomas' confession to Nathanael's and the other disciples.

[503] Moody Smith, *John*, 383.

[504] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 58, lists John 20:28 as an example of the use of the articular nominative for the vocative (the nominative of address). See also BDF § 147.

[505] Carson, *John*, 659. Harris, *Jesus As God*, 110, notes concerning his view that Thomas' confession is a form of direct address and is addressed to Jesus, "This view prevails among grammarians, lexicographers, commentators, and English versions." See also Barrett, *John*, 477, who compares Thomas' confession with 1:1: "The difference between the present verse and 1:1 (where θεός is anarthrous) cannot be pressed; here the articular nominative is used for vocative." Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 548–49, states, "The words are addressed to Jesus, and are therefore a statement of faith in Him, not, as Theodore of Mopsuestia maintained, an address of wonder and thanksgiving to the Father. . . . Modern commentators point out that in the New Testament the word *God* with the definite article is reserved for the Father, and that it is anarthrous when applied to Jesus. . . . It may, however, be doubted whether the Evangelist intends this nice grammatical and theological distinction. Thomas honours the Son in the same terms with which the Jews were accustomed to honour the Father."

Father as θεός, this view is problematic.[506] Contextually and grammatically Thomas' confession is most properly read as addressing Jesus with a confession of faith. The phrase ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ indicates that Thomas' confession is a response to Jesus (20:27) and spoken directly to Jesus.[507] In context, the linking the two designations, κύριος and θεός, with καί encourages the reader to understand the two terms as having the same referent, not two different ones.[508] The collocation of divine titles reveals who Thomas believes Jesus to be. He is his Lord and God. Thomas confesses the true identity of Jesus. He is not just the one who was crucified and who rose from the dead. Jesus is more than this. He is Yahweh Elohim. Thomas' confession is unique, yet not unfamiliar. The reader has encountered, throughout the Gospel, words pointing to the divinity of Jesus. The narrator immediately presents Jesus as God in the prologue, both its beginning (1:1) and its end (1:18). "Thomas's confession," observes Kasper Bro Larsen, "resounds like an echo from the opening verse of the prologue, 'the Word was God' and so it constitutes the moment where the cognitive level of a character from the story-world finally reaches the level of knowledge presented to the reader in the prologue."[509] What the reader of the Gospel has known from the beginning, a character within the Gospel's narrative finally confesses. The truth that encircled the prologue now encloses the narrative. J. Ramsey Michaels

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[506] Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 125–26, is one who understands Thomas' words as referring to both Jesus and the Father. This interpretation is influenced, however, by her assertion that the Gospel never refers to Jesus as God, but only as his son.

[507] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 110, The context agrees with this reading, as this pericope records a conversation between Jesus and Thomas.

[508] Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:332–33. The construction ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου is not, however, a construction conforming to Granville Sharp's Rule. See Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; BLG 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 110.

[509] Larsen, Recognizing the Stranger, 208–9. See also Bruce, John, 394; and Köstenberger, John, 579, who rightly observes, "This climactic confession forms an inclusio with the ascription of deity to Jesus as the Word-made-flesh in 1:1, 14, 18." Lindars, John, 615, links the confession with 1:1, but suggests, "It is also the consequence of the Wisdom christology of the Prologue, whereby the Christ event is related to God in his dealings with the world, both as Creator and Redeemer."

observes, "Finally the introduction of Jesus to the reader as 'God' (1:1), or 'God the One and Only' (1:18), is confirmed from within the narrative."[510]

John intends his readers to understand Thomas' words as a high Christological confession of Jesus' divinity, identifying Jesus as the God whom Moses and the prophets saw, and with whom they spoke. This confession is the climax of a Gospel designed to teach that Jesus is God and to instill faith in Jesus as the Son of God.[511] Jerome Neyrey comments, "The name 'God' will be shown to refer to God's creative power, which Jesus, who is Logos and 'God,' exercises in 1:1–3. The deity's other name, 'Lord,' is associated with the second power (i.e. eschatological power). Hence, at the Gospel's ending, when Jesus has demonstrated power over death, he is acclaimed 'My Lord and my God.' "[512] The fullness of the deity dwells in this one who is appropriately addressed as Lord and God. Not blasphemous,[513] but a confession of faith, Thomas' words lead the reader to the faith that brings life (1:4–5; 20:31). Murray Harris concludes his study of Thomas's confession:

> That Thomas's cry was not an extravagant acclamation, spoken in a moment of spiritual exaltation when his exuberance exceeded his theological sense, is apparent from two facts. First, the evangelist records no rebuke of Jesus to Thomas for his worship. Jesus' silence is tantamount to consent, for as monotheists Jews considered the human acceptance of worship as blasphemous. Thomas was not guilty of worshiping the creature of the Creator. Indeed, Jesus' word to Thomas—πεπίστευκας— implies the acceptance of his confession, which is then indirectly

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[510] Michaels, *John*, 1018. Moloney, *John*, 537, links Thomas' confession in 20:28 with 1:1–2, the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμί statements, and Jesus' claim in 10:30, "I and the Father are one." Morna D. Hooker, *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 73, notes, "with that recognition of him as 'God' we are taken back with a jolt not just to the beginning of the narrative but to the opening declaration of the Gospel: 'the Word was God.' " See also Keener, *John*, 2:1211.

[511] "Thomas appears at the end of John 20," notes Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 72, "helping to bring the matter of discipleship into the lap of the readers. . . . Prior to his encounter with the risen Christ, Thomas had already received testimony about God and the Lord, and in the encounter this testimony found a new voice on Thomas' own lips." Van Belle, "Christology and Soteriology in the Fourth Gospel," 443, suggests that Thomas' confession is the culmination of the titles used for Jesus throughout the gospel's prologue and first chapter.

[512] Neyrey, *John*, 42.

[513] Carson, *John*, 658, refutes the notion that Thomas is exclaiming the divine name as a form of profanity.

> commended to others (v. 29b). Second, John has endorsed Thomas's confession as his own by making it his final and climactic christological affirmation before his statement of purpose, verse 31. The author found Thomas's cry a convenient means by which he might bring into sharp focus at the end of his Gospel, as at the beginning (John 1:1, 18), the ultimate implication of his portrait of Jesus.[514]

The words from Jesus and about Jesus prompt faith in him. Such faith stands congruent with the Old Testament, throughout which one reads of Jesus; for he is both its source and the one about whom it is written (5:39). Worship of Jesus as Lord and God is not blasphemy, but faithful worship of Yahweh.[515] It is this faith into which John intends his reader to enter through the working of the Spirit through the word.

The prologue begins and ends with explicit statements in which Jesus is referred to as God. Köstenberger and Swain observe the inclusio formed by the identification of Jesus as θεός, yet misunderstand John's intent that Jesus was and is the one whom Moses and the prophets saw and with whom they spoke:

> Various Christological titles are applied to Jesus by his followers, but most striking is the application of the term *theos* itself to Jesus in the opening and closing verse of the prologue and in the final pericope of the Gospel proper (20:28). This literary *inclusio*, whereby Jesus is affirmed to be God at the end of the Gospel is startling in that it takes a designation, *theos*, universally applied to the God of the Hebrew Scriptures in the entire body of the Gospel and changes the referent to Jesus.[516]

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[514] Harris, *Jesus As God*, 126–27. Also Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Destruction of the Second Temple and the Composition of the Fourth Gospel," *TJ* 26 NS/2 (2005): 105, who observes that 20:28 "constitutes an *inclusio* with 1:1 and represents the most overt instance of worship of Jesus as God in any of the Gospels. . . . What is more, Thomas's confession climaxes the Gospel, making the decisive point that the only proper response to the Fourth Gospel's revelation that Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish religious symbolism is that of worship."

[515] See Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 223–24, who says, "Although Thomas is not said to confess or worship Jesus, the acknowledgement of Jesus as 'my Lord and my God' can hardly be construed in any other way. The personal pronouns indicate that this is a confession addressed to Jesus and, hence, properly judged an acclamation not only of his identity but an act of worship. . . . That the evangelist sees no contradiction between the confession of Jesus as 'my God' and as 'Son of God' reveals the basic contours of his Christology and sheds some light on the question of what it might mean to worship the risen Jesus. Specifically, it cannot mean to worship a figure alongside of God, or in addition to God, but to acknowledge the propriety of speaking of the one who is the Son of God, the incarnation of the Word of God as 'my God.' "

[516] Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 60. See also Christopher W. Skinner, "Misunderstanding, Christology, and Johannine Characterization: Reading John's Characters Through the Lens of the Prologue," in

The referent of θεός is not changed, but is instead clarified. As early as 1:1, Jesus, as the Word, is the agent of creation (harkening back to Gen 1:1). In between, the existence of another who is also to be known as God, but who is not the Word, is also stated. Jesus, the Word, was in the beginning, and is God, and yet there is another who is properly called God as well. But only one, the Word, is the actual agent of creation. Marianne Meye Thompson notes:

> When, in the climactic confession of the Gospel, Thomas addresses the risen Jesus as "My Lord and my God!" this formulation stands as the summary and elaboration of the work and the person of Jesus through the Gospel. The direct confession of the risen Lord as God stands alongside and interprets, but does not eclipse, the narrative that points to his dependence upon the authorization of the Father. Like the prologue, then, the entire Gospel points both to the one who is "with God" and who "is God."[517]

The narrative ends with the full confession of who this Jesus is. The prologue concludes similarly. As in the beginning of the prologue (1:1), so also at the end of the prologue (1:18), Jesus is declared to be θεός.

Many scholars have linked Thomas' confession that Jesus is God in 20:28 with the opening statement of the prologue that the Word is God in 1:1. What has been overlooked, however, is the essential role played by 1:18, forming the inclusio around the narrative of the Gospel from 1:18 to 20:28–29. Commenting on the three verses in John proclaiming Jesus as θεός, B. A. Mastin observes,

> It is well known that the Fourth Gospel contains a number of confessions of faith in Jesus: 20:28 is not only the last of these but also the most complete, expressing the full belief of the church in the risen Christ. This is the point to which the Evangelist wished to bring his reader and thus no doubt is one reason why the explicit assertions

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Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; LNTS 461; London: T&T Clark, 2013), 127, who summarizes, "A synchronic approach to the narrative provides the audience with the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the revealer of the Father who has come from above, to be glorified on the cross and at the tomb. For one to believe in Jesus, an understanding of these truths must be present. By using the Prologue in concert with misunderstanding characters the narrator illustrates improper belief in Jesus and beckons the audience to respond in belief (cf. 20:31) from a perspective informed not by sight, but by a knowledge of Jesus' origins and identity."

[517] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 55.

> of 1:1, 18; 20:28 are not found elsewhere in the gospel. Thus the term appears at the very beginning of the gospel, in the verse which marks the transition from the Prologue to the account of Jesus' earthly ministry, and in the statement of faith which sums up all that the Evangelist was trying to convey about the significance of Jesus for his readers. These three verses are placed at strategic points in the gospel, and this underlines the significance of what they say.[518]

John 20:28 explicitly asserts for the third and last time in John's Gospel that Jesus is θεός, the one whom Moses and the prophets saw, and with whom they spoke. Thus, the narrative ends with a confession of Jesus as God, just as the prologue ends with a statement that Jesus is God. John 20:28 helps with John 1:18 to form the inclusio around the Gospel's narrative. Yet this is no mere repristination of an earlier statement. Thomas' confession of Jesus' divinity is the only time in the Gospel that a character in the narrative confesses the full deity of Jesus. Thomas' confession is the highest and most complete confession of the Gospel's Christological teaching by one of Jesus' followers. The narrative has reached its conclusion in the same way in which it was introduced. Jesus is ὁ ὤν in the flesh. The God of the Old Testament is not just revealed but is himself present in Jesus Christ. Christopher Skinner, commenting on Thomas' confession, observes, "In this simple exclamation, Thomas confesses what the reader has known all along—Jesus is the unique revelation of the Father to humanity. He is the true, full, and physical manifestation of Yahweh."[519] The one whom John describes at the conclusion of the prologue as the ὁ ὤν who spoke to Moses in Exod 3:14, is, at the end of the narrative, named ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου by Thomas. The application of two Old Testament forms of the divine name to Jesus form an inclusio around the narrative and teach the reader that the one who spoke not just with Moses, but also with Abraham, Jacob, Isaiah, and all the prophets, is Jesus.

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[518] Mastin, "A Neglected Feature of the Christology of John," 42.

[519] Skinner, *John and Thomas*, 70–71.

It is ostensibly simple and straightforward to argue for the inclusio formed by 20:28 and 1:1, and many have done so. However, a fuller understanding of and appreciation for Thomas' confession in 20:28 and Jesus' response in 20:29 reveals a more complete inclusio with 1:18. Scholars have frequently noticed the obvious kindred nature of 1:1 and 20:28, because in both verses Jesus is explicitly God. While this is a strong inclusio around the entire work, the absence of a necessary understanding of the relationship of 20:28 and 20:29 has led scholars to overlook the fuller inclusio around the narrative formed by 1:18 and 20:28–29. As is typical with John, there is more to its interest than is often perceived. And further investigation yields both further understanding and the opportunity for additional inquiry.

"Have You Believed Because You Have Seen?"

The explicit mention and importance of not-seeing in both 1:18 and 20:29 assists the reader to understand not only the inclusio, but also the narrative framed and informed by the inclusio. The one who is not seen is revealed by the one who is seen and is alone heard. Therefore, there stands a fundamental and necessary not-seeing yet knowing (1:18) that is ours through this one and only one, who is God in the flesh. Those who, like Thomas, see with the eyes of faith are blessed along with those in the Old Testament who were similarly blessed through the One and Only One to see what flesh and blood eyes alone can in no way see. Thus, through the words and works of Jesus, and through none other, there exists a not-seeing yet knowing (1:18), a not-seeing yet believing (20:29). All those who know believe; all those who believe confess the oneness of the one who can be seen with the one who cannot be seen. This faith is wrought by the Spirit through the words from and about Jesus, the Word of the Father, ὁ ὤν in the flesh.

Therefore, close attention must be paid to the way in which John 1:18 and John 20:29 contribute further to the inclusio around the Gospel's narrative. Especially important is the connection between the not-seeing in 1:18 and 20:29. John 1:18 presents "not-seeing yet

knowing," and 20:29 adds the concluding statement from Jesus concerning "not-seeing yet believing." An understanding and appreciation of the role of not-seeing yet knowing/believing in the inclusio aids in a fuller understanding of the Gospel, especially in the closing episode of its narrative (20:24–29), wherein Thomas confesses what he cannot see with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but what he nevertheless sees by means of the eyes of faith through the Spirit and the Word. Jesus' unique role as the revealer of the Father is not unique to John's Gospel. John highlights the Old Testament theophanies experienced by Moses, Jacob, Abraham, and Isaiah in order to explicate to the reader that the object of these visions was not the Father, for he remains invisible, but the Son, who, being truly God, is the visible voice of the invisible Father. Thomas' confession (20:28), therefore, like the prologue, invokes a familiar Old Testament name of God in order to proclaim that Jesus always has been the one and only one who makes God known. In this confession, he, and all who thus believe, are blessed (20:29). In this confession, ὁ ὤν in the flesh (1:14, 18) accomplishes again the work that he alone has been given to do, of the revealer (1:18) of the one who cannot be known or believed upon apart from the Word, who alone has seen, has heard from, the Father (1:18; 5:37; 6:46; cf. 1 John 4:12, 20). Those who see Jesus with the eyes of faith see the Father (12:45; 14:9). Believing what cannot be seen (for that is what faith is and does, Heb 11:1), they are blessed (20:29).

At the end of the prologue, the reader is told of the μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν who always has been the one and only one who reveals the invisible Father (1:18). This one is Jesus Christ (1:17). In the narrative that follows, words from and about Jesus are given so that those who hear them might see and believe. These words serve to reveal who Jesus is and, in so doing, claims John, reveal the Father. Indeed, those who see Jesus rightly see the Father (14:9). Those who see the oneness of these see in the one who can be seen the one who cannot be seen. The prologue begins and ends with the clear reference to both Jesus and his Father as God (θεός). The reader is

encouraged to interpret the narrative with this identification always in mind. At the conclusion of the narrative, with the characters of the Gospel, the reader sees the oneness of Jesus and his Father as θεός through the word and deeds of the Son.[520] In the climactic confession of the Gospel, Thomas (whose name means "Twin") confesses with all who believe that Jesus is ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. It is this confession and faith that stands as the goal of the Gospel, and conveys life to all who believe (20:30–31).

The identification of Jesus as one with the Father thus forms an inclusio around the narrative of the Gospel. Just as the first and final verses of the prologue explicitly refer to Jesus in this way, so also does the narrative of the Gospel end. Though the Father is not explicitly mentioned at the end, the revelation of him is in evidence in Thomas who confesses the oneness of Father and Son. In this concluding episode, the identification of Jesus as θεός comes from a character within the narrative. What is known in the prologue is revealed in the narrative of the Gospel through words from and about Jesus. Faith finds in Jesus the one who cannot be seen, and those who do not see yet believe are blessed.

Full and correct understanding of the last narrated episode in this Gospel preceding the epilogue comes only through appreciation and understanding of the role of all such trajectories within the story. Thomas is not a lone disciple, and his confession is not to be read outside of the context of the narrative leading up to it. All that John has written before informs this event.

The narrative of the Gospel reaches its climax and conclusion with Thomas' confession of Jesus as Lord and God in 20:28. Yet Jesus, the Word, has the last word. John 20:29 contains two

[520] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, 315, lists the different ways the evangelist has presented Jesus, and concludes, "The list can be expanded greatly, but the point is that when this list is compared to the designations of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, the other presentations of Jesus pale in significance before these magnificent confessions about him in John. In the years of contemplating the significance of Jesus, the Johannine evangelist in the context of that early community has supplied for the church of all ages a truly masterful statement about Jesus—Jesus is indeed Lord and God!"

parts. The importance and loftiness of Thomas' confession in 20:28 is maintained by the majority of scholars, yet vast differences define those who have attempted to interpret Jesus' response in 20:29. This dissertation seeks to read 20:29 not in contrast to Thomas' confession, but as a blessing upon Thomas, the disciples present, and future believers.

Thomas' confession is regarded by nearly all as the high Christological point of John's Gospel, and yet scholars have differing opinions concerning the nature of Thomas' faith. These differing views affect how scholars read John 20:29 and the role of signs/seeing throughout the Gospel. Since this dissertation employs a narratival synchronic reading of the text, the discussion of layers, recensions, and redactions will not be entertained. Instead, the differing views of the text in its current form will occupy our time and space.

Still exerting influence over many scholars and their perception of the Gospel, Bultmann's view of John's use of a signs source deserves comment.[521] Bultmann (also Fortna) conceived of the Gospel as a redaction of varied source material, some of which existed in opposition to each other regarding the role of signs. Bultmann's signs source, in line with 20:30–31, viewed signs and seeing as a positive means for faith in Jesus. The final redactor of the Gospel (or the evangelist himself), however, held signs and seeing in a negative light (in concert with the "passion" source). Thus, in 20:29 Jesus is presented as rebuking Thomas due to his faith based on signs (sight) instead of the word alone. Bultmann does not call into question Thomas' faith, but sees Jesus' response as one that puts Thomas to shame. He states, "The answer of Jesus (v. 29) by all means confirms that in the statement of Thomas faith speaks; but at the same time the answer puts him to shame."[522] Thus, the issue is one of faith by sight/signs versus a better faith based on the word. As Bultmann concludes, "Fundamentally, it ought not to be the sight of the

[521] See, for example, Neyrey, *John*, 331.

[522] Bultmann, *John*, 695.

Risen Lord that first moves the disciples to believe 'the word that Jesus spoke' (2:22), for this word alone should have the power to convince them."[523] This tension between inferior and superior faith, or higher and lower means of believing, has continued in recent discussions of the Thomas episode even in those who are not as given to the question of sources as is Bultmann. Marriane Meye Thompson observes, "Butlmann's theological agenda has fundamentally shaped the course of investigation of the signs in John, making it almost impossible to study the Gospel without assuming that it is better to 'believe without seeing.' "[524]

Since the presupposition of either the existence or non-existence of a dichotomous view of faith and sight/signs greatly impacts scholars' views of 20:29, it is important to determine whether such a position can be defended from the rest of the Gospel. D. A. Carson asks if the assumption that faith based on signs is weaker than faith not tied to signs can be supported from the Gospel itself. He observes, "There is little evidence in the rest of this Gospel to support the view that faith based on word is always strong, good, and praiseworthy, while faith based on signs is always weak, bad, and inferior."[525] Carson accurately addresses the inadequacy of reading the Gospel in these terms, but fails to address the Gospel's interest in the cause of faith. Just as John is fond of word play, synonyms, linguistic themes, numbering, and structural devices, he is also often accused of perceived inconsistencies within the Gospel narrative. Those studying the Gospel's design and message often find themselves frustrated when trying to trace consistent themes throughout the narrative. Often, the author seems to reverse course or change the tenor of metaphors. Patterns are introduced by the author without definitive resolution,

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[523] Bultmann, *John*, 696. See also Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:467.

[524] Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 81.

[525] Donald A. Carson, "Is Faith in Christ Without Evidence Superior Faith? A Re-examination of John 20:29," in *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology: Essays in Honor of Max Turner* (ed. I. Howard Marshall et al.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 108.

leaving the reader to either despair, or to wonder at the complexities of the text. Aporias are a common subject of the history of the Gospel's interpretation, revealing the author's occasional use of dichotomy and surprise.[526] Finding total uniformity within the theme of seeing and believing proves no less elusive when sought throughout the Gospel. Craig Koester adequately summarizes the problem encountered when analyzing the Gospel in order to determine if there is a disparaging view of faith based on signs, "The difficulty is knowing how to assess the various passages, since the gospel refers to signs in both positive and negative ways, and uses 'believe' for both inadequate and genuine types of faith."[527] Sight and signs are not in and of themselves sufficient for faith. It is the Spirit working through the word that creates faith.

In order to examine John's themes of seeing and believing, some have sought to trace the trajectory of seeing/not-seeing throughout the narrative. In his examination of John's use of the Greek verbs for seeing, Phillips' thesis is that "there is evidence of real discrimination in the use of the various Greek words and that their crown and consummation is to be found in the Johannine word for faith."[528] Recently, Kasper Bro Larsen has noted the Gospel's narrative journey from not-seeing to seeing in his study on the recognition scenes in John, *Recognizing the Stranger*.[529] Larsen contends that Biblical literature contains examples of anagnorisis, "and one

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[526] The desire to see within the aporias a redactional or compositional history has led to further obfuscation or perilously tedious and conjectural suggestions regarding strata, layers, evidence of editing (ironically owing to the inability of the supposed editor to create a smooth text), or long periods of composition with displaced or misplaced discourses.

[527] Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing," 328.

[528] Phillips, "Faith and Vision," 84. Phillips later notes (p. 91), "The way in which πιστεύειν is the climax of this series is not only brought out in the resurrection narrative, to which we have already referred, but also in the last recorded dominical words in the original form of the gospel at 20:29"

[529] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 1–2. Larsen begins his work with the famous recognition scene from Homer's *Odyssey* (19.317–507), wherein Odysseus returns home from his journey, posing as an old acquaintance. His childhood nurse, Eurycleia gives him a bath as a sign of hospitality, and notices a scar from a wound Odysseus suffered during his childhood. Eurycleia immediately recognizes this old man as her master Odysseus, and proclaims his identity. This scene is often regarded as the *locus classicus* of the recognition scene/anagnorisis. DeConick, " 'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen' (John 20:29)," 392–93, also quotes this story when

of the most conspicuous examples of its kind is indeed the climactic apparition narrative in the Fourth Gospel featuring doubting Thomas, or as one might rather say, recognizing Thomas. When confronted with Jesus' wound marks, the twin disciple makes a Eurycleian discovery and exclaims his epoch-making confession: 'My Lord and my God!' (20:28 NRSV)."[530]

According to Larsen, the Gospel "seeks to eliminate God's inaccessibility and enable a *visio Dei* by means of the Jesus-sign."[531] Larsen helpfully links this reading of the Gospel with the statement of God's invisibility found in 1:18a. The elimination of God's inaccessibility moves beyond the story world. John's reader/hearer has not seen God, and is chronologically removed from the opportunity for any physical sight of Jesus. Larsen suggests that the text itself represents Jesus for the readers of the Gospel. "The Gospel constitutes a second sign that points toward Jesus and compensates the reader for being in a situation where the divine Jesus-sign is not directly accessible."[532] The elimination of the distance between the recognizer and the recognized is accomplished both for the characters of the narrative and the reader through anagnorisis. Larsen suggests that just "about every encounter between Jesus and worldly observers was regarded as an anagnorisis challenge."[533]

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discussing the resurrection appearances in John 20, as does Stan Harstine, "Un-Doubting Thomas: Recognition Scenes in the Ancient World," *PRSt* 33 (2006): 441–42. See also the discussion of anagnorisis in Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 77–86.

[530] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 2.

[531] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 5. Larsen identifies the objectives of his study as (p. 18) "to (1) demonstrate that a considerable number of Johannine encounter scenes thematize the question about Jesus' true identity by playing on ancient recognition-scene conventions; (2) examine how the form of the Johannine recognition scenes change the course of the narrative, thus giving rise to a focus on the type-scene's function in the exposition process of the narrative rather than on its role in characterization and the development of story events; and (3) discuss how the type-scene works as an integral medium for the Gospel's communication of its main issue concerning the recognition of Jesus, the stranger from heaven." The third objective bears the most interest for the present dissertation.

[532] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 5–6.

[533] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 89. Larsen does note that this requires a rather generic understanding of the term anagnorisis.

Larsen's reading of John's Gospel is one in which Jesus appears hidden, in order to be revealed. In light of this, Larsen suggests that "John's prologue *whispers* important clues in the reader's ears."[534] Important among these clues is that the λόγος was "present in the *kosmos* prior to Jesus' appearance, which the world, however, was unable to comprehend."[535] Thus, the reader is encouraged to recognize the λόγος as Jesus, and through Jesus to see God throughout the narrative of the Gospel.

John 20 serves as the recognition climax[536] in John's Gospel, and is epitomized by Thomas' confession.[537] This event is climactic because "Thomas' confession . . . resounds like an echo from the opening verse of the prologue, 'the Word was God' (1:1c), and so it constitutes the moment where the cognitive level of a character from the story-world finally reaches the level of knowledge presented to the reader in the prologue."[538] Yet Larsen's analysis of this climactic moment of the Gospel typically fails to embrace the importance of 1:18a. Instead of seeing the connection of the not-seeing in 1:18a and the blessing in 20:29, Larsen views this as a rebuke to Thomas for basing his faith on seeing. The following section will seek to complement Larsen's appreciation of John's use of thematic unrecognition/recognition in order to provide a holistic understanding of the Gospel's unique emphasis on the not-seeing of God which occurs even when people see Jesus. The journey is not from not-seeing to seeing, but from not-seeing and not knowing or believing to not-seeing yet knowing and believing.

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[534] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 88.

[535] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 81.

[536] See also Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 85.

[537] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 185–86. Larsen identifies four recognition scenes in John 20: The discovery of the empty grave, 20:1–10; the appearance to Mary Magdalene, 20:11–18; Jesus' appearance to the disciples without Thomas, 20:19–23, and the appearance to Thomas, 20:26–29.

[538] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 208–9.

Far from being simply an either disparaging or favorable pairing, faith and seeing exist in an ambiguous and often misunderstood relationship. Udo Schnelle concludes his discussion of miracles and faith by stating, "Undoubtedly, faith cannot be separated from Jesus' proclamation, but the frequently underestimated importance of miracles in the Johannine concept of faith makes clear that for the evangelist both were important: the words and the works of Jesus, the revelation of his divine Sonship in the *ῥήματα* and in the *σημεῖα*."[539] Schnelle, makes an important observation, yet fails to note that, apart from the Spirit working through words from and about Jesus, a right understanding of Jesus' signs is not possible. Apart from the Scriptures, Jesus' signs remain the indecipherable deeds of a man whose origins and whose nature remain unclear.

Throughout the Gospel, there are some who believe because of a sign (the disciples in 2:11), some who believe without seeing, and the majority of characters see but do not believe (3:19–21; 11:46; 12:37–41).[540] Marianne Meye Thompson observes,

> Because there is revelation in the signs, they ought to lead to faith; yet the relationship between signs and faith as John envisions it is subtle and complex. Clearly signs are intended to lead to faith (2:11; 12:37; 20:30), but there are statements in the Gospel which indicate that sometimes faith precedes true comprehension of the miracle (11:40). In other passages, those who do not understand the signs are judged for their stubborn refusal to believe (9:39–41; 12:37–41). What is clear is that John delineates the various responses to Jesus' signs in terms of belief and unbelief, and that one's response to the signs indicates whether one is a believer or an unbeliever.[541]

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[539] Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 170.

[540] Moody Smith, *John*, 384–85, wrestling with the ambiguous interplay between seeing and believing says, "No one who sees the risen Jesus does not believe, and this is as true in John as it is in the other Gospel accounts. . . . Thus in a real sense there is no seeing of the risen Jesus without believing, even though the seeing is taken to be prior. So there is no believing without seeing, but in the case of the resurrection also no seeing without believing. Therefore, the seeing itself is a gift of Jesus, of course from God." Moody Smith's statement strives to understand the relationship but still fails to understand the complexity of seeing and believing and believing in what cannot be seen.

[541] Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus*, 84.

The response of belief or unbelief is not always congruent or consistent. Some who see and believe seem to have true faith. Others follow for reasons that are not praiseworthy (4:48; 6:26). Some who initially see and believe have faith that is not trustworthy (2:23–25).[542] Others believe without seeing and their faith is held in high esteem (20:9). And above all, the vast majority of the characters of the Gospel are able to see Jesus clearly but have no idea who he is, let alone believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God; faith in his name is not attributed to those who merely see Jesus. Koester's suggested solution is one in which the characters are examined instead of the themes themselves. The Gospel presents different characters often in juxtaposition in order to encourage the reader to imitate the exemplar of faith. Thomas seems to demand seeing and touching as a pre-condition of believing, similar to the skeptics in Jerusalem, yet he believes in response to the seeing that he is granted.[543] The juxtaposition of characters is noteworthy in John 20. There, the beloved disciple sees the evidence of the empty tomb and believes (20:8), Mary Magdalene encounters the risen Jesus (20:11–18). The twelve gathered late in the day on Easter receive a visit from Jesus (20:19–23). And finally Thomas pronounces the true identity of Jesus in his confession that Jesus is "Lord and God."[544]

Since the themes of seeing and believing cannot be said to be either necessarily dichotomous or consistently complementary,[545] Jesus' response to Thomas' confession is

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[542] Donald A. Carson, "Is Faith in Christ without Evidence Superior Faith? A Re-examination of John 20:29," in *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology: Essays in Honor of Max Turner* (ed. I. Howard Marshall, Volker Rabens, and Cornelis Bennema; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 107, labels such faith as "unsatisfactory."

[543] Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing," 346.

[544] See Moloney, *John*, 537–38.

[545] Brown, *John*, 2:1050, states, "We have emphasized our understanding of 29 as a contrast between seeing and not-seeing precisely as a rejection of the attempt to find in this verse a contrast between seeing and believing. Both groups in 29 truly believe; and we find no evidence for Bultmann's contention that the faith spoken of in 29a, despite the fact that it gave expression to the confession 'My Lord and my God,' is not praiseworthy because seeing is sensible perception and thus radically opposed to faith."

interpreted in a variety of ways.[546] Many try to find some kind of middle ground between a total rebuke of Thomas and a confirmation of his confession. Köstenberger exemplifies this as he comments, "Jesus' response to Thomas in fact constitutes a mild rebuke. The point of Jesus' remark is not so much to pronounce Thomas's faith inferior—after all, the confession has a climactic function in the Johannine narrative—but rather to show the limitation of a faith in Jesus based on seeing him risen and to signal the transition from such faith to believing in the apostles' testimony."[547] Others view Jesus' response as a total repudiation of Thomas' need for proof which brought about his confession. Haenchen comments, "Verse 29 evidently provides the Evangelist's correction of this faith. . . . In fact, for the Evangelist, the true Christians are those of a later generation, who never saw the earthly nor the risen Jesus, but only knew the message that had been transmitted to them, with respect to which they came to faith. As a consequence, they, and not Thomas, are blessed."[548] Along with Bultmann, Robert Fortna views 20:29 as the evangelist's rebuke of a faith which comes about by seeing: "This paradoxical superiority of a

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[546] Carson, "Faith without Evidence," 105, observes that in contrast to Bultmann, "Today, however, most commentators reject the thesis that this verse upholds a contrast between seeing and believing. Instead, they detect some kind of contrast between faith based on sight and faith not based on sight. Admittedly, this contrast is nuanced in diverse ways."

[547] Köstenberger, *John*, 580. See also A. T. Robinson, *The Divinity of Christ in the Gospel of John* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916), 163–64, who says, "Jesus accepted his homage, but took pains to point out that he had missed the opportunity for the highest faith in not believing without sight."

[548] Haenchen, *John*, 2:211–12. See also Whitacre, *John*, 486, who states, "Thomas has accepted the revelation, but he gets no commendation from Jesus. Rather, Jesus looks ahead to those who will believe through the witness of these disciples who have seen." See also Ron Cameron, "Seeing Is Not Believing: The History of a Beatitude in the Jesus Tradition," *Foundations & Facets Forum* 4 (1998): 55, who states, "Thomas is still one who must see in order to believe (vs 29a). He therefore does not receive a blessing." Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 548, contrasts Thomas with the beloved disciple and future generations, who believe without seeing. See also DeConick, "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen," 396, who suggests that Thomas is depicted as the fool and that John 20:25–29 is written as a correction of the mystical theology of the Thomasine Christians, concludes, "For Johannine Christians faith in Jesus was the basis of their salvation, whereas for Thomasine Christians, the mystical visionary encounter was paramount. The discourse between these communities on this subject is preserved here from the perspective of the Johannine community which presents its 'correct' version of soteriology that developed as the result of the discourse." Brian D. Johnson, "Thomas and Marturia: John 20:24–31," *ProEGL&MBS* 25 (2005): 173, notes, "I would therefore understand the comments of Jesus to Thomas as indicative of the need for belief based not upon sight, but upon testimony."

faith-without-seeing is the point of the story of Thomas, which 4E evidently creates and with which the Gospel comes to its dramatic close. . . . The implication is clear: belief without seeing signs is a superior form of faith."[549]

Many attempt to see both an affirmation of Thomas' faith and a blessing for the future generations. Thomas is not rebuked for seeing, but instead is representative of an opportunity that has passed away. Those who were of the generation of Jesus were blessed to believe through seeing, but those in the future, who no longer have the ability to see Jesus in the flesh are either equally or even more blessed to believe without the benefit of physical sight.[550] F. F. Bruce represents this perspective and notes,

> But since the apostolic generation passed from earth, all believers in the crucified and risen Lord have believed without seeing, and to them is assured the special blessing here pronounced by him. To us, faith comes not by seeing but (as Paul puts it) "from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom 10:7). John knows this, and therefore he presents his readers with "the preaching of Christ"—the story of Jesus—in written form, that faith may come to them.[551]

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[549] Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor*, 246.

[550] See Michaels, *John*, 1018–19, who observes after comparing the reaction of Jesus to Thomas' confession in 20:28 to his response to Peter's in Matt 16:17, "Here too is a beatitude, but not for Thomas. . . . Yet it should not be read as a rebuke to Thomas either. . . . To whom is Jesus referring? Quite clearly to the readers of the Gospel, and others of their generation, whether Jews or Gentiles, who now believe in Jesus without having lived through the events of his ministry." See also Brown, *John*, 2:1050: "The transition from 29a to 29b is not merely that one era precedes the other, but that one leads to the other." Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:333–34, notes, "Jesus accepts Thomas' confession, but does not spare him from the accusation that he came to believe only after an assurance through 'seeing' . . . Thomas is the exponent of that experience, by a disciple, of Jesus' 'appearances,' which is denied to later believers." Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 168, states, "[T]he macarism in v. 29b formulates what applies to the *subsequent* generations: having faith without directly seeing the risen Son of God. Immediate seeing is reserved for the eyewitnesses. But it gives rise to a tradition, and to that extent it applies to the community that, in the kerygma fully participates in the eyewitnesses' seeing." Dorothy Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith: The Role of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in John 20," *JSNT* 58 (1995): 47–48, concludes, "Jesus' statement in 29a applies to the Easter community as a whole and not just to Thomas. Jesus' beatitude, therefore, need not be seen as denigrating Thomas (or anyone else). Rather it functions as narrative paraenesis for a community struggling to understand Jesus' absence and discouraged by distance from the Easter events and the tangible signs of the resurrection. The narrator's point is that the community is not disadvantaged by this distance. The faith of future believers, and thus the implied reader, is singled out for blessing." See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 386; Sanders, *John*, 438; Moody Smith, *John*, 383; Talbert, *Reading John*, 257.

[551] Bruce, *John*, 394–95.

Still others view Thomas' faith as a step in the development of a fuller or more real faith. D. A. Carson writes, "Thomas' faith is not deprecated: rather it is as if the step of faith Thomas has taken, displayed in his unrestrained confession, triggers in Jesus' mind the next step, the coming-to-faith of those who cannot see but who will believe—so he pronounces a blessing on them."[552] Still others make the distinction between Thomas and future generations more stringent and describe Jesus' words as addressing not really Thomas, but readers of the Gospel. George Beasley-Murray writes, "The emphasis in v. 29, of course, is not on Thomas but on those who have not 'seen.' "[553] Similarly, Alicia Myers states, "Fittingly, therefore, Jesus prays for his disciples *and* for those who will come after them, he offers various asides to this audience in his farewell discourse, and speaks a macarism more applicable for them than for Thomas in Jn 20:29."[554] It is this kind of assumption which overlooks the all-encompassing nature of Jesus' words of blessing to all, including those of Jesus' generation (Thomas, the Twelve, Mary, and all of Jesus' day) and those of previous and future generations who believe in what they cannot see.

Thomas seems an unlikely source for the most complete and faithful confession of the identity of Jesus in the narrative of the Gospel. First, Thomas does not appear in the first half of the Gospel. Second, his appearances in the second half of the Gospel (11:16; 14:5; 20:24–29; see also 21:2) present Thomas as one who misunderstands Jesus. Third, Thomas is rebuked by Jesus as one who does not believe just prior to the great confession.

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[552] Carson, *John*, 660. See also Carson, "Faith without Evidence," 114, who concludes his discussion of John's ability and proclivity to discuss events as being either pre or post resurrection, "In other words, the accumulating evidence suggests that the contrast between (a) and (b) in verse 29 is not so much between inferior and superior faith (along whatever axes), as between the grounds of faith that were possible for the first generation of believers and the grounds of faith needed by subsequent generations." Later (p. 118), Carson concludes his article with the comparison between 20:29 and 1:17, and suggests that the blessing in 20:29 does not diminish Thomas' confession, but pronounces a blessing on all who believe. Collins, "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen," 185, sees a progression of sight and faith within the Thomas episode from (1) without sight, no faith (20:25); to (2) sight with faith (20:29a); to (3) without sight, faith (20:29b). See further Hendriksen, *John*, 466; and Köstenberger, *John*, 580.

[553] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 386.

[554] Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 183.

Thomas appears only in the second half of John's Gospel and in its epilogue. In Thomas' first appearance, he makes a statement ("Let us go so that we also may die with him," 11:16), which either reveals commitment or complete misunderstanding. The second time Thomas is described he asks a question ("How can we know the way?" 14:5), which appears to entirely misunderstand Jesus' statement. The third appearance of Thomas (20:24–29) rounds out the second half of the Gospel and contains the highest Christological confession of not only the Gospel but the entire New Testament.[555]

Whereas Thomas appears only in the second half of the narrative, John the Baptist inhabits its first. The person of John the Baptist frames the first half of the Gospel, as the ministry of the Baptist begins the narrative (1:19), and reference to his testimony concludes its first half (10:40–41). In a similar way, Thomas appears at the beginning of the second half of the narrative (11:16) and his testimony (confession) concludes the second half of the narrative (20:28).[556] Along with Moses and the prophets, John the Baptist is the primary speaker of words about Jesus that truly bear witness to the identity of Jesus in the first half of the Gospel. If such clues and John's use of characters within the structure of the narrative is given any credence, then Thomas in the second half of the narrative whose appearances reflect those of the Baptist may be read as one who speaks similarly truthful words concerning the identity of Jesus.[557] Though Thomas' first two

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[555] In Thomas's fourth appearance in the epilogue of the Gospel (21:2) he is described as "the one called Didymus" (meaning "Twin") just as in 11:16 and 20:24. Not often observed is the fact that his given name "Thomas" means the same thing.

[556] Contra Thomas Popp, "Thomas: Question Marks and Exclamation Marks," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (ed. Steven A. Hunt et al.; WUNT 314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 505, who represents the more popular view: "The reader encounters Thomas for the first time at the end of the first section of the Gospel (11:16); for the second time at the beginning of the farewell discourse (14:5–7); for the third time, in the final scene (20:24–29); and, for the last time, at the beginning of the supplemental chapter (21:2)." Popp does later (p. 513), however, make the helpful observation, "Thomas' three appearances are artfully correlated: both resurrection chapters, John 11 and 20, frame the Passion story."

[557] Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 77, 107, observes the similarity between John the Baptist at the beginning of the Gospel and Thomas at the end. Riley, however, suggests that the characters exist as a polemic concerning groups in John's day.

appearances reveal misunderstanding or confusion, Thomas remains loyal[558] to Jesus, as one of the Twelve, when others walk away (see 6:66–70). Thus, the absence of Thomas in the first half of the narrative does not call into question his credibility as a confessor of Jesus, but instead pushes the reader to reflect on Thomas' relationship to John the Baptist.

Unlike the Baptist, however, Thomas is not presented as one who understands Jesus in all of his appearances. Thomas appears as a character within the Gospel who misunderstands.[559] Nicolas Farelly observes, "Thomas appears as a complex character, one who is obviously attached to his master, yet shows great ignorance and lack of understanding."[560] Thomas's first appearance in 11:16 reveals a disciple who is resigned to death with Jesus, although Jesus had just promised resurrection.[561] Though some have argued that Thomas is faithful and willing to die with and for his master, he still misunderstands Jesus' teaching that he is going to raise Lazarus from the dead.[562] William Bonney observes, "John portrays Thomas as one who is loyal to Jesus, one who is ready to follow him, but one who does not fully understand him. Thomas' statement in 11:16 clearly indicates that he sees the proposed journey to Judea in a completely different

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[558] Dennis Sylva, *Thomas—Love As Strong As Death: Faith and Commitment in the Fourth Gospel* (LNTS 434; New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 104, suggests that Jesus' appearance to the Twelve in 20:25–29 is "solely for the sake of Thomas" because "Loyalty answers loyalty."

[559] Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 137, suggests, "John consistently portrays [Thomas] as one who judges his relationship to Jesus from an earth-bound point of view." Later, Bonney (p. 139) suggests that Thomas' problem is that his interpretation of Jesus' words is on "a strictly literal plane. John narrates no inclination on the part of Thomas to search for a metaphorical understanding of Jesus' words." Also Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel*, 163, states, "Thomas represents a material, concrete point of view. He judges by appearances, but is overcome by the miracle of belief." Concerning Thomas in 11:16, Carson, *John*, 410, comments, "On this occasion Thomas reflects not doubt but raw devotion and courage, even thought it was courage shot through with misunderstanding and incomprehension."

[560] Farelly, *Disciples*, 118.

[561] Skinner, *John and Thomas*, 55, notes, "Whether Thomas' words are understood as a reference to dying along with Lazarus or with Jesus, it is clear that he has not understood that the mission to Judea is one to be characterized primarily by resurrection and *not* by death." Popp, "Thomas: Question Marks and Exclamation Marks," 508–9, notes the similarity between Thomas' statement in 11:16 and Peter's statement in 6:67–69. See also Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 133; and Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 78–79.

[562] Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:329, says that Thomas is "Slow on the up-take, yet he remains true to Jesus."

light from that in which Jesus sees it."[563] In 14:5, Thomas asks a seemingly incredulous question of Jesus. Thomas does not know where Jesus and those with him are going, so how is he supposed to know the way?[564] Once again, Thomas has taken Jesus' teachings the wrong way. Whereas Jesus points the disciples to himself as the destination and the way, Thomas responds with inquiries about where and how to get there. Thomas Popp makes the helpful observation regarding Thomas' question in 14:5, "His current lack of understanding serves as an opportunity to provide further Christological explanation. The 'I am' statement of Jesus stands in the center of the dialog with Thomas (14:6)."[565]

Thomas, the disciple who appears lost in misunderstanding, is the Twin.[566] Thomas seldom appears in the narrative, but plays an important role within those appearances. His explicit identification as Twin carries weight in the understanding of his role as an important character within the narrative. Discussing Thomas' role as both anti-type and type (twin), Dennis Sylva

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[563] Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 137. Also Farelly, *Disciples*, 119, who comments on Thomas' statement in 11:16, "[T]his statement misses the mark in that it disregards what Jesus had just explained to the disciples. Thomas does not seem interested in Jesus being about to display his glory through the 'awakening' of his friend." Barrett, *John*, 476, labels Thomas as "loyal but obtuse." Brown, *John*, 2:1045, labels Thomas as obstinate and suggests, "Thomas is not in the least impressed by Jesus' manifestation of knowledge at a distance. He agrees to go up to Judea with Jesus, but he insists that they are going up to be put to death." Popp, "Thomas: Question Marks and Exclamation Marks," 508, observes, "Jesus has the faith of his disciples in view (11:15b) when he refers to the waking of Lazarus (11:11). Thomas does not understand this allusion. He is fixated on the earthly demise of Jesus and cannot comprehend the deeper meaning of Jesus' journey to Bethany."

[564] Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 139, suggests that Thomas' question "borders on sarcasm. He exaggerates the impossibility of their knowing the 'way' by emphasizing that they do not even know 'where' it is they are supposed to be going."

[565] Popp, "Thomas: Question Marks and Exclamation Marks," 512–13.

[566] Raymond F. Collins, " 'Who Are You?' Comparison/Contrast and Fourth Gospel Characterization," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John* (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; LNTS 461; London: T&T Clark, 2013), 86–87, says, "The Greek term [Didymus] is a translation of the Aramaic 'Thomas,' which means twin. The Greek epithet is proper to the Fourth Gospel; it is not used in the Synoptics. The Fourth Evangelist says that Thomas is called the Twin. The evangelist does not say that Thomas is a twin nor does he mention that Thomas had any siblings, let alone one who was born simultaneously. Thus the reader is left to ponder as to whether the sobriquet indicates the circumstances of Thomas's birth, whether it is his proper name, or whether it is perhaps a nickname." The *Acts of Thomas* 39, presents Thomas as Jesus' twin brother. Carson, *John*, 410, notes that the Syriac speaking churches have held that Thomas was the Judas of Mark 6:3, and was the twin brother of Jesus; Risto Uro, *Thomas: Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 10–15, discusses the evidence for the Syriac tradition that Jesus was the twin of Jesus.

observes, "Thomas is a type in that he speaks explicitly as a member of the group of disciples (11:16) and for the disciples (14:5). Hints that he may be more than a type, however, come from 20:25b, where he rejects the testimony of his fellow disciples and from 20:28 where he utters the most appropriate confession of Jesus: one that is without parallel in this gospel."[567] It is this disciple who through the resurrection of Jesus and the work of the Spirit, believes that Jesus is God on account of Jesus' words.[568] This disciple, in spite of his misunderstanding and even unbelief, provides for the reader a model of faith and true confession.

From unbelief comes a faithful confession. Just as understanding emanates from one who is characterized by misunderstanding, so the faithful confession that Jesus is God is found in the mouth of one whom Jesus labeled ἄπιστος (20:27).[569] Carson observes, "Up to this point, Thomas has shown himself a loyal disciple of the Jesus who went to the cross, so far as he understood him; he has not been a believer in any distinctly Christian sense."[570] The immediate context portrays Jesus as one who is able to speak of faith in the midst of unbelief.[571] Kasper Bro Larsen

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[567] Sylva, *Thomas*, 7. Sylva suggests that John's characterization of Thomas is complex and varied, and suggests (p. 8) that Thomas is the "disciple who casts filaments backwards and forwards in this gospel." Sylva compares Thomas to Judas (pp. 91–93), Peter (p. 94), and Nathanael (pp. 94–99). Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:331–32, compares Thomas with Nathanael, observing the parallels in Nathanael's encounter with Jesus and confession in 1:45–51 with Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus in 20:25–29. See also Neyrey, *John*, 330.

[568] Farelly, *Disciples*, 125–26, notes, "The content of his confession corresponds to statements made by the narrator earlier in the prologue (1:1, 10, 14, 18) and by Jesus in a prior dialogue with Thomas (14:6–7)."

[569] Ridderbos, *John*, 648, observes, "[F]or the first time in the Gospel, Jesus is addressed in the absolute sense as 'my God' and this lofty word here at the end of the Gospel comes from the lips of 'unbelieving' Thomas." Sylva, *Thomas*, 106, notes, "Thomas' high confession in 20:28 should be looked at in the light of the power of his words in 20:25b. One powerful utterance provides a new way of living toward Jesus that is a 180 degree turn from his prior intense response of denying life in Jesus to acknowledging him as the source of all life. By doing so Thomas moves readers back from the narrative proper with its treatments of events in this world to the beginning of the prologue with its affirmations that through Jesus all things came to be and that in him was life." Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith," 43, suggests that Thomas' response to the disciples declaration that they have seen the Lord "displays a typically Johannine interweaving of faith and misunderstanding." See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 385; and Michaels, *John*, 1017.

[570] Carson, *John*, 657. See also Johnson, "Thomas and *Maturia*," 171, who says, "Jesus does not suggest that Thomas needs to stop doubting, rather he identifies Thomas' state as *disbelief* (ἄπιστος). Jesus calls Thomas to move from unbelief to belief, not from doubting to certainty."

[571] See, however, Harstine, "Un-doubting Thomas," 447, who suggests, "Given the information gleaned from

observes, "Thomas is often regarded as an archetype of doubt. At the same time, however, he gives voice to the Gospel's christological climax: 'My Lord and my God!' (20:28). The tension between emphasized cognitive resistance and ultimate confession creates one of the Gospel's most *ekplectic* anagnorises."[572] Faith in Jesus is the result of the Spirit working through words from and about Jesus. Earlier in John 20, Mary does not recognize Jesus as the one to whom she is talking until Jesus speaks her name (20:16). The result is faith in Jesus as her risen Teacher.[573] This pattern is repeated in Jesus' appearance to the Twelve, including Thomas in 20:25–29. Jesus commands Thomas to stop being an unbeliever, and to believe (20:27).[574] The result is faith expressed in Thomas' confession (20:28). William Bonney concludes,

> John demonstrates that, in order for Thomas to gain this vision, his earth-bound mode of being had to be transcended by the only one who has access to heavenly realities, God's Son. John presents faith not as something that can be generated from within the potential believer, as an act of the human will. It can only come through the will of God as an act of grace. The reader here sees Jesus revealed as the agent of Thomas' change.[575]

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the recognition scenes in Homer and an understanding of the use of the word pair πιστός/ἄπιστος in the ancient world, it is probable that Thomas's presentation in the Fourth Gospel would be understood by a first-century reader as that of a loyal and faithful servant, a servant who is waiting for a sign of recognition that only his true master can provide. The loyalty and true fidelity of Thomas has been mischaracterized throughout recent history as a lack of faith."

[572] Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 208. See also Demetrios Trakatellis, "Seeing and Believing: The Thomas Incident (John 20:24–29)," in *Agape and Diakonia* (ed. P. A. Chamberas; Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 45, notes, "Thomas appears as a person loyal to Jesus and ready to die with him, but, at the same time, skeptical, stubborn, and realist in a somehow negative way. The same picture, intensified to be sure, is sketched in John 20:24–29. Thomas is depicted here as a stubborn realist, as an unbelieving and skeptical individual who needs crude evidence in order to believe that Jesus is risen. However, when he believes, he offers a terrific confession of faith, a really unique, 'My Lord and my God.' "

[573] For parallels between Mary and Thomas, see Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith," 37–49; Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 187; Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 146–55; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 142–43; Köstenberger, *John*, 580, and Moloney, *John*, 538.

[574] Köstenberger, *John*, 578, explains Thomas' objection to the disciples' statements that they had seen the Lord as a "welcome foil for forestalling the incipient gnostic notion that Jesus only appeared to be human. . . . John takes pains to affirm that Jesus 'came in the flesh.' which entails also that his resurrection body was not merely that of a phantom or spirit apparition but a 'fleshly' (albeit glorified) body." See also Sanders, *John*, 437.

[575] Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 167–68.

Thomas does not believe on his own accord. His character is consistently presented in the narrative as one who does not understand Jesus. Yet the one who is the revealer of God speaks faith into Thomas—faith in God, faith in Jesus. The highest confession of faith in the Gospel confesses the identity of the one who reveals the Father because he is uniquely one with the Father. He is ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh. Thus, he is both the cause and the object of Thomas's faith, and the faith of the reader of the narrative. John Painter notes:

> Through [the resurrection] the disciples became aware of the true significance of Jesus and *remembered crucial* events in the life of Jesus so that they understood them in the perspective of salvation history, in relation to the Old Testament (2:22; 12:16). This *remembrance* is linked to the activity of the Paraclete (14:26). While the events that were remembered were unchanged, the memory was modified by a new perspective, the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Paraclete.[576]

The Spirit speaks and so brings understanding through words from and about Jesus. The disciples, like Thomas, believe who Jesus is, and why this matters (what it therefore means for him to have suffered and died on the cross). This faith brings life (20:30–31).

The seeming dichotomous characterization of Thomas as faithful disciple and uncomprehending one is consistent in the Gospel. Dennis Sylva observes, "No other character in this gospel so tenaciously holds on to companionship with Jesus while just as resolutely distancing himself from Jesus' central teaching."[577] John presents for his readers a character moved from unbelief to belief through the words of Jesus. Sylva adds, "The narrative function[s] . . . to suggest that Thomas is the disciple who is proven wrong with the world on sin justice, and judgment. Thomas is a paradigmatic figure of one who looks as though he should be excluded from Johannine communion."[578] Yet it is this disciple who, far from being excluded, confesses

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[576] John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature, and Theology of the Johannine Community* (2d ed.; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1993), 414–15.

[577] Sylva, *Thomas*, 8.

[578] Sylva, *Thomas*, 105.

the faith of all disciples.[579] Craig Keener states, "Thomas' very skepticism makes him the ideal proponent of a high Christology by indicating the greatness of the revelation by which he was convinced."[580] The Gospel itself presents the greatness of this revelation through words from and about Jesus, who is the Word of God. The result of this Gospel is elicited faith in Jesus as Lord and God. Just as was the case with Thomas (the Twin), faith is worked through the Word for all of Jesus' disciples.[581]

The words of 20:29 are not disputed. Yet the proper punctuation of 20:29 and its meaning are the source of keen debate. Jesus' words may be read as a statement: "You have believed because you have seen me."[582] Or they may be read as a question; "Have you believed because you have seen me?" Since the majuscules contained no punctuation, the manuscripts before the minuscles offer no assistance.[583] Peter Judge observes, "A sampling of commentators reveals a fairly equal distribution" of those who interpret 29a as a statement or a question.[584] What is more,

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[579] "The repeated pronoun *my* does not diminish the universality of Jesus' lordship and deity, but it ensures that Thomas' words are a *personal* confession of faith," notes Carson, *John*, 659. "Thomas thereby not only displays his faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but points to its deepest meaning; it is nothing less than the revelation of who Jesus Christ is. The most unyielding sceptic has bequeathed to us the most profound confession." See also Harris, *Jesus As God*, 122.

[580] Keener, *John*, 2:1211. See also Homer Hailey, *That You May Believe: Studies in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1973), 149, who observes, "In relating this confession of Thomas, John appears to reach the climax of evidence and its effect on men. The pessimist (11:16) and skeptic among the group was brought to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and God. There could have been no greater confession of faith or of conviction that Christ has been raised from the dead than the expression of Thomas."

[581] Moloney, *John*, 539, notes, "Jesus' words summon Thomas away from unfaith to belief." Johnson, "Thomas and *Maturia*," 172, observes, "The theme of belief/unbelief runs deep in the Gospel of John. We could perhaps say that the highest duty in the Gospel of John is to believe, while it is a 'capital sin' to fail to believe because unbelief brings judgment and death. The Thomas pericope is clearly an important part of this belief/unbelief motif, as the final four uses of πιστεύω in the Gospel of John are all found in this account (from verse 25–30)." See also Brown, *John*, 2:1026.

[582] Talbert, *Reading John*, 256–57, reads the phrase as a statement and emphasizes the perfect tense of the verbs: "Jesus responds to Thomas's confession: 'Because you have seen me in the past and continue to see me, you have believed and continue to believe.' "

[583] Barrett, *John*, 477, observes, "This clause, punctuated by WH as a question, could be taken as a statement, and is perhaps better taken so, though WH are supported by many minuscles (the earlier MSS are not punctuated)."

[584] Judge, "A Note on John 20:29," 2185 n. 8. See further the discussion on pp. 2184–85.

the decision to read this as either a question or a statement does not necessarily define how one interprets the meaning of Jesus' comments for Thomas, the other disciples, or later believers.

Jesus' response to Thomas, ὅτι ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας, is read by many as a statement. Many who read it as such concentrate on the clause's first verb, ἑώρακάς. The implication is that Jesus' response to Thomas' confession of faith is focused neither on the faith expressed nor the content of the confession, but on the means by which Thomas came to believe. Jesus rebukes Thomas, for his faith is one that has come about by seeing. "Because you have *seen me* you have believed. This then leads to the statement in 29b that those who have not seen are blessed. Thus, the conclusion is reached that it is better, or more blessed, to believe without seeing. This tends to be the favored trend of commentators, due largely to the above discussion concerning the role of seeing and believing.

If the focus of the statement is not on seeing, then it might fall upon the verb πεπίστευκας, and Jesus' response would be focusing on the validity of Thomas' faith. Rudolph Schnackenburg lists four reasons to read this phrase as a statement, all of which focus on the validity of Thomas' belief. The first two reasons revolve around the inconsistency between Thomas and the disciples' faith and the doubting of its validity. The third suggests that the perfect of πιστεύω suggests a firm faith. And the fourth suggests that a statement connects better than a question with the second half of the verse.[585] The strength of understanding Jesus' response as a statement is that it affirms Thomas' faith and leads naturally to the blessing found in the second half of the verse.[586] Barrett suggests that "in this solemn and impressive pronouncement Jesus does not ask a

[585] Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:334. See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 386.

[586] Carson, *John*, 659, says, "It is better to understand the first part of Jesus' response as a statement (and to that extent a confirmation of Thomas' faith)—one that prepares the way for the beatitude that follows."

question, but declares the truth."[587] Thomas' faith is not at question. He has just made the highest Christological confession in the narrative. He has confessed the truth about Jesus' identity.

Or Jesus' response to Thomas may be read as a question,[588] expecting a positive and/or negative response.[589] Noting the important role of questions in John's Gospel, Douglas Estes observes that "the questions of Jesus in John work together to highly persuade the reader into considering things the reader may never consider otherwise. . . . The questions of Jesus in John reveal major evidence to corroborate the evangelistic purpose of the Fourth Gospel."[590] This is not the first time in the Gospel that Jesus has responded to a confession of faith with a question. In 1:49–50 Nathanael confesses Jesus to be "Son of God" and "king of Israel", and Jesus responds with a question.[591] In both 1:50 and 20:29, Jesus asks if believing has happened "because" (ὅτι). In both, the framing of Jesus' question begins with the fronted suggestion of a possible reason why ("because") followed by the offering of an extraordinary pronouncement.[592] In 1:50, Jesus suggests that much remains for Nathanael and the others to "see." In 20:29, Jesus suggests that the seeing of such "greater things" has just happened not with flesh and blood eyes

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[587] Barrett, *John*, 477.

[588] NA28 punctuates Jesus' utterance as a question, as do Lachmann, Tischendorff, von Soden, and others. The frequent rhetorical function of Jesus' questions in the Gospel has been a recent focus of the Gospel's scholarly study. Notable is Douglas Estes, *The Questions of Jesus in John: Logic, Rhetoric, and Persuasive Discourse* (BIS 115; Leiden: Brill, 2013). Estes (pp. 164–65) finds thirty-nine questions (including 20:29) in John.

[589] Some have interpreted Jesus' response as characteristic of both a question and a statement. Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel according to John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1954), 2:356, states, "The first clause of his reply is half interrogative, half exclamatory." Christopher Tuckett, "Seeing and Believing in John 20," in *Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology* (ed. Jan Krans et al.; NovTSup 149; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 173 n. 10, argues that the phrase should be taken as a statement, but then says, "If however it is a question, it is surely a question presuming the answer 'yes!' " He provides no explanation for this suggestion.

[590] Estes, *Questions of Jesus*, 170.

[591] Lindars, *John*, 616, Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:334. Lincoln, *John*, 503, suggests that Jesus' question asks, "Have you believed their testimony because you have seen me?"

[592] Michaels, *John*, 1019, notes, "Jesus' words to Thomas here also recall his words to Nathanael (1:50), where he . . . promises something 'greater.' "

but with the eyes of faith. Thus, Jesus declares, "The blessed (are) those who have not seen and yet have believed."[593] Appearing at the Gospel's beginning and at its end, these two question of Jesus serve also to frame its narrative.[594]

Therefore Jesus' words in 20:29a are best read as a rhetorical question.[595] Jesus is not asking whether or not Thomas saw, or whether or not he believed. Jesus asks a rhetorical question for the sake of Thomas, the disciples, and all who believe. He asks so as to teach. What has Thomas seen? What has he otherwise come to believe, and how? Thomas sees, then believes. In a sense, he believes because he has seen. But has Thomas seen WHAT he now believes? Is not faith "the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1)? Does he not therefore now believe what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see? How, then, has he come to believe?

Gerald Borchert observes that Jesus' question is best read as rhetorical, and adds, "But this question, rather than being a rebuke of Thomas, provides the evangelist with the opportunity to call for believing that is not based on sight or touch but on the message of the witnesses. The Gospel and this periscope itself is intended to engender such believing that is parallel to that of the early witnesses without the benefit of tangible witnesses."[596] Jesus' question is not easily answered with a simple yes or no. Yes, Thomas has seen what he seemingly demanded to see. The result of this encounter was belief. But, no, Thomas has not seen what he now believes about Jesus. He confesses what can never be seen (1:18a). John Marsh notes that Thomas "had learnt in

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[593] Trakatellis, "Seeing and Believing," 43, suggests, "An aspect then, of the blessedness of believers in John 20:29 could be the *greater things* promised in 1:50." Sanders, *John*, 437 n. 1, states, "it may be that the situation is summed up in a question which confronts the listener with the vital issue involved before the blessing which forms the climax to the whole as pronounced."

[594] Cameron, "Seeing Is Not Believing," 48, observes that John typically presents a question in order to address a character's understanding and to prepare the reader for a clarifying statement from Jesus.

[595] Collins, "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen," 175 n. 7, observes, "The NRSV, however, interprets John 20:29a as if it were a rhetorical question. . . . So, too, did many minuscule manuscripts and the RSV, as well as the revised NT of the NAB and some modern commentators."

[596] Borchert, *John 12–21*, 316.

the mere 'seeing' of the glorified Lord that sense and sight were not the sufficient things he had supposed. In a strangely paradoxical way he had found through seeing that seeing was not believing. . . . Belief, that is to say, is not the inevitable concomitant of sight as such; it is, as John and the whole New Testament make plain, always the work of the Holy Spirit."[597] Therefore, seeing is NOT believing. Rather, to believe is finally to see with the eyes of faith what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. Thus, Thomas' seeing of the invisible Father (14:9) happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus (20:29) that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

Thus, Jesus' question to Thomas seeks no answer from Thomas. Rather, it awaits an answer that Christ alone can give, that teaches both Thomas and the rest of the disciples the true nature, the true cause, of faith. Through word alone does the Holy Spirit engender faith in him who is the Word in the flesh. For our sake, and for our salvation, God happily binds himself to that which is powerful to do his work in this world through his word, through him who is the Word of Life, the source of faith for all. Through words from and about Jesus comes Spirit-wrought faith, or the Spirit does not do its work, faith in what can never be seen, yet can be and is believed in Thomas and all the rest. For "the blessed," are "the not-seeing yet believing ones," who by grace through faith in response to words from and about Jesus have been given to see with heavenly eyes what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see.

[597] Marsh, *Saint John*, 646–47. The New Testament teaches that faith happens not when one sees, but when one hears. For "hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?" (Rom 8:24). Instead, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). And so, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). See also James W. Voelz, *Mark 1:1-8:26* (ConC; St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 55, who suggests that in the "strange and perplexing" Gospel of Mark as well, "seeing is *not* believing; on the contrary, seeing *follows from* believing, not the other way around."

"The Blessed (Are) Those Who Have Not Seen and Yet Have Believed"

As is customary, the definite preverbal predicate nominative (the substantized adjective μακάριοι) appears without the article. The copula ("are") is assumed. The single use of the article οἱ modifies the two substantized participles, ἰδόντες and πιστεύσαντες,[598] which are linked by the contrastive ("and yet") conjunction καί. Not two groups but one group of persons is described. Raymond Collins notes, "The generic participles, joined by καί and qualified by a single article, function as the generic singular of the typical gnomic saying, or the אַשְׁרֵי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר ('blessed is the man who') of biblical tradition. It is not a single individual but an entire class of people that is envisioned."[599] The resulting axiomatic utterance (both ἰδόντες and πιστεύσαντες are thus gnomic aorists)[600] speaks to a corresponding comprehensively timeless truth that without exception describes all faith, beginning with the faith of Thomas.[601] Barrett suggests, "The aorists in John may be 'timeless,' " but then errs, furthering the common misunderstanding that Jesus refers only to those who will believe in the future, when he states that they "probably indicate the fact that when John wrote the Church was composed of men who had seen no such resurrection as Thomas had seen, and yet had been converted (had come to believe). The blessing is probably intended for all Christians other than eyewitnesses, not for those only who were able to believe

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[598] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 282, cites 20:29 as an example of a construction in which the article governs multiple substantives, and the groups referred to are identical. See also Collins, "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen," 174, who labels ἰδόντες and πιστεύσαντες "arthrous and conjoined participles." Collins also observes that these two verbs "are among the most common vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel."

[599] Collins, "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen," 183.

[600] Tholuck, *John*, 418, notes, The aorists ἰδόντες and πιστεύσαντες are to be explained by the use of the aorist in general propositions and proverbs, as in James 1:11, 24; Luke 1:52."

[601] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 615, observes, "[M]any substantival participles in the NT are used in generic utterances. . . . As such it is expected to involve a *gnomic* idea." Carson, "Faith without Evidence," 116–17, argues that the aorist is not to be understood as indicating past time, and so concludes that the participles may be understood as indicating a future sense. Yet this interpretation is based on the assumption that Thomas is NOT being addressed in 20:29b. Instead, the text is most plainly read understanding the aorists as gnomic, with the disciples and the future readers in mind.

without signs and wonders."[602] Raymond Collins suggests that Jesus' pronouncement is a beatitude as found in Greek and Hellenistic literature, due to the absence of a principal verb and the presence of the word *μακάριοι* at the beginning.[603]

The question is not whether Thomas saw, but what he saw. It is not a question of whether he believed, but what he believed, and how. The question is what did Thomas see and what did he not see when he saw Jesus. And if Thomas is unable to see what he believes about Jesus, where does such knowledge, such faith in him, come from? The vast majority of scholars have treated this passage as though seeing is believing. But this need not be, and should not be, how one reads the text.

In John, there is a seeing that is the work of one's flesh and blood eyes (e.g., "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails," 20:25), and there is a seeing that exceeds the capacity of one's flesh and blood eyes to see (e.g., "The one who has seen me has seen the Father," 14:9). Therefore, "seeing Jesus" need not necessarily and solely refer to the work of one's flesh and blood eyes. Does Thomas believe because he has seen Jesus? At face value, the answer to Jesus' question seems to be yes. Does Jesus imply, however, that the answer might also be no? Udo Schnelle suggests that Thomas experienced "miraculous sight." More than merely seeing the resurrected Jesus, Thomas sees in Jesus what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. "In miraculous fashion, Thomas is able to test the identity of the Risen One with the earthly Jesus

[602] Barrett, *John*, 477. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 443, regarding the blessing in 20:29, states, "This is the true climax of the gospel; the rest, however true and however moving, is mere postscript."

[603] Collins, "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen," 175. Later (p. 177) Collins suggests, "Immersed in the tradition of the Jewish Scriptures as his narrative was, it is likely that the Evangelist was inspired by the scripture's use of beatitudes." See also Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:334, who observes, "It is remarkable that the beatitude form of style is used not a little (seven times) in Rev, both for eschatological promise and for warning. If Rev is connected with the 'Johannine circle,' the use of such a mode of expression in the mouth of the evangelist cannot surprise."

within space and time."[604] According to Schnelle, "Jesus expressly accepts the connection between miraculous seeing and the faith that results."[605] Thus, the answer implied by Jesus may also be no. For, in the seeing of Jesus, there is always also a not-seeing. Those who know of this blindness are nevertheless blessed (see 9:38–41). Thomas sees what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see, but eyes of faith most certainly can. Thomas sees Jesus in a way that is only possible through faith.[606]

Such a reading of the Johannine seeing is consistent with the role of seeing in the Fourth Gospel generally, and especially in chapter 20. The Beloved Disciple sees the testimony of the empty tomb and believes (20:8), yet does not fully understand what has happened until the meaning of Scripture is made clear to him (20:9; cf. 2:22; 12:16). Mary sees the risen Jesus, but does not recognize him until he calls her by name (20:16; cf. 10:3–4). The Ten rejoice at seeing Jesus (20:20), yet this occurs only after Jesus has spoken "peace" to them (20:19). Thomas sees Jesus in the room, but does not confess him until after Jesus has spoken (20:26–27).[607] Seeing him, and no more, is no sufficient catalyst for the engendering of faith. Throughout the narrative

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[604] Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 141. While the distinction between the earthly Jesus and the Risen One is not overly helpful, Schnelle's perception of a seeing beyond what is accomplished by the physical eyes alone assists in contemplating the full meaning of the text. Thomas sees and confesses more than just the physical reality of Jesus. See also Lincoln, *John*, 504, who notes, "The wounds in the body of Jesus serve for him as a sign, pointing to the revelation of God in Jesus as the crucified and risen one and eliciting from him the appropriate response of belief in Jesus as Lord and God."

[605] Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 141. Schnelle continues (p. 142) to explore the difference between Thomas and the Johannine community (and readers of the Gospel) who do not have the opportunity for this miraculous seeing. See also Köstenberger, *John*, 579, who notes, "Thomas acknowledges Jesus as his Lord and God. Although 'Lord' may have simply expressed respect, the reluctant disciple now realized that Jesus was in fact somehow God incarnate."

[606] Tholuck, *John*, 417–18, notes, "To avoid misapprehending the answer of our Lord, we must bear in mind, that what he says is meant only to have reference to the domain of religion, but it is essential to religious faith, in antithesis to the outer world, to hold fast to that which is invisible, παρ' ἐλπίδα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι, Rom 4:18."

[607] Talbert, *Reading John*, 256, regarding 20:25, suggests, "Thomas's demand has to do with the question of whether or not the one whom they have seen is really Jesus. The only way he will believe that it is the same Jesus is by empirical verification of the wounds in his body." However, Thomas's confession does not express that this is what he believes. Thomas confesses much more than the validation of the identity of Jesus as the one who was crucified.

of the Gospel, thousands see Jesus. Why do but a few believe? The healing of the man born blind does not immediately result in faith (9:35–36). Once his eyes are opened, he must hear from Jesus if he is to believe (9:37–38). Thus, the question is the true identity of Jesus, and where the knowledge of this comes from. Only those who know that they are blind to this will ever truly see (9:39–41) that there is more to Jesus than meets the eye.

When addressing the disciples' desire to see the Father, Jesus teaches the disciples that there is a seeing of him that exceeds what flesh and blood eyes ordinarily are able to see. "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" (14:9) cannot imply a seeing of Jesus or of the Father with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, for "no one has ever seen God" (1:18). There is more at stake. The true seeing of Jesus results in something that is otherwise impossible: the seeing of the invisible God.

For the blessed are those who do not see and yet believe. Jesus' blessing to those who do not see and yet believe refers not only to future generations. It refers without exception to all who believe in what can only be believed in response to the Word. Those living before the incarnation of the λόγος, those living at the time of his suffering and death, and those living after his ascension to the Father are all blessed to believe in what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see: God.

Just as the object of what can be seen is vital for 20:29, so also is the object of what one otherwise believes. What do those who are blessed believe? This question is largely unaddressed by the commentaries. Commentators write as though Thomas' seeing of what he believes is self-evident. Yet it is clear from the rest of the Gospel that such assumptions are misleading. What does Thomas see? What does he believe? Is seeing believing? Thomas' confession proclaims Jesus to be Lord and God. How does he know this?

Thomas believes that the man standing before him is God. This is his confession. How has he come to know this? "The absolute use of the verb 'to believe' in 20:29," notes Gilbert van Belle, "is naturally clarified by the preceding verse in which Thomas confesses his faith. It is a question of believing that Jesus Christ is our Lord and our God or, in other words, that he is the Messiah, the Son of God."[608] This is the faith desired by the narrator in the prologue.[609] The Gospel declares this twice in the prologue (1:1, 18), and concludes with it here (20:28). What is necessary for such faith to exist?

The content of belief for those who hear this word concerning the Word is that Jesus is God. He is God in the flesh, and he reveals the Father, who is the God never seen. The confession of the invisible God informs the content of Thomas' faith. The one standing before him is the image and reflection of one who cannot be seen. He is the man Jesus, but he is also the God who cannot be seen. In this dichotomous reality, Jesus reveals the Father to Thomas and the disciples. Jesus fulfills his own promise to them from 14:9. Those who see him, see the Father. The seeing of the one, that he is one with the other, is the seeing of the other, not because they are one and the same, but because they share in all things, the same nature, the same will, the same mission. Marianne Meye Thompson notes that Jesus' response to Philip in 14:9 "means not that the Father and Jesus are identical but that the Son so fully embodies the Word, glory, and life of the Father that to see the Son is to see the Father. There need be no journeys to heaven, no practice of mystical techniques, in order to gain a vision of the Father, for the Son incarnates the

[608] Van Belle, "Christology and Soteriology in the Fourth Gospel," 442. See also Marsh, *Saint John*, 648, who says, "The word ***believe***, thus used absolutely, cannot but mean full belief in Jesus as Christ and Son of God."

[609] Lincoln, *John*, 503, states, "Now Thomas is able to make explicit the implications of Jesus' words. For readers, of course, this unique status of Jesus has been made clear from the beginning of the narrative. The prologue had already stated that the Logos was God (1:1) and that it is the only God who has made the Father known (1:18). But readers have then had to watch from this position of superior knowledge to see whether the various characters in the ensuing narrative are able to recognize Jesus' identity."

Father's glory and hence makes the Father known."[610] Raymond Brown rightly notes, "This is very high christology."[611]

Thus, those who believe in Jesus believe in the one who sent Jesus. Those who hear Jesus hear the Father, whose word he speaks. It is this faith that forms the content of Thomas' confession. Barnabas Lindars, states:

> Jesus was both "with God" and also "was God." As one who was "with God," he could be thought of separately from him, and this is most easily understood by using the idea of the Father and the Son. But the union between them is such that Jesus can say, "I and the Father are one" (10:30), so that "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9). It is in this sense that "my God!" is an appropriate expression of faith in Jesus as the exalted Lord. The act of belief not only puts Thomas into relationship with the risen Lord, but also with the Father himself.[612]

Not only then is the Father one whom no one has ever seen. Thomas confesses Jesus to be what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. A man stands before him, and he confesses him to be God. Flesh and blood stand in the room, having been exalted on the cross and vacated the tomb, with wounds palpable still, and Thomas proclaims him to be Lord and God.

Thus, the blessed are those who see in Jesus with the eyes of faith what flesh and blood eyes—including Thomas' eyes—can in no way see: God. Gregory the Great understood this. He comments:

> When the apostle Paul says that "faith is the ground of things to be hoped for, the proof of things that are not evident," it is clear that faith is the proof of those things that cannot be made evident. Things that are evident no longer involve faith but recognition. Why, then, when Thomas saw and when he touched, was it said to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed"? Because he saw one thing, and he believed another; divinity could not be seen by a mortal person. He saw a human being, and he confessed him as God.[613]

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[610] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 114.

[611] Brown, *John*, 2:632.

[612] Lindars, *John*, 615.

[613] Pope Gregory I, *Forty Gospel Homilies* (trans. Dom David Hurst; CS 123; Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian

He sees the flesh and blood of the risen one. He then also believes something about the risen one that flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. This important distinction has been largely overlooked by commentators. Most discuss the issue of seeing and not-seeing in 20:29 as though seeing were believing. No one has ever seen what Thomas confesses regarding Jesus. The blessed are those who believe what cannot be seen. Thomas sees flesh and blood and confesses what has never been seen.

Thomas confesses, observes John Marsh not some "simple 'belief that Jesus who was crucified had been raised from the dead and could therefore visit the disciples again.' That would be belief in a miracle of resuscitation, or even of resurrection; it would not of itself constitute belief in Jesus Christ as he who is one with the Father. It would justify Thomas saying 'My Lord,' but it could hardly justify him in saying 'My *God*.' "[614] Thomas confesses instead what no one's eyes can see: God. Thomas' eyes see a man, yet his faith confesses God.[615] Thomas' eyes see the one that he has followed all this time, the one that he sometimes understood and sometimes misunderstood. His eyes see the one who died. Yet it is his belief that Jesus and the Father are one that he confesses. Blessed is the one who has faith wrought by the Spirit in response to words from and about Jesus, or there is no faith. Blessed is the one who believes what has never been seen yet can be known in him who makes God known.

Thomas is blessed to believe what his eyes can in no way see. Indeed, he is blessed to confess what seems contrary to his eyes. As John Marsh observes:

Publications, 1990), 207. See Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 11–21* (ACCS 4b; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 373.

[614] Marsh, *Saint John*, 647. See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 385–86, who states, "His utterance does not simply acknowledge the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, but expresses its ultimate meaning, i.e., as revelation of who Jesus is. Yet it is not an abstract theological definition concerning the person of Christ."

[615] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 170, makes a similar observation about John the Baptist in his comments on John 1, "In Jesus John is confronted by the eternity of the Word of God. And this is what the prophet also sees. He sees what no human eye can see or even conceive of."

> But the eye with which a man "sees" the one who sent Jesus Christ into the world is not located in any physical body as a sense organ, and its functioning can therefore take place both in association with physical seeing, as in the case of the beloved disciple, Mary Magdalene, the disciples on Easter evening, and now Thomas on the octave of Easter; but it can also, even there, be recognized as distinct from physical sight, and this is made clear in the story of Thomas, who stands for all ages as the link between the experience of the apostles and that of the later Church, making plain to all believers that there was no advantage to the apostles in "seeing"; not really, because physical seeing can be as seriously questioned as any other experience of sense; not really, because the vision of Jesus as the Word of God incarnate is the gift of the Spirit both to those who "see" certain things and those who do not. The blessedness of belief is thus really to those who believe, not to those who see. This is the universal beatitude with which John closes his gospel. It includes Thomas as well as contemporary man; and contemporary man as well as Thomas.[616]

This one who stands before him is a man who was dead and is now alive. But in no way does it follow that a risen one is necessarily also God. In John's Gospel, there is another who already has died and is risen, yet is not God. Lazarus, of course, is never confessed. Something fundamentally distinguishes the one risen one from the other. Thomas confesses the one and not the other to be Lord and God. What distinguishes the one from the other is not what any of them have seen. What distinguishes the one from the other is the word that they have heard, words from and about the one and only one who makes God known. For the blessed are those who believe what they have heard (Rom 10:17).

Positioned in close proximity to the Gospel's third and final reference to Jesus as θεός (20:28), Jesus' concluding axiomatic utterance recalls the "not-seeing yet knowing" of John 1:18 and thus helps to strengthen further the inclusio around the Gospel's narrative. A full understanding and appreciation of John's use of inclusios leads one to look back to the narrative's beginning in order to understand its end. Upon investigation, one finds not only unique explicit references to the deity of Jesus both at the beginning and at the end of the

[616] Marsh, *Saint John*, 647–48.

narrative, but also references to not-seeing. The prologue ends with the striking, absolute statement, "No one has ever seen God." Without qualification, this statement presents a problem for the reader. If God is not seen, then how is one to know him? The answer in the Gospel is the one who always has been the one and only one to make God known.[617] The coming of this one does not change the truth of 1:18a. God the Father is never seen. God is not seen. No one has ever seen God. Yet those who see with the eyes of faith that Jesus is one with the Father see the unseen Father. Thomas confesses what cannot be seen. All who believe in God believe in him who cannot be seen. Such faith comes not by sight, but by hearing. In response to words from and about Jesus, what Thomas and the others have seen is now seen in a new light. Those who have not seen what now they believe are blessed. For they have come to believe what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. Therefore, to Thomas and the rest, to all such not-seeing yet believing ones, Jesus pronounces his blessing in 20:29. For, without exception, the blessed are those who do not see what they they believe about Jesus.

In this representative disciple, Thomas (meaning "twin"),[618] the work of the revealer to make God known is emblematically accomplished. The revealer, the Word, reveals through words what flesh and blood eyes can in no way see. Such words from and about Jesus have always engendered and will continue to engender Spirit-wrought faith in those who hear them.

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[617] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 8, says, "Jesus himself is visible to the physical eye, but to truly see him (as not all men do) is to see the one who is otherwise invisible."

[618] Koester, *The Word of Life*, 127, states, "Readers of John's Gospel are like Thomas in that they are not among those who initially saw the risen Christ. They are also like Thomas in that they have received testimony about Jesus—the Gospel itself conveys such witness. John's account of the resurrection shows that seeing does not guarantee believing—one can see the empty tomb, the grave cloths, the angels, and even the risen Jesus without coming to faith. By extension, readers learn that faith is not the result of accumulating more and more information about the situation at the tomb. John has shown that no matter how clear something appears to be, it is susceptible to alternative interpretations. The reports *about* the risen Jesus evoke faith when they are made effective *by* the risen Jesus. It is true that Thomas eventually saw the risen Jesus with his own eyes, and this will not be the case for the readers, at least until 'the last day' (6:39). Yet the Gospel assumes that resurrection faith continues to be generated because the risen Christ continues to be active, encountering people through the witness of his disciples and the work of the Holy Spirit."

Through Thomas and the rest of the eyewitnesses still others like them will become "not-seeing yet believing ones" when, in response to what they have heard, in response to words from and about Jesus, they believe what their eyes can in no way see.

Conclusion

John 1:18a states boldly that no one has ever seen God. This is an absolute and striking statement that confronts the reader as incompatible with certain base assumptions. First, how can a God who cannot be seen be known? What about the instances in the Old Testament wherein individuals are said to have seen God? The rest of 1:18 provides some resolution to these tensions. The μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὢν has made him known. Thus, there exists the possibility of a not-seeing yet knowing in the prologue.

The unseen θεός, revealed by the λόγος in the flesh, by the μονογενὴς, θεὸς, ὁ ὢν, can be known. The one and only one has made him known. The invocation of Old Testament contexts (beginning with the glory in 1:14 and Moses in 1:17) moves the reader to see that Jesus always has been the only and only one who makes God known. Charles Gieschen notes:

> That the Prologue understands the [One and Only] as the Glory whom privileged individuals in Israel's past have seen is implied in 1:18. "No one has ever seen God; it is the [Ond and Only] of God, who is close to the Father's bosom, who made him known' (cf. 6:46). This is a profound interpretation of the Israelite and Jewish theophanic traditions: God (the Father) has never been seen by man (cf. Exod 33:20) but the . . . (Son) has seen him and makes him known. This assertion implies that the [Son] was *seen* before the incarnation since he is the one who makes God known, not only *in* the incarnation, but also *before* the incarnation (cf. 6:46). Therefore, he has always been the visible manifestation of God.[619]

At the end of the prologue, God is unseen and yet known. The following narrative explains and illustrates how God always has been and so still is made known through the deeds and words of Jesus. The Spirit does its usual work of engendering faith through words from and about Jesus,

[619] Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 273.

so that, at the conclusion of the narrative, Jesus proclaims a blessing on those who consequently do not see and yet believe. Thus, from not-seeing yet knowing in the prologue finds its informing end in the not-seeing yet believing at the close of the narrative.

Thus, not just John 1:18 and John 20:28 but also John 1:18 and John 20:29 contribute together to the inclusio surrounding the Gospel's narrative. Not just the places where Jesus is called God but also those that speak of not-seeing yet knowing/believing help to frame the narrative. Lack of appreciation for this has led not only to neglect of that which informs the Gospel's structure but also interpretational missteps.

The reader of the Gospel gains greater comprehension of the Gospel's important themes through a better understanding of John's intentional structuring of his narrative. Just as Jesus is proclaimed to be God at the beginning and end of the prologue (1:1 and 1:18), so also is he heralded at the end of the prologue and the end of the narrative (1:18 and 20:28). Helping also to buttress the inclusio formed by 1:18 and 20:28 is the theme of not-seeing yet knowing/believing in 1:18 and 20:29. Schuchard correctly observes:

> [T]hough God is indeed hidden, he is nevertheless accessible to all. "The One and Only, God, the [O]ne [W]ho [I]s (ὁ ὤν, as twice in LXX Exod 3:14!!) in the bosom of the Father, that one has made him known" (John 1:18; cf. Col 1:15). John teaches, then, not that the "seeing" of the Father in the person of the Son is the same as a direct or immediate "seeing" of God. Rather, to see the Father in the person of the Son is to see what mere eyes can in no way see. This manner of "seeing" is done by grace through faith, not with the eyes but with the mind and heart by the power of the Spirit through the word of the Gospel. Thus, Jesus declares that "the blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!" (John 20:29).[620]

Thus, there is a not-seeing yet knowing at the end of the prologue in 1:18, and a not-seeing yet believing at the end of the narrative in 20:29. Standing at the midpoint of the Gospel's end-to-end double inclusio (see 1:1 and 18; see also 1:18 and 20:28), the statement "No one has ever

[620] Schuchard, *1–3 John*, 477.

seen God (1:18a) confronts the Gospel's reader with a truth that might initially startle. Yet there is one who always has been the one and only one who makes the God who has never been seen known. Thus, John 1:18a links the beginning of the narrative of the Gospel with its informing end, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

John states at the conclusion to his prologue, "No one has ever seen God." This endpoint of the first inclusio formed by explicit statements that Jesus is God (1:1; 18), serves also as the beginning of another inclusio containing verses which identify Jesus as God (1:18; 20:28). In the context of this truth concerning the identity of Jesus another truth is repeated: God is not-seen (1:18). Those who believe in this not-seen God are blessed (20:29).

This dissertation has explored the role of the statement, "No one has ever seen God" in the interpretation of the Gospel of John. Intrinsic to such an investigation is the identification of the placement of this statement within the inclusio formed by 1:18 and 20:28–29. The key contribution of this present study is the role of not-seeing in both the beginning and end of the narrative.

Chapter 1 exposed the gaping hole in scholarship regarding 1:18a. There exists a dearth of comments concerning the meaning of this verse. Most observe some similarity between 1:18 and the theophany at Sinai recorded in Exod 33–34, without noting the extreme difference between Moses' experience of seeing God and John's statement of not-seeing. While many have identified the statement in John 1:18 as aporetic, none have sought to understand this statement within the context of an inclusio with the end of the narrative in the Thomas episode (20:28–29).

Chapter 2 focused on the inclusio around the prologue formed by 1:1 and 1:18. These verses share the statement that Jesus is θεός, the identification of two who are both properly θεός, as well as the intimacy of fellowship shared by the two who are θεός. More than a mere recapitulation of 1:1, 1:18 adds to the inclusio the statement that no one has ever seen God.

Chapter 3 discussed the identity and role of the μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν. The μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὤν reveals him who is not-seen. It is this revelation which forms the narrative of the Gospel. The words from and about Jesus are the means by which the Spirit works faith. Jesus is the one who always reveals God. He is the ὁ ὤν (Exod 3:14 LXX) of the Old Testament, who appeared to Moses, Jacob, Abraham, Isaiah, and the rest of the prophets. Though none have ever seen God the Father (5:37; 6:46), God appears to his people through Jesus. Those who see Jesus with the eyes of faith, see the Father (14:9).

Chapter 4 explored the confession of Thomas, and Jesus' subsequent blessing. The words of Thomas' confession further identify Jesus as ὁ ὤν of Exod 3:14 (LXX). The words of the Twin are the highest Christological confession of the Gospel and the New Testament. It is this faith that is blessed. Those who thus believe in the identity of Jesus are blessed; for in believing, they see what cannot be seen with flesh and blood eyes.

In a world dominated by the scientific approach to knowledge and reason, the mysterious and unknown is suspect. There can be no certainty in what cannot be seen and therefore cannot be known. If something is not observable, then it is not provable. As a matter of fact, that which is observable is perceived by most as necessarily more reliable than that which cannot be seen or proven. Enter into this world the statement of John that "No one has ever seen God." Yet enter also the premise that God not only exists, but that he is the source of all things, of life and light and even the source of the observable world. Faith in this one who is not-seen is the only way to obtain temporal and eternal life. It is this God who is the implicit and explicit object and content of the New Testament Scriptures.

God is a mystery. He is not a solvable mystery, nor a mystery that exists in order to be explored nor understood. God is a mystery revealed in the further revelation of his mysterious nature. However, just when all is lost in an ephemeral world of not-seeing and not-knowing, God

reveals himself in the basest of means. God reveals his love, his mercy, his plan, even his most important essence of character through the blood of a man dying on a cross. It is this reality that separates the theology of the New Testament scriptures from the other sacred texts of the world. It is this reality that necessarily substantiates the claims of Paul that salvation is the working of God alone (see Rom 3:21–25; Eph 2:8–9). It is this reality that forms the foundation of the centrality of love in the Johannine corpus. The scandalous reality of God displayed for the world on a cross, through death, in weakness, forms the brilliance of the banal proclamation of the apostles and evangelists who produced the words of the New Testament.

Yet the very public and very physical reality of the scandal of the cross does not negate the truth of God's mysterious existence and essence. He is still not-seen. He is still not-known. It is only and always through his self-revelation in Jesus Christ that God is seen and known. This revelation however, is far from clarifying and reducing the mystery. The God who is outside of the assumed hierarchy established through the Enlightenment refuses to capitulate to the base means of perception in order to exist, while at the same time coming to his creatures through the simplest means available; blood, bread, water, death, and words.

Standing at the midpoint of the Gospel's end-to-end double inclusio (see 1:1 and 18; see also 1:18 and 20:28–29), the statement "No one has ever seen God (1:18a) confronts the Gospel's reader with a truth that might initially startle. Yet there is one who always has been the one and only one who makes the God who has never been seen known. Thus, John 1:18a links the beginning of the narrative of the Gospel with its informing end, where the seeing of the invisible Father happens not when one sees with flesh and blood eyes, and no more, but when one by the power of the Holy Spirit believes in response to words from and about Jesus that Jesus is one with the Father, ὁ ὤν (LXX Exod 3:14) in the flesh.

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