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Word of Life, Word of God: An Examination of the Use of the Term Logos in the Johannine Literature

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WORD OF LIFE, WORD OF GOD:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE USE OF THE TERM “LOGOS” IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

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To my mother and to the memory of my father
With gratitude
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The term λόγος is employed in various ways in the Gospel of John and in the First Epistle of John. Most notably, in the Prologue of the Gospel of John, the λόγος is said to have been with God “in the beginning,” indeed to be God (1:1), and to have become flesh and dwelt among us (1:14), the latter verse thus being a clear reference to Jesus Christ. The first verse of the First Epistle of John speaks of the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς— the word of life—a phrase which is commonly held by scholars to be less christologically explicit than the use of λόγος in the Gospel Prologue.

Commentators have offered various explanations for the literary and theological provenance of the λόγος of the Prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18). Some have seen the origin of the Johannine λόγος in Hellenistic Jewish speculation, the Hebrew Wisdom tradition, or early Gnosticism. The majority of these scholars take the view that the Gospel is a unity, composed mainly by one author, and that the Epistles of John were composed later. Yet these same scholars acknowledge that the First Epistle of John is written in a style inferior to that of the Johannine Gospel, that its theology is less advanced, and that the use of the term λόγος in the opening verses of the First Epistle (I John 1:1) is more ambiguous as a reference to Jesus himself than it is in the Gospel Prologue.
In a 1993 article, Ed. L. Miller defended the view that the First Epistle of John was written after the main body of the Gospel of John but prior to the Prologue of the Gospel.¹ Like many of his scholarly predecessors, Miller points to the inferior grammatical style ("incoherence") and the less explicit nature of the Christological use of λόγος in the Prologue of 1 John in comparison to that in the Prologue of the Gospel of John, but in opposition to these scholars, he draws the conclusion that the Epistle Prologue served as "a kind of rough draft or outline for, or at least an anticipation of, some of the later lines that now, included in the Gospel Prologue, introduce the Fourth Gospel."² Miller sought to demonstrate from this assertion that one can trace a development in the use of λόγος as a Christological title from the body of the Gospel through the ambiguity of the Prologue of the First Epistle to the clear identification of the λόγος with Jesus Christ in the Gospel Prologue. According to this proposed trajectory, λόγος and (perhaps) ῥῆμα are already used “in a theologically and christologically suggestive manner” in the body of the Gospel,³ where the two terms refer to the preaching and teaching of Jesus; next, λόγος appears in the Prologue of the First Epistle of John as part of the phrase “λόγος of life” which may refer in a “confused” way to Christ himself; finally, the

²Ibid., 453.
³Ibid., 450.
term λόγος becomes an explicit Christological title in the Prologue of the Gospel.⁴ Thus we move from Jesus who speaks the word to Jesus who is the Word.

Miller finds “the origin of the Johannine Logos” in the body of the Gospel of John itself, in the theologically-laden employment of the term to refer to the “word” or “words” of Christ. In fact, Miller goes so far as to criticize those who “stop short of the possibility that it is [in the Fourth Gospel proper] primarily, essentially, and exclusively that we encounter the origin of the Logos concept, any other associations attaching themselves only along the way and only in a more or less accidental manner.”⁵

Urban C. von Wahlde, whose views will be discussed more fully in chapter two of this dissertation, asserts that the Gospel of John as it has come down to us went through three editions to reach its final form. It is his position that the First Epistle of John was written before the composition of the third edition of the Gospel, when the completed Prologue was prefixed to the Gospel.⁶

My objective in this dissertation is to explore whether or not the position of Ed. L. Miller can be seen as complementary to that of von Wahlde—that is, can we trace the development of an increasing Christological significance for the term λόγος in the Johannine tradition, starting with what von Wahlde has identified as the first

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⁴ Ibid., 455.
⁵ Ibid., 450.
edition of the Gospel, then proceeding through the second edition, I John, the third
dition of the Gospel and finally the Prologue, where this development seems to
culminate in the explicit identification of the λόγος with Jesus Christ?

In order to conduct this investigation, we shall begin in chapter 1 with a survey of
the history of scholarship on the relationship of the Gospel of John to the First
Epistle of John. In chapter 2 we shall look in detail at von Wahlde’s arguments for
asserting that the Gospel was composed in three stages and that 1 John was written
before the composition of the third edition. In chapter 3, we shall consider the
significance of the term λόγος in the first and second editions of the Gospel,
according to von Wahlde’s demarcation of that material. Chapter 4 will be an
examination of the use of λόγος in I John, including that of the opening verse. In
chapter 5 we shall consider how λόγος is used in the third and final edition of the
Gospel. Chapter 6 will include an excursus on the proposed backgrounds for the
term in the Gospel Prologue followed by the presentation of the case for that
hypothesis which is, in my view, best supported by the evidence. Chapter 7 will
summarize what our investigation has shown regarding whether or not we can in
this manner trace the evolution of an increasing Christological significance for the
word λόγος in the Johannine tradition.

What follows is a more detailed summary of the content of each chapter.
Chapter One: A Review of Modern Scholarship on the Relation of the Gospel of John to the First Epistle of John

The procedure for investigating the question considered in this dissertation, namely, whether or not we can trace an evolution of the Christological significance of the term λόγος within the Johannine literature, depends to a great extent on a particular view of the sequence of composition of that literature. The issue of the interrelationship among the Johannine writings is known as the “Johannine Question.” For reasons that will be briefly explained in the Introduction to chapter 1, we shall focus in this chapter on the history of scholarship on the relationship between the Gospel and the First Epistle of John.

Most of the scholars surveyed in this chapter regard the Gospel of John as mainly the work of one author. For them, there are two principal questions: First, are John and I John from the pen of the same author or of two different authors? Second, which was composed first? Other scholars believe the Gospel was composed in stages over a period of several decades; consequently, the questions of authorship and order of composition are more complex. One of those questions is when the First Epistle was written in relation to the stages of the Gospel’s composition.

I shall conclude the chapter with observations on certain elements common to all these views. These considerations will show that the widely accepted theories on the relationship of the Gospel of John to the First Epistle of John raise many questions that indicate that that relationship is more complex than most scholars have maintained. This conclusion will lead into a discussion in chapter 2 of von
Wahlde's position concerning the composition of the Johannine Gospel and the place of I John in relation to the Gospel.

**Chapter Two: The Theory of Urban C. von Wahlde on the Composition of the Gospel of John and of the First Epistle of John**

In this chapter, I shall survey the evidence presented by von Wahlde for his position that the Gospel of John was composed in three stages (editions) and that the First Epistle of John was written after the second edition but before the third and final edition.

**Chapter Three: A Study of Λόγος in the First and Second Editions of the Gospel of John**

Having made the case for the view that the Gospel of John went through three editions to reach its final form, I shall consider the instances of the term λόγος in the material identified by von Wahlde as coming from the first and second editions of the Gospel. I shall consider the two editions in one chapter because the term appears only three times in the first edition.

An issue that must be addressed before our examination of the use of λόγος in the different editions of the Gospel is the fact that many scholars regard the words λόγος and ῥῆμα as interchangeable in the main body of the Gospel. Thus our understanding of the meaning of λόγος in the second and third editions of the Gospel may be affected by how ῥῆμα is used. (ῥῆμα does not appear in the first edition.)
I shall then proceed to examine the three instances of λόγος in the first edition. This will be followed by an examination of the use of the term in the second edition. Those instances in which the term has the ordinary meaning of word, speech, or discourse will be looked at briefly. The focus will be on those occurrences of the word λόγος that bear a theological significance. Each of these passages will be considered in detail by looking at what commentators have said about each of these passages. I shall conclude this chapter by summarizing what the theologically-significant uses of λόγος in the first and second editions reveal about what significance the term possesses in those editions.

**Chapter Four: A Study of Λόγος in the First Letter of John**

Having taken the position that 1 John was written between the composition of the second edition and third editions of the Gospel, the consideration of λόγος in the first and second editions will be followed by an examination of its use in the First Epistle of John. Because the significance of its occurrence in the prologue of the Epistle is the subject of much debate and because its use there is different from that of the rest of the Epistle, this chapter will be divided into two major parts: λόγος in the Epistle prologue (1 John 1:1) and λόγος in the rest of the Epistle. In the first part, we shall examine the Christological significance of the phrase ο λόγος της ζωής. Does the word λόγος here refer simply to “the word of God”—that is, the Scriptures? Is it meant to point in an ambivalent way toward Jesus himself? Is it used here in the same way that it is used in the Prologue of the Gospel of John, or is it a stepping stone from the idea of Jesus proclaiming the word to that of Jesus *being* the Word?
In the second part of chapter 4, we shall examine the significance of λόγος in the remainder of I John, where the term is used in the context of the command to “keep the word” of God. We shall examine whether the phrase refers to the commandment to “love one another,” or to a command to persevere in “correct belief” (e.g. I John 2:5, 7).7

Excursus: The Theory of Urban C. von Wahlde Concerning the Johannine Commandment Tradition

The issue addressed in part II of chapter four, namely, the significance of the term λόγος in relation to the Johannine Commandment Tradition, is complex. Urban von Wahlde represents a view different from that of the majority of scholars. I shall provide a separate Excursus in which we shall examine in detail the arguments of von Wahlde for his position on this question.


In this chapter, we shall look at the meaning of λόγος in the material identified by von Wahlde as constituting the third edition of the Gospel. In this edition, Jesus speaks of remaining in his word. What is this word in which the disciples are to abide?

Chapter Six: A Study of Λόγος in the Prologue of the Gospel of John

Here we arrive at what I maintain is the final piece to be added to the Gospel (along with chapter 21). We shall consider different theories concerning the author’s possible source or sources for the concept of the λόγος as he employs it in

the Gospel Prologue. Then we shall look at ways in which the use of the term in the Prologue goes beyond what we find in those possible sources. This will be followed by a presentation of my own view as to the provenance and meaning of the Logos concept as it appears in the Prologue.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion to the Study of the Term ΛΟΓΟΣ in the Gospel and Letters of John

In this chapter, I will briefly review the evidence that has been presented to determine whether or not there was an evolution of the Christological significance of the term λόγος from the first edition of the Gospel of John through the second edition, 1 John, the third edition, and, as the culmination of this development, the Prologue of the Gospel of John.
CHAPTER ONE

A REVIEW OF MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ON THE RELATION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Introduction

As stated in the General Introduction, my objective in this dissertation is to explore whether or not we can trace the development of an increasing Christological significance for the term λόγος in the Johannine tradition, starting with what Urban C. von Wahlde has identified as the first edition of the Gospel, then proceeding through the second edition, the First Epistle of John, the third edition of the Gospel and finally the Prologue, where this development appears to culminate in the explicit identification of the λόγος with Jesus Christ. The answer to this question depends to a great extent on a particular view of the sequence of composition of the Johannine literature. Therefore, before considering the use and significance of λόγος in 1 John and in each of the three editions of the Gospel marked out by von Wahlde, I shall show through a review of modern scholarship on the relationship of the Gospel of John to the First Epistle why the evidence calls for a view of this relationship that is more complex than most scholars have favored.
The issue of the interrelationship among the Johannine writings is known as the “Johannine Question.” However, for our purposes, we need not include in our consideration 2 and 3 John or the Book of Revelation. The term λόγος does not appear in 2 John, and in 3 John the only instance of the word is the plural λόγοις πονηροῖς, which refers to the “evil words” by which a certain Diotrephes is slandering the community (3 Jn 1:10).1 The relationship of Revelation to the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John is highly debated and is a question beyond the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, we shall focus on the relationship between the Gospel and the First Epistle of John.

For scholars who regard the Gospel as mainly the work of one author, there are two principal questions: First, are John and I John from the pen of the same author or of two different authors? Second, which was composed first? For scholars who believe the Gospel was composed in stages over a period of several decades, the questions of authorship and order of composition are more complex. The fundamental question to be asked in that case is, as Kenneth Grayston put it, “[W]here does the material of the epistle stand in relation to the process by which the Gospel came into being and exercised its influence?”2

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Since there is a great variety of opinion regarding the solution to the Johannine Question, I shall attempt to bring some order to this survey of various Johannine scholars by grouping them as follows:

I. Scholars who hold that the Gospel of John was composed before 1 John.

II. Scholars who hold that the Gospel was written alongside or after the Epistle.

III. Scholars who hold that the Gospel and 1 John were written independently of each other.

IV. Scholars who hold that 1 John was written after the main body of the Gospel of John but before the Prologue.

I shall conclude the chapter with observations on certain elements common to all these views.

In considering the issue of whether the Gospel or Epistle was written first, we shall also look at the interrelated question of whether or not these two works are the product of a common author. The relevance of this question to our concern with the order of composition may seem minimal. Indeed, the first of the scholars surveyed in this chapter, A. E. Brooke, writes that one can "reasonably" take either position on the chronological priority of the one Johannine document over the other whether one maintains that they are from the hand of the same author or that one of the two is the work of an imitator.³ However, the attempt to answer this question

brings to light evidence that points to the complex nature of the composition of the Gospel and its relation to the First Epistle.

Most of the scholars whose views are summarized in this chapter deal with the question of common authorship for the Gospel and I John by addressing first the evidence from literary style and then the evidence from similarities and differences in theology or theological nuance between the two works. It can be said at the outset that the evidence based on literary style does not shed much light on the question of common authorship or of the priority of one work over the other. Indeed, several of the scholars surveyed have judged that evidence to be "inconclusive." Therefore, in the presentation of the work of these scholars, their comparison of the linguistic features of the two documents will be summarized only briefly. The comparison of the respective theological content of the Gospel and Epistle, however, raises several questions regarding the relationship between them. These considerations will set the stage for the discussion of the views of Urban C. von Wahlde in Chapter 2.

Scholars Who Hold that the Gospel of John Was Composed before 1 John

A. E. Brooke (1912)

Many of the scholars whose views on the relationship of the Gospel of John to the First Epistle of John are presented in this chapter begin their discussions with reference to A. E. Brooke's 1912 commentary of the Johannine Epistles. As recently

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5 See n. 3 above.
as 2009, D. Moody Smith wrote of the continuing value of Brooke’s commentary and considers it to be the appropriate starting point for tracing a trajectory to the present time in the discussion of the relation between the Johannine Gospel and Epistles. Brooke, in turn, acknowledges that in the section of his commentary’s introduction addressing the question of identity of authorship for the Gospel and the First Epistle (pp. i-xix), he has made “freest use” of the second of a series of articles on the topic by H. Holtzmann, which was published in 1882 in the *Jahrbuch für Protestantische Theologie*. In fact, Brooke’s lists comparing the vocabulary, style, and content of the Johannine Gospel and First Epistle are “practically taken” from Holtzmann’s.

Brooke devotes section 1 of the Introduction to his commentary on the Epistles of John to the relationship of the First Epistle to the Gospel of John. In part (a) of this section, “Identity of Authorship” (pp. i-xix), Brooke addresses the question of whether or not the Gospel and First Epistle were written by the same person. In the part (b), “Priority” (pp. xix-xxvii), Brooke seeks to answer the question of which of the two Johannine works was produced first. The following is a summary of his arguments and conclusions as contained in these two parts of his Introduction.

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8 Brooke, Epistles, i.

9 Though Brooke’s subtitle for section 1 of his Introduction is “The Epistles and the Gospel,” in actuality he focuses exclusively on the relationship between the Gospel and the First Epistle.
Brooke begins his consideration of the question of common authorship for the Gospel of John and 1 John by stating that the traditional view that the same person wrote both is still (that is, in 1912) the view of the majority of scholars:

The view which at first sight must seem obvious has always been maintained by the majority of scholars who have investigated the subject...And the patent similarity of style, language, and ways of thinking between the two writings might reasonably be regarded as leaving no room for doubt.  

Nevertheless, Brooke acknowledges that “a minority of competent scholars” has rejected the traditional view and that their number has “largely” grown in his day. He refers to the “increasing number of supporters” for Baur’s explanation of “the obvious connection” (Brooke’s words) between the Gospel and First Epistle, namely, that it is the result of imitation rather than common authorship.

Brooke, relying to a great extent on Holtzmann, first considers in great detail the linguistic evidence for the issue of common authorship of the Gospel and First Epistle of John. As stated in the Introduction to this chapter, these literary features do not contribute much to answering the question of priority and so will be presented here only briefly.

Brooke reproduces Holtzmann’s lists of phrases common to both the Gospel of John and the First Epistle, a long list indeed which Brooke calls “very striking.” Based on these considerations, Brooke states that the connection between the

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10 Brooke, Epistles, i.


12 Brooke, Epistles, i.
Gospel and First Epistle “is obvious,” leaving one with the choice of explaining this connection by positing either an imitator or “a writer repeating, *not without significant variations*, his common phrases and methods of expression [emphasis in the original].”¹³ In Brooke’s view, “[t]he usage of these phrases seems on the whole to support the latter hypothesis.”¹⁴

Brooke states that “perhaps clearer” examples have been observed in pairs of verses or parts of verses, one from the Gospel and one from the Epistle, in which the wording of both is very close or, in part, identical. He writes: “It would be easy to make the list a long one.”¹⁵ To him, “the usage suggests a writer who varies his own phrases, rather than a mere copyist.”¹⁶ If a copyist is involved, “there has at least been intelligent use and not slavish copying.”¹⁷

After considering other similarities in writing style between the two Johannine works, Brooke turns to similarities of ideas, both in doctrine and ethics. Since the investigation of the similarities and differences in theology between the Gospel and I John contributes a great deal to the discussion of the relationship between the two works, it is good to review Brooke’s treatment of the issue in some detail.

¹³ Ibid., v.
¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid.
Brooke states that "[t]he general ideas which form the basis of the Johannine teaching are common to both." These ideas and some of the passages in which they are found include, as Brooke presents them:

The incarnation of the Son of God [I John 4:2/John 1:14]; The life which has its source in Him [I John 5:11/John 1:4; 6:33; 6:35 (cf. v 48)]; And which is identified with Him [I John 1:1, 2/John 5:26; 11:25]; Abiding in God: being in Christ, the means of abiding in God [I John 2:24; 3:6; 5:20/John 6:56; 14:20; 15:4-7; 17:21]; God's word abiding in us [I John 2:14; 2:24/John 5:38]; God's love proved by the sending of His Son [I John 4:9/John 3:16]; the command to love the brethren, which is the result of this [I John 3:23 (cf. 3:11, 16, 18)/John 13:34 (cf. 15:12, 17)]; Believers the children of God [I John 5:1/John 1:12, 13]; The great stress laid on "witness"[I John 5:6 (cf. vv 9-11)/John 5:36, 37 (cf. 8:17 f.)].

Brooke also notes

[c]ertain pairs of opposites common to both writings: Light and Darkness, Life and Death, Love and Hate, Truth and Falsehood, The Father and the World, To be of the World [and] To be not of the World, God and the Devil, The children of God and the children of the Devil, To know and not to know God, To have seen and not to have seen Him, To have life and not to have life.

Though Moody Smith observes that "‘dualism’ is a term Brooke seldom if ever uses" and that since Brooke’s day "recognition of the importance of so-called Johannine

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18 Brooke, Epistles, viii.

19 See Brooke, Epistles, viii-ix. Brooke presents these in the form of a table, but I have arranged them in paragraph form. In the table he provides the Greek text of most of the verses cited, thereby demonstrating not only the closeness of thought between the Gospel and the First Epistle but the similarity of expression as well. Since the view taken in this dissertation is that the Gospel of John was composed in three stages, with the First Epistle having been produced between the second and third of those stages, it is worthwhile to note here that the majority of the Gospel verses cited in this list as containing parallels in thought to the Epistle come from the third edition: John 1:4, 12, 13, 14 (from the Prologue); 3:16; 5:26; 6:56; 11:25; the latter part of 14:20 ("...and you in me and I in you"); 13:34; 15:4-7, 12, 17; 17:21. The exceptions are John 6:33, 35, 48 (concerning the Bread of Life); the central part of John 14:20 ("...I am in my Father..."); John 5:38; John 5:36, 37 and 8:17f (concerning the concept of "witness").

20 Brooke, Epistles, ix.
dualism” has grown,21 it is clear from his listing of “pairs of opposites common to both writings” that Brooke was aware of the presence of dualism in the Johannine Gospel and First Epistle.22

Brooke comments that many more similarities exist between the Gospel and I John:

To quote all that exist would involve printing practically the whole of the Epistle and a large part of the Gospel. [Johann Daniel] Schulze’s statement, quoted by Holtzmann (p. 134), can hardly be denied, “In the whole of the first Epistle there is hardly a single thought that is not found in the Gospel.”23

Brooke considers as well the words and phrases found in the Gospel but not in the Epistle and Holtzmann’s list of fifty “peculiarities” of phraseology in the Epistle.24 To him, the differences are not strong enough to suggest different authors. Rather, the impression of similarity between the two works is stronger than that of difference.25 The differences do suggest to him the probability that that an interval of time passed between the composition of the Gospel and that of the Epistle, but


22 Brooke, Epistles, ix. Though Brooke does not provide chapter and verse for the instances of dualism in the Gospel, we shall see that according to von Wahlde’s theory of the composition of the Gospel, such a dualistic worldview is characteristic of the third edition. It is not, however, a dualism in which opposing forces of good and evil possess equal power (the absolute dualism of Gnosticism), but the modified, ethical dualism of an apocalyptic worldview in which God’s goodness will ultimately triumph. Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, 1:251; 3:334.


24 See Brooke, Epistles, xii-xv.

25 Brooke, Epistles, xv-xvi.
“there are no adequate reasons for setting aside the traditional view which attributes the Epistle and Gospel to the same authorship.” He considers common authorship to be “the most probable explanation of the facts known to us.”

Next, Brooke deals with the question of priority, that is, whether the Gospel of John or First Epistle of John was written first. He begins by summarizing the arguments of those who favor the priority of the Epistle. As he presents each argument, he also presents his counter-argument. Only those points which have been taken up for debate by subsequent scholars are summarized here.

An argument presented by those who maintain the priority of the Epistle over the Gospel that is especially pertinent to the topic of this dissertation is that the Prologue of the Epistle (1:1-4) contains “an earlier stage of the Logos doctrine” than the Prologue of the Gospel. The Logos doctrine of the Epistle Prologue does not go beyond the “personification of abstract categories, ζωή αἰώνιος, λόγος τῆς ζωῆς,” and the concrete conception of the Personal [sic] Logos has not yet been reached. It is only in the Gospel that the Monarchianism, common to the Epistle and other second century writings, is met by a clear differentiation of the Person of the Father and the Son. Brooke does not indicate the source of this quotation.

Brooke, Epistles, xix. Monarchianism was an early view of the relationship between the Father and the Son that denied the distinct personhood of the Logos, making him either “a mere power residing in God” (dynamic Monarchianism) or, as Son, merely one of three names, together with “Father” and “Holy Spirit,” for “the same divine person” (Modalistic Monarchianism). See Alan Cairns, Dictionary of Theological Terms (Greenville, S.C.: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2002), 285. Note the phrase, “Epistle and other second century writings [emphasis added].”
Brooke counters that, while such a view might be “satisfactory” if we only had the two Prologues as evidence, when we consider the Epistle and the Gospel in their entirety, the Epistle contains many passages in which the “personal differentiation’ of the Father and the Son” is as clearly expressed “as in the Logos doctrine of the Gospel (cf. 2:22 f., 4:2, 5:10, etc...).”32 Brooke argues further that even if it is true that the Logos doctrine of the Epistle Prologue represents “an earlier stage” than that of the Gospel, “[i]t is at least as probable that in the Epistle there is a further accommodation to the Monarchian ideas which came into greater prominence as time went on.”33 The doctrine of the Gospel was far ahead of its time, so that “some accommodation to the average faith of Christendom would not have been unnatural.”34

Brooke’s final response to the view that the Logos doctrine of the Epistle Prologue is not as developed as that of the Gospel Prologue is to appeal to the general impression left by a comparison of the two passages...that the Preface [i.e. Prologue] to the Epistle presents a summary of the various points contained in the [Gospel] Prologue, and distributed throughout the Gospel, upon which the writer wishes to lay stress in the new circumstances that have arisen.35

In Brooke’s view, the first verses of the Epistle would make more sense to those familiar with the Prologue of the Gospel. “It is far more difficult to explain the

32 Brooke, Epistles, xix-xx.
33 Ibid., xx.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Prologue [of the Gospel] as an expansion and development of what is contained in the Epistle."³⁶

The second argument of those who favor the priority of the Epistle over the Gospel which Brooke addresses is that the term ἄλλον παράκλητον of John 14:16, a reference to the Holy Spirit, was suggested by the Epistle’s reference to Christ as παράκλητος (2:1). Brooke argues that this tells us nothing as to which document came first since the term is used differently in each case. In the Epistle, Christ acts as our paraclete with the Father in heaven, while the Spirit’s role is on earth and consists of reminding the disciples of Christ’s words, “convicting the ‘World’ of the mistakes they have made with regard to Christ, and...leading the Disciples into all the truth.”³⁷

Next, Brooke summarizes and responds to the argument that the Epistle author expects the return of Christ in the immediate future, while “the Evangelist has given up this expectation” and “refined” the understanding of the Parousia by interpreting it as “the symbolical expression of a spiritual presence [of Christ].”³⁸ In response, Brooke acknowledges that the Epistle’s concept of the Parousia may represent “average Christian feeling more closely than the Gospel,” that is, that the Epistle is closer to the primitive Christian understanding than the Gospel, but this may be the result of “modification of more original, and perhaps unpopular, views” rather than

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³⁶ Ibid.
³⁷ Ibid., xx-xxi.
³⁸ Brooke, Epistles, xxi.
a growth in understanding from the Epistle to the Gospel.\textsuperscript{39} Furthermore, the difference in viewpoint between the Gospel and Epistle on this point “has been greatly exaggerated.”\textsuperscript{40} Brooke cites John 5:26-29 and 6:39, 40, as evidence that the Evangelist “had not given up the popular expectation of a ‘last day’ and a final judgment.”\textsuperscript{41} The Farewell Discourses provide evidence of this as well. Indeed, the situation faced by the author of the Epistle may have led to a greater emphasis on the imminence of the Parousia than one finds in the Gospel.\textsuperscript{42} Brooke also states that “the ‘spiritualization’ of the idea of Antichrist in the Epistle is at least as complete as the spiritualization of popular eschatology in the Gospel.”\textsuperscript{43}

The fourth argument of those who maintain the priority of the Epistle over the Gospel is that the Epistle’s view of propitiation, that is, the expiatory nature of Christ’s death, is closer to the Pauline teaching than the Gospel’s.\textsuperscript{44} The comparison is made between I John 1:9, in which God’s justice is “the motive for the forgiveness of sins,”\textsuperscript{45} together with the statement that Christ is ἱλασμός... περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν (2:2), and Romans 3:25 ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
The Evangelist, on the other hand, sees Christ’s work as that of glorifying the Father in the Son “in making His name known among men (John 17:4-8).” Brooke counters that “[a]gain it is a question of proportion rather than of fundamental difference.” He acknowledges that the expiatory nature of Christ’s work “is not specially prominent in the Fourth Gospel,” but the concept is there, as evidenced by John the Baptist’s declaration: “Ἰδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου,” and by the Evangelist’s comment upon Caiaphas’ inadvertent prophecy that “…it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.’ …he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation….” (Jn 11:50-51). Brooke points out that some have even seen in the latter passage “a literary connection with I John 2:2.” Besides, says Brooke, even if there were a real difference between the Gospel and Epistle in their view of the expiatory character of Christ’s death, “it would have little bearing on the question of priority.”

Having listed and attempted to refute these and other arguments in favor of the Epistle’s chronological priority over the Gospel, Brooke presents the evidence for the priority of the Gospel, though he states that “a considerable portion” of that

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
50 Brooke, Epistles, xxii.
51 Ibid.
evidence is “as little conclusive as most of what has been considered on the other side.”52

To Brooke, the first important point for consideration is that “[m]any passages in the Epistle seem to need the help of the Gospel in order to become intelligible. They could only have been addressed to those who knew the Gospel, or, at least, the teaching which it contains.”53 Some of the examples Brooke provides of passages from the Epistle that seem to presuppose ideas in the Gospel and the Gospel passages that contain those ideas include the following:

I Jn 2:27 - καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρῖσμα ὃ ἔλαβετε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ μένει ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε ἣνα τις διδάσκῃ ὑμᾶς: ἀλλ’ ὡς τὸ αὐτὸ χρῖσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων...

Jn 14:26 - ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀγιόν...ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν [ἐγώ].

I Jn 3:8 - ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἔστιν, ὅτι ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ὁ διαβόλος ἀμαρτάνει. Cf. I Jn 3:15

Jn 8:44 - υμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἔστε καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν θέλετε ποιεῖν. ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ οὐκ ἔστηκεν

I Jn 5:12 - ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει τὴν ζωήν: ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει.

Jn 3:36 - ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον: ὁ δὲ ἀπειθῶν τῷ υἱῷ οὐκ ὄψεται ζωήν, ἀλλ’ ἡ ὀργή τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐπ’ αὐτὸν.54

Brooke admits that

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., xxii-xxiii.
54 See Brooke, Epistles, xxiii.
In none of these instances do we find any thought or expression in the Epistle which is obviously, and beyond all doubt, borrowed from the Gospel. But there is no mistaking the general impression [emphasis added] which they convey. Originality and force is always in the Gospel rather than in the Epistle, where the thoughts are, as a rule, derived and generalized.\textsuperscript{55}

In his view, the language of the Epistle can be seen as intelligible provided that we assume that the audience "ha[s] been taught the content of the Gospel."\textsuperscript{56}

For all this, Brooke admits that even if he is correct that the language of the Epistle presupposes familiarity with the teachings of the Gospel, "it does not amount to proof of the priority of the Gospel in actual composition."\textsuperscript{57} The Epistle author may have been teaching the concepts found there over a period of time, so that "[e]ven if we need the Gospel to explain the Epistle, the readers of it may have had their necessary commentary in the author's oral teaching."\textsuperscript{58}

One item Brooke returns to is the connection between the Prologue of the Epistle and that of the Gospel. After repeating his view that the opening verses of the Epistle are "most easily explained as presupposing the Prologue [of the Gospel]," he states that "a closer examination of ver. 2 [of the Epistle] almost compels us to take this view":\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{55}Brooke, Epistles, xxiii.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., xxiv.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., xxv.
καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ύμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἦτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν (1 John 1:2).

He compares this to these verses of the Gospel Prologue:

ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. (1:4)

Καὶ ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο... καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (1:14).

ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ (1:7) ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. (1:4)

Brooke asserts, “There can be no doubt on which side the originality lies. The Epistle presents a summary, not a first sketch.”

After considering a few more examples of concepts and language found in both the Gospel and Epistle, Brooke admits that none of the examples provides “proof positive of the [Epistle author’s] actual dependence on the text of the Gospel,” but in his view, “their evidence, such as it is, all points in the same direction.” Once again, he resorts to “the general impression gained from studying the two writings,” which he finds “convincing.” The Epistle author’s goal is to remind his readers of what they had been previously taught but had not adequately understood.

Brooke concludes his consideration of the evidence regarding which of the Johannine documents was the earlier of the two with a bold statement:

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60 See Brooke’s chart in Epistles, xxv-xxvi.
61 Brooke, Epistles, xxvi.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., xxvii.
64 Ibid.
These considerations, if they accurately represent the facts, determine *with certainty* [emphasis added] the question of priority, so far as the substantial content of the two documents is concerned. They do not perhaps preclude the possibility of a later date for the actual composition, or publication, of the Gospel. But in view of them such hypotheses are extremely unlikely.\textsuperscript{65}

The work of subsequent scholars, whose views are considered below, demonstrates that Brooke did not settle once and for all the questions of common authorship or of priority for the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. Nevertheless, with a great deal of help from the previous work of H. Holtzmann, he did lay out the issues in detail and presented arguments that succeeding generations of scholars would seek to address.

\textbf{C. H. Dodd (1937, 1946)}

In 1937, C. H. Dodd published an article, “The First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel,”\textsuperscript{66} on the question of the identity of authorship between the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. Since that time, scholars dealing with this issue have frequently been in dialogue with Dodd’s article. He repeated much of the evidence and his conclusions in his 1946 commentary \textit{The Johannine Epistles}.\textsuperscript{67} In these two works, Dodd recognizes that it had been the “unvarying tradition from early times” as well as the view of many scholars of his own era that the Evangelist—that is, the author of the Gospel—was also the author of the

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.


Epistle.\(^{68}\) Dodd observes the great similarity between not only the ideas of the two works but the modes of expressing them.\(^{69}\) He refers to the findings of A. E. Brooke who, in his introduction to his commentary on the Johannine Epistles,\(^{70}\) lists about fifty phrases in I John "which have close parallels in the Gospel."\(^{71}\) Dodd asserts that there are few passages of the Epistle which do not echo the language of the Gospel.\(^{72}\) Such are the similarities between the two works that one must conclude that either they are by the same author or that the author of one was deeply influenced by the author of the other.\(^{73}\) If the latter is the case, the second author was either a personal disciple of the first, or profoundly studied his works at length, or both.\(^{74}\)

Dodd, however, points out that there are significant differences between the two works "in form and content."\(^{75}\) He first considers differences in style and language. He makes the general observation that "[t]here is surely to be felt in the Fourth Gospel a richness, a subtlety, a penetrating quality of style to which the Epistle

\[^{68}\text{Dodd, Epistles, xlvi—xlix. See also Dodd, "First Epistle," 129.}\]

\[^{69}\text{Dodd, "First Epistle," 129; Epistles, xlvi.}\]

\[^{70}\text{Brooke, Epistles, i-iv. As we noted in our summary of Brooke's views, Brooke in his turn indicates that most of the lists in his introduction are "practically taken" from those of H. J. Holtzmann in the second of his articles on the "Problem of the First Epistle of S. John in its relation to the Gospel," ("Das Problem des ersten johanneischen Briefes in seinem Verhältnis zum Evangelium") in Jahrbuch für Protestantische Theologie 8 (1882) 128-52.}\]

\[^{71}\text{Dodd, "First Epistle," 129-130; Epistles xlviii, referring to the work of Brooke (see previous note).}\]

\[^{72}\text{Dodd, "First Epistle," 130; Epistles, xlviii.}\]

\[^{73}\text{Dodd, "First Epistle," 130; Epistles, xlviii.}\]

\[^{74}\text{Dodd, "First Epistle," 130; Epistles, xlviii.}\]

\[^{75}\text{Dodd, "First Epistle," 130; Epistles, xlix.}\]
cannot pretend." Dodd acknowledges the subjectivity of such observations, but he maintains these can be supported to some degree by a linguistic study of the original Greek of the two texts. Dodd proceeds in his 1937 article to a detailed examination of “Grammatical words and particles.” He compares the frequency of appearance of prepositions, adverbial and conjunctive particles, compound verbs, particular grammatical structures (idioms), rhetorical figures, and possible Aramaisms in each of the two works. After observing, for example, that “the Gospel is much richer in particles than the Epistle,” he goes on to state, “The statistics thus confirm the impression that the style of the epistle is more monotonous and less flexible.” His consideration of the far greater number of compound verbs in the Gospel than in the Epistle leads Dodd to the same conclusion, namely, that “the style of the Gospel is richer, more varied, and more flexible than that of the Epistle.” Even when Dodd draws comparisons between the Epistle and passages of the Gospel comparable in length to the Epistle, the results demonstrate to him, pace Brooke, that there is good reason for questioning the belief that the same person wrote the two works.

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76 Dodd, *Epistles*, xlix; see also “First Epistle,” 131.

77 Dodd, *Epistles*, xlix.


79 Ibid., 132.

80 Ibid., 133.

81 Ibid., 133-34.
The most impressive linguistic evidence that Dodd presents to challenge the notion of common authorship of Gospel and Epistle concerns vocabulary. Differences between the two works include the presence in the Epistle of “no fewer than thirty-nine words or expressions” not found in the Gospel, despite the fact that the Epistle is much shorter, and the absence of over thirty words from the Epistle which are frequently employed in the Gospel or which relate closely to central Johannine ideas. Dodd asks,

Is it likely... that [the author of the Gospel] would have written a second work upon some of the central Christian themes, without using words which came so easily to him for the ideas of being saved and lost, for grace and peace, for divine judgment, for the will of God, for the divine necessity (δει̃), for “bearing fruit” in Christian living—without referring to Christ as Lord, to His glory, to His descent and ascent, or to the resurrection....

It is not impossible, answers Dodd, but it raises “misgivings about the common authorship of the two works.” He sums up the evidence from his analysis of the style and language of the Gospel and Epistle by saying that it leaves the authorship of the two works “in grave doubt.”

Turning from form to theological content, Dodd acknowledges the “affinity of thought” between the Gospel and the First Epistle, and comments that it is not surprising that there should be some differences between two works by the same

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82 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 138. See also Epistles, p. i.
83 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 139-40; see also Epistles, l-li.
84 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 140-41; See also Epistles, li.
85 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 141; See also Epistles, li.
86 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 141.
author. However, there are differences between Gospel and Epistle that “go beyond what we should naturally expect in two works from the same hand.”

Dodd expresses in a well-balanced chiastic sentence one of the major differences between the Gospel of John and I John:

It is perhaps worthy of note that the Epistle has no quotations from the Old Testament, only one direct allusion to it [3:12\(^{88}\)], and few indirect echoes of Old Testament language, while the Gospel has very many indirect echoes, a large number of direct allusions, and abundant quotations, as well as some arguments which presuppose Rabbinical interpretations of the Old Testament.\(^{89}\)

Furthermore, as Dodd writes in his commentary, the Gospel gives evidence of familiarity with the ideas and practices of first-century CE Judaism and of “strong interest” in the teachings of both the Hellenistic and rabbinic Palestinian Judaism.\(^{90}\)

On the other hand, the Johannine Epistles, according to Dodd, show the least amount of Jewish influence of all the New Testament writings\(^{91}\):

Here, then, is a formidable difference between our two writings: the Gospel according to John has a stamp derived from the influence of the Old Testament, from interest in Judaism as a living religion, and from knowledge of a Semitic tongue: the Epistle is free from any such stamp.\(^{92}\)

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\(^{87}\) Dodd, *Epistles*, p. li; see also “First Epistle,” 141.

\(^{88}\) See Dodd, *Epistles*, li.

\(^{89}\) Dodd, “First Epistle,” p. 141; see also *Epistles*, p. li. In fact, I John and the shorter 2 and 3 John are the only New Testament works that do not directly quote the Old Testament, see *Epistles*, lii.

\(^{90}\) Dodd, *Epistles*, lii.

\(^{91}\) Ibid.

\(^{92}\) Ibid. See also “First Epistle,” 141-142.
Dodd observes in his 1946 commentary that, by way of contrast, the Hellenistic element, which is blended in a unique way with the Hebraic characteristics in the Gospel, “has in some respects freer play in the First Epistle.”\(^93\) In his 1937 article, he wrote of the “Gnostic” influence on the Epistle and Gospel, but he refers to many of the same examples.\(^94\) These will be dealt with below.

Most importantly, Dodd argues that in the area of theology we find differences between the Gospel of John and the First Epistle which might indicate different authors. He believes it can be shown that “there are in the Epistle a number of divergences from the Gospel which are not isolated or occasional, but represent together a tendency of thought different from, or even inconsistent with, the thought of the Gospel.”\(^95\) The theological outlook of the Epistle on certain key points is “nearer than the Gospel to general or popular Christian beliefs,” especially on three key points: eschatology, the redemptive efficacy of Christ’s death, and the concept of the Spirit.\(^96\) I will briefly examine each of these below.

First, Dodd considers the differences in Eschatology. The author of the Epistle maintains that the (second) coming of Christ (2:28) and the “Day of Judgment” (4:17) are near. In the Gospel of John, however, “the eschatology inherited by

\(^{93}\) Dodd, *Epistles*, lii.


\(^{95}\) Dodd, “First Epistle,” 142.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., See also *Epistles*, pp. liii-liv; here he refers to the popular Christianity to which the Epistle is closer than the Gospel as “primitive.”
Christianity from Judaism is...radically transformed.” 97 For the Evangelist, for example, the “rebirth” of the believer and the fulfillment of “all other such hopes” have already taken place (cf. John 3:5), whereas the author of the Epistle, who would agree that the Christian is “born of God,” holds out the hope to the believer of becoming “something more glorious still at the parusia.” 98 Both Epistle and Gospel agree “that the believer already possesses eternal life,” but while the Evangelist presents “the whole life of the Church” from the perspective of eternity, the author of the Epistle sees the Church as in a state of expectancy, and those expectations are soon to be fulfilled. 99 Dodd refers to the Epistle’s time-scheme as that of “popular eschatology.” 100

Another difference between the eschatology of the Gospel and that of the Epistle is that the author of the Epistle evokes the popular Christian belief that before the coming of Christ the Antichrist will appear. 101 For the Epistle writer, this has taken place in the form of the appearance of heretical false prophets who deny the reality of the Incarnation of Christ (2:18, 22; 4:3). Dodd believes that “[i]t is extremely difficult to find a place for this doctrine [of the appearance of the Antichrist before the Second Coming] within the scheme of the Fourth Gospel.” 102 According to Dodd,

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97 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 142. See also Epistles, lii-liv.


99 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 143.

100 Ibid.

101 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 143-144.

102 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 144.
the Evangelist either ignores or reinterprets the “eschatological myth” behind the First Epistle’s “collective Antichrist.”

Second, Dodd examines the differences between the Gospel and the Epistle with regard to the efficacy of the death of Christ. The theology of the Epistle on this topic “scarcely go[es] beyond the terms of the primitive apostolic Preaching.” The author uses “only one technical term of theology” (ἱλασμός), which Dodd translates as “expiation” (2:2; 4:10). He regards the term as an “index” to the notion of the Suffering Servant found in Second Isaiah and maintains that its use was avoided by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Rather than develop the idea of expiation, the Evangelist sees the death of Christ as his glorification or exaltation (12:23, 32-33, 13:31) through which he “‘draws’ all men into the sphere of eternal life (12:32, 11:52).” While Dodd acknowledges that in the Gospel Christ’s death is a sacrifice, it is so as a “self-dedication (ἀγιάζω ἐμαυτόν 17:19), and...as an expression of His ‘love to the end’ for his own (13:1)....It is not a sacrifice for the expiation of sin [emphasis added].”

In Dodd’s view, there is only one passage in the Gospel of John that may possibly be taken as support for the notion of expiation, that in which John (the Baptist) calls

103 Ibid.
104 Dodd, Epistles, liv.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 145.
108 Ibid.
Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). Dodd, however, rejects the idea that this refers to expiation. The Lamb symbolism, he maintains, is more likely an allusion to the apocalyptic image of the horned lamb as leader of God’s flock, an image found in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 14:1-2), rather than a reference to the paschal lamb or the lamb of Isaiah 53.109 Having dispensed with John 1:29 as an expression of the doctrine of expiation, Dodd concludes that “the idea of expiation never occurs in the Fourth Gospel.”110 The Epistle writer, on the other hand, clearly sees the death of Christ as expiatory, and is closer than the Gospel to “general early Christian belief” on this point.111

Third, Dodd addresses the differences between Gospel and Epistle in their teaching on the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John is certainly “high.”112 Though the Evangelist sometimes uses the impersonal and neuter πνεῦμα to refer to the Spirit, “in the closing discourses of the Fourth Gospel the Spirit is more unequivocally personal than anywhere else in the New Testament....He is the Paraclete.”113 In the Epistle, however, the Paraclete is Christ and the use of the term πνεῦμα is similar to its “popular” use as found in Paul and the Acts of the Apostles.114 In I John 4:1-6, in which the readers are told to test the

110 Ibid., 146.
111 Ibid.
112 See Dodd, Epistles, liv.
113 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 146.
114 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 146-147.
pneumata, "[p]neuma is used in the neuter sense of 'prophetic inspiration.'" The author goes on to speak of "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." Dodd maintains that here "there is no suggestion of personality in the spirit," whereas in the Gospel of John 14:17, 15:26, and 16:13, the "Spirit of truth," who is referred to in each of these passages as the Paraclete, "is spoken of in fully personal terms." Dodd also sees the "spirit" in I John 5:6-8 as impersonal, as are the water and the blood, and asserts that here, as in 4:1-6, the term may refer to prophetic inspiration.

According to Dodd,

[t]he conception of the Spirit in the Epistle remains within the limits of primitive or popular belief (3:24; 4:6, 13; 5:6-8...). There is no trace of the high 'Johannine' doctrine which is found in the Gospel (John 3:5-8; 4:23-24; 6:63; and especially 14:15-17, 25-6; 15:26; 16:7-15).

For Dodd, then, the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John actually differ in their theology of eschatology, the efficacy of Christ’s death, and the Holy Spirit.

Dodd writes,

...the differences are not casual or unconnected. They all mean that the Epistle stands very near to the common Christianity of the early period, while the Fourth Gospel shows a remarkable and individual development from this common position.

115 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 147.

116 Ibid. Dodd refers here to John 4:1-6, but it is clear from his discussion that he intends I John 4:1-6.

117 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 147.

118 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 148-149.

119 Dodd, Epistles, liv.

120 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 148.
The differences in theological outlook between Gospel and Epistle on these three themes, together with those differences noted above, raise a strong challenge to the tradition that the same author wrote both works.\textsuperscript{121}

Dodd devotes the next section of his 1937 article to the “Gnostic” influence on the First Epistle. He places the term “Gnostic” in quotation marks and explains that he uses it “as a convenient label for a tendency in thought which can be traced both within and outside Christianity, e.g. in Philo and the Hermetica, in Valentinus and other Christian heretics.”\textsuperscript{122} He asserts that “[t]here are passages in the Epistle which suggest that it stands closer than the Gospel to the ‘Gnosticism’ against which both writings are directed.”\textsuperscript{123} Examples of the Epistle’s affinity to “Gnostic” ideas are the explicit statement that “God is light” (I John 1:5) and the notion that “...if he is manifested, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).\textsuperscript{124} Even the statement “God is love” (I John 4:8, 16) can, according to Dodd, be traced “directly to ideas of Hellenistic thinkers about the divine nature.”\textsuperscript{125}

Having taken the view that I John bears greater affinities with early “Gnosticism” than the Gospel, Dodd interprets two terms in I John in light of parallels with the “Gnostic” sources. The first is the term σπέρμα in 3:9: “Everyone who is born of God

\textsuperscript{121} Dodd, “First Epistle,” 148; Epistles, liv.

\textsuperscript{122} Dodd, “First Epistle,” 148. When summarizing this section in his 1946 The Johannine Epistles, Dodd refers rather to the “Hellenistic element” in the First Epistle, p. lii.

\textsuperscript{123} Dodd, “First Epistle,” 148.

\textsuperscript{124} Dodd, “First Epistle,” 149-50.

\textsuperscript{125} Dodd, Epistles, liii.
does not sin, because His seed (σπέρμα) abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. Dodd cites several passages from “Gnostic” sources and Philo that speak of the divine element in human beings.126 “Those in whom the σπέρμα τοῦ θεοῦ resides are the ‘good souls’ of Valentinus, which are δεκτικαὶ τοῦ σπέρματος ["receptive of the Seed"], and accordingly they are sinless.”127 In his commentary, Dodd identifies the σπέρμα itself, the divine principle which brings about in human beings a rebirth to a sinless nature, as the Gospel.128

With greater hesitation, Dodd also seeks to attribute the use of χρισμα (anointing) in I John 2:20, 27 to this “Gnostic” influence. The term has been understood to refer to an anointing with the Holy Spirit. Dodd argues otherwise. In the context of warning against the secessionists and false teachers, the Epistle author writes with an emphatic υμεῖς: “And you have a chrism from the Most High, and all of you have knowledge” (2:20); “And as for you, the chrism which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His chrism teaches you (and it is true and no lie), and as He has taught you, abide in him” (2:27).129 Note that possession of the chrism leads to knowledge.130 The emphatic you, as if to say,


127 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 151.

128 Dodd, Epistles, 77-78.

129 The translation is that contained in Dodd’s article, “First Epistle,” 152.

130 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 152.
“You too have a chrism,” implies that the false teachers also claimed to have a chrism leading to gnosiso. Dodd maintains that “to be ‘anointed’ is to be initiated into gnosiso. The ‘chrism’ is the teaching communicated to Christians at baptism, by which they are initiated into the Christian ‘mystery’.” Therefore, as was the case with the term σπέρμα, the χρίμα of 2:20, 27, according to Dodd, is the Word of God, the Gospel.

Dodd explains that he is not asserting that the author of I John is teaching “Gnostic” doctrine; rather, he took over terminology from the opponents to use their own language as weapons against them. In doing so, he gave terms such as “seed” and “chrism” a different meaning from that which they had for the “Gnostics.” The point for Dodd is that the author of the First Epistle of John “stood in close contact with that movement of religious thought out of which Christian and semi-Christian Gnosticism came.” The Gospel of John also displays contact with “Gnostic” trends, but here “the ‘Gnostic’ elements are thoroughly mastered and absorbed into a unified and highly individual Christian theology, and the writer is circumspect in his use of Gnostic-sounding language.”

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131 Ibid., 152-153.
132 Ibid., 153. See also Epistles, 61-64.
133 See Dodd, Epistle, 61-64, 78; see also ”First Epistle,” 153.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
Christ through seeing him as he is, is more “unguarded” in its use of “Gnostic” language than is the Fourth Gospel.\(^{137}\)

For Dodd, the challenge provided by differences of style and language to the belief that the Gospel and I John were written by the same person is increased by these differences in thought between the two works.\(^{138}\) He acknowledges the possibility that the same person wrote the Gospel and Epistle if enough time had passed between the writing of each to allow the author to change “his thought and style...”\(^{139}\) He also sees it as reasonable to argue that the Epistle was written first, given that its theology is closer to that of “popular” Christianity.\(^{140}\) The author would then have written the Gospel after his theology had developed more and after he had learned to be more cautious in his use of “Gnostic” language.\(^{141}\)

However, Dodd asserts that “there is definite evidence to suggest that the Fourth Gospel is, in fact, presupposed by the Epistle.”\(^{142}\) The language about a “new” and “old” commandment in the Epistle (I John 2:7-8) would seem to indicate that “the writer and readers had before them the similar passage in John 13:34: ‘I give you a new commandment, to love one another.’”\(^{143}\) Dodd provides another example of a

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 153-154.

\(^{138}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^{139}\) Ibid.

\(^{140}\) Dodd, “First Epistle,” 154. See also Epistles, Iv.

\(^{141}\) Dodd, “First Epistle,” 154.

\(^{142}\) Ibid.

\(^{143}\) Ibid.
passage from I John that he believes is clarified by reference to the Gospel: in I John 3:8-15, the author asserts that the one born of God does not sin, that the one who does not act rightly and love his brother is a child of the devil, and that “anyone who hates his brother is a murderer....” The sudden introduction of the term “murderer” can be better understood with reference to John 8:44-47, where Jesus tells his opponents that their father is the devil, who was “a murderer from the beginning.”

In his 1946 commentary, Dodd gives another example: in I John 5:9-10, the author speaks of the testimony of God on behalf of the Son. The meaning of this passage is made clearer by reference to the Gospel of John 5:19-47, in which Jesus speaks of the same theme. In Dodd’s view, the Gospel passages are presupposed by and help to make sense of the Epistle passages.

Thus, Dodd asserts, if the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John were written by the same person, “we must conclude that he wrote the Epistle after the Gospel.” However, to take the position that the two works had a common author, one would have to suppose that this author declined in his “powers of thought” and skill as a writer as he aged and “reverted in some respects to a more pedestrian outlook...” by the time he wrote the Epistle. Dodd acknowledges the possibility

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144 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 154-55.
145 Dodd, Epistles, 131-133.
146 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 154-155; See also Epistles, Iv.
147 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 155.
148 Dodd, Epistles, Iv.
149 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 155.
that an author may change his/her style and/or ideas with the passage of time and
the changing of circumstances.\textsuperscript{150} He may also have written more carelessly as he
aged, among other similar possibilities.\textsuperscript{151} Dodd, however, believes that the simpler
conclusion is that “the two works are by different authors.”\textsuperscript{152}

In his commentary, Dodd takes note of the view that the Gospel of John is the
work of “several hands,” which, if true, would allow for the possibility that the
author of the Epistle contributed to the Gospel’s composition, but he states that (at
least in 1945 when he wrote his commentary) the scholarly consensus seemed to be
moving away from what he calls “separatist theories”:

\textit{It seems almost certain that the Gospel bears all through (apart from
possible minor and occasional editorial touches, and in spite of the
possible use of various sources) the stamp of a single mind; and in
view of the facts we have noted, it is difficult to find the same mind at
work in the Epistle.}\textsuperscript{153}

In fact, the “mind at work in the Epistle” was “a mind inferior to that of the
Evangelist in spiritual quality, in intellectual power and in literary artistry.”\textsuperscript{154}

Thus Dodd concludes that “the simplest hypothesis...seems to be that the author
of the Epistle was a disciple of the Evangelist and a student of his work.”\textsuperscript{155}

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\textsuperscript{150} Dodd, \textit{Epistles}, lv-lv.
\textsuperscript{151} Dodd, “First Epistle,” 155.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Dodd, \textit{Epistles}, lv-lvi. See also “First Epistle,” 155. In note 1 on p. 155, Dodd allows that the
author of the Epistle may have contributed to the composition of the Gospel, but this contribution
would have consisted of “minor editorial work.”
\textsuperscript{154} Dodd, “First Epistle,” 155.
\textsuperscript{155} Dodd, \textit{Epistles}, lvi; See “First Epistle,” 156.
\end{flushright}
author of the Epistle did not merely imitate his teacher, however, but on some points of theology he had “his own special outlook, and the Epistle represents a definite stage towards that normal or central Christianity which emerged from the New Testament period.”

W. F. Howard (1947)

The significance of the linguistic and stylistic evidence for different authors presented by Dodd was challenged by several scholars, including W. F. Howard. In his 1947 article, Howard makes five general observations which must be taken into account when evaluating the linguistic differences between the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. First, the Gospel seems to have been composed over a long period of time and is the fruit of a lifetime of reflection; the Epistle appears to have been written in response to a particular situation. Second, the Gospel is concerned with a much broader range of topics than the Epistle. The Gospel encompasses several genres of writing: “narrative, dialogue, discourses, with particles appropriate to each.” Howard asks if any of these genres “would have been appropriate in any part of the Epistle.” Third, the Evangelist made use of written and oral sources, so it is natural that the Gospel would contain a broader range of vocabulary than that which is found in the Epistle, which the author wrote or

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156 Dodd, “First Epistle,” 156. See also Epistles, lvi.


158 The “general observations” that follow are from Howard, “Common Authorship,” 13-14.

159 Ibid., 13.
dictated “on the spur of the moment” without reference to a previous source on the same topics.\textsuperscript{160} Fourth, the possible Aramaisms that Dodd sees in the language of the Gospel may be accounted for by “the Jewish character of the tradition or of the written document followed by the Evangelist,” whereas the Epistle was written in “free Greek” on a topic for which there would have been few or no quotations from the Old Testament or sayings of Jesus.\textsuperscript{161} Fifth, there is the question of how much freedom an amanuensis, or secretary, would have had in composing an apostolic letter.\textsuperscript{162}

Howard ably demonstrates that there are sound explanations for why two works by the same author might display the differences in language and style that cause Dodd to doubt common authorship. For example, he points out that the differences in the number of occurrences in adverbial particles can be accounted for by the fact that many of the adverbs that appear in the Gospel but not in the Epistle have to do with time and place and are therefore more appropriate in narrative.\textsuperscript{163} Regarding the greater number of compound verbs in the Gospel, this can be explained by the “vastly wider range of subject-matter in historical narrative [which] gives the Gospel unquestionably a richer vocabulary.”\textsuperscript{164} In dealing with the list of words that that are frequently employed in the Gospel or are closely related to key Johannine

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 15.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
concepts but which do not appear in the Epistle, a list which Howard acknowledges as impressive, Howard reminds the reader that it is necessary to consider the distribution of these words throughout the Gospel and their relevance to the subject-matter and purpose of the Epistle.\textsuperscript{165}

Howard counters Dodd’s arguments against common authorship for the Gospel and the Epistle based on differences in thought by pointing out two flaws in Dodd’s method: it presupposes “too rigid a uniformity on the part of a religious teacher,” and it does not take into account the effect that critical circumstances may have on the expression of doctrine.\textsuperscript{166} It is not surprising that the author, in responding to the crisis that evidently was taking place at the time that he wrote the first Epistle, would give a “special turn” to certain doctrines in his polemical treatise.\textsuperscript{167}

Howard maintains that this difference in emphasis would be especially probable in the area of eschatology, and, as a consequence, in relation to the doctrine of the Spirit. He writes:

\begin{quote}
It is natural to assume that the coming of the Spirit, foretold with such a wealth of instruction in chs. xiv-xvi in the Gospel, is the Johannine equivalent for the older apocalyptic conception of the coming of Christ represented by the discourse in Mark xiii and the Synoptic parallels...[I]n the Gospel the doctrine of the Spirit has sublimated the older apocalyptic conception into a mystical union with the glorified Christ and the Father.\textsuperscript{168}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 17
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\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 22.
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\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
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The eschatology of the Epistle appears to represent a return to the earlier conception of an imminent return of Christ. Howard points out, however, that a strong eschatological element is not lacking in the Fourth Gospel. Dualistic conceptions of a world above versus a world below and of the present age versus the age to come, ideas found in Jewish apocalypticism, are present in the Gospel. Jesus promises to raise up the believer on the last day and refers to his coming again in chapters 14 and 21. The title Son of Man appears in eight chapters of the Gospel. In some of these instances, the title is related to the idea of judgment, a judgment which is regarded as “a continual process in the present.”\textsuperscript{169} However, in 5:21f and 12:47f, this judgment is presented as taking place in the future. “The two conceptions of eschatology, partly as realized already, partly as still a future event, are both present in the mind of the Evangelist.”\textsuperscript{170}

In what would appear to be a return to earlier Christian teaching, the apostasy of some members of the Epistle author’s community was seen by the author as a sign that the end was near, for in primitive Christian thought the appearance of false prophets was one of the tribulations that would take place before the imminent parousia. Indeed, the author calls these apostates “antichrists” (I John 2:18, 22; 4:3; cf. 2 John 1:7).\textsuperscript{171} However, Howard recalls the words of A. E. Brooke:

\textbf{[T]he ‘spiritualization’ of the idea of Antichrist in the Epistle is at least as complete as the spiritualization of popular eschatology in the Gospel. The Parousia which the writer of the Epistle expected,}

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
perhaps more eagerly than when he wrote the Gospel, was nevertheless a spiritual fact rather than an apocalyptic display [emphasis added]. 172

Concerning the doctrine of the Spirit, it is true that in the Gospel the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit, whereas in the Epistle the Paraclete is “the heavenly Christ.”173 However, Howard points out, as had Brooke (see above), that the Spirit is referred to in the Gospel as “another Paraclete” who will continue the work of Christ on earth. In the Epistle, Christ, “the first Paraclete,” continues in heaven to offer intercession as he had on earth (Howard cites John 17: 9, 15, 17, 19 f.). The way in which the role of the Spirit is portrayed in the Epistle, says Howard, was called forth by “the deadly heresy that threatened the Church.”174 Both the heresiarchs and the adherents of the author of the Epistle claim to possess the Spirit as the guarantee that they have fellowship with Christ and with each other (that is, within their respective communities) and the Spirit “gives reality to the testimony of the Church in its message and worship.”175 Howard writes that, in response to the claims of the opponents, the author of the Epistle “applies the Johannine teaching of the Paraclete.”176 (From the context it is evident that Howard is referring to the doctrine of the Paraclete found in the Gospel, for he goes on to allude to Jesus’ words in the Farewell Discourses about the function of the Paraclete.) The Paraclete

172 Brooke, Epistles, xxi.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
testifies to Jesus “come in the flesh” (See I John 4:2). Denial of this basic truth of the Incarnation comes from a “spirit of error” (See I John 4:3, 6). “But the Paraclete is the Spirit of truth, guiding into all truth.”\textsuperscript{177} Thus, Howard disagrees with Dodd’s view that the “spirit of truth” that is opposed to the spirit of error is impersonal.\textsuperscript{178} Howard cites the words of E. F. Scott: “So far from conflicting with [the doctrine of the Spirit] of the Gospel the doctrine of the Epistle is in full harmony with it and serves to elucidate and define it.”\textsuperscript{179}

Regarding the expiatory nature of Christ’s death, which Dodd maintained was absent from the Gospel, Howard makes the statement that “there is no clear doctrine of the Atonement in any of the Johannine writings.”\textsuperscript{180} This statement is somewhat confusing, for he goes on to point out the various places in the Johannine writings that indicate a doctrine of expiation. It should be pointed out, however, that Dodd does not deny that the Epistle presents Christ’s death as expiation for sin.\textsuperscript{181} As Howard remarks, Dodd “has himself done more than any other scholar to prove that ἱλασμός [I John 2:2, 4:10] means not propitiation but expiation, the removal of the infection of sin that keeps man away from fellowship with God.”\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{178} See above, Dodd, “First Epistle,” 147. Note that Howard capitalizes the “s” in “Spirit of truth” whereas Dodd does not.


\textsuperscript{180} Howard, “Common Authorship,” 24.

\textsuperscript{181} See Dodd, “First Epistle,” 144-145 and n. 1 on 145.

\textsuperscript{182} Howard, “Common Authorship,” 24.
we saw above, however, Dodd does deny the presence of a doctrine of expiation in the Gospel of John. Howard points out a fact ignored by Dodd, namely that, whatever the original background to the Lamb of God image in John 1:29, John (the Baptist) declares that Jesus is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world [emphasis added].”  Furthermore, there are the parallels between John 3:16 and I John 2:2 and 4:9 f.:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life (John 3:16 NAB).

He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world (I John 2:2 NAB).

In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins (I John 4: 9-10 NAB).

Regarding the relation of the Gospel and Epistle to “Gnosticism,” Howard makes the observation that, on the one hand, Dodd maintains that the Epistle is closer than the Gospel to “the Gnosticism that is at the farthest remove from primitive Christianity, whilst it [the Epistle] has just been described as nearer than the Gospel to the Judaic theology of earliest days.” Still, Howard acknowledges the presence of this paradox and attributes it to “the effect of Christian apologetic. Both Gospel

\[183\] Ibid., 24.

\[184\] See Howard, “Common Authorship,” 24. I have used the New American Bible translation rather than reproducing the version in Howard’s article.

and Epistle are strongly opposed to Gnosticism, whilst both use language intended to commend the Christian message to the contemporary world of Hellenism.”

Howard concludes: “There is so much in common to Gospel and Epistle, both in language and in thought, that presumptive evidence favours the substantial unity of authorship.” Still he acknowledges that there are certain differences, though these may be due in part to differences in subject-matter, genre, the process of composition and dictation, and to the influence of external events on “the mind of the Christian pastor or leader and upon the needs of the Church.”

Rudolf Bultmann (1967)

Rudolf Bultmann does not accept that the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John were written by the same person. For him, the “decisive argument” against common authorship is that while the Gospel is aimed at non-Christians—“the world” and “the Jews” who represent it—the First Epistle is opposed to “false teachers” who consider themselves true representatives of Christianity. This consideration demonstrates to Bultmann that I John was written after the time of the Gospel. The author of the Epistle was certainly influenced by the language and thought of the Gospel, but he did not merely imitate it.

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186 Ibid.
187 Ibid., 24.
188 Ibid., 24-25.
J. L. Houlden observes that most scholars (at the time of his writing) regard both the Gospel and Epistle as the products of a “Johannine school” rather than as the work of a single author. 190 Few now assert identity of authorship throughout [emphasis added]..., though many scholars accept the possibility that the author of the Epistle contributed “at certain points (perhaps at a late stage)” to the composition of the Gospel. 191 Arguments based on style seem inconclusive, but, in Houlden’s view, when one considers the thought and purpose of the two works, identity of authorship seems “unlikely.” 192 “[The Gospel and First Epistle] share many ideas, but the differences are of such a character as to indicate that the Epistle represents a time when Johannine thought had developed in new directions since the writing of the Gospel.” 193 The problems facing the author of the Epistle, primarily regarding authority and “right faith,” were different from those encountered by the Evangelist. Therefore, Houlden asserts, while the Epistle contains deep theological insights, the emphasis has shifted from the doctrinal concerns of the Gospel to one that is more ecclesiastical and pastoral. Though he acknowledges that the teaching of the Epistle is simpler and more primitive than that of the Gospel, Houlden maintains that the nature of the problems dealt with

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190 Houlden, Epistles, 37.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid., 38.
193 Ibid.
indicates that the Epistle was written at a later date than the Gospel and by a different individual.\footnote{Ibid.}

Houlden does accept the possibility that certain passages were added to the Gospel as corrective statements to “a previously more homogeneous and smoothly running narrative,” though he does not clearly state that these were added by a different author such as the author of 1 John.\footnote{Ibid., 12.} That these passages seem to be corrective additions is especially true, in his view, of verses concerning the Last Day and the future resurrection of believers (5:27-9; 6:39, 40, 44; 12:48), the outpouring of water and blood from the pierced side of Christ (19:34), and Jesus’ statements about eating his flesh (John 6).\footnote{Ibid., 12.} Houlden regards these verses as “signs of development within the Johannine church” toward what would come to be considered as orthodoxy.\footnote{Houlden, \textit{Epistles}, 12.} He asserts that these passages are anti-Gnostic and bring the Gospel of John more in line with the writings of the mainstream. Furthermore, these teachings are among those which receive even more emphasis in 1 John than in the Gospel. Indeed, the view of the author of 1 John that the end is very near (2:18) is a return to “a more primitive eschatological awareness than that of not only [the Gospel of John] but also other writings of its period (e.g. Luke-Acts}
According to Houlden, this future eschatology (belief in the imminence of the Last Day and the return of Christ) exists more comfortably alongside a realized eschatology (the awareness that the believer already enjoys eternal life) in I John than it does in the Gospel.\textsuperscript{199}

Houlden also regards the general Christology of 1 John as “much less ‘advanced’ and more traditional and simple that that of [the Gospel of John].”\textsuperscript{200} Jesus is presented as “God’s agent, the Messiah...rather than the mediator who in his very being is one with God ([Gospel of John] 10:30).”\textsuperscript{201} The Epistle proclaims that “God is light” (1 John 1:5) and “God is love” (4:8) but does not make statements about Jesus that are comparable to the high Christology of the Gospel. Therefore, the Epistle is said to be “theocentric” rather than “christocentric.”\textsuperscript{202} Houlden notes that in 1 John 1:1f. and 5:20f Jesus appears to be spoken of in “‘high’ terms,” but he regards these passages as ambiguous and asserts that the author of the Epistle appears to avoid making proclamations of high Christology.\textsuperscript{203}

What the Epistle affirms about Jesus is that he has “come in the flesh” (4:2), and somehow this affirmation of Jesus’ humanity is related to the author’s central teachings that the believers “abide in the truth” and must love one another.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid.
Houlden maintains that the imperfect manner in which this connection is made is evidence that the author was under pressures “of a type more ecclesiastical than doctrinal...” 204

In 1 John then we meet a stage in Johannine teaching which is also encountered in certain, possibly added, passages in [the Gospel of John]. They represent a restatement of Johannine doctrine which lacks both the speculative quality and the power of mind which is manifested in the greater part of [the Gospel of John]. It is a stage which attempts to draw back, under conservative pressure, exerted perhaps from a weight of “normative” Christianity elsewhere, from Gnostic-type tendencies and towards the teaching of the main body of the Church. 205

Raymond E. Brown (1982)

Raymond E. Brown theorizes that the body of the Gospel was written ca. 90 CE and that the final redaction took place just after 100 CE. 206 “Any such hypothesis makes it possible that I John was composed after some stages in the composition of [the Gospel of] John and before other stages.” 207 In his discussion of the chronological relationship between the Gospel and the Epistle, Brown distinguishes between the relationship of 1 John to the “basic composition” of the Gospel (“the work of the evangelist”) and to the final redaction of the Gospel. 208

After making the observation that the scholarly community is divided over the question of whether I John or the Gospel of John was written first, Brown

204 Ibid., 14.

205 Houlden, Epistles, 14.


207 Ibid.

208 Ibid., 32-33.
summarizes the arguments of each position. In favor of the priority of I John over the basic composition of the Gospel of John, he notes that there is no definite quotation of the Gospel in I John, some passages in the Epistle appear to be more "primitive" than the related passages in the Gospel\(^{209}\), and the theology of the Epistle has been considered "earlier or less developed" (e.g. I John, in line with earlier New Testament works, emphasizes the atoning nature of Jesus’ death, whereas the Gospel presents his death as the moment of his ascension).\(^{210}\)

Furthermore, it has been suggested that I John is more Jewish than the Gospel in its apocalyptic terminology and its warning against idolatry (5:21), indicating that it was composed before the community had major contact with Gentiles. Finally, the parallels in terminology between I John and the Dead Sea Scrolls have been seen as evidence that I John was written earlier than the Gospel.\(^{211}\)

Brown next summarizes the arguments in favor of the priority of the Gospel of John in relation to the First Epistle. He notes that the only members of the Johannine community mentioned by name in the Epistles are Gaius, Diotrephes, and

\(^{209}\) Ibid., 33. Brown cites the respective Prologues of the two works as an example of what has been considered the "primitive" character of certain passages in I John in comparison to related passages in the Gospel of John, but he states on p. 108 that he has identified “redactional elements” in the Gospel Prologue (see Epistles 108). Indeed, in his Anchor Bible commentary on the Gospel of John, he writes that “it was probably...the redactor who added the Prologue to the Gospel...."Gospel According to John, (2 vols.; AB 29-29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966-1970), 29:xxxviii. This is confusing, for he makes clear that in the section being summarized here (Epistles, 32-35) he is considering the relationship of I John to the "basic composition" of the Gospel and not to the work of the redactor. In his earlier work, The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 97, Brown claims that the Epistle Prologue (I John 1:1-4) was written “almost as a corrective” to the views of those who were “making much of the pre-existence motif” of the Gospel Prologue.

\(^{210}\) Brown, Epistles, 33.

\(^{211}\) Brown, Epistles, 33-34.
Demetrius in III John. These are Greco-Roman names, a fact which suggests to him the presence of “many Gentiles” in the Johannine churches at the time the Epistles were written (though he acknowledges that many Jews bore the name “Gaius” during this time.) Brown then observes that the Gospel of John is dominated by “a fierce struggle with outsiders, especially with ‘the Jews,’” whereas there is no indication of a division within the Community. He raises two questions here: could a community torn apart from within, having “already lost the larger part of its ‘progressive’ members to the world (II John 7-9; I John 4:5), have then survived the traumatic expulsion from the synagogue (John 9:22; 16:2)?”; would the Evangelist have presented the Community’s “prototype,” the Beloved Disciple, as having deeper insight into Jesus than even Peter (see John 20:8; 21:7) if the “christological extremists” opposed by I John had already been present in the Community when the Gospel was composed? For Brown, the situation behind the two works is more intelligible if I John was composed after the Gospel. He argues that it is inevitable that “after a separation from a parent body,” in this case, the expulsion of the Johannine Christians from the synagogue due to their high Christology, the alienated group will tend to defensively exaggerate their most central position.

“[F]or some will always push their understanding of the group’s position beyond the

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212 Brown, Epistles, see p. 34, n. 81. To argue from the presence of Greco-Roman names in III John that I John was written later than the Gospel of John presupposes that I and III John were written at about the same time. Brown adopts the hypothesis that the same author wrote the three Epistles of John (p. 19).

213 Brown, Epistles, 34.

214 Ibid.

215 Brown refers to his earlier work, Community, 36-47.
stance that originally brought about the separation.”

If this conflict within the Community had already erupted when the Gospel was written, it would be difficult to account for the absence of evidence for it in Gospel itself. On the other hand, the lack of reference to conflict with “the Jews” and others outside the community in I John is not difficult to explain, for the internal conflict reflected in the Epistle would have “pushed aside” concern with external opponents, “for in religious polemics no enemy is so dangerous as the enemy within.”

Brown also maintains that certain aspects of the differences in theology between the Gospel and I John are more comprehensible if the Epistle is understood to have been written after the Gospel. He cites B. F. Westcott: “It can only be said with confidence that the Epistle presupposes in those for whom it was composed a familiar acquaintance with the characteristic truths which are preserved for us in the Gospel.”

However, according to Brown,

...I John does more than presuppose ideas found in the Gospel of John; the tone of those ideas is different, and that difference can be explained in every case if the thrust of the Gospel of John has been exaggerated by those who accepted its message. If we go down the list [of differences in thought between I John and the Gospel that Brown provides on pp. 26-28 of his commentary], the thrust of I John is intelligible as a reaction to an overemphasis [italics in the original] on high Christology, on death as glorification, on the activity of the Paraclete-Spirit as teacher, and on final eschatology.

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217 Ibid., 35.

218 Ibid.


In the list referred to in the preceding quote, which he states is not exhaustive, Brown highlights the following five differences in ideas between the Gospel and I John: first, the Epistle attributes features to God which are attributed to Christ in the Gospel. For example, I John 1:5 proclaims: “God is light”; in the Gospel of John 1:4, 9; 8:12; etc., Jesus is the light. I John speaks of God’s commandments (or “his,” referring to God) in 2:3-4; 3:22-24; 5:2-3; I John 4:21 (as well as II John 4-6) refers to the commandment to love one another as coming from God. In the Gospel, Jesus is the source of commandments (13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12). 221

Second, “I John stresses aspects of a lower Christology in instances where [the Gospel of] John stresses a higher Christology.”222 As an example of this, Brown cites the use of “word” in the Prologue of I John and in the Prologue to the Gospel. In his view, the “word” in I John “seems to refer to the gospel-message about life, whereas in the [Gospel of] John Prologue it is clearly personified.”223 The Epistles emphasize the Son of God “come in the flesh” (I John 4:2; II John 7), while the Gospel highlights “the glory that shines through the flesh” (John 1:14).224 Brown points out, as others

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221 Ibid., 26. Brown regards the statement that the Gospel of John is christocentric while the First Epistle is theocentric as an “oversimplification,” since “[m]uch of I John is highly christocentric, but there are differences between the two works about what is attributed to God and what to Jesus.” See 26, n. 59.

222 Brown, Epistles, 26. Note again the careful wording: “Once again I am avoiding the simplification of saying that I John has a low Christology and [the Gospel of John] a high christology. The two works share to a large extent the same Christology, even if there are differences of emphasis.” 26, n. 60.

223 Brown, Epistles, 26. See n. 209 above for the problem of using the Gospel Prologue as evidence that I John was written after the Gospel of John.

224 Ibid., 26.
have, that the words “glory” or “glorify” appear 39 times in the Gospel but not at all in the Epistles.225

Third, Brown regards the references to the Spirit in I John as “less specific” than in the Gospel of John. Indeed, while the term “Paraclete” signifies the Holy Spirit in the Gospel, it refers to Jesus in I John 2:1. In I John 4:1-6 the Spirit of Truth is contrasted with the Spirit of the Antichrist, or of Deceit, without any qualification that would indicate the “personal quality” of the Spirit of Truth. Thus he is in agreement with Dodd on this point.226 Brown points out, however, that “there are relatively clear references to the Spirit in I John 3:24; 4:13; 5:6, 8, even if the term ‘Holy Spirit’ is never used (contrast John 1:33; 7:39; 14:26; 20:22).”227

Fourth, “[t]he final eschatology of I John differs from that of [the Gospel of] John.”228 (From Brown’s own explanation, it seems better to say that I John and the Gospel differ in their stress on final eschatology). Brown acknowledges that a comparison of the two works on this point is complicated by Bultmann’s view that statements of “undeniable final eschatology” in the Gospel are from the hand of the Ecclesiastical Redactor, while the evangelist (understood as the author of the main body of the Gospel) expresses only a realized eschatology—that is, the believer

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225 Ibid., 26, n. 61.

226 See Dodd, “First Epistle,” 147.


228 Brown, Epistles, 27.
already enjoys eternal life in the present.\(^{229}\) Even if one maintains that the evangelist accepted both a realized and a final eschatology, “there is no doubt that the major emphasis in [the Gospel of] John is on realized eschatology....”\(^{230}\) While the author of I John also regards the believer as already possessing divine life, he proclaims a future coming of Jesus “when he is revealed” (2:28) and “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (3:2).\(^{231}\)

Fifth, “[t]here are no quotations from the OT in I John while there are many in [the Gospel of] John,”\(^{232}\) though Brown points out that the Old Testament story of Cain “shapes a whole section of I John (3:12ff) and the OT covenant theme had strong influence on its ethical outlook.”\(^{233}\) Nevertheless, the Epistle does not give evidence of the conflict with “the Jews” that is so prevalent in the Gospel, “a fact that may explain the lack of direct references to the OT.”\(^{234}\)

For Brown, the Johannine Epistles demonstrate

...a concretizing of insights, an appeal to tradition, a defensiveness against dangers from within, and a certain cautious retrenchment [since the writing of the basic composition of the Gospel]—the marks of the second generation of a community now more concerned with survival and preservation than with the conversion of Jews and Gentiles.\(^{235}\)

\(^{229}\) See Brown’s discussion of “Realized Eschatology and Final Eschatology” in the Gospel of John in *Gospel*, cxvi-cxxi.


\(^{231}\) Ibid.

\(^{232}\) Ibid., 28.

\(^{233}\) Ibid.

\(^{234}\) Ibid.

\(^{235}\) Ibid., 35.
He concludes this section, then, by saying that it is “almost certain that I John was written after that tradition in GJohn took shape” and that it is “very likely” that the author of the Epistle was someone other than the evangelist (that is, the author of the main composition of the Gospel).\footnote{236}

Though Brown has a subsection in his commentary entitled “The Epistles and the Redaction of GJohn,” he deals primarily with the question of whether the author of I John and the redactor of the Gospel of John were the same person (the arguments for which he finds dubious),\footnote{237} rather than with the question of which came first—the Epistles or the redactor’s contribution to the final form of the Gospel.

\begin{flushright}
John Painter (2002)
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On the question of the relationship between the Gospel of John and I John, John Painter writes that the linguistic and theological evidence is “inconclusive.”\footnote{238} He provides charts to demonstrate the common vocabulary and phrases shared by GJohn and I John in comparison to the rest of the New Testament writings.\footnote{239} He maintains that the evidence for a common Johannine language is strong.\footnote{240} In fact, Painter notes that the Gospel and I John are closer to each other than are Luke and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[236] Ibid.
\item[237] Ibid., 108-112.
\item[238] John Painter, \textit{1, 2, and 3 John}, 59.
\item[239] Ibid., 62-64.
\item[240] Ibid., 64.
\end{footnotes}
Acts or 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Following A. E. Brooke, he quotes Johann Daniel Schulze: “[I]n the whole of the first Epistle there is hardly a single thought that is not found in the Gospel.”

Despite the many similarities between the Gospel of John and I John, however, the “tangled Greek” of I John in comparison to the more masterful handling of the language in the Gospel presents a challenge to the view that the same author wrote both works greater than any differences in thought. Still, Painter acknowledges the similarities, especially in the two Prologues, which, more than any other writings of the New Testament, display “a large number of common features in a short space.” (More will be said of this later when we deal specifically with the Prologues of the Gospel and I John).

Against the view of Georg Strecker (see below) that the Gospel and the first Epistle were written independently of each other by authors drawing on a common tradition, Painter points out that, in addition to the similarities between the respective openings of each work, they have similar closings:

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these things (tauta) are written

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241 Ibid., 68.


243 Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 69.

244 Ibid., 69.

that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that believing in his name you may have life. (John 20:30-31)

I wrote these things (tauta) to you that you may know that you have eternal life, who believe in the name of the Son of God. (I John 5:13)\textsuperscript{246}

Not only is there similarity in content, but I John 5:13 appears before the final ending of the Epistle, just as John 20:30-31 is placed, apparently as a conclusion, before chapter 21 of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{247} To Painter, the fact that John 21 was probably added by an author other than the evangelist indicates that the author of I John “presuppose[d] the final form of the Gospel including ch. 21 [emphasis added].”\textsuperscript{248} Painter sees further evidence for the dependence of 1 John on the Gospel in the statement of purpose contained in each ending. While the author of John 20:31 wrote to encourage belief so that his readers might have life, the author of I John 5:13 writes to those who do believe in order that they may be assured that they possess eternal life. Painter asserts that this difference is the result of the different situations that produced the two works: the evangelist seeks to promote belief which leads to life; the Epistle author needs to reassure community members whose faith has been shaken by the trauma of schism that they indeed have eternal life.\textsuperscript{249}

\textsuperscript{246} The italics appear in Painter’s citation of these verses in order to highlight the similarity in language between them. Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 70-71.

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 70.

\textsuperscript{248} Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 71.

\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., 71-72.
The Gospel itself gives evidence of a process of composition involving more than one author, which suggests the possibility of a Johannine school. The presence of chapter 21, which for several reasons appears to be an addition, strengthens the impression that the final form of the Gospel was not entirely the work of the “primary evangelist.” The existence of a Johannine school consisting of disciples of the evangelist may shed light on the relationship between the Gospel and the Epistles. According to Painter, most scholars today do not accept common authorship of the two works.

Painter writes that the Gospel of John is the product of a tradition which developed from about 30 to 90 CE when (as is commonly believed) the Gospel was published. The Epistles, on the other hand, “were written in a relatively short space of time in response to a single significant crisis.”

Scholars Who Hold that the Gospel Was Written Alongside or After the Epistles

Kenneth Grayston (1984)

In the course of summarizing views on the authorship of the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John since Dodd published his article in 1937, Kenneth Grayston observes that scholars of that period (1937 to the time that Grayston was writing in the early 1980's) assumed that “both Epistle and Gospel could be ascribed to

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250 Ibid., 59.
251 Ibid, 73.
252 Ibid., 73-74.
253 Painter, 1, 2, 3 John, 74.
authors [sic]...” and that the composition of the Epistle followed that of the Gospel.

On the question of whether or not the Gospel and Epistle had the same or different authors, Grayston, like many of the other scholars we have reviewed, writes that arguments from style are “inconclusive.” Regarding arguments from language or ideas (“substance”), Grayston agrees with the view that the Epistle author expresses his beliefs “in a primitive Christian and relatively undeveloped form....” As we saw in our discussion of the positions of previous scholars, the Epistle is held to contain a more “primitive” Christian view in its references to the imminence of the end time and the day of judgment (2:18; 4:17), the expiatory effect of Jesus’ death (1:7; 2:2; 4:10), and the opposition between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (4:6). Significantly, Grayston writes: “It may be agreed that the Gospel shows awareness of these convictions, but by transforming them, not by reproducing them in this primitive form.” The Gospel contains references to the Spirit that are varied in nature “but all are far richer than the minimal references in the Epistle.” The author(s) of the Gospel demonstrates an interest in the death of

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254 From the context it seems Grayston intended to write: “...to different authors....” Grayston, *Epistles*, 7.

255 Ibid., 7.

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid., 8.


260 Ibid.
Jesus that can be seen not only in the Passion narrative but in the discourses and dialogues that precede it, but the author does not employ the language of sacrifice or atonement. Grayston writes that “...of the Gospel’s subtle, though infrequent, use of eschatological language there is scarcely a hint in the Epistle.”

After these considerations, the question remains for Grayston: Were the Gospel and Epistle written by the same person, or was the Epistle the work of an imitator or of a writer “who share[d] the ‘house style’ of writing but ha[d] a less creative grasp of the tradition?” He suggests that rather than focusing on those things which appear in one document and not in the other, it would be “more illuminating” to look at those expressions that are found in both and observe shifts in meaning.

For Grayston, it is clear that the Epistle is inferior to the Gospel, which would suggest different authors or a common author who “partly changed his mind and his style and was constrained to work within different ranges of ability.” In Grayston’s view, however, the Epistle itself was written by more than one person: “those who composed the initial agreed statement and the main writer who used the

261 Ibid., 8. Like Dodd, Grayston does not accept John 1:29, John the Baptist’s testimony to the Lamb of God, as an example of atonement language. See Dodd, “First Epistle,” 145-46.

262 Grayston, Epistles, 8. This statement is surprising. Perhaps Grayston’s intent here is to emphasize the word “subtle,” since the First Epistle certainly contains eschatological language. In the same paragraph, Grayston previously cites 1 John 2:18; 4:17, where the Epistle author refers to the imminence of the last hour (2:18) and the day of judgment (4:17).

263 Grayston, Epistles, 8.

264 Ibid.

265 Ibid., 9.
statement and expanded it.” The Gospel was also the work of more than one individual: an “authorizing group” (the “we” of John 1:14, 16; 21:24), the author of John 21, and perhaps multiple contributors to the body of the Gospel. The position that the Gospel was composed in stages means that rather than asking if the Gospel and I John were composed by the same author, we must ask: “[W]here does the material of the epistle stand in relation to the process by which the Gospel came into being and exercised its influence?” This leads to a need to investigate the origins and development of the community that produced the Johannine literature.

While Dodd, who believed that the Gospel of John was the work of a single author and that the Epistle was written afterwards by a disciple of the evangelist, rejected the idea that questions dealt with in the Epistle contributed to the formation of the Gospel, other scholars have proposed the author of I John “as the redactor at least of John 13-17”—i.e. the Farewell Discourses. Still others suggest that a situation

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.


269 Ibid., 9-10.

270 Ibid., 10.

271 Grayston, Epistles, 10, cites Dodd, Epistles, lvf.

similar to that which evoked the writing of I John was responsible for certain elements of the Farewell Discourses. Grayston counters Dodd, who considered A. E. Brooke conclusive on the issue of the priority of the Gospel over I John, by pointing out that most of Brooke’s arguments “could tell either way” and calls Brooke’s treatment of the issue “confused and indecisive” and based on “the general impression gained from studying the two writings.” Grayston declares: “The argument is frail; the conclusion feeble.”

Grayston acknowledges the many close parallels between the Gospel and the Epistle and that these elements of the Epistle are clarified by their Gospel context, but which came first? He writes that there are three basic arguments for the priority of the Gospel over the Epistle: “a Gospel is a foundation document, and an

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276 Grayston, *Epistles*, 11, referring to Brooke, *Epistles*, xix-xxvii; the last quote is Grayston’s citation of Brooke, xxvii.


278 Ibid.
Epistle must be a successor document (Robinson, p. 57)\textsuperscript{279}; the Christology of the opponents of the author of I John is of “an advanced gnostic kind” that could only have followed upon the development of Christology in the Gospel of John; the Epistle demonstrates a concern for ecclesiastical matters not found in the Gospel.\textsuperscript{280}

Grayston counters each argument: those who take a modern critical approach to the question of the historicity of the Gospel would reject “the primacy of Gospel over Epistle...”; the concern of the opponents of I John was not to protect the supernatural Christ from contact with the earthly Jesus (as it would be for later Gnosticism), but rather “whether it was necessary to attach any Christology to Jesus at all...a problem to be settled earlier, not later, in the community’s history”\textsuperscript{281}; ecclesiastical problems can arise at any time in a community’s development. Regarding this last point, Grayston asks, “[D]oes not John 13-17 [the Farewell Discourses] deal with the internal problems of the community and its relation to the world?”\textsuperscript{282}

Grayston asserts that if one maintains that the Epistle was composed after the Gospel, it becomes necessary to account for the fact that so much of the Epistle


\textsuperscript{280} Grayston, \textit{Epistles}, 11.

\textsuperscript{281} Grayston, \textit{Epistles}, 11-12; I take it that Grayston is referring to the position of the opponents as identified by Brown, namely, that the opponents did not attach any significance to the human career of Jesus. See, for example, Brown, \textit{Epistles}, 73-79.

\textsuperscript{282} Grayston, \textit{Epistles}, 12.
seems to reflect “an earlier phase of Christian awareness.” Against Houlden, who acknowledged the more primitive nature of the Christology of I John but maintained that it represented an attempt to retreat from Gnostic-type tendencies, Grayston suggests that “it would be easier to suppose that the Christology of the Epistle had not yet reached the level of Christology in the Gospel.” Furthermore, the parallels in the Gospel to the Epistle’s notions of the atoning nature of Christ’s death and an earlier future eschatology may indicate that these features “were given some recognition in the Gospel and made part of a richer understanding of the death of Christ and the significance of eschatology.”

Grayston takes issue with Raymond Brown on several points. While Brown acknowledges the presence of “early and Jewish motifs” in the Epistle, he takes this merely as evidence that there were “earlier forms” of the Johannine tradition and that this tradition originated among Jewish Christians. Brown also acknowledges that the Epistle’s Christology is not as high as some of that found in the Gospel and that the author places less emphasis on the role of the Spirit-Paraclete. He attributes this, in his hypothesis, to the fact that the opponents of the author of I John adhered to an exaggerated interpretation of the high Christology of the Gospel, an interpretation that they claimed was authorized by their being taught by the

283 Ibid.
284 Houlden, Epistles, 14.
285 Grayston, Epistles, 12.
286 Ibid., 12-13.
Spirit.\textsuperscript{287} Therefore the Epistle author downplayed these elements “in order to correct his opponents.”\textsuperscript{288} Thus, as we saw above, Brown is able to acknowledge that I John contains early-Christian motifs such as final eschatology, an emphasis on Jesus’ humanity, and the atoning nature of his death that are not as prominent in the Gospel, and still maintain that the Gospel predates the Epistle.\textsuperscript{289} Grayston counters that “it would have been singularly ineffective” for the Epistle author to ignore the strongest arguments that, according to Brown’s hypothesis, his opponents presented.\textsuperscript{290} In other words, Grayston does not accept that the explanation for the lack of emphasis in the Epistle on themes prominent in the Gospel (high Christology, role of the Spirit-Paraclete) is due to the Epistle author’s desire to correct the exaggerated views of his opponents. If that had been the case, the Epistle author would have engaged those issues directly, not downplayed them.

As we saw above, for Brown the decisive factor in determining the order of composition of the Gospel and the First Epistle is that the conflict reflected in the Gospel is with outsiders, while that of the Epistle is an internal conflict. This supposition leads him to assert that if the Epistle had been written first, the community that was engaged in conflict with outsiders—that is, the community behind the Gospel—would already have been divided and weakened, but there is


\textsuperscript{288} Brown, \textit{Community}, 96; see also 97.

\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 96-97.

\textsuperscript{290} Grayston, \textit{Epistles}, 13.
“no indication of that.” Grayston, however, such indications can be found in John 13-17.

Grayston also challenges Brown’s view that the dissidents, basing their position on their interpretation of the Gospel, placed such an emphasis on the divine principle in Jesus that they neglected his earthly life and ministry. Grayston agrees that the dissidents did not see much significance in the earthly career of Jesus; however, “that they attached excessive value, or indeed any value, to the divine principle lacks evidence. It is no more than an assumption by those who read the dissidents as advanced Gnostics.”

Grayston asserts that Brown is “acutely embarrassed” when dealing with the references to the Spirit in I John because “the references are few, indirect, and not authoritative.” When the author of I John does mention the Paraclete, he is referring to Jesus. While Brown believes that the author knew the Paraclete sayings in the Farewell Discourses of the Gospel (John 13-17), where Jesus tells his disciples that the Spirit “will not speak on his own...he will take from what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn 16: 13, 14) and will remind them of what Jesus has taught them in his earthly career (14:26), Grayston thinks that the author would not have

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291 Brown, Community, 97; see Grayston, Epistles, 13.
292 Grayston, Epistles, 13.
293 Ibid., 13. See Brown’s discussion on the secessionists in Community, 110-120, esp. 112, 113.
294 Grayston, Epistles, 13.
295 Ibid.
296 Grayston states that Brown thought the author of the Epistle knew the Paraclete sayings of John 13-17, but I could not locate where Brown states this clearly. See Grayston, Epistles, 13.
failed to use these sayings, had he known them, against opponents who were emphasizing the role of the Spirit to the detriment of Jesus' significance. To Grayston it is more probable that the author of I John did not know these Paraclete passages, for in fact “they did not exist in the community’s tradition until I John raised the questions they were designed to answer.”\textsuperscript{297} The composer of John 13-17 sought to ensure that “whole-hearted acceptance of the Spirit” did not detract from the significance of Jesus’ human existence but rather strengthened it.\textsuperscript{298} Indeed, earlier in the Gospel statements about the Spirit, which may well have originated in a group obsessed by their experience of the Spirit, are carefully neutralized by being attached to Jesus’ actions and words, and to the descent and ascent of the Son.\textsuperscript{299}

Grayston contends:

If the Epistle is placed after the composition of the Gospel, somewhat elaborate theories are required to justify its presence. If the Epistle finds a place during the composition of the Gospel, it throws light on parts of the Gospel which have long puzzled exegetes. In this commentary it is argued that \textit{passages in the Epistle often look like first attempts at material which later appears in the Gospel, where its presence can be justified if it began from the situation for which the Epistle was the earlier written response} [emphasis added].\textsuperscript{300}

\textsuperscript{297} Grayston, \textit{Epistles}, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{299} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{300} Grayston \textit{Epistles}, 14. To support his claim, Grayston calls attention to his exegesis of particular passages in I John:

“(a) on 1:1-14, \textit{which seems to be the basis of the Prologue of the Gospel} [emphasis added]; (b) on 2:20, 25, and 3:22, where teaching about the Spirit is considered; (c) on 3:12-13, in relation to Judas; (d) on 3:18, where speech is depreciated; (e) on 3:23, in relation to believing; (f) on 4:14, as regards the world; (g) on 4:17, concerning judgment; (h) on 5:14-17, where readers are encouraged to ask anything of Christ; and on 5:20-21, where christologies are compared.”
Martin Hengel (1989)

In *The Johannine Question*, Martin Hengel, who sees a greater unity of theological thought in the Johannine corpus than other scholars have, proposes the hypothesis that “a towering creative teacher” was the “head” who stood behind “the ‘Johannine community’ and the Johannine corpus, letters, Gospel (and Apocalypse)....” As the basis of this hypothesis, Hengel begins with the attestation of second-century Christian writers such as Papias of Hierapolis and Irenaeus of Lyons and works his way back to the internal evidence of the Johannine literature itself. Hengel suggests that the teacher and head of the Johannine community was the πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, whom Papias identifies along with Aristion as a disciple of the Lord. This John the Elder is not the same as the John whom Papias mentions earlier in the same sentence along with Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, and Matthew. It appears the first John named is the apostle, son of Zebedee, whereas John the Elder was also a disciple of Jesus but not one of the Twelve. Hengel speculates that the latter “founded a school which existed between about 60 or 70 and 100/110 in Asia Minor....”

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302 Ibid., 104.

303 Ibid., 80.


305 Hengel, *Question*, 17, 74.

306 Ibid., 80.
The Gospel, which Hengel calls “the work of John ‘the elder,’” grew slowly over a long period “parallel to the development of the teaching of the school. So it contains in some way the deposit of the Christological teaching of the head of the school over quite a long time, possibly several decades.” In contrast, the letters were dictated by the author, now an old man, “quickly and in understandable agitation” as a response to a split within the school occasioned by former members who so emphasized the impassibility of the divine Logos that they posited a separation between the Logos and the man Jesus, thereby diminishing the salvific importance of the latter. The Gospel was completed “some years after the letters...” Indeed, just as the letters are the elder’s reaction to this crisis, so are passages in the Gospel “which today are so readily attributed to some kind of redactors”—passages such as the Prologue and sections of the farewell discourses and the passion narrative. After John the Elder’s death, a single redactor commissioned by the elder’s pupils put the finishing touches on the Gospel, but in a cautious and sparing manner. According to Hengel the redactor’s additions would include chapter 21 and the “beloved disciple” passages. The title Gospel of John was also an addition of the final editors (Hengel sometimes uses the term in the plural) who wanted thereby to provide a rival authority to the predominantly Petrine tradition of the Synoptic

307 Ibid., 102.
308 Ibid., 107
309 Ibid., 72, 80-81.
310 Ibid., 73.
311 Ibid., 105.
Gospels. While the title referred to John the Elder, it could also suggest John the son of Zebedee, who was one of the Twelve.\textsuperscript{312} Hengel suggests that this double reference could have been deliberate. Indeed, the identity of the ideal figure of the beloved disciples may be intentionally ambiguous. Hengel writes of “the unique way in which the figures of John son of Zebedee and the teacher of the school and author of the Gospel [i.e. John the Elder] are deliberately superimposed...” in the portrayal of the beloved disciple.\textsuperscript{313}

**Scholars Who Hold that the Gospel and I John Were Written Independently of Each Other**

Rudolf Schnackenburg (1975)

Rudolf Schnackenburg, like many scholars before him, refers to Dodd’s work on the differences in terminology between the Gospel of John and I John which led Dodd to reject common authorship for the two works.\textsuperscript{314} He also refers to the important observations made by W. F. Howard, which we reviewed above, concerning the distribution of these terms in the Gospel of John, their various meanings within the framework of the Gospel and the epistle, the different natures and processes of composition of the two works, and differences in subject matter.\textsuperscript{315}

\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 106-108.

\textsuperscript{313} Ibid., 129-132.


\textsuperscript{315} Schnackenburg, Epistles, 34-35. Schnackenburg summarizes Howard, “Common Authorship,” 12-25 (see above); Schnackenburg also refers to the work of W. G. Wilson, “An Examination of the
These observations, in Schnackenburg’s view, reduce the significance of the statistical differences between the Gospel and Epistle.316

However, Schnackenburg observes that the case for different authors for the two works has grown stronger and expresses his desire “to assert more emphatically this point of view.”317 When considering the theological perspectives and motifs of the Gospel of John and I John, the similarity between them is such that it is possible to speak of “a distinctive Johannine theology.”318 Nevertheless, various possibilities remain regarding authorship.

Schnackenburg refers to Dodd’s view that the Presbyter of I John was “a disciple of the Evangelist and a student of his work.”319 What was most important for Dodd was that the Presbyter’s theology was closer than that of the evangelist to “the primitive apostolic kerygma and to the original church catechesis still current at that time.”320 Schnackenburg questions whether or not this is true. As we have seen, Dodd based his view primarily on differences in theology between the Gospel of John and I John in eschatology, the nature of Christ’s death as atonement, and the

Linguistic Evidence Adduced against the Unity of Authorship for the First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel,” Journal of Theological Studies Vol 49 (1948), 147-56, in which Wilson’s statistical analysis of the language of the Gospel and Epistle in relation to the New Testament as a whole showed that the differences between the two Johannine works are not as great as Dodd maintained.

316 Schackenburg, Epistles, 34-35.
317 Ibid., 35.
318 Ibid.
320 Schnackenburg, Epistles, 36.
Schnackenburg, following Howard, counters Dodd’s position on each point. First, regarding eschatology, Schnackenburg points out that…even in the Gospel there is a strong eschatological element. As Son of God and Son of man, Jesus is entrusted with the functions of an eschatological judge and given power to raise from the dead (John 5:20-29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54). The title Son of man appears in eight different chapters. The last day is seriously envisioned (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48).

Schnackenburg quotes Howard, who asserts that the Evangelist had in mind both a partly realized and a partly future eschatology. Schnackenburg acknowledges that “there is a stronger emphasis on future eschatology in I John,” but in his view the difference between the two works on this point is not so great as to require different authors. Rather, the imminence of the end times in I John can be explained by the situation faced by the author.

Second, Schnackenburg addresses the theology of the Gospel and Epistle regarding the efficacy of Christ’s death. He acknowledges that, as with the notion of future eschatology, I John is more explicit than the Gospel of John regarding the atoning nature of Christ’s death in its use of ἱλασμός in I John 2:2; 4:10. However, the Gospel is not lacking in references to Christ’s atoning death. Schnackenburg,

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321 Ibid., 36, citing Dodd, llii-liv.
323 Schnackenburg, Epistles, 36.
325 Schnackenburg, Epistles, 36.
contrary to Grayston, attributes great importance to “the powerful witness of the Baptist to the Lamb of God in John 1:29, 36” and the words “who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; 1 John 3:5). Jesus is called Savior of the world in both the Gospel (John 4:42) and in I John (4:14). The saving nature of God’s love for the world appears in both works (cf. John 3:16; I John 4:9-10). Schnackenburg writes that “above all,” there is the preposition “hyper, so significant in early Christian theology, expressing the idea of Christ’s vicarious sacrifice for sin, or at least hints of it (John 6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50-52; 15:13; 17:19; 18:14; I John 3:16).”

Third, Schnackenburg maintains that Dodd’s understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in I John is insufficient due to the fact that, “for no reason [Dodd] denies the Spirit’s cooperation in the believers’ birth from God and rejects the interpretation of ‘the divine seed’ (3:9 REB) as a reference to the Holy Spirit.” Furthermore, as we have seen, Dodd also rejects the notion that “charisma” (or “chrism”) in I John 2:20, 27 refers to the Holy Spirit, in spite of the fact that this “charisma” performs a similar function to that of the Paraclete in John 16:13. Recall that for Dodd both the divine seed and the unction (χρῖσμα) in I John are the

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328 Ibid.
329 Ibid., 37.
330 Ibid., 37; see Dodd, *Epistles*, ii. Indeed, Dodd attributes the notions of the divine “seed” (I John 3:9) and the “unction” of I John 2:20, 27, to “Gnostic” sources, employed by the author of I John “with a profound change in meaning....” P. lii.
word of God. Schnackenburg maintains that Dodd’s position results in an “acute
tension” between Gospel and Epistle in their respective teachings about the Spirit
and an “impoverished concept of the Spirit [in I John].” Schnackenburg states:

...an organic interpretation of I John is possible only if we recognize
the intimate connection between “spirit” and “life,” between the work
of the Spirit and the birth of the believers from God, and between the
Spirit on the one hand and revelation and teaching on the other. If the
emphasis is somewhat different, this is because of the conflict with
heresy in the epistle, and the claim of the heretics to be the true
pneumatics.

Schnackenburg highlights several other characteristic ideas and expressions
which the Gospel and I John have in common and which demonstrate to him the
“close affinity” between the two works. The differences can be explained by many
factors such as the change in genre and the circumstances which occasioned the
writing of the Gospel and the epistle. Yet, while the differences do not make it
impossible that the two works have the same author, they do lead many scholars to
attribute them to different authors. At the same time, the author of the epistle must
have been a pupil of the evangelist or “a member of the circles which gathered
around him. In this way, he preserved the tradition of the evangelist.”

The comparison of I John to the Gospel of John makes it clear to Schnackenburg
that the epistle is “a completely independent literary product. It neither

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331 See Dodd, Epistles, 63, 77-78.
332 Schnackenburg, Epistles, 37.
333 Ibid.
334 Ibid., 38.
presupposes the existence of the written Gospel, nor does it leave the reader to expect such a work dealing with the earthly life of the Son of God to follow."\textsuperscript{335} As for the question of which came first, Gospel or Epistle, Schnackenburg declares it "unanswerable."\textsuperscript{336}

Georg Strecker (1989)

Georg Strecker assigns a late date to the Gospel and 1 John. In his view, the presbyter John mentioned by Papias of Hierapolis (Eusebius \textit{Hist. eccl.} 3.39.3-4) is the presbyter who wrote 2 and 3 John "at the beginning of the Johannine tradition" and I John and the Gospel of John were later produced by the Johannine school tradition in the first half of the second century.\textsuperscript{337}

In considering the relationship between I John and the Gospel of John, Strecker notes that there are indeed "common elements...both linguistic and material in character, since the key Johannine concepts of 'truth' (ἀλήθεια) and 'love' (ἀγάπη), among others, appear in both books."\textsuperscript{338} He suggests that both works belong to an "an advanced stage in the history of the tradition."\textsuperscript{339} Strecker points out the differences, however. The Gospel is written in the form of a \textit{vita Jesu}, which is, of course, quite different from that of the Epistle. This results in different emphases and theological concepts. The author of I John does not refer to any traditions

\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{336} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{337} Strecker, \textit{Letters}, xli-xlII, 5.
\textsuperscript{338} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{339} Ibid.
concerning the life of Jesus. Strecker makes the generalization that I John is “ecclesiologically oriented,” while the Gospel is christologically oriented.340 Regarding differences in content between the two works, Strecker considers it significant that certain theological ideas appear in only one or the other. Many of these differences in theological content have been indicated in the work of earlier scholars (see above). First, while the Gospel of John contains an allusion to the atoning nature of the death of Jesus (John 1:29), this concept is explicit only in I John 1:7, 9; 2:2; 4:10; similarly, the concept “hope” (ἐλπίς) appears only in 1 John 3:3 in all the Johannine writings;341 παρουσία appears only in I John 2:28.342 Second, in the Gospel, present (or realized) eschatology receives greater emphasis than future eschatology. Third, in the Gospel, the term Paraclete refers to the Spirit; in I John 2:1 the term refers to Jesus Christ. Fourth, in the Gospel, Jesus is the “light” (8:12 and elsewhere); in I John it is God who is light (1:5). Fifth, there is no direct mention of “false teachers” in the Fourth Gospel, but I John 2:18 speaks of “many antichrists” and 4:1 of “false prophets.” Sixth, “[t]he ecclesiologically important terms χρῖσμα, σπέρμα, κοινωνία, and παρρησία are found only in 1 John, whereas the absolute Christological concept of logos appears only in John 1:1, 14.”343 Seventh, the term δόξα, so prominent in the Gospel of John, does not appear in I John, nor do

340 Ibid.
341 Ibid., 91
342 Ibid., 79.
343 Ibid., 6.
statements about Christ ascending and descending. The terms σώζειν, σωτηρία, κρίσις, ύψους, and πνεῦμα ἅγιον are also absent from I John. 344

For Strecker, the conceptual differences in Christology and ecclesiology “go beyond mere variety of expression or expressive intention.” 345 Furthermore, the common elements are not so great as to persuade Strecker that the same author wrote both Johannine works. His position on this question is that “[t]he terminological differences and agreements are explained, rather, when one presupposes that both documents originated as mutually independent writings of the Johannine school.” 346

Judith M. Lieu (2008)

Judith M. Lieu also rejects the idea of “a direct literary relationship between I John and the Gospel in anything like the latter’s current form [emphasis added]….” 347 To Lieu, the “consistent subtle differences” between the two works even in passages which closely parallel one another “suggest that both writings draw independently on earlier formulations.” 348 In direct contradiction to A. E. Brooke, with whose work we began this discussion, Lieu writes that “…I John nowhere appeals to or assumes

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344 This paragraph summarizes Strecker’s views in Letters, 5-6.

345 Strecker, Letters, 6.

346 Ibid.


348 Ibid., 17.
knowledge of the Gospel, and indeed that the latter seems unlikely; rather, each
writing is, largely independently, reworking common or shared traditions.”349

Scholars Who Hold that I John Was Written after the Main Body of the Gospel
of John but before Prologue

J. A. T. Robinson (1963)

J. A. T. Robinson presents his view, without providing supporting arguments, that
the Gospel of John is a literary unity composed by a single author, though not all at
once.350 He believes that the Prologue of the Gospel and the Epilogue (chapter 21)
are to be distinguished from the rest of the Gospel: though written by the same
person who wrote the main body of the Gospel, they were composed later.351 The
Prologue, consisting of poetic lines (vv. 1, 3-5, 10, 11, 14a) and theological
commentary upon those lines (vv. 2, 12, 13, 14b, 16-18), was composed around the
original narrative beginning of the Gospel, which consisted of the verses concerning
the testimony of John (the Baptist) (vv. 6-9, 15, 19).352 Robinson argues that the
period to which the Gospel Prologue belongs is that of the Johannine Epistles and
not that of the main body of the Gospel. Whereas the Gospel’s purpose is
“evangelistic,” the Epistles contain polemic aimed at docetism. This anti-docetic
polemic is found in 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7 (“come in the flesh”), but also in the

349 Ibid., 8.

350 J. A. T. Robinson, “Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John,” NTS 9 no 2 (Ja 1963): 120-29; see p. 120.

351 Ibid., 121, 124.

352 Ibid., 126-27.
Gospel Prologue (1:14). It is not, however, found in the Gospel proper. It is Robinson’s contention that John 1:14 is a clearer and firmer assertion of the reality of Jesus’ coming “in the flesh” than 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7. This consideration, together with others such as the more profound nature of the Gospel Prologue in comparison to that of the First Epistle, leads him to assert that the Epistle Prologue is a “first sketch” of the Gospel Prologue. According to Robinson, then, the body of the Gospel was written first, then the Epistles, and finally the Prologue and Epilogue. The Epistles, which “presuppose the main body of the Gospel,” constitute a bridge between that main body and the Gospel Prologue.

Ed. L. Miller (1993)

Ed. L. Miller, like J. A. T. Robinson, maintains that the sequence of the composition of the Johannine literature was as follows: Gospel of John proper → First Epistle of John → Prologue of the Gospel. This sequence is one of three assertions that he makes in his article “with a minimum of comment...” The other two assertions that Miller makes “with a minimum of comment” are that “[t]he Prologue (1:1-18) is a literary and theological unity and...must be viewed as a separate work [from the Gospel proper]” and that all three Johannine works (Gospel proper, First Epistle,

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353 Ibid., 124.
354 Ibid.
355 Ibid.
Gospel Prologue) are “from the same theological circle and were most probably composed by the same individual....”

According to the trajectory that Miller proposes, the words λόγος and ρήμα, which in the body of the Gospel are interchangeable, are already used “in a theologically and christologically suggestive manner” in the body of the Gospel, where the two terms refer to the preaching and teaching of Jesus; next, λόγος appears in a “confused but still more elevated and theologically enriched” way in the phrase “λόγος of life” in the first verses of 1 John; finally, the term λόγος becomes an explicit christological title in the Prologue of the Gospel.

Thus we move from Jesus who speaks the word to Jesus who is the Word.

It is Miller’s contention that the Johannine community gradually grew in its awareness of the christological significance that was implicit in the term λόγος from the beginning (I presume he means the beginning of the growth of the Johannine tradition) and came to accept it as a christological title. He maintains that his proposal accounts for such facts as “the total absence in the Gospel proper of λόγος as a Christological title whereas it appears as a title in the Prologue four times.” (As we shall see, those who do not adhere to the position that the Prologue of the Gospel was written last have sought other ways to explain this absence.) Miller believes that his hypothesis helps to answer other questions about the development...

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357 Ibid., 445-446.
358 Ibid., 450.
359 Ibid., 455.
360 Ibid., 455.
of the Johannine tradition. Perhaps most significant is his contention that his hypothesis does not create any difficulties in compatibility between alleged sources for the Johannine λόγος and the actual Johannine λόγος.\footnote{Ibid., 456.} He is referring here to the discrepancies that arise between the various sources to which the origin of the Johannine λόγος is attributed and the actual employment of the term in the Prologue, not least of which is the very multiplicity of theories about that origin.\footnote{Ibid., 449.} Miller's hypothesis has the advantage, he maintains, that "it presents us with no non-Johannine ideas whatsoever."\footnote{Ibid., 456.} He even goes so far as to criticize those who stop short of the possibility that it is [in the Fourth Gospel proper] \textit{primarily, essentially, and exclusively} that we encounter the origin of the Logos concept, any other associations attaching themselves only along the way and only in a more or less accidental manner [emphasis in the original].\footnote{Ibid., 450.}

**Observations on Certain Common Elements in the Views of the Scholars Surveyed**

In the course of this review of the history of scholarship on the relation between the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John, certain common elements have emerged which indicate that the relationship between the two works is more complex than many of these same scholars suppose. The majority of scholars assume that unity of the Gospel—that is, that it was written largely as a unified whole. The question, then, is whether the fourth Evangelist and the author of the Epistle

\footnote{Ibid., 456.}

\footnote{Ibid., 449.}

\footnote{Ibid., 456.}

\footnote{Ibid., 450.}
was the same person. Most of the scholars surveyed have maintained, in accord with Dodd, that the Gospel was composed first as a kind of life of Jesus and that, later, a disciple of inferior theological insight and writing skills composed the Epistle to meet a specific challenge.365 What is striking, however, is how many of these same scholars (e.g. Dodd, Houlden, Brown) agree that the Epistle represents a theology (Christology, eschatology, pneumatology) more primitive—that is, closer to the generally accepted doctrines of early Christianity—than that of the Gospel of John.366 Still, they insist on the priority of the Gospel over the Epistle, due in large part to the understanding that the Evangelist is dealing with opposition from outside the circle of Johannine Christians (the “Jews”), while the Epistle author is responding to a split within the community and makes no allusion to conflict with “the Jews.”367 The Epistle, then, seems to reflect a situation that arose later in the history of the Johannine community and represents a retreat from certain “progressive” tendencies that had begun to emerge. Scholars such as R. Brown argue that since the “progressives” appealed to the Gospel of John to support some of their views, it was necessary for the Epistle author to reassert more traditional views. Thus we find the positions of I John described as a “draw[ing] back” (Houlden)368 or “retrenchment” (Brown).369 Yet, Grayston, as cited above,

366 See Dodd, “First Epistle,” 142; Epistles, liii-liv; Brown, Epistles, 32-35; Houlden, Epistles, 38.
367 See Brown, Community, 97.
368 Houlden, Epistles, 14.
369 Brown, Epistles, 35.
maintains that it would be more natural to assume that the development in areas such as Christology went in the opposite direction—from more “primitive” to more evolved. Recall that Grayston argues that passages in I John “often look like first attempts at material which later appears in the Gospel, where its presence can be justified if it began from the situation for which the Epistle was the earlier response.”  

It is also notable how many scholars acknowledge the possibility of minor or even more extensive additions to the Gospel of John, perhaps by someone other than the Evangelist. It would be helpful to review briefly what the various authors surveyed in this chapter have said on this point: Brooke wrote that the Epistle may have been written before “the actual composition, or publication, of the Gospel” (though he considered this “extremely unlikely”); Dodd allowed for “possible minor and occasional editorial touches...”; Houlden considered it possible that certain passages were added as corrective statements to a previous narrative; Brown posits several stages of development of the Gospel and acknowledges that such a view opens the way for the notion that the Epistle was written at some point during the stages of composition of the Gospel. For Robinson and Miller, this point

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370 Grayston, Epistles, 12-14.

371 Brooke, Epistles, xxvii.

372 Dodd, Epistles, lv-lvi.

373 Houlden, Epistles, 12.

374 Brown, Epistles, 32. We should also add to this list Rudolf Bultmann’s “Ecclesiastical Redactor.” Though Bultmann does not mention the work of this redactor in his brief statements on the relation between the Gospel and First Epistle of John in the Introduction to his commentary on the Johannine Epistles (see n. 189 above), he held that the Gospel as it has come down to us “is not as the Evangelist
would be between the composition of the main body of the Gospel and that of the Prologue. Furthermore, apparent differences in theology between the Gospel and the Epistle, which we have explored in this chapter, and even within the Gospel itself suggest the possibility that the compositional history of the Johannine writings was actually a complex process. In the next chapter, we shall explore the theory that the Gospel developed in stages and that the First Epistle was written at some point during that development. This investigation will prepare the way for our consideration of the significance of the term λόγος in each of those stages.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORY OF URBAN C. VON WAHLDE ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AND OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Introduction: Three Editions of the Gospel of John

In the previous chapter, we reviewed the history of modern scholarship on the relationship between the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. We saw that while many scholars regard the theology of I John as more primitive than that of the Gospel, these same scholars continue to maintain the traditional view that the Gospel was written before the Epistle. There have also been various views on the history of the composition of the Gospel itself. I concluded that the evidence called for an understanding of the Gospel’s composition and its relation to the First Epistle that is more complex than that which has been commonly accepted by Johannine scholars.

In his commentary on the Gospel and Epistles of John,1 Urban C. von Wahlde has developed a theory of the compositional history of the Gospel of John and its relation to the First Epistle of John that I believe goes far in resolving the problems raised by the traditional answers to the Johannine Question. Based on evidence within the Gospel itself, von Wahlde has identified distinct layers of tradition in the

Gospel. He maintains that the Gospel of John went through three stages or editions in its compositional history to reach the form in which we now have it. The First Epistle was written between the composition of the second and third editions.

The view that the Gospel was written in several stages is prompted by the appearance in the Gospel of different theologies as well as apparent disjunctures and even contradictions in the flow of ideas (I:10). At times, for example, there appear to be insertions of material between one verse and another, so that if the apparent insertion is removed, the sequence of thought in the remaining verses makes more sense (I:10-12). In other instances, a question is posed and Jesus’ response, in the text as it now stands, does not seem to be related to the question (I:103-104). These seeming disjunctures are known in Greek as ἀπορίας, the plural of ἀπορία, a word that means “difficulty of passing” with reference to places. Von Wahlde explains that, with regard to literary texts, the word “aporias” (to use the Anglicized form) refers to the various types of disjunctures “that prevent a smooth, consistent reading of the material” (I:10). These aporias are the primary evidence that the text of the Gospel has been edited. The aporias indicate the literary seams, those places in the text where one can detect that the work of one author ends and

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2 Since almost every reference in this chapter is to Urban C. Von Wahlde’s *The Gospel and Letters of John*, it seemed best to indicate the volume and page number for each reference in parentheses rather than placing it in a footnote. The volume number is indicated by a Roman numeral.

3 Von Wahlde offers the example of the “parable of the shepherd” (John 10:7-13), in the present form of which Jesus speaks of himself as the good shepherd and as the gate for the sheep.

that of another begins (I:23). The recognition of these aporias is the starting point for von Wahlde’s analysis of the composition of the Gospel of John (I:22-24).

Von Wahlde also mentions two other indicators of editing within the Gospel text that help to identify these literary seams: *Wiederaufnahme* (or repetitive resumptive) and the use of the phrase ταῦτα εἰπὼν (or variations of it). *Wiederaufnahme* refers to the ancient editorial practice of making an insertion in an existing text and then repeating some of the material that appears before the insertion in order to return to and continue with what was being said (I:24). Von Wahlde acknowledges that the presence of such repetition alone may indicate an author’s style rather than editing. However, when this repetition is not a matter of style and when it appears in passages where one or more instances of incongruities, or aporias, can be observed, it is more likely that the repetition is an indication of editing (I:25). In the same way, while the use of ταῦτα εἰπὼν can simply express that one action is following upon another, at other times its appearance results in an abrupt transition from one idea to another, seemingly unrelated, idea. In these instances, the phrase “is almost surely an indicator that an author is either adding material or resuming the sequence of an earlier edition” (I:25).⁵

Using the aporias, then, as a starting point (I:23), von Wahlde begins to determine where the material of one edition ends and another begins. As this process of identifying literary seams continues, numerous features of the Gospel material become evident that can subsequently be used to indicate what material belongs to

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⁵ Von Wahlde lists the following verses in the Gospel of John as those in which ταῦτα εἰπὼν seems to be a mark of redaction: 7:9; 9:6, 11:28; 13:21; 18:38; 20:14, 22. See n. 61.
which edition. These features fall into three basic categories: “characteristic terminology, features of narrative orientation (‘ideology’), and differences in theological outlook” (I:25).

The criterion of characteristic terminology refers to the fact that within the Gospel, different terms are used to refer to the same object or group. These terms appear consistently within an edition and are characteristic of that edition. A key example of this provided by von Wahlde is that one term—or set of terms—is consistently used for the religious authorities in the first edition and another term is consistently used for religious authorities in the second edition (I:26).

The second criterion, narrative orientation or ideology, consists of attitudes and presuppositions to be found in the writing of the particular author. An example of the differences in narrative orientation among the editions would be the contrasting portrayals of the attitude of the common people toward the religious authorities in the first and second editions. In the first edition, the common people do not hesitate to disagree with the religious authorities. In the second edition, however, “the people fear ‘the Jews’ and avoid them and do not dare to disagree with them” (I:26).

The third criterion concerns the theological outlook of each edition. Von Wahlde observes that while the theology of the second and third editions incorporates much of the theology of the previous edition(s), each edition possesses its own distinctive theological elements (I:27). This is certainly the case, for example, with the christology of each edition—that is, how the author of each edition views the relationship of Jesus to God the Father. The first edition exhibits a low christology
(a view of Jesus as fulfilling traditional Jewish expectations) (I:98-101). The christology of the second edition is higher than that of the first edition, since in the second edition Jesus is portrayed as claiming divinity (I:174-75). The third edition goes further than the second in numerous ways by asserting the preexistence of Jesus and in the portrayal of Jesus’ application to himself of the title ‘I AM” (I:307-308). Von Wahlde points out the danger of subjectivity in distinguishing material of one edition from that of another according to theological criteria, yet he maintains that this danger is lessened by the close correlation between the theological features he identifies with the ideological (narrative orientation) and linguistic features (terminology) (I:27).

As his starting point for identifying what material belongs to which edition, von Wahlde notes that there are two sets of terms used to designate the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. In one set of material, the terms “Pharisees,” “chief priests,” and “rulers” are used. In the other set, the religious leaders are referred to as “the Jews” (I:27). Using these linguistic markers, other features begin to emerge. In the former set, the term for miracles is σημεία (“signs”); in the latter, the term is ἔργα (“works”) (I:28). These other features become in turn the means of identifying material of the different editions where the primary linguistic markers mentioned above are absent (I:30). In this way, contrasts between other instances of characteristic terminology, narrative orientation, and the theology of the first and second editions emerge (I:30).
When the material of the first and second editions has been marked out, there remain within those sets of material still more aporias and differences in terminology, theology and narrative orientation. Such characteristics are indicators of a third hand at work. The most distinctive feature of the work of this third author is an apocalyptic worldview. This feature thus becomes the major criterion for identifying the material of the third edition (I: 30-31).

What emerges from such an analysis of the Gospel are three strata, or editions, of material with distinctive characteristics and features. We shall see that Von Wahlde further maintains that the First Letter of John was written “after the composition of the second edition of the Gospel but before the composition of the third” (emphasis in the original) (I:49). Having adopted this position, in Volume I, Part 4, he traces the development of Johannine theology through the following sequence: first edition of the Gospel—second edition—First Letter of John—third edition. (I:395ff).

In what follows, I will summarize von Wahlde’s views concerning the linguistic characteristics, narrative orientation, and theology of each edition and the Epistle, together with his theory of the historical context out of which each Johannine document emerged. The First Letter of John will be considered after the summary of the second edition of the Gospel and before that of the third edition since, according to this view, that is the order in which the documents were composed.
Characteristics of Each Edition of the Gospel and of the First Epistle of John

The First Edition

According to von Wahlde, the use of the terms “Pharisees,” “chief priests,” and “rulers” for the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day characterizes the material of the first edition, which, he asserts, consisted of an entire narrative of the ministry, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus (I:58). He refers to this first edition as “the bedrock of the written tradition of the Johannine community” (emphasis in the original; I:39).

As stated above, the term for “miracles” in the first edition is σημεία (“signs”) (I:68-70). According to von Wahlde,

[t]he first Gospel focused on the miracles of Jesus...and recounted them in all their power as “signs” that Jesus was truly “from God,” that he was the “Messiah” and the “Son of God”—and that he should be believed. In all of this, the categories are those of traditional Jewish expectation (I:58).

The miracles are recounted in order of increasing magnitude, reaching their climax in the raising of Lazarus from the dead (I:58). In the first edition of John's

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6 Von Wahlde provides the text of the Gospel of John with the three editions indicated by three different typefaces in volume I:561-609. By referring to this text, we can see that the term “Pharisee(s)” occurs in the first edition in 1:24; 3:1; 4:1; 7:32 (twice), 45, 47, 48; 9:13, 15, 16; 11:46, 47, 57; 12:19; 18:3. Its occurrence in 8:13; 9:40; 12:42 is identified by von Wahlde as third edition material (cf. I:64). As we shall see, the author of the third edition uses the terms for religious authorities which he finds in the material to which he is making his additions.


7 The word σημεῖον/σημεία appears in the first edition of the Gospel of John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14, 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30. However, in 2:18 and 6:30 a sign is something the Jews (2:18) or the crowd (6:30) demand as proof of who Jesus is rather than something requested by a person in need. Von Wahlde assigns these two instances to the second edition. 4:48 and 6:26 appear in contexts that suggest the third edition. The rest of the instances listed here belong to the first edition (I:68-70).
Gospel, the miracles of Jesus lead to belief, whereas in the Synoptics belief is presupposed in order for a miracle to take place. For example, in John 2:23 we read: “...many believed in his name, seeing his signs that he was performing” (I:58-59).

The christology of this first edition was a low christology: Jesus was seen as fulfilling traditional Jewish expectations concerning the Messiah, the Christ (I:98-101). Some of the examples given by von Wahlde include Andrew's statement to his brother Simon Peter, “We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Christ)” (Jn 1:41). The term also appears in Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:25, 29). Nicodemus calls Jesus “a teacher from God” (Jn 3:2). In Jn 1:49, Nathaniel exclaims, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel”. (The term Son of God in this instance, like the term “messiah,” is ambiguous and may not carry the connotations of divinity that it does in subsequent editions [see I:98]). The people proclaim Jesus to be “the Prophet who is coming into the world (Jn 6:14; cf 7:40, 52),” a reference to the “prophet like Moses who would appear in the last days” (see Deut 18:15-18) (I: 58). In fact, the christology of this edition focuses on portraying Jesus as greater than Moses. (I:51). The aforementioned use of the word σημεῖον for “miracle” suggests a parallel with Moses, for this same term was used in the Septuagint to refer to the miracles of Moses at the time of the Exodus (I:58).

The portrayal of the Jewish religious leaders in the first edition is quite distinct from that found in the second edition. In addition to the previously noted difference in terminology for these leaders (“Pharisees,” “chief priests,” and “rulers” in the first edition, “the Jews” in the second), there are also differences between the first and
the second editions in what might be called the behavior of the leaders. Whereas in the second edition “the Jews” are united as a single group in their steady and bitter opposition to Jesus, in the first edition the religious authorities differ among themselves in their opinion of him and their hostility toward him grows as the narrative progresses (I:59). Von Wahlde cites four references from the first edition that demonstrate the division that existed among the religious authorities concerning Jesus: two instances occur in 7:45-52, first between the Pharisees and the Temple police (7:45-48) and, second, between Nicodemus and the majority of the Pharisees (7:48-52). The other two instances are found in 9:16 and 12:42 (I:83-84). Von Wahlde traces the increasing hostility of the Pharisees toward Jesus in the material of the first edition beginning with “the curiosity of Nicodemus” (3:1-2) and culminating in their convening of the Sanhedrin, which determined to kill Jesus (11:47-50) (I:84-85). “In the first edition, the religious authorities as a group are never in dialogue with Jesus but rather talk among themselves and with others,” in contrast to “the Jews” of the second edition whose “primary narrative role” is to debate with Jesus about his claims (I:60).

The reactions of the common people toward the religious authorities also differ in the first and second editions respectively. In the first edition, the people do not hesitate to dispute with these leaders, but in the second edition we see various people (who are Jewish themselves) act or react out of “fear of the Jews” (I:60). Chapter 9 of the Gospel, which consists of material that von Wahlde identifies as being from all three editions, provides an excellent example of this. The man born
blind boldly debates and even mocks the Pharisees in vv. 15-17, 24-34 (first edition), whereas in v. 22, for example, from the second edition, the man’s parents refuse to answer for their son because they feared the Jews (I:87-88).

According to von Wahlde, the first edition is structured upon the two elements we have just discussed, namely, “the increasing magnitude of the signs of Jesus, together with the increasingly widespread belief of the people and the increasing hostility of the religious authorities” (I: 61).

It is this edition that preserves the traditions found only in John’s Gospel, such as geographical references and related details that demonstrate “a remarkably detailed knowledge of first-century Palestine” (I:61).8 Furthermore, the chronology of the events of Jesus’ ministry found in the first edition, which differs from that of the Synoptics, “is increasingly being judged [by scholars] to be more accurate than that of the Synoptics” (I:61).

Von Wahlde asserts that the community behind the first edition was primarily Jewish Christian (I:120). As stated above, the christology of the first edition was a traditional Jewish christology “focusing on an identification of Jesus as greater than Moses” (I:51). Indeed, “[i]n many respects, the first edition of John’s Gospel functions...as a proof from signs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah” (I:116). The discussions of his miracles in this edition employ titles such as “the messiah,” “the prophet,” or “the son of God,” titles of traditional Jewish expectation. This would

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8 Out of a total of approximately forty-five topographical references in the Gospel, there are twenty that are found only in John or that contain details found only in John. Examples include Cana of Galilee (2:1,11; 4:46-54); Jacob’s Well (4:4-6); the pool of Bethesda (5:2) (I:124).
indicate that the author of the first edition of the Gospel of John sought to present evidence that Jesus was the Messiah and that he was “from God” in a manner that would appeal to fellow Jews and that would not appear to contradict Jewish monotheism (I:116-117). The author of the first edition displays “detailed, accurate knowledge of Judea and Palestine” and of Jesus’ ministry, which in this edition is focused in Judea. These considerations lead von Wahlde to suggest that the author was most likely a Christian Jew living in Judea (I:132; cf. I:62), who wrote for a Jewish-Christian community that was centered there (I:135).

Concerning the original length of the first edition, von Wahlde writes that it is impossible to say how much of the material of this edition was removed by the subsequent authors but that it must have been a great deal. As evidence for this, he points out that in various places in the Gospel a question asked in the first edition is answered by material from a later edition. Furthermore, information that would be required for a complete portrayal of Jesus is lacking (I:62).

An example of a passage in which material from the first edition has been replaced by that of the second can be found in chapter 3 of the Gospel. In vv.1-2, the Pharisee Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and says to him, “Rabbi, we know that you have come as a teacher from God. For no one is able to perform these signs that you perform unless God is with him.” In the next verse, Jesus responds in esoteric terms: “...unless a person is born again, that person is not able to see the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:3). Jesus’ “response” to Nicodemus seems to be no response at all. This is an
indicator that the original material of the dialogue from the first edition has been replaced by material of a different edition (I:103-104, 196-97). 9

Regarding the date of composition of the first edition, von Wahlde writes that many of the features that would ordinarily be employed to determine the date of the New Testament writings are entirely lacking in what remains of the first edition material in the Gospel’s present form. Theological criteria do not provide a sure guide since they may be based on the presupposition that theological development was uniform “throughout all sectors of early Christianity.” There seem to be no references to external events such as the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. The first edition does contain what are considered by scholars to be accurate recollections of the ministry of Jesus which are not found in the other Gospels, a fact which may indicate that the first edition is at least as old, if not older than, the Gospel of Mark. Von Wahlde writes that the best that scholars can do is to determine the date of the first edition relative to the second edition of the Gospel, which, he maintains with considerable hesitation, predates the Jewish Revolt in 66 AD. Therefore, it is “not unreasonable” to suggest that the first edition was composed in the fifties, though, von Wahlde cautions, such a determination is “entirely speculative” (I:133-34).

9 Other instances where a question is posed or an event occurs in the first edition and is answered or reflected upon with second edition material are, for example, 3:22-26/27-30; 7:26b-27/28-30; 7:31-32/33-36; 12:20-22/23-30 (I:197). Such instances of non sequiturs in the text of the Gospel are indicators to this writer of the correctness of the view that the Gospel consists of more than a single edition.
The Second Edition

The author of the second edition profoundly transforms the tradition as it was found in the first edition. While the second author incorporates the material of the first edition into his more developed theological positions, the second edition material is in numerous ways quite distinctive from the first. Indeed many features of the first and second editions can be said to contrast with one another. Some of the characteristics and features of the second edition are incorporated by the author of the third edition. The latter group should therefore be said to be introduced into the Johannine tradition by the author of the second edition (I:137).

The profound transformation of the Johannine tradition that can be observed in moving from the first to the second edition is evident in such critical areas as christology and pneumatology and in the portrayal of the Jewish religious authorities. Through “continued reflection upon the meaning of Jesus’ ministry... in the light of the Jewish tradition,” the Johannine community developed a “high” christology, a christology which asserted that Jesus was, in some sense, divine, and this development naturally led to conflict with those Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, let alone as divine. “The second edition is shaped by conflict with fellow Jews in the synagogue.” This edition is characterized by the use of the term “the Jews” for the religious authorities.10 The term for the miracles of Jesus in this edition is ἔργα (works), of which more will be said below (I:51-52).

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10 In the second edition, the term “the Jews” signifying the hostile religious authorities can be found in 2:18, 20; 5:10, 15, 16, 18; 6:41; 7:1, 11, 13, 15, 35; 8:22; 9:18, 22a, 22b; 10:24, 31, 33; 11:8; 13:33; 18:12, 14, 38; 19:7, 12, 14, 31, 38; 20:19. The term, used in the “hostile” sense, also appears in the
"The Jews" debate with Jesus and accuse him of blasphemy because he dares to refer to God as his own Father and claims equality with God (I:51; see John 5:18). Indeed, it is this high Christology which is the focus of the second edition (I:140). Jesus possesses the Spirit and refers to God as "Father" (I:141) and to himself as the "Son" in an absolute sense (I:403, 423), a title which implies a relationship to the "Father" (I:189-90, 403).11 Jesus states: "...[T]he Father is in me and I am in the Father" (10:38). Though he is divine, it is not clear in the second edition that Jesus is equal to the Father. In one place in the material of the second edition, Jesus proclaims, "The Father and I are one (John 10:30)," yet in another place he announces, "The Father is greater than I (14:28)" In 5:19 Jesus says: "...the Son is not able to do anything of himself." Jesus expresses the same idea in 5:30; 7:28; 8:28; 14:10 (I:406; cf. I:407-408). There is no clear indication in the second edition of the Son's preexistence (the existence of the Son before his incarnation as a human being) (I:408-409).

In the second edition's portrayal of the relationship between Jesus as "Son" to God as "Father," "Jesus is 'sent' by the Father to bring the Father's 'work' to 'completion'" (I:141). The "works" of Jesus—i.e. miracles—"contribute to the completion of this overall 'work'" (I: 141)—hence the use of the term is ἔργα (works)

third edition in 6:52; 8:31, 48, 52, 57; 18: 31, 36 (I:145). As we shall see in the discussion of the third edition, the third author uses the term for religious authorities that appears most recently in the material to which he is making his additions (I:231). The term "Iudaioi" also appears in the Gospel as a designation for persons from Judea (first edition) or as the name for the Jewish race as a whole (mostly in the first edition) (I:91-92).

11 Von Wahlde cites: "5:19 (twice), 20, 21, 22, 23 (twice); 6:40; 14:13; 17:1 (twice). In these instances the Son is understood as divine in the narrow sense" (I:189-90).
In John 5:36, for example, Jesus states: “But I have a witness greater than that of John: the works that the Father has given me to bring to completion; the works themselves that I perform witness about me that the Father has sent me.”

The death of Jesus is not presented as an atoning death (making up for the sins of humanity) but as the means by which Jesus goes to the Father and is able to send the Spirit (I:141, 206). In fact, the chief role of Jesus in the second edition is to herald the imminent “eschatological outpouring of God’s Spirit” upon those who accept the claims Jesus makes about himself (I:51-52). Thus, in 7:38-39 (second edition), we read: “’The one who believes in me—as the Scripture says, “rivers of living water will flow [from his belly (third edition)].”’ (He said this about the Spirit that those who believed in him were to receive. For the Spirit was not yet because Jesus was not yet glorified.)” The bestowal of the Spirit upon the believers is to take place, then, after Jesus’ “glorification” (I:51-52) – his death on the cross and going to the Father.

As 7:38-39 makes clear, in the second edition, the Spirit is understood as “the principle of eternal life” and is at times spoken of as “living water” (I:141). In 4:10, therefore, when Jesus offers the Samaritan woman at the well “living water,” he is offering her the Spirit (I:460).

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12 Von Wahlde cites fifteen instances in the Gospel of the use of the term ἔργον (“work”) “as a term for miracle”—all (with the possible exception of 7:3) from the second edition: “5:20, 36 (twice); 7:3, 21; 9:3; 10:25, 32 (twice), 33, 37, 38; 14:10, 11; 15:24” (I: 150).
As a result of his or her reception of the Spirit, the principle of eternal life (I:141),
the believer would enjoy the prerogatives of this eschatological gift as promised in
the Old Testament: “...[T]he believer would be radically transformed and would now
have eternal life in the present, would not undergo judgment, would have direct
knowledge of God, and would have no need of ethical directives or religious rituals”
(I: 52). The believer is not only cleansed of past sin, but he or she is preserved
from sinning in the future (I:142). The notion that the believer would have eternal
life in the present (realized eschatology) meant that physical death was of no
consequence. In what von Wahlde calls “the clearest expression of this view of
present eschatology” (I:461), the Johannine Jesus declares:

Amen, Amen, I say to you, the one who hears my word and believes in
the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment
but has crossed over from death to life. Amen, Amen, I say to you, the
hour is coming and is now present when the dead will hear the voice
of the Son of God and those hearing it will live (John 5:24-25).

The life granted in the present and which continues into eternity was not conceived
of as including a bodily resurrection. In fact, the “flesh”—material reality—“is
useless” (John 6:63; see I:550-51).

In the second edition the Spirit appears to be not so much a person as a power
and is mentioned without qualification (I:141) –that is, simply as “the Spirit.” The
Spirit is not presented in this edition in an apocalyptic context as the Spirit of Truth

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13 Von Wahlde cites the following OT passages prophesying “a final definitive outpouring of the Holy
(I: 448). The last cited passage, from Joel, seems especially illustrative: “Then afterward I will
pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall
dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; Even upon the servants and the handmaids, in
those days, I will pour out my spirit.” (Joel 3:1-2 NAB).
in opposition to the Spirit of Deceit, as “he” is in 1 John and, implicitly, in the third edition (I: 141).

Due to the reception of the gift of the Spirit, the status of the believer is regarded as so exalted that it is almost indistinguishable from that of Jesus (I:142). The Spirit-anointed believer is truly a “child” of God, such that the distinction between Jesus’ divine sonship and that of the believer is not clear in the second edition. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Spirit grants the believer direct knowledge of God and God’s will, as well as forgiveness of sins and preservation from future sin, so that the role of Jesus as savior and any need to recall his specific teachings is compromised (I:141-42).

We saw above that the function of the σημεία in the first edition was to lead people to belief in Jesus. In the second edition, however, little interest is shown in the miracles themselves (I:140). Rather, “belief in Jesus is primarily acceptance of his claims about himself and is based on [the testimony of] four witnesses (John the Baptist, the works of Jesus, the words of Jesus, and the Scriptures)” (I:141).

The paradigmatic presentation of the basis for belief takes place in 5:31-40 [all identified by von Wahlde as coming from the second edition]. There Jesus explains that he does not witness to himself but that there are other witnesses. He then lists the witness of John, his works, his word (which is the word of the Father), and the Scriptures (I:173-74).

Indeed, the arrangement which the second author imposes on the material of the first edition is done in such a way as to highlight these witnesses and the varied responses of the Gospel characters to them (I: 143). Those who respond positively to these witnesses to Jesus behold his glory (I:198). In fact, von Wahlde divides the
Gospel in its second edition form according to the two glorifications of Jesus: the first glorification in the time of the ministry, that is, “before the hour” (John 1:1-12:50), and the second glorification of Jesus in his passion, death, and resurrection (the “hour” of Jesus) (13:1-20:31). (See I:201-203).

In the second edition, the Jews are consistently presented as being hostile to Jesus and united in their opposition to him (in contrast to the religious authorities of the first edition, who are divided among themselves regarding Jesus.) The common people and even Pilate fear “the Jews” (I:139-140). This is thought by von Wahlde to reflect the above-mentioned conflict of the Johannine community with the Jews who did not accept Jesus’ claims at the time of the writing of the second edition rather than the situation during the historical ministry of Jesus (I:193). There are indications in the material of the second edition of the consequent expulsion of the Johannine Jewish Christians from the synagogue (John 9:22; I:193-94, see n. 99). Certainly at the center of the controversy was the high christology of the Johannine community (I:51).

Von Wahlde maintains that the community behind the second edition, like that behind the first edition, was Jewish-Christian, familiar with Jewish thought (I:52, 223).

The First Letter of John

Before reviewing the characteristics and features of the third edition, we must turn to the first letter of John in order to be able to properly understand the history.

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14 In the second edition, various people are said to act or not act “for fear of ‘the Jews’”: 7:13; 9:18-23; 19:38; 20:19. Pilate can be seen to be intimidated by “the Jews” in 19:7-8, 12 (I:158).
of the development of the theology of the Johannine community. This is because, according to von Wahlde, the First Letter of John was written “after the composition of the second edition of the Gospel but before the composition of the third” (I:49). The evidence for this is presented below.

It is the view of von Wahlde and of other scholars that, following the break with official Judaism, the Johannine community experienced internal conflict. This conflict is reflected in the First Letter of John. What can be known of the views of the opponents of the author of 1 John must be gleaned from the epistle itself (III:2). It seems the schism has already taken place (I:52-53) and the author of 1 John is writing to those who have remained faithful to the tradition he represents (III:13 [?]). Von Wahlde believes that this author is identical with the author of 2 and 3 John, who identifies himself as “the Elder” (I:53; III:6). This “Elder” had been a disciple and “an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus [though not one of the Twelve] and a founding witness of the Johannine tradition as it is enshrined in the canonical Gospel” (I:53). Von Wahlde asserts that this disciple of Jesus, who died before the composition of the material of the third edition of the Gospel, is the same person called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in the third edition (I:53-54; III: 6, 11).

According to von Wahlde, the conflict that tore the Johannine community apart resulted from different views on the proper interpretation of the second edition of the Gospel. The opponents of the author of 1 John based their views on a literal understanding of the second edition, interpreted in the light of the Old Testament promises concerning “the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit” and the
prerogatives that came with it. (I: 53). 15 As von Wahlde reconstructs the views of
the schismatics from the internal evidence of 1 John, they seem to have placed such
an emphasis on the role of the Spirit in the forgiveness of sins16 and the bestowal of
eternal life that the significance of Jesus was limited and temporary (III:363). Once
Jesus had gone to his Father at his death and sent the Spirit, his role in salvation
ceased. Moreover, the believer, through the reception of the same Spirit with which
Jesus had been anointed, became a son or daughter of God in the same sense that
Jesus was (I:419; III:4, 369). Thus, the opponents did not regard Jesus as the Christ
(I:419; III: 364, 369) nor do they confess him as the Son of God in a unique sense (III:
4, 357 358, 363-64).17 It was the Spirit who cleansed the believer from sin and
taught him or her all things; therefore, Jesus’ death was not regarded as salvific
(III:365) nor was there a need to preserve or remember his teachings (III:367). The
Spirit preserved the believer from sin,18 so he or she had no need of ethics (III:360-
62; 368). Having been anointed with the same Spirit as Jesus, the believer enjoyed
all the prerogatives that were promised in the Old Testament to those upon whom
the Spirit would be poured out in the last days (III:345, 363).

The author of 1 John wrote his epistle (actually a tract) in order to nuance or
correct the views of the opponents. Since he, too, accepted the teachings of the

15 See note 13 above.

16 Von Wahlde concludes that the opponents held such a view from the fact that the author of 1 John
so frequently affirms that forgiveness of sins comes through Jesus that he (the author) must be
reacting to an opposing view. See note 27 below.


18 That the opponents held this view is implied in 1 John 1:8, 10 (III:362).
second edition of the Gospel, he had many beliefs in common with the opponents but regarded their understanding of the tradition as inadequate (I:53; III: 346). In particular, the author sought to clarify the role of Jesus in the salvation of the believer. Key expressions in 1 John speak of Jesus “come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7) and having come “not in water only, but in water and blood” (1 John 5:6). These expressions emphasize that Jesus not only bestowed the Spirit (represented by water) but also offered himself as an atoning sacrifice (flesh, blood) for those who believed in him (1:7). Thus, while the opponents were correct that the Spirit was the principle of life, Jesus’ sacrificial death brought forgiveness of sin (I:513-515).19

Both Jesus and the Spirit played a role in the work of salvation. The author also sought to clarify the distinction between Jesus and the believer by asserting his unique sonship (μονογενής) (1 John 4:9). A critical element of this was the notion of the preexistence of Christ (the existence of the “Son” before his coming “in the flesh”) which seems to be indicated by the author’s writing of “the life” that was “revealed” rather than “born” (1:2 [twice]) and that was “in the presence of the Father” (1:2). The Son is said to be “revealed” in 3:5, 8. The author uses the term “Jesus Christ” six times in 1 John (1:3; 2:1, 3:23; 4:2; 5:6, 20) and it appears twice in 2 John, which, according to von Wahlde, is by the same author (2 John 3, 7) (I:421),

19 In addition to 1 John 1:7, in which it is specifically stated that “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin,” the role of Jesus in the forgiveness of sins is mentioned in 1 John 2:1-2, 12; 3:5, 16; 4:10,14; 5:6. See III:368.
indicating that Jesus was not one of many “christs” or “anointed ones,” as the opponents seemed to have considered themselves to be, but the Christ (I:419, 421).

The author of 1 John makes a clarification regarding the believer’s possession of the Spirit: God has given the believer of his Spirit (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13)—that is, the believer has a share in God’s Spirit (The author of the third edition of the Gospel will say that Jesus possesses the Spirit “without measure” [John 3:34]). In the view of the author of 1 John, those who are faithful to the tradition he represents have received the Spirit of Truth, whereas the opponents possess the Spirit of Deception (1 John 4:1-6) (I:450).

While the author of 1 John agreed with the opponents that the Spirit-anointed believer was in a sense sinless, he maintained that “if we say that we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). The author admits that the faithful have sinned and may yet sin. Moreover, the Spirit’s gift of eternal life had not yet reached its fullness, for, contrary to the position of the opponents, all will be judged in the end time (1 John 4:17) (I:526). The seeming contradiction between the author’s acceptance of the idea that the Spirit renders the believer sinless and his insistence that the believer can still sin is an example of how the author at times presents apparently opposing views side-by-side without resolving the tension.

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20 1 John 3: 6, 8, 9; 5:18. (see chart in vol. III:362).

21 See 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2, 12; 3:5; 4:10; 5:16-17 (chart III:362).

22 See von Wahlde’s clarification of this point in III:42.
An important element that appears in the first (and second) letter of John is the introduction into the tradition of a concern for the two Johannine commandments. The first, to keep the word of Jesus, is expressed in various ways and highlights the need for proper belief. This commandment counters the position of the opponents, who deny the importance of remembering the words of Jesus. The second, to love one another, is expressed more clearly. In the letters these commandments are attributed to God. The author of the third edition of the Gospel incorporates these two commandments into the Gospel narrative as commandments given by Jesus to his disciples (III:386-87).

The author of 1 John also introduces into the Johannine tradition an apocalyptic worldview. This can be seen, for example, in the way he writes of both the Spirit of Truth and the opposing Spirit of Deception (mentioned above). We can also see in 1 John the concept of walking in the light (1:7) as opposed to walking in darkness (1:6; 2:9-11), the presence of the idea that the Johannine community is living in the last days, as evidenced by the apostasy of those who have broken from the community (2:18-19), and the warning that the Antichrist is coming (2:18c). Indeed, those who have seceded from the community are Antichrists (2:18-19) (see III: 19).

Regarding the structure of the First Letter of John, about which there are, of course, a variety of theories, von Wahlde finds the view proposed by A. Feuillet and adapted by R. E. Brown to be “the most helpful.” Apart from the Prologue and the

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23 The passages dealing with the two commandments are complex and it can be difficult to separate out the one from the other. Von Wahlde identifies them as 1 John 2:3-11; 3:21-24; 4:21-5:5; 2 John 4-6.
Conclusion, von Wahlde sees the Letter as divided into two parts, “each dominated by the themes of light and love and initiated by the recollection of the proclamation that God is love and that we are to love one another” (III:19-20). As we shall see below, von Wahlde maintains that the author of the third edition of the Gospel, writing after the composition of 1 John, imposed this same general structure on the Gospel itself, so that the Gospel can be divided into two parts focused on the themes of “Jesus as light” and the command to love one another (III:20).

**Arguments for the Priority of 1 John over the Third (Final) Edition of the Gospel**

As stated above, it is von Wahlde’s position that the First Letter of John was written after the composition of the second edition but before that of the third edition. Since this a critical point for the question of the evolution of the Christological significance of the term Logos in the Johannine literature, I shall present von Wahlde’s arguments for this position in some detail here:

First, in chapter 14:16 of the Gospel of John, which is from the third edition, Jesus promises to send “another Paraclete.” No other figure has been referred to as the Paraclete anywhere else in the Gospel. Jesus himself is not called the Paraclete in the Gospel. Yet in 1 John 2:1, Jesus is referred to as “a Paraclete before the Father.” Thus, the Gospel reference to the Spirit as another Paraclete is rendered intelligible by the reference to Jesus as “a Paraclete” in 1 John (I:377-378)

Second, in the Gospel, the Spirit is referred to three times as “the Spirit of Truth” (14:17; 15:26; 16:13) The full apocalyptic significance of this term is not completely evident until one reads 1 John 4:1-6, where the term “Spirit of Truth” is placed in
opposition to “the Spirit of Deception.” Thus, it is in light of 1 John 4:1-6 that it becomes clear that the third edition author is presupposing the dualistic framework characteristic of apocalyptic literature in his use of the term “Spirit of Truth.” (I:378).

Third, in John 13:34, Jesus states that his command to “Love one another” is a “new” commandment. In I John 2:7-8, the author refers to a command that is not new, but old, though new in some respects. Though this reference is to a different commandment, the discussion of new and old, according to von Wahlde, helps to make sense of the notion of a “new” commandment in the John 13:34 (I:378-79).

Fourth, in the Gospel, the witness of the Beloved Disciple is invoked as proof that, when Jesus’ side was pierced by the soldier’s lance, blood and water flowed from the wound (Jn 19:33-35). In 1 John 5:6-9, it is the Spirit who gives witness that Jesus came “through water and blood.” Von Wahlde asserts that the author of 1 John is the Beloved Disciple, who, out of a desire to avoid appearing as “a unique, preeminent ‘authority,’” does not invoke his own witness but that of the Spirit. The author of the third edition of the Gospel, however, who is writing after the death of the Beloved Disciple, does not hesitate to appeal to the authoritative witness of the Beloved Disciple regarding the phenomenon of the blood and water flowing from Jesus’ side. (I:379).

There is another argument to be made for the priority of 1 John over the third edition of the Gospel based on 1 John 5:6-7 and John 19:34. In 1 John 5:6 the author states explicitly that Jesus came “not in the water only but in the water and the blood.” However, von Wahldes points out that “The only other instance where
water and blood are mentioned together is in John 19:34” (I:380). The author of I John cannot be reacting against John 19:34 since the latter verse does not claim that only water flowed from Jesus’ side but rather states clearly that both blood and water flowed from the lance wound. According to von Wahlde, it would make sense that the author of I John is reacting against the view of the second edition of the Gospel, where in several places Jesus offers living water (e.g. John 4:10-15; 7:37-39. [I: 380]) with no mention of “the blood.” In 7:37-39 it is made explicit that the water flowing from the belly of Jesus is “the Spirit that those who believed in him were to receive.” It was the view of the opponents of 1 John, based on the theology of the second edition of the Gospel, that “the sole purpose of Jesus’ ministry was to make available the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit” (I:-380)—that is, Jesus came “in water only.” However, “the author of 1 John rejects this view and argues that Jesus also came in blood, that is, to give his life as an atoning sacrifice (see 1 John 1:7)” [I:- 380]. Von Wahlde asserts that John 19:34 was written after 1 John 5:6-7 so as to confirm within the Gospel narrative itself what 1 John expressed in a theological manner (I:380).

Fifth, 1 John does not give evidence that there was an authoritative office in the Johannine community. Yet in the third edition of the Gospel, particularly in chapter 21, Peter is portrayed as receiving the commission from Christ to feed the sheep, even as the Beloved Disciple’s superiority of spiritual insight is evident. Von Wahlde points out that it is much more likely that the early Christian communities moved from a less structured, less authoritative model to a more authoritative structure
rather than the reverse (I:380-81). This is further evidence, then, that 1 John was composed before the third edition of the Gospel.

Sixth, “[b]oth 1 John and the third edition of the Gospel present a view of eschatology that involves both present and future elements, most notably a final universal judgment” (I:381). In John 5:24-29, we find an interesting juxtaposition of the two views of eschatology: in 5:24-25, Jesus declares: “...the one who hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has crossed over from death to life...the hour is coming and is now present when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those hearing it will live.” This is a clear expression of a present, or realized, eschatology. Yet in vv. 28-29, Jesus declares that “those in the tombs will hear [the Son of Man's] voice and will come forth, those who have done good to a resurrection of life, those who have practiced evil to a resurrection of judgment.” Here we find an expression of future eschatology, including a bodily resurrection. Von Wahlde indentifies John 5:27-29 as belonging to the third edition.

While the first letter of John expresses both a realized and a future eschatology, evidence for a concern with bodily resurrection is lacking (I:381). It would appear, then, that the third edition, with its concern for this issue, was composed later than 1 John.

Seventh, it is often stated that the theology of 1 John is less developed than that of the Gospel (I:381-82). For von Wahlde, the question to be asked concerns the theology of 1 John in relation to the second edition and in relation to the third
edition of the Gospel. Concerning the eleven points of the evolution of the theology of the Johannine community which von Wahlde treats in Volume I, Part IV, he maintains that in every instance where there are differences in points of theology, the First Letter of John exhibits a more developed theology than that of the second edition of the Gospel, and third edition exhibits a more developed theology than that of the First Letter of John. This is most notably true with regard to christology and pneumatology. Von Wahlde provides five specific examples of the development of certain theological concepts as found in the second edition, 1 John, and the third edition. (I:381-82).

The first of these five examples is that, in the second edition, the Spirit is spoken of in an unqualified manner, but in 1 John the Spirit is called the “Spirit of Truth” and set in dualistic opposition to the “Spirit of Deception” (4:1-6). “Yet the most developed pneumatology is found in the Spirit-as-Paraclete passages that come from the third edition.” In the third edition, the Spirit is also conceived of within a dualistic framework as in 1 John, yet in the third edition the Spirit as Paraclete possesses “features that are more personal than those of either the second edition or 1 John” (I:382).

Second, despite its consistently high Christology, the second edition does not assert the preexistence of Jesus. In 1 John, however, we read: “...and the life was revealed...the life that is eternal and that was in the presence of the Father and was revealed to us” (1 John 2a, e-g). These expressions seem to speak of the preexistence of the Son. In the third edition, the notion of Jesus’ preexistence from
“the beginning” is made explicit (see, for example, the Prologue of the Gospel, John 1:1). In addition to expressions of the Son’s preexistence, the third edition contains other passages which also exhibit “the highest and most unequivocal christology” in the Johannine literature. There are, for example, the *Ego eimi* (“I Am”) statements of Jesus in which he applies the Septuagint rendering of the sacred name of Israel’s God to himself (John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19), the declaration that Jesus has “life in himself” (John 5:26), and Thomas’ exclamation upon seeing the risen Jesus: “My Lord and my God (20:28).” Thus, von Wahlde sees a trajectory from the second edition through 1 John to the third edition which “moves in the direction of applying to Jesus attributes that had previously been reserved for God.” (emphasis in the original) (I: 382-83)

The third example of a development in theology from the second edition through the First Epistle to the third edition is found in a comparison of the Prologue of the Gospel and the Prologue of 1 John. Both contain several similar expressions; however, in the Prologue of the Gospel several ideas are a more developed than in the Prologue of 1 John. As an example, von Wahlde points out that in the Prologue of the first letter of John, there is mention of the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς (“the word of life”) (1 John 1:1). Von Wahlde describes its use here as more metaphorical than its use in the Gospel Prologue. In the Prologue of the Gospel, however, the *logos* is clearly identified with Jesus. It is more logical to assume that the use of the term “logos” increased in precision as the community’s Christology evolved rather than vice-
versa. In that case, the use of “word” in 1 John 1:1 “could be better seen as a catalyst for the development of the Logos doctrine of the Gospel than the reverse” (I:383).

Fourth, von Wahlde also demonstrates the shift to a higher christology in moving from 1 John to the third edition of the Gospel by highlighting the fact that in 1 John God is said to be light (1 John 1:5), while in the third edition Jesus is the light (John 1:4-5, 7-9; 8:12). Furthermore, while in 1 John God is said to be “the source of the commandments given to the disciples,” in the third edition Jesus is the source. Von Wahlde writes:

The traditional view of this is that what was first predicated of Jesus in the Gospel is later predicated of God in the Letters. This would be a curious “development.” It is almost inconceivable that the community would shape it conception of God in the light of its conception of Jesus (I:383).

It is much more likely, as stated above, that as the Johannine community’s christology became increasingly higher, the community came to predicate of Jesus qualities that had previously been attributed to God alone (I:383).24

The fifth example of theological development from 1 John to the third edition of the Gospel is that “the importance of ritual actions is clearer in the third edition than it is in 1 John.” In the Gospel of John 20:23, for instance, Jesus bestows on the disciples the power to forgive sins. “Whatever the precise meaning of ‘confessing’ one’s sins in 1 John 1:9, it is not so ritualized as is the process described in the

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24 However, it should be noted that von Wahlde accounts for the difference in attribution—to God in the Epistles, to Jesus in the third edition of the Gospel—not in terms of a developing theology but rather as due to the nature of the conflict faced by the author of 1 John. His opponents deny the abiding importance of Jesus. In order to engage them on “common ground,” the author speaks of the commandments as given by God (I:383).
Gospel.” In the Gospel, there is explicit affirmation of the importance of the Eucharist (John 6:51-58), but there is no comparable affirmation in 1 John (I:383).

The eighth and final argument von Wahlde offers for the chronological priority of I John over the third edition of the Gospel is that “other concepts found in the Gospel make more sense if they are seen to be developments subsequent to the writing of 1 John” (I:384). As examples, he points to the uses of the term “righteousness” and to the topic of petitionary prayer in the Gospel and in 1 John. “[T]he way [the term ‘righteousness’] is used in John 16:8, 10, would seem to presuppose that it was a term familiar to the community. However, the term appears several times in 1 John...”. For von Wahlde, it is the use of the term in 1 John that is the basis for John 16:8, 10 (III: 384). Petitionary prayer is discussed in 1 John 5:13-17, where it is written that based on “believing in the name of the Son of God (v. 13),” the believer can have confidence “that if we ask for anything according to his [God’s] will, he [God] hears us (v. 14).” In the third edition of the Gospel, Jesus declares: “...whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give to you (John 16:23).” Furthermore, Jesus will not ask the Father for the disciples, for “the Father himself loves you....” (16:26-27). In von Wahlde’s view, the relationship between 1 John 5:13-17 and John 16:23b-24, 26-28 “is more intelligible if [the verses] in 1 John are understood to be the foundational statement and the verses in the third edition are understood to presume the understanding presented there” (III:384-85).

In von Wahlde’s view, these eight factors taken together (including the five particular examples of theological development listed under the seventh factor),
demonstrate that “in all cases, the third edition [of the Gospel] either presumes the
existence of the First Epistle or receives full intelligibility only in light of it.” Von
Wahlde regards this as “very strong evidence” that I John was composed before the

As stated above, according to von Wahlde, the author of 1 John, who was “the
Elder” who wrote 2 and 3 John and was the witness upon whom the Johannine
tradition was founded, died before the composition of the third edition of the Gospel
and is referred to as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” by the author of that edition.
(I:53-53; III:6, 11).

The Third Edition

In the third (and final) edition of the Gospel of John, we encounter several
theological concepts which are either further developments of ideas contained in
the earlier strata of the Johannine writings (i.e. first edition, second edition, 1 John)
or which are dealt with here for the first time (I:230, 358). The author of this
edition both provided the Gospel with “a third overarching structure that
complemented the first two without disturbing them” (of which more will be said
below) and made numerous additions to the written Gospel of varying lengths (i.e.
glosses) (I:353, 357).

As with the authors of the previous editions and 1 John, “the third author uses
distinctive terminology and has distinctive literary techniques and a distinctive
theology” (I:231).
While the third author does introduce into the Johannine Gospel “a number of new terms or terms with new meanings,” he does not employ distinctive terminology for religious authorities. Rather, he uses the terminology already present in the passages of the Gospel to which he is adding his material (I:231).25

The author of the third edition sought to incorporate the authentic understanding of the Johannine tradition as expressed in 1 John into the Gospel of John. At the same time, the third author goes beyond the theology of 1 John (I:53-54; cf. I:233, 358). In the area of christology, for example, the concept of the preexistence of Christ becomes explicit, especially in the Prologue of the Gospel (John 1:1-18), a hymn prefixed to the Gospel around the time of the composition of the third edition. Christ is identified with the Logos that was with God in the beginning (before creation) and through whom all things were made. Indeed, it is said “the Logos was God” (John 1:1). In addition to this identification of the Logos who “became flesh” (John 1:14) in Jesus as divine, the material of the third edition contains the “I Am” statements of Jesus (“…before Abraham, I AM”)26, by which Jesus applies to himself the Septuagint rendering of the sacred name of God as revealed to Moses from the burning bush and asserts his own divine preexistence. Also in the third edition, the Apostle Thomas, upon seeing the risen Christ, exclaims, “My Lord and my God!” (20:28) (I:309-310). The author of the third edition also continues (from 1 John) the

25 Thus, in verses that von Wahlde identifies as third edition material, the term “Pharisees” appears in 8:13; 9:35-41; 12:42. In the third edition, the term “the Jews” appears in 6:52; 8:31, 48, 52, 57 (I:300-301).

26 John 8:58; also 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:6, 8.
use of the term μονογενής to specify the unique nature of Jesus’ divine sonship (1:18; 3:16, 18) (I:308). The distinction between Jesus’ possession of the Spirit and that of the believer is reinforced by the statement of the third author that Jesus possessed the Spirit “without measure.” (3:34) (I:311; see summary of these christological developments in I:359-60).

Whereas in the second edition Jesus’ death is not presented as an atonement for humanity’s sins but rather as the means of his going to the Father and the prerequisite for his sending of the Spirit, the third author affirms that Jesus’ death was not only a departure to the Father, but was a death that took away humanity’s sin.27 This view was expressed in 1 John and is now incorporated into the Gospel itself by the author of the third edition (I:234, 315-18, 361).

The role of the Spirit (whom the third author calls “another Paraclete” [14:16]) is portrayed in relationship to the words and deeds of Jesus when, in the Last Supper discourses, Jesus tells his disciples that the Spirit of Truth (an apocalyptic term) “will not speak on his own but only what he hears” (16:13) and will remind them of all he (Jesus) has taught them (14:26). Thus, as important as the Spirit is in granting life to the believer, the words of Jesus, particularly the command to “love one another,” retain their importance for the Spirit-anointed believer (I:313, 320-22; Need to check this reference). Furthermore, the Spirit is presented in the third edition more as person than force (I:453).

The author of the third edition retains the view of the role of the four witnesses to Jesus found in the second edition (John the Baptist, the words of Jesus, the works of Jesus, the Scriptures) but adds to that list the Spirit of Truth and the disciples (15:26-27) (I:233).

The importance of the material elements of religion finds expression in the third edition (I:235). In the third author’s addition to the Bread of Life sermon (John 6), beginning with v. 51, the language of Jesus’ discourse becomes more explicitly Eucharistic: “the bread that I give is my flesh for the life of the world...Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life within you...” (6:51, 53). The belief in the bodily resurrection of the dead is explicitly put forward (5:28-29). Furthermore, in connection with this view of the continuing importance of material reality, the role of human leadership is affirmed: in chapter 20, the role of intermediaries in the forgiveness of sins is expressed when the risen Jesus says to the disciples: “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them; whose sins you retain are retained (20:23).” In the appendix to the Gospel, chapter 21, the risen Christ commissions Peter to feed the sheep (21:15-17). While the Beloved Disciple is presented as more insightful than Peter, this passage from Chapter 21 seems to indicate that the author seeks to bring the Johannine community into a stronger communion with the larger Christian church represented by the figure of Peter. (I:235, 555-59)

The third author, through additions to the Gospel text which appear “loosely tied to their context and at times introduce confusion in relation to earlier elements of
the Gospel,” seems to desire to correlate the Johannine tradition with that of the Synoptics (I:235). In 4:44, for example, “Jesus himself bore witness that a prophet does not have honor in his own country.” Cf. Mk 6:4, Matt 13:57; Lk 4:24). Yet in the next verse it says that “the Galileans welcomed him....” This is a clear sign that different hands are at work. Another example would be the appearance of the phrase “Kingdom of God” in 3:3 and 3:5, the meaning of which is not elaborated (I:349-50).

The third author continues to exhibit the apocalyptic worldview introduced into the written Johannine tradition by the author of 1 John (I:231-32). The use of the title “Son of Man,” so frequent in the Synoptics, is an apocalyptic characteristic that appears only in the third edition (1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35, 12:23, 34 (twice); 13:31) (I:274; cf. I:232). Another apocalyptic feature of the third edition are the two references to the ‘Kingdom of God’ mentioned above (I:232). We also find in the third edition what von Wahlde calls “a fundamental symbolic expression of apocalyptic dualism: the images of light and darkness” (I:232).28 Other expressions of an apocalyptic worldview include the aforementioned references to the Spirit as “the Spirit of Truth” (14:17; 15:26; 16:13), which, in 1 John, had been explicitly set in opposition to “the Spirit of Deception.” The commandment to love one another is understood in a sectarian manner: the members of the Johannine community are to love fellow members of the community (13:34, 35; 15:12; 15:17);


Another element that the author of the third edition carries over from 1 John is the tradition of the two Johannine commandments—i.e. to keep the word of Jesus (14:23-26) and to love one another (13:34-35; 15:9-17). Whereas these commandments are attributed to God (the Father) in the First Letter of John, in the third edition of the Gospel it is Jesus who gives these commands to the disciples. Furthermore, for the third author, the commandments given by Jesus to the disciples correlate with the two commandments given by the Father to Jesus: the commandment concerning “what to say and what to speak” (12:46-50) corresponds to the first commandment to the disciples to keep the word of Jesus and the other, to lay down his life for his sheep (10:15b-18), corresponds to the second commandment to the disciples to love one another. (III:386-397).

Von Wahlde writes that, as was the case with first and second editions, the date of the third edition cannot be determined with certainty (I:385). Basing his conclusion on both internal (i.e.—within the Gospel) and external evidence, he asserts that the third edition of the Gospel was probably completed by 85-90 AD. He regards it as certain that it was completed before 100 AD. (I:390). While it is not possible to determine the date of the composition of the third edition with utter
accuracy, the most important question for von Wahlde is that of the relationship between the First Letter of John and the third edition of the Gospel. As we have seen, he maintains that 1 John was composed prior to the composition of the third edition of the Gospel. (His arguments for this are presented above.)

As for the place of the composition of the third edition (the final form of the Gospel), the traditional association of the Gospel of John with Ephesus may, in fact, possess an element of truth. According to von Wahlde, the links between the Gospel of John and Ephesus are supported by internal evidence, such as the many similarities between Gospel of John and the Deutero-Pauline letter to the Ephesians, as well as external evidence, such as the indications in the Letter of Polycarp of Smyrna to the Philippians that a heretical view of the Johannine tradition such as that opposed by the author of 1 John was to be found in the regions near Ephesus (I:390-93).

Von Wahlde writes: “The most that can be said regarding the author of the third edition is that he is a representative of the Johannine community, writing after the death of the Elder” (the Elder) (I: 375). We should recall here that in von Wahlde’s view, the Elder who identifies himself as the author of 2 and 3 John is the author of 1 John as well and is the same individual referred to as the Beloved Disciple in the third edition of the Gospel. “The author of the third edition shares the views of the Elder and was a member of the group who remained in fellowship with the Elder and his part of the community” (I: 375). Yet the third author did not merely incorporate the insights of the Elder into the Gospel, but went beyond the concerns
expressed in 1 John and dealt with theological issues not addressed in that epistle. In doing so, the third author brought the Gospel of John into greater harmony with the traditions of other Christian communities, that is, those communities compromising what scholars refer to as “the Great Church.” (I: 375-376).

Some scholars have detected similarities in structure between the First Letter of John and the Gospel of John in its final form. Von Wahlde, following insights by both Feuillet and Brown, maintains that the basic structure for both Gospel and Epistle consists of a Prologue, two major sections and an Epilogue. Whereas some scholars have accounted for the similarity in structure by asserting that the author of 1 John imitated the structure of the Gospel, von Wahlde provides a more nuanced account. It is the author of the third edition of the Gospel who has imposed on the Gospel as a whole a structure reflecting that of 1 John (I:353-56).

In the view of von Wahlde, the overall structure of the third edition of the Gospel—which is to say, of the Gospel as it has come down to us—is as follows:

1. Prologue (1:1-18)
2. Jesus as the Light of the world (1:19-12:50)

The reader will recall that 1 John “is loosely structured around the themes ‘light’ and ‘love’, themes that dominate the first and second halves of 1 John respectively” (I:53).
It is common today to divide the Gospel as it exists now into two parts, the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. Concerning the relationship between this twofold division and the respective structures of the three editions, von Wahlde writes:

Once one understands the literary and theological development of the Gospel, it becomes evident that the division of the Gospel into “the Book of Signs” and the “Book of Glory” calls attention to a mix of features from different editions. In the first edition, the entire Gospel was a “Book of Signs.” In the second edition, one might refer to the twofold division as “two books of glory” and the third edition might well refer to this twofold division as the demonstration of “Jesus as light and Jesus as loving,” as the third author overlaid his own theological conceptualization that he adapted from 1 John (1:198, n. 108).

Conclusion

In the Gospel of John different theologies can be found side by side. This is true, for example, in the Gospel’s christology, eschatology, and pneumatology, to name several key areas. Through the identification of literary seams within the text of the Gospel as we have it, Urban C. von Wahlde has detected patterns that indicate that certain terms and theological views cohere in such a way that they are characteristic of different strata of the Gospel. Once these steps in the process of identifying the Gospel material as belonging to particular stages of the Gospel’s composition have been achieved, it can be seen that the theological views of the author of the First Epistle of John represent a development over those of earlier stages of the Gospel and yet are developed further in the final edition of the Gospel.

Having found the evidence presented by von Wahlde to be persuasive, I shall now turn to an examination of the significance of the term λόγος in each of the editions of the Gospel delineated by von Wahlde and in the First Epistle.
CHAPTER THREE
A STUDY OF ΛΟΓΟΣ IN THE FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS OF
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Introduction

In the previous chapter I summarized Urban C. von Wahlde’s theory of the compositional history of the Gospel of John and the First Letter of John. I indicated that I found his arguments for positing three stages in the composition of the Gospel to be persuasive. We shall now begin to examine the use of the term λόγος in each of those three stages and in I John. Our aim is to determine whether or not we can trace a development in the christological use of λόγος as we move from the first edition to the second, from the second to the first Epistle, from the Epistle to the third edition, and finally to the Gospel Prologue. In this chapter we shall look at the significance of the term in the first and second editions.

Λόγος in the First Edition of the Gospel of John

The term λόγος appears three times in the first edition of John’s Gospel.  

4:39 Εκ δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἐκείνης πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν τῶν Σαμαριτῶν διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναικὸς μαρτυρούσης ὅτι Εἶπέν μοι πάντα ἡ ἐποίησα.
In his commentary on 4:39, von Wahlde refers to the τὸν λόγον of the Samaritan woman as her “report.”¹ The author of the third edition added verses 40-42, in which the townspeople state explicitly that they no longer believe on account of the woman’s “report” (referring back to τὸν λόγον in v 39, from the first edition, translated as “word” by von Wahlde; here in v 42 τὴν σὴν λαλιάν, third edition, translated as “your report” by von Wahlde).² Rather, as the author narrates in the previous verse, “...many more believed because of his [i.e. Jesus’] word (διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ).” Whereas in the first edition material, much value is placed on belief based on the report of someone else, in this case the Samaritan woman (v 39), “the focus [in the third edition material] is on the word of Jesus itself (vv 41-42).”³ Von Wahlde writes that this focus is important in two ways. First, the word of the Samaritan woman decreases in importance, since the townspeople now believe based on hearing Jesus’ own word. Second, the author of the third edition, who is writing after the composition of I John, emphasizes the function of Jesus’ word as leading to true belief in order to counter the view of the opponents of the author of I John, who had denied any permanent value to that word.⁴ The verses from the third edition, then, highlight the fact that in v 39, which is from the first edition, τὸν λόγον


³ Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:195.

⁴ Ibid., II:195; cf.196-7.
simply refers to the report of the woman regarding Jesus, in contrast to the more significant use of the τὸν λόγον in v 41, where it is the word of Jesus himself that leads to faith.

4:50 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς. Πορεύου: ὁ υἱὸς σου ζῇ. ἐπίστευσεν ὁ ἀνθρωπός τῷ λόγῳ ὅτι εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐπορεύετο.

An official asks for his son to be healed. After Jesus tells him that his son lives, “the man believed the word [τῷ λόγῳ] that Jesus spoke to him and he departed” (Jn 4:50). The episode exemplifies the concept of faith based on miracles typical of the first edition. Furthermore, according to von Wahlde, ‘...the magnitude of Jesus’ power is evident in the retrieval of the child from the point of death, by Jesus’ word alone, at a distance from the city, at the very hour when he spoke the word.” While some have seen in the phrase “believed the word” a reference to the message preached by Jesus, I concur with von Wahlde when he writes that no mention is made here of Jesus’ preaching. It is most likely, then, that “in the original version of the Gospel,” ἐπίστευσεν ὁ ἀνθρωπός τῷ λόγῳ simply means the official “believed what Jesus said.”

For C. H. Dodd, the word itself that Jesus spoke, ὁ υἱὸς σου ζῇ (4:50; cf. 51, 53) is “significant,” for it is stated three times, and he sees a close connection between this healing narrative and that of the following one, the healing of the man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years (5:1-9, also first edition). Though this second

5 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:206.

6 Ibid., II:205-207, see esp. 206.
narrative does not contain the word λόγος, it is by Jesus’ words, “Get up, take up your pallet, and walk (v 8)” that the man is healed. Thus Dodd writes,

He too is restored by the word of Jesus; more precisely, perhaps, by the word and by obedience to the word, since it is only in obeying the command, ἐγείρε, ἄρον τὸν κράβαττόν σου, καὶ περιπάτει, that the healing becomes effective.

We may say, therefore, that both narratives tell how the word of Christ gave life to those who were as good as dead, either in the sense of being at the point of death or in the sense of living chronically in a state of suspended vitality. In each case the life-giving Word [sic] is the pivot of the story.7

By capitalizing “Word” in the last sentence cited, Dodd is referring back to the Prologue of the Gospel, 1:1-18. Given the position of this dissertation that the Prologue, the only place in the Gospel where λόγος is used as a title for Jesus, was prefixed at the last stage of the Gospel’s composition, I do not agree that we can speak of the life-giving Word—that is, with a capital “W” indicating the Logos of the Prologue—at this point.

Rudolf Schnackenburg contrasts the “efficacious word” of Jesus in 4:50 with the prophet Elijah’s restoration to life of the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-24). The contrast is suggested by the similarity of Elijah’s words to the widow, “See, your son lives,” to those spoken by Jesus to the official. Whereas Elijah “stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, ‘O LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!’” (1 Kings 17:23) to effect the restoration, Jesus

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“restores life by his word alone....”8 Because he has confidence in the word of Jesus, the official's faith appears to be greater than that of the people of Galilee, who must see to believe (v 48).9

We see in 4:50, then, that the λόγος of Jesus has the power to restore to life. This life, however, refers to physical life or, as Dodd maintains, the vitality of that life.10 We shall see that in the second edition of the Gospel, the word of Jesus leads the hearer to life in a more profound sense.

19:13 Ὁ οὖν Πιλᾶτος ἀκούσας τῶν λόγων τούτων ἠγαγεν ἐξω τὸν Ἰησοῦν, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ βήματος εἰς τόπον λεγόμενον Λιθόστρωτον, Ἑβραϊστὶ δὲ Γαββαθα.

Pilate hears the words [τῶν λόγων τούτων] of the religious leaders. Here λόγος, in the plural, simply has the ordinary meaning of spoken words.

**Λόγος in the Second Edition of the Gospel of John**

**General Comments on Λόγος and Related Terms**

**In the Second Edition**

In this chapter, we shall see that in the second edition of the Gospel of John there is a focus on the word of Jesus as a witness to the claims he makes about himself. However, we shall also see that the author of the second edition does not always use the term λόγος when expressing this function of the word of Jesus but may employ

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9 Ibid., I:467.

other terms. An issue that must be addressed in this regard is that several scholars treat τὸ ρῆμα, or more precisely its plural form ῥήματα, which does not appear in the singular in this Gospel, as synonymous with λόγος in the body of John’s Gospel—that is, apart from its use in the Prologue. For example, the authors on the entry for λόγος in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (*TDNT*) write that since so much of the ministry of Jesus involved proclaiming a message, specifically a spoken word, “it is natural that [in all four Gospels] there should be countless references to Λέγειν or λόγοι or ρήματα. In this respect there seems to be no distinction between λόγος and ρῆμα.” When commenting on the different uses of λόγος in the Fourth Gospel, the *TDNT* cross-references the uses of ρήματα. C. H. Dodd states in the course of his examination of the uses of λόγος in John’s Gospel apart from the Prologue:

[Τ]he λόγος of Christ is the sum total of His spoken words (λόγοι or ρήματα), regarded as containing His thought or meaning, but His uttered words, nevertheless, as is shown by the fact that *what is said of His λόγος can also be said of His ρήματα* [emphasis added].

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12 Ibid., IV:105.

13 Ibid., IV:128.

14 Dodd, *Interpretation*, 266. On pp. 265-68, Dodd provides an overview of the uses of λόγος in John’s Gospel apart from the Prologue. He divides these instances into four groups (not counting the Prologue), all of which have some relation to ρήματα.
Ed. L. Miller maintains that in the body of the Gospel (that is, apart from the Prologue), the two words are interchangeable.\textsuperscript{15} As we progress through this examination of the use and meaning of \textit{λόγος} in the second edition, we shall attempt to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between \textit{λόγος} and \textit{ῥήματα} within that edition.

Apart from \textit{ῥήματα}, there are other terms besides \textit{λόγος} employed by the author of the second edition to express the function of the word of Jesus as witness to the truth of his claims. While in this part of the present chapter I shall focus on the instances of the word \textit{λόγος} in the second edition, I shall also examine the use of these other terms in cases where such an examination helps demonstrate the significance of \textit{λόγος} itself within this edition.

We shall also see that in the second edition, the \textit{λόγος} of Jesus is linked to the reception of eternal life for the believer (5:24) and to the “cleansing” of the disciples (15:3). The precise nature of this link will be explored below.

\textbf{Ordinary Uses of \textit{Λόγος} in the Second Edition}

It must also be noted that not every occurrence of \textit{λόγος} in the second edition possesses a profound theological meaning. In the following verses from the second edition, \textit{λόγος} has the ordinary meanings of “a word,” “speech,” or “a saying”:

7:36 What is this saying [ὁ λόγος οὗτος] of his...?16

7:40 ...Some of the common people [first edition], hearing these words [ἀκούσαντες τῶν λόγων τούτων]....
19:8 When, therefore, Pilate heard this statement [τοῦτον τὸν λόγον]....

In 10:35, λόγος refers to the “word” of Scripture or the Law:

10:35 If it [the Law cf. 10:34] calls ‘gods’ those to whom the word of God [ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ] came, and if Scripture cannot be contradicted....

The same is true in 15:25:

15:25 But in order that the word [ὁ λόγος] written in their Law might be fulfilled....

In 17:20, λόγος is the testimony of the disciples:

“I do not pray for these [the disciples] alone but also for those believing in me through their word [διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν].

The use of λόγος in 6:60 may at first glance appear to be a case in which the term refers to what Jesus has just said in the previous verses: “...many of the disciples...said, ‘This word [ὁ λόγος οὗτος] is offensive....’” In their present location, these words of the disciples appear as a reaction to Jesus’ discourse concerning himself as the Bread of Life. Indeed, in the verses immediately preceding v 60, he has spoken of the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood in order to have eternal life (6:51-58). These verses, however, are from the third edition, whereas v 60 is second edition. Furthermore, in the discourse itself, Jesus has been

addressing the “crowd” and “the Jews.” Now, it is the disciples who react. It is not clear what in the discourse has offended them. Thus, von Wahlde asserts that “it is difficult to imagine” that vv 60-65 (he is not including here 61c-62, which are from the third edition) were originally located after 6:59.17

Theologically Significant Uses of the Term Λόγος

In the Second Edition

In the following pages, we shall examine those instances of the use of the term λόγος in the second edition which bear a theological significance—that is, a significance beyond that of a simple saying or statement. The various Johannine scholars whose views are considered here do not distinguish between editions of the Gospel of John and their arguments are often based on verses drawn from material identified by von Wahlde as being from different editions. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I have followed von Wahlde in identifying from which edition each of the cited verses comes. While the focus of this section of the chapter is the term λόγος in the second edition, material from the third edition can sometimes shed light on, or confirm, the understanding of the term in the second edition, for, according to von Wahlde,

...particularly the theological and ideological features of this third edition is in dialogue primarily (but not exclusively) with the material of the second edition. At the same time, the third edition did not reject the thought of the second edition outright but accepted much of it while nevertheless attempting to modify other aspects.”18


18 Ibid., I:236.
It is hoped that through the following study of the relevant texts from the second edition, we can discover whether or not the term λόγος possesses a particular meaning or meanings for the author of that edition.

**General Comments on the Λόγος of Jesus as Witness**

**In the Second Edition**

In chapter 2, the general summary of von Wahlde's views on the composition of John's Gospel, we saw that in the first edition of the Gospel of John belief in Jesus is presented as based on his signs (σημεία) — i.e. miracles,\(^{19}\) while in the second edition belief in Jesus is based on other “witnesses” as well. In 5:31-40, all of which is second edition material, Jesus is portrayed as invoking witnesses other than himself to the truth of the claims he makes about himself. These witnesses are John the Baptist (vv 32-35), his works (τὰ ἔργα, the term signifying Jesus' miracles in the second edition\(^{20}\); v 36), his word (τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ, though the antecedent of αὐτοῦ here is not Jesus but the Father who sent him, for the word of Jesus is the word of the Father; \(^{21}\)vv 37-38), and the Scriptures (vv 39-40).\(^{22}\) This “paradigmatic

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\(^{19}\)Ibid., I:150.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., I:150. Here von Wahlde identifies three different uses of the term ἔργον in the Gospel of John. As a term for miracle, it appears in 5:20, 36 (twice); 7:3, 21; 9:3; 10:25, 32 (twice), 33, 37, 38; 14:10, 11; 15:24. With the possible exception of 7:3, these instances are identified by von Wahlde as contained in the second edition. 

\(^{21}\)See von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, I:174. As we shall see, the presence of the third witness, the word of Jesus which is the word of the Father, in 5:31-40 is debated, as von Wahlde notes in II:109-110.

\(^{22}\)Ibid., I:173-74.
presentation of the basis for belief” is the key to understanding how the author of the second edition arranged the material he used from the first edition, material that emphasized Jesus’ “signs,” and “integrated it into a larger theological framework” based on the concept of the above-mentioned witnesses. Von Wahlde provides a concise but thorough summary of this structure:

Jesus explains to his listeners (esp[ecially in] 5:31-40) that there are four witnesses that show that he speaks the truth and is to be believed. These four witnesses are: (1) the witness of John the Baptist, (2) the witness of the works of Jesus, (3) the witness of his words, and (4) the witness of Scripture. At the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, the disciples experience, and respond positively to, these witnesses (1:19-2:22) and are shown as models of belief. During his public ministry, Jesus also presents this witness to “the Jews” primarily through three essential witnesses (cf. 5:32-35), that of Scripture (6:1-50), that of his words (8:13-59) and that of his works (9:1-10:38), but “the Jews” do not respond positively (15:2-25) and do not believe (cf. 12:37-50).

We shall now look at those passages concerning the witness of Jesus’ word, as well as the passages that portray a link between Jesus’ word and eternal life (5:24) or the “cleanness” of his disciples (15:3), in detail. I have included in the text of this chapter the Greek text of the passages being examined, with the three editions indicated by von Wahlde, so that the reader may see the instances of λόγος in their

23 Ibid.


25 John the Baptist is not an essential witness, for Jesus does not accept “human witness,” John 5:34; cf von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:258.

26 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, I:198. See also von Wahlde’s “Addendum: The Role of the Witnesses to Jesus and Belief,” II: 109-110.
context. Plain-faced type indicates first-edition material, italic type indicates second-edition material, and bold-faced type indicates third-edition material.27

**John 1:19-2:22 The Response of the Disciples to the Four Witnesses**

The first appearance of the word λόγος in the material of the second edition is in 2:22, which comes at the end of a passage that, as indicated in the citation from von Wahlde’s commentary in the previous section, von Wahlde has marked out as having for its theme the response of the disciples to the four witnesses to Jesus, those same witnesses to be listed by Jesus in the “paradigmatic” passage 5:31-40.28

While our concern is with 2:22, the text of 1:19-2:22 is presented here so that the reader may see more clearly the function played by λόγος in 2:22 as one of the four witnesses in the second edition.

1:19-34 The First Witness to Jesus: John Witnesses about Himself and about Jesus

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19 Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου, ὅτε ἀπέστειλαν Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίταις ἵνα ερωτήσωσιν αὐτὸν, — Τίς εἶ; 20 καὶ ὡμολόγησεν καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσατο, καὶ ὡμολόγησεν ὅτι ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ χριστός. 21 καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν· Τί οὖν; σὺ Ἠλίας εἶ; καὶ λέγει· οὐκ εἰμί. ὁ προφήτης εἶ σύ; καὶ ἀπεκρίθη· οὔ. 22 εἶπαν οὖν αὐτῷ· Τίς εἶ; ἵνα ἀπόκρισιν δῶμεν τοῖς πέμψασιν ἡμᾶς· τί λέγεις περὶ σεαυτοῦ; 23 ἔφη· ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· εὐθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, καθὼς εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας ὁ προφήτης. 24 Καὶ ἀπεσταλμένοι ἦσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων. 25 καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· Τί οὖν βαπτίζεις εἰ σὺ οὐκ εἶ ὁ χριστός οὐδὲ Ἠλίας οὐδὲ ὁ προφήτης; 26 ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς· ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγων· ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν ὑδατι· μέσος ὑμῶν ἐστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε, 27 ὁ ὑπὸ σωματον ἄρχειν.
οὐκ εἰμὶ ἄξιος ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδήματος.

28ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ὅπου ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων. 29Τῇ ἐπαύριον βλέπει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει· ἰδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.

30οὗτός ἐστίν ὑπὲρ οὗ ἦν Ἱωάννης βαπτίζων. 31Τῇ ἐπαύριον βλέπει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει· ἰδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.

32κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα φανερωθῇ τῷ Ἰσραήλ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων.

33καὶ ἠμαρτύρησε λέγων ὅτι τεθέαμαι τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαίνον ὡς περιστερὰν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτόν.

34κἀγὼ ἑώρακα καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

1:35-51 The Response of the First Disciples to the Witness of Jesus

35Τῇ ἐπαύριον πάλιν εἰστήκει ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο καὶ ἐμβλέψας τῷ Ἰησοῦ περιπατοῦντι λέγει· ἰδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

36καὶ ἠκολούθησαν εὐθὺς. ἦλθαν οὖν καὶ εἶδαν ποῦ μένει καὶ παρ᾽ αὐτῷ ἔμειναν τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην· ὥρα ἦν ὡς δεκάτη.

37οὗτος εἶναι τῶν ἀπὸ Πιλάτου, ὃς ἦσαν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Μισσιλίου καὶ ἐμβλέποντας αὐτὸν λέγει· οὗτος εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ.
Καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅφεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεῳγότα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

2:1-12 The Second Witness to Jesus

2:1 Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεί. 2ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον. 3καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν· οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν. 4[καὶ] λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου. 5λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διακόνοις· ὅ τι ἂν λέγῃ ὑμῖν ποιήσατε. 6ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ λίθιναι ὕδριαι ἓκατὼν καθαρισμὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων κείμεναι, χωροῦσαι ἀνὰ μετρητὰς δύο ἢ τρεῖς. 7λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· γεμίσατε τὰς ὑδρίας. καὶ ἐγέμισαν αὐτὰς ἕως ἄνω. 8καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἀντλήσατε νῦν καὶ φέρετε τῷ ἀρχιτρικλίνῳ· οἱ δὲ ἤνεγκαν. 9ὡς δὲ ἐγεύσατο ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον γεγενημένον καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει πόθεν ἐστίν, οἱ δὲ διάκονοι ᾔδεισαν οἱ ἠντληκότες τὸ ὕδωρ, φωνεῖ τὸν νυμφίον ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος 10καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· πᾶς ἄνθρωπος πρῶτον τὸν καλὸν οἶνον τίθησιν καὶ ὅταν μεθυσθῶσιν τὸν ἐλάσσω· σὺ τετήρηκας τὸν καλὸν οἶνον ἕως ἄρτι. 11Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφανέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. 12Μετά τοῦτο κατέβη εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ αὐτὸς καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ [αὐτοῦ] καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκεῖ ἔμειναν οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας.

2:13-22 The Third and Fourth Witnesses

13Καὶ ἐγγὺς ἦν τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων, καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ὁ Ἰησοῦς. 14Καὶ εὗρεν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοὺς πωλοῦντας βόας καὶ πρόβατα καὶ περιστερὰς καὶ τοὺς κερματιστὰς καθημένους, 15καὶ ποιήσας φραγέλλιον ἐκ σχοινίων πάντας ἐξέβαλεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τά τε πρόβατα καὶ τοὺς βόας, καὶ τῶν κολλυβιστῶν ἐξέχεεν τὸ κέρμα καὶ τὰς τραπέζας ἀνέτρεψεν, 16καὶ τοῖς τὰς περιστερὰς πωλοῦσιν εἶπεν· ἄρατε ταῦτα ἐντεῦθεν, μὴ ποιεῖτε τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρός μου οἶκον ἐμπορίου. 17ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι γεγραμμένον ἐστίν· ὁ ζῆλος τοῦ οἴκου σου καταφάγεταί με. 18Ἀπεκρίθησαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· τί σημεῖον δεικνύεις ἡμῖν ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς; 19ἐπεκρίθησαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· τί σημεῖον δεικνύεις ἡμῖν ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς; 20ἐπεκρίθησαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· τί σημεῖον δεικνύεις ἡμῖν ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς; 21ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἔλεγεν περὶ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. 22ὅτε οὖν
Commentary on Λόγος in John 1:19-2:22

Concerning the composition and arrangement of the second-edition material in this passage, as well as the function of the word (λόγος) of Jesus in 2:22, von Wahlde writes that the author of the second edition

*took over* both the material dealing with the advent of the first disciples on the basis of the report from John (1:19-49) and also the report of the Cana miracle (2:1-11) from the first edition but *arranged it* according to the pattern of witnesses (which he would later articulate paradigmatically in 5:31-40) and then added his own material in 2:18-22 as examples of how the disciples responded to the word of Jesus and the Scriptures (the third and fourth witnesses as listed in 5:31-40) [Italics in the original].

It is noteworthy that here in 2:22, the fulfillment of a “word” of Jesus is given equal status with the fulfillment of words of Scripture. While von Wahlde makes this observation, the various other scholars consulted for this chapter made no comment on this aspect of Jesus’ word in this verse.

*John 5:19-47 A Discourse on the Relationship of the Son with the Father*

The next two instances of the term λόγος in the material of the second edition appear in 5:24 and 38, which are part of a passage that von Wahlde has titled “A Discourse on the Relationship of the Son with the Father.” This section, 5:19-47, consists mostly of second edition material, though with some insertions by the

30 Ibid., II:104.
author of the third edition. The section is presented here with the material of the second and third editions indicated.

5:19-30 A Discourse on the Relationship of the Son with the Father

(Part 1): The Two Powers Given to Jesus

19Ἀπεκρίνατο οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐλεγεν αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ἀπ’ ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲν· ἂν γὰρ ἂν έκείνος ποιή, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ. 20ὁ γὰρ πατήρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, καὶ μείζονα τούτων δείξει αὐτῷ ἔργα, ὥσπερ Ἰησοῦς θαμάζητε. 21ὁ γὰρ πατὴρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, καὶ μείζονα τούτων δείξει αὐτῷ ἔργα, ἵνα ὑμεῖς θαυμάζητε. 22ὁ γὰρ πατὴρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, καὶ μείζονα τούτων δείξει αὐτῷ ἔργα, ἵνα ὑμεῖς θαυμάζητε. 23ὅτα γὰρ οὗτος ποιεῖ, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ. 24Αμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν. 25ὡς γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἐγείρει τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ ζῳοποιεῖ, οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς οὓς θέλει ζῳοποιεῖ. 26ὁ γὰρ πατὴρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, καὶ μείζονα τούτων δείξει αὐτῷ ἔργα, ὥσπερ Ἰησοῦς θαμάζητε. 27καὶ ἔδωκεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· 28καὶ έδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν, ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἐστίν. 29οὐ δύναμαι ἐγὼ ποιεῖν ἀπ’ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐδέν· ἂν γὰρ ἂν έκείνος ποιή, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν. 30οὐ δύναμαι ἐγὼ ποιεῖν ἀπ’ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐδέν· ἂν γὰρ ἂν έκείνος ποιή, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν. 31Εὰν ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ, ἡ μαρτυρία μου οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθής· 32ἄλλος ἐστίν ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμοῦ, καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἀληθὴς ἐστίν ἡ μαρτυρία ἣν μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ. 33ὑμεῖς ἠθελήσατε ἀγαλλιαθῆναι πρὸς ὥραν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ αὐτοῦ. 34ἐγὼ δὲ ὅτι θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἔχει τὸν θεόν τοῦ πέμψαντός με. 35καὶ καὶ ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἰερὰ δικαίως ἐστίν, ὅτι οὐκ ζητῶ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με.
Ἰωάννου· τὰ γὰρ ἔργα ᾧ ἔδωκέν μοι ὁ πατήρ ἵνα τελειώσω αὐτά, αὐτά
tὰ ἔργα ᾧ ποιῶ μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὅτι ὁ πατήρ με ἀπέσταλκεν. 37καὶ ὁ
πέμψας με πατήρ ἐκεῖνος μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ ἐμοῦ. οὔτε φωνὴν αὐτοῦ
πώποτε ἀκηκόατε οὔτε εἴδος αὐτοῦ ἐωράκατε, 38καὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ
οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν υἱῶν μένοντα, ὅτι ὁ ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος, τούτῳ ὑμεῖς οὐ
πιστεύετε. 39ἐραυνάτε τὰς γραφάς, ὅτι ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ἐν αὐταῖς ζωήν
αἰώνιον ἔχειν· καὶ ἐκεῖνοί εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ· 40καὶ οὐ
θέλετε ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχητε.

5:41-47 A Discourse on the Relationship of the Son with the Father

(Part 3): The Glory That Jesus Does, and Does Not, Accept

41Δόξαν παρὰ ἀνθρώπων οὐ λαμβάνω, 42ἀλλὰ ἐγνώκα ὑμᾶς ὅτι τὴν
ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. 43ἐγὼ ἐλήλυθα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι
tοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε με· ἐὰν ἄλλος ἔλθῃ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τῷ
ἰδίῳ, ἐκεῖνον λήμψεσθε. 44πῶς δύνασθε ὑμεῖς πιστεύσαι δόξαν παρὰ
ἀλλήλων λαμβάνοντες, καὶ τὴν δόξαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ οὐ
ζητεῖτε; 45Μὴ δοκεῖτε ὅτι ἐγὼ κατηγορήσω ὑμῶν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα·
ἔστιν ὁ κατηγορῶν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς ὃν ὑμεῖς ἠλπίκατε. 46εἰ γὰρ
ἔστω μου· εἰς ὃν ἐμοὶ· εἰς ὃν ἐμοί· εἰς ὃν ἐμοὶ· εἰς ὃν ἐμοί·
ἔγραφεν. 47εἰ δὲ τοῖς ἐκεῖνοι γράμμασιν οὐ πιστεύσετε, πῶς τοῖς ἐμοῖς
ῥήμασιν πιστεύσετε;

Commentary on Λόγος in John 5:19-47

We shall now examine in detail the use of λόγος in 5:24 and 5:38.

John 5:24 Jesus’ Word Leads to Eternal Life

In 5:24, Jesus states: “Amen, Amen, I say to you the one who hears my word (τὸν
λόγον μου) and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come
into judgment but has crossed over from death to life.” Schnackenburg calls this
verse “theologically important because it contains the essential Johannine kerygma,
that whoever believes in the Son has eternal life (see 3:16, 36, etc.)"32 A little further on, Schnackenburg refers to Jesus’ word as the “life-giving word of God....”33

As stated above, this verse is part of a discourse on the relationship between the Father and the Son which runs from 5:19 to 47, a section largely belonging to the second edition, though with some insertions belonging to the third edition. It is immediately preceded by second edition material (5:9b-18), which has been added to the first edition account of the healing of the man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years (5:1-9a) (see comments on John 4:50 above). The second edition material brings the element of controversy into the story and contains the statement by Jesus, “My Father works until now, and I work also” (v 17), which is understood by “the Jews” as a claim to equality with God (v 18). This section provides the transition to the discourse of 5:19-47.34

For Rudolf Bultmann, 5:1-47 was originally part of a longer discourse which also consisted of 7:15-24 and 8:13-20.35 He writes:

The theme of 5:19-30 is the equality of Jesus’ activity as Judge with the activity of God; 5:31-47 [see below] and 7:15-24 discuss the rights of such a claim of Jesus, in other words the question of μαρτυρία;


33 Ibid., II:109.

34 See Dodd, Interpretation, 320.

8:13-20 [see below] finally bring the themes of μαρτυρία and κρίσις together.\footnote{Ibid., 247.}

Regarding vv 24-27,\footnote{Von Wahlde identifies vv 24-25 as second edition and 27-29 as third. See Gospel and Letters, II:229.} he writes that in these verses we have “a description of the eschatological judgement as the judgement which is carried out through Jesus’ word.”\footnote{Bultmann, Gospel, 247.} Hearing the word of Jesus confronts the individual with the need to choose between life and death and is thus a “situation of judgement.”\footnote{Ibid., 257.} In a note to his comments on John 15:3, Bultmann includes 5:24 as an instance in which the λόγος of Jesus “is not a single utterance, but the word of Jesus as a whole.”\footnote{Ibid., 534, n. 3.} Thus, here in 5:24, the λόγος of Jesus is his message in its entirety.

Dodd writes that the dominant theme of the discourse beginning at 5:19 is expressed in v 21: “...the Son gives life to those he wishes.” Though this verse comes from the third edition, the notion that “the one who hears [Jesus’] word and believes [in?] the one who sent [him] has eternal life...” is contained in v 24, the verse under consideration here as part of the second edition. Dodd points out that it is through the hearing of the word of Jesus that “[Jesus’] work of ζωοποίησις becomes effective...”\footnote{Dodd, Interpretation, 318.} Like Bultmann, Dodd understand the λόγος of 5:24 (and 15:3) to
refer to the whole of Jesus’ message, a message that is both revelation and “a 'command' to be obeyed.”

Likewise C. K. Barrett, in his comments on 5:24, emphasizes that the ακούειν in this verse, like שׁמע in some cases in the Old Testament, has the meaning “to hear and do,” “to be obedient.” Thus the word of Jesus, while it does include the notion of “precept” (Barrett refers to 15:20 [third edition] as a particular example of this), goes beyond this meaning. “[T]he word of Jesus is an active thing, which has almost an independent existence, and judges, gives life, and cleanses (15:3).”

Schnackenburg states that in 5:24 to hear the word of Jesus is not merely a physical hearing but “a qualified kind of hearing in faith,” as shown in the subsequent verse (second edition also) where it is οι ακούσαντες - the ones hearing - “the voice of the Son of God” who will live (v 25). Von Wahlde also makes this point: “Jesus gives eternal life, but the ability to receive eternal life is contingent upon hearing Jesus’ word and ‘believing in the one who sent me.’ Thus, belief is the prime factor in the attainment of eternal life.” These comments make clear that the word of Jesus is life-giving for those who hear and accept it in faith. I shall

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42 Ibid., 265.
45 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:244-45.
comment below on the essential role of the Spirit in this process that begins with the word of Jesus and leads to eternal life.

Schnackenburg adds that within ν 24, καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με demonstrates that hearing the word of Jesus in faith means believing the one who sent him, for, according to Schnackenburg, πιστεύειν with the dative does not mean to believe in someone but rather to believe someone, that is, to believe what he or she says.46 “The dative with πιστεύειν usually indicates the witness or the testimony—or, as here, the authority—on the strength of which faith is established...”47 The significance of this grammatical consideration for our understanding of the λόγος of Jesus in the second edition is that it indicates that what Jesus says is indeed what the Father says. Thus Schnackenburg sees the statements in John 3:32ff48, particularly 3:33 (“he who receives his testimony sets


47 Schnackenburg, Gospel, II:464, n. 57. Dodd also writes that “[W]hile πιστεύειν with the dative means to give credence to the words which Jesus speaks, πιστεύειν εἰς αὐτόν means to have confidence in Him based upon an intellectual acceptance of the claims made for his person.” Interpretation, 183-4. However, Blass and Debrunner do indicate that πιστεύειν with the dative can have the meaning “to believe in,” F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. A Translation and Revision of the ninth-tenth German edition incorporating supplementary notes of A. Debrunner by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961) J 187(6), p. 100. Perhaps C. K. Barrett states it accurately when he says that πιστεύειν with εἰς τὸ ὄνομα (1:12; 2:23; 3:18) “may be distinguished from πιστεύειν with the dative, which generally means ‘to give credence to’...[emphasis added],” Gospel, 164.

his seal to this, that God is true”) and 3:34 (“he whom God has sent utters the words of God”), as reading like a commentary on 5:24.49

Since in 5:24, Jesus speaks of eternal life for those who hear his word and believe in the one who sent him (“...ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων ... ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον...”), it seems appropriate to comment here on another verse from the second edition, 6:63, that makes a connection between Jesus words (in the plural) and life. Here the term for what Jesus speaks is not λόγος but ρήματα: “τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν, ἢ σάρξ οὐκ ὀφελεῖ οὐδέν· τὰ ρήματα ἃ ἐγὼ λελάληκα πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωή ἐστιν” (John 6:63). Von Wahlde explains the connection between Jesus’ words, on the one hand, and “the Spirit and life” on the other, as “elliptical.” Jesus words are not to be equated with the Spirit. Rather, we have here a rhetorical expression stressing the close connection between the two. What we are to understand in interpreting this verse is that “...Jesus’ words witness to him; this leads to belief; belief leads to the reception of the Spirit, when Jesus is glorified and goes to the Father (7:39).”50 We saw above that in his commentary on 5:24 von Wahlde emphasized the role of belief in explaining how hearing Jesus’ λόγος leads to life. If we combine this with Jesus’ statements in 6:63, then the explanation of the link between Jesus’ word (or words) and eternal life in the second edition of the Gospel

49 Schnackenburg, Gospel II: 109. The translation of 3:32, 34, is from the English translation of Schnackenburg’s commentary. Von Wahlde identifies these verses as third edition, but this does not exclude the possibility that the author of the third edition is expanding upon a theme found in the second edition. See the discussion of John 8:12-59 below, where this is the case.

50 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:327.
is completed: “Jesus’ words witness to him; this leads to belief; belief leads to the reception of the Spirit...” and “the Spirit gives life.”

The connection between 5:24 and 6:63 raises the issue referred to above in the introduction to λόγος in the second edition, that of the relationship between λόγος and ρήματα in the body of John’s Gospel, or, more precisely, in the second and third editions of the Gospel, since ρήματα does not appear in the first edition. Recall the citation from Dodd in the introductory section above:

[T]he λόγος of Christ is the sum total of His spoken words (λόγοι or ρήματα), regarded as containing His thought or meaning, but His uttered words, nevertheless, as is shown by the fact that what is said of His λόγος can also be said of His ρήματα [emphasis added].

Among the comparisons Dodd makes as evidence for this position is that of 5:24 with 6:63 (as well as 6:68, from the third edition, where Simon Peter says to Jesus: “...ρήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου ἔχεις”). In his commentary on 6:68, von Wahlde makes a statement that at first may seem to oppose Dodd’s position: “While both [λόγοι and ρήματα] can mean ‘words,’ logos can refer to the entire message of Jesus whereas ρήμα never does.” To understand this assertion in relation to Dodd’s, a distinction must be made. Ῥῆμα is defined as “that which is said or spoken, word, saying.” It can also be a phrase as opposed to a single word. In addition, it can signify the

51 Dodd, Interpretation, 266.
52 Ibid., 266.
53 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:328.
“subject of speech, matter.”\textsuperscript{54} As such, the plural ῥήματα (recall that the singular ῥήμα does not appear in John’s Gospel)\textsuperscript{55} can be regarded as synonymous with the plural λόγοι.\textsuperscript{56} However, the singular λόγος can—and in the second edition of John’s Gospel sometimes does—refer to the message of Jesus in its entirety, as von Wahlde points out in the citation above. While Jesus’ λόγος can, in the words already quoted from Dodd, be understood as the sum total of Jesus’ “spoken words”—his ῥήματα—the term λόγος goes beyond the uttered words to express “the content of Christ’s teaching, the thought or meaning it conveys, and not merely the utterance.”\textsuperscript{57} These words, also from Dodd, show that there is no contradiction between von Wahlde’s view and that of Dodd regarding the relation between λόγος and ῥήματα in the body of the Gospel of John. (Dodd does not distinguish between editions of the Gospel.)

John 5:31-40  The Paradigmatic Listing of Witnesses and a Disputed Question

Von Wahlde maintains that this passage (5:31-40) “plays a central role in the second edition, and in the Gospel as a whole.”\textsuperscript{58} Here Jesus is portrayed as presenting the witnesses to the veracity of his claims. It is around these witnesses that much of the second edition material is structured. Furthermore, the theme of

\textsuperscript{54} Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (9\textsuperscript{th} ed., revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones; with revised supplement; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

\textsuperscript{55} Debrunner and others, TDNT, IV:128.

\textsuperscript{56} See Dodd, Interpretation, 265. See also Debrunner and others, TDNT, IV:107, n. 148, where it is stated that John usually uses τα ῥήματα as the plural for λόγος, though λόγοι or its forms does appear in 7:40; 10:19; 14:24; 19:13.

\textsuperscript{57} Dodd, Interpretation, 267.

\textsuperscript{58} Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:263.
these witnesses as the basis for belief is what “most clearly distinguishes” material of the second edition from that of the first, in which belief is based on Jesus’ miracles (“signs”).

There is considerable disagreement among scholars as to how many witnesses are “summoned” by Jesus in 5:31-40. While von Wahlde asserts that there are four—John the Baptist, the works of Jesus, the words of Jesus, and the witness of the Scriptures—others have recognized only three, and it is the very one that concerns us, the word of Jesus, whose presence in this passage is called into question. This is understandable, since John (v 33), the works (v 36), and the Scriptures (v 39) are specifically said to witness to Jesus. Jesus also states: “And the Father who sent me, he himself has witnessed about me” (v 37ab) but precisely how and whether or not this is to be considered a distinct witness from the works and the Scriptures is disputed. Furthermore, while the term λόγος appears in this section (v 38a)—that is, the λόγος of the Father—it is not explicitly called a “witness” in itself.

In commenting on this passage, Dodd, after observing that Jesus refers to the witness of the Baptist only for the sake of those who value the Baptist’s teaching, calls the testimony of the Father “the finally valid testimony” and states clearly that this witness (μαρτυρία) “is accessible to men in two ways [emphasis added]”—through the works of Jesus and through the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Dodd also

59 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters II:261.

60 Ibid., II:109-110.

61 Dodd identifies the works that Jesus performs as ζωοποίησις and κρίσις. Interpretation, 329.
states that, due to the fact that the people will not be convinced by the "Word of God" in Scripture since they do not have God’s “Word” dwelling in them (v 38), the Evangelist “passes somewhat lightly over the biblical testimonia...in order to fix his readers’ attention on the primary evidence—the self-evidencing power of the ‘Word of God’ working in the words and actions of Jesus [italics added].”

Barrett lists the witnesses invoked by Jesus in 5:31-40 as that of John the Baptist, the works performed by Jesus “in the Father’s name,” and the Old Testament. These witnesses are of “secondary authority” due to their derived nature; the truly “satisfactory testimony” is that of God himself, “the divine self-authentication of the mission of Christ to those who accept him.” In his notes on v 37, Barrett mentions the previous references to the witness of the Baptist and of the works; he then writes that witness “is also given directly by the Father,” which indicates that for him the direct witness of the Father is distinct from that of the Baptist and the works. However, he states that “it is not clear to what witness John refers at this point.” Barrett doubts that it is a reference to the Scriptures, mentioned explicitly in v 39, and rejects the idea that it is an allusion to the heavenly voice at the time of

62 Dodd maintains that outward testimony of Jesus' works or of the Scriptures cannot be accepted without “a certain prior inward acceptance of God’s λόγος...[The λόγος] is in the widest sense God's self-disclosure, in word or deed, or in silent operations within the mind of man. The unresponsive Jews have not the λόγος of God dwelling in them, and therefore cannot recognize the ‘word.’” Interpretation, 330. Dodd refers here to I John 5:10. Interpretation, 330, n. 1.

63 Ibid., 331.

64 Barrett, Gospel, 258.

65 Ibid., 266.
Jesus’ baptism, an event omitted by the fourth evangelist. Following Dodd, Barrett sees a possible clue to the meaning of v 37 in 1 John 5:9f:

If we accept the witness of humans, the witness of God is greater because this is the witness of God that he has witnessed about his Son. The one believing in the Son of God has the witness in himself. The one not believing God has made him [God] a liar because he has not believed in the witness that God has witnessed about his Son. (I Jn 5:9-10)

Thus one must believe in the Son in order to receive the direct witness of the Father.

“What John means is that the truth of God in Jesus is self-authenticating in the experience of the believer; but no such convenient phrase lay to his hand.”

In his notes on v. 38, which speaks of God’s λόγος that does not dwell in the unbelievers, Barrett writes that “the thought was probably not absent from John’s mind that the true Word of God was Jesus....” In this verse Jesus states “...you [i.e. the unbelieving Jews] do not have his word remaining in you because you do not believe the one whom he sent [italics added].” As seen above in the comments on 5:24, the use of the dative τούτῳ with πιστεύειν shows that in this clause the issue is not so much belief in Jesus per se; rather, “the primary thought is that of giving credence to what Jesus says.” Thus, even though Barrett seems to regard the

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66 See n. 62 above.
67 Translation is that of von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters III: 182.
68 Barrett, Gospel, 266-7.
69 Ibid., 267.
70 Ibid., 267.
Father’s testimony mentioned in v 37 as an interior experience, it remains true that in v 38 the unbelievers do not possess the λόγος of God because they did not accept the spoken λόγος of Jesus.

Raymond E. Brown speaks of the four witnesses listed by Jesus in the passage under consideration: John the Baptist, the miracles (works) of Jesus, the Father himself, and the Scriptures. He cautions, however, that these witnesses are, “in Jesus’ mind, only four different aspects of the witness of ‘Another’ [v 32], that is, the Father, on his behalf.” In commenting on the third witness, that of the Father (vv 37-38), which is the one that concerns us here, Brown writes that it is possible that Jesus’ reference is to some specific event, such as the theophany at Sinai, but he considers it more likely that “we have here a more general reference to the Father’s internal testimony within the hearts of men (vs. 38).” Thus, like Dodd and Barrett, Brown believes that God’s testimony is “the self-authenticating quality of his truth....” in the hearts of those who believe, and, like Dodd and Barrett, he supports this notion by referring to 1 John 5:9-10. However, in his commentary on v 38, he suggests the possibility that the last two lines of v 37 (“His voice you have never heard; nor have you seen what He looks like”) are parenthetical, so that the first line of v 38 should begin with “yet” and follow from line two of v 37: “The Father...has

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71 Cf. Dodd, Interpretation, 330; see n. 62 above.


73 Ibid., 227-228.
Himself given testimony on my behalf; yet His word you do not have abiding in your hearts.” This would imply that “the believer does have the word of God abiding in his heart; the same is said of the word of Jesus in [15]:7 [emphasis added].” Though 15:7 is identified by von Wahlde as third edition material and the word for Jesus’ words in this verse is ῥήματα rather than λόγοι, it remains true that Brown sees the notion of God’s word abiding in one’s heart to be the same as that predicated of Jesus’ word. This could be taken to indicate that Brown recognizes an identification of the word of Jesus with the word of God in the Gospel of John.

Bultmann states: “Fundamentally the Father’s witness can be nothing other than the witness of the ἔργα which he has given the Son to do,” but to this seemingly unambiguous statement he adds, a few sentences later, the testimony of Scripture. The latter is indicated by the fact that the Father’s act of witnessing is expressed in the perfect tense, μεμαρτύρηκεν rather than μαρτυρεῖ. Thus, Bultmann reasons, “[T]he reference is to a witness which was made in the past by the Father, which however is still valid in the present, namely the witness of Scripture; for only that can be meant by the λόγος of God in v. 38 (cp. 10:35) [emphasis added].”

We saw above that Bultmann explicitly states that the Father’s witness consists of the ἔργα the Son performs and that the λόγος of God in v 38 must be the Scriptures, yet he also writes that “ἔργα here as elsewhere...refers to the whole of

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74 Ibid., 225.

75 Bultmann, Gospel, 266.

Jesus' activity as the Revealer." He maintains that “the real \( \epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha \) [of Jesus] are the \( \kappa\rho\iota\nu\epsilon\nu \) and the \( \zeta\omega\sigma\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\iota\epsilon\nu \) [as opposed to the \( \sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota \)]” and that “Jesus' words and deeds are \( \mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\iota\alpha \), in that they are the \( \kappa\rho\iota\nu\epsilon\nu \) and \( \zeta\omega\sigma\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\iota\epsilon\nu \)....” He continues that the witness of the Father to Jesus and the witness which Jesus “\textit{bears} [italics in the original] to what he has seen and heard are identical.” It seems that for Bultmann, the words of Jesus are a form of the Father's witness, but from the whole of his commentary on 5:31-40, he appears to be saying that the \( \mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\iota\alpha \) of Jesus' words are part of the \( \epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha \) he has been given to do.

Rudolf Schnackenburg expresses agreement with Bultmann's view that the witness of the Father "can only be that of the \( \epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha \), which he has given the Son [to do]," and takes issue with Bultmann's subsequent referral of the Father's witness in v 37a to the Scriptures due to the perfect tense of \( \mu\epsilon\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\iota\kappa\epsilon\nu \) (see above). Schnackenburg does not regard the witness of the Father in v 37 as a new testimony; rather, the Father witnesses to Jesus through Jesus' works. It is only the appearance of the word \( \kappa\alpha\iota \) at the beginning of v 37 ("\textit{and} the Father who sent me...") that misleads one into thinking of the Father's witness here as different from that of the works. The \( \kappa\alpha\iota \) here is epexegetical, that is, appositional, to clarify what

\footnote{Schnackenburg, \textit{Gospel II}: 469, n. 119. Schnackenburg maintains that the perfect tense of \( \mu\epsilon\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\iota\kappa\epsilon\nu \) does not necessarily imply that the Father's witness in v 37a is a reference to the Scriptures.}

\footnote{Ibid., 265.}

\footnote{Ibid., 266.}
has just been stated. Schnackenburg argues that this interpretation—“that it is in the works that the Father bears witness to the Son whom he has sent”—makes sense of the following passage: “His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen (v 37b).”

The Scriptures are identified as a witness to Jesus in v 39, but Schnackenburg writes that the transition in v 39 does not suggest that the Father’s witness of v 37 refers to the testimony of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Schnackenburg affirms that “the evangelist would certainly understand the Scriptures as divine testimony too.” He argues that v 37 “occupies the mid-point not only spatially but theologically between the testimony of the works and the testimony of the Scriptures: both rest on the authority of God.”

Thus Schnackenburg makes the same move for which he criticizes Bultmann and extends the witness of the Father referred to in v 37 to that of the Scriptures.

Schnackenburg also seems to echo Bultmann when he writes:

We should not limit [God’s testimony in v 37] to the works, but give it an all-embracing meaning referring to everything which, in the Johannine view, can be perceived in the concrete: Jesus’ works, his words (cf. v. 24) [italics added], and the holy Scriptures which contain God’s word.

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81 Schnackenburg refers to Blass and Debrunner, sec. 442, 9, and cites John 1:14 and 1:16 as examples of this. Gospel, 124.

82 Schnackenburg, Gospel, 266. The translation of v 37b is that contained in the English translation of Schnackenburg, Gospel, II:119.


84 Ibid., 124.
Schnackenburg’s reference to 5:24 is significant, for there Jesus speaks of the consequences of hearing his λόγος. Furthermore, in his comments on the λόγος of God in v 38, though he asserts, in light of v 39, that Jesus is referring to God’s word in Scripture, Schnackenburg writes that the word of God in Scripture is not beneficial to “the Jews”

...if they do not believe the one whom God has sent. For it is now he who speaks the words of God (3:34), and anyone who wishes to have life must hear his word and believe him who sent him (5:24). *The life-communicating function of the word of God preserved in Scripture is transferred to the one whose words are spirit and life (6:63b, 68). Hence it is not possible for God’s life to abide in those who, though they open themselves to the word of Scripture, are shut fast against the living, personal Word of God* [emphasis added].

Still, it is not clear from all this that Schnackenburg sees the word of Jesus as a form of the Father’s witness that is distinct from the Scriptures since, in his comments on v 39, he states that “[t]he word of Scripture and [Jesus’] own word form a unity (cf. 2:22).”

George R. Beasley-Murray asserts that the witness referred to as “Another” in v 32 is God himself, who has witnessed to Jesus through John the Baptist, the works of Jesus, and the word of God, “which the Father attests through the Scriptures (37-40).” Beasley-Murray considers vv 37-40 as one unit rather than two distinct units consisting of the Father’s witness (37-38) and the witness of Scripture (39-40). He

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85 Ibid., II: 124-5

states explicitly: “The Father’s witness in this paragraph [i.e. vv37-40] is his word in the Scriptures [emphasis in the original].”\textsuperscript{87}

Though he makes no mention of the word of Jesus as a distinct form of the witness of the Father in his commentary on vv 37-40, Beasley-Murray suggests that the opening sentence of this passage (vv 31-32) invites comparison with 8:13-18; there it is said that Jesus’ self-testimony is in fact true, for he speaks what the Father communicates to him (8:16, 28; 12:49).\textsuperscript{88} Therefore, his self-testimony is in reality the joint testimony of the Father and the Son (8:17-18). The same thought lies behind the present passage [5:31-32?; emphasis added].\textsuperscript{89}

What this survey of the views of major Johannine scholars on the identity of the witnesses in 5:31-40 has shown is that, while they do not explicitly regard the word of Jesus in this passage as a form of the Father’s witness separate from the works and the Scriptures, each has acknowledged, if in an indirect way, that the words of Jesus are indeed a kind of witness to him and that his words are, to use Beasley-Murray’s phrase, “joint testimony” with that of the Father.

Von Wahlde offers five arguments in defense of the view that John 5:37-38 refers to the third witness to Jesus as the word of the Father “as it is present in the word of Jesus [italics in the original].” First, there is a close parallel between these verses and John 8:16b-18, in which the witness of the Father is closely connected to the


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 78. Beasley-Murray’s biblical citations here are quite confusing, for it is in 8:14 that Jesus says his witness about himself is true, and it is in v 28 that he asserts that he speaks just as the Father taught him. V 16 concerns judgment rather than testimony.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 78.
witness of Jesus. Second, 5:31-40, which speaks of the witnesses to Jesus, parallels 15:22-25, in which the word of Jesus is clearly a witness distinct from that of the works: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no guilt of sin (v 22)....If I had not performed works among them that no one else performed, they would not be guilty of sin....” (v 24). Third, if we regard v 37 as an introduction to the witness of Scripture (v 39), it is difficult to explain the intervening words: “...you do not have his word...because you do not believe in the one whom he sent” (v 38).

Fourth, by interpreting “word” in v 38 as a reference to the Scriptures, “Schnackenburg does not explain how not believing in Jesus causes ["the Jews"] not to have the word of God in them. Certainly, the word of God in Jesus is harmonious with the word of God present in the Scriptures, but they are distinct witnesses.”

Fifth, if we collapse the witnesses of vv 37-38 with those of vv 39-40 (as Beasley-Murray does [see above]), we cannot “adequately account for the words ‘and those also witness to me’ in v 39, which clearly identify the Scriptures as a separate witness from that of the word of the Father.”

I agree that the parallels between 5:37-38, on the one hand, and 8:16b-18 and 15:22-25, on the other hand, support the view that, for the author of the second edition, the word of Jesus is connected to the witness of the Father (8:16b-18) and is a distinct witness from that of the works (15:22,24). I also concur with von Wahlde that if one takes the Father’s witness (v 37) and his word (v 38) as the Scriptures

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90 Ibid., II: 259, n. 2.
themselves, it is not clear how “the Jews” do not have God’s word, that is, the Scriptures, remaining in them because of their refusal to believe in Jesus. The fifth argument, that the Scriptures are mentioned in v 39 as a separate witness from the Father’s witness in v 37, is strengthened if we translate the καί of v 39 as “and...also” as von Wahlde and Brown do,\(^9^1\) though it could simply mean “and,” so that v 39 would read “and those [i.e. the Scriptures] witness to me.” Even in the latter case, however, the καί in v 39 indicates that the Scriptures are an additional witness to the witness of the Father in v 37. We have already seen that in 2:22 (second edition), the word of Jesus is mentioned as distinct from and on a par with the Scriptures.

To von Wahlde’s citations of parallels within the Gospel of John that support the view that in 5:31-40 the third witness to Jesus is the witness of the Father as expressed in the word of Jesus, I would add 14:10-11, which von Wahlde identifies as belonging to the second edition. Though the term for the words of Jesus in 14:10 is ρήματα rather than λόγοι (see the discussion of this issue under the section on 5:24 above), we find an expression here of the notion that the words of Jesus are the words of the Father: “The words that I speak to you I do not speak of myself. But the Father abiding in me performs his works.” Though 10c speaks of Jesus’ words (ρήματα) and 10d speaks of the Father’s works (έργα), the context of this passage, in which Jesus states “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (10a, cf. 11a), makes it clear that when Jesus says he does not speak “of” himself, he means that he speaks

the words of the Father. V 11 removes any doubt that the words of Jesus are a separate basis for belief from the works: "Believe me when I say\(^\text{92}\) that I am in the Father and the Father in me. If not, believe because of the works themselves [emphasis added]."

Though he does not make reference to 14:10-11 in his five arguments refuting those who do not regard the word of Christ as a distinct form of the Father’s witness in 5:31-40,\(^\text{93}\) in his commentary on these two verses later on, von Wahlde writes: “Two proofs, the words and works of Jesus, are said to demonstrate [that Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Jesus so that to see Jesus is to see the Father].”\(^\text{94}\)

Furthermore, “[a]lthough there is no reference to the witness of Scripture [in 14:10-11], the witness value of the words and works of Jesus seems intended to reflect the paradigm of the witnesses to Jesus characteristic of the second edition.”\(^\text{95}\)

**John 8:12-59 The Word of Jesus as Witness**

John 8:12-59 is a mixture of second and third edition material.

8:12-30 A Discourse on the Witness of the Word of Jesus (Part 1)

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\(^{92}\) The Greek reads simply “πιστεύετέ μοι ὅτι...”, but as we saw above (pp. 10-11), Schnackenburg writes in regard to 5:24 that the use of the dative after πιστεύειν indicates that it is a question of believing the Father, that is, what he says, rather than believing in the Father. See also Dodd, *Interpretation*, 183-4. (However, as I point out in n.38, Blass and Debrunner do indicate that πιστεύειν with the dative can have the meaning “to believe in,” J 187 (6). Still, the contrast here between “believe me” and “believe because of the works” makes it clear that πιστεύετε μοι refers to Jesus’ words.)


\(^{94}\) Ibid., II:625.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., II: 626, n. 12.
12Πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου· ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοί οὐ μὴ περιπατήσῃ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ, ἀλλ’ ἔξει τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς. 13ections γλυκόν αὐτῷ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι· σὺ περὶ σεαυτοῦ μαρτυρεῖς· ἡ μαρτυρία σου οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθής. 14εἶπον οὖν αὐτοῖς· κἂν ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ, ἀληθής ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία μου, ὅτι οἶδα πόθεν ἦλθον καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγω· ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ὑπόθεται ὑμᾶς δὲ οὐκ οἴδατε πόθεν ἔρχομαι· ἐπὶ ὑμᾶς δὲ ὑπάγω. 15ὑμεῖς κατά τὴν σάρκα κρίνετε, ἐγώ οὖν κρίνω δὲ ἐγώ, ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἐμὴ ἀληθινὴ ἐστὶν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε πόθεν ἐρχομαι ἢ ποῦ ὑπάγω. 16ὑμεῖς κατὰ τὴν σάρκα κρίνετε, ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω οὐδὲν. 17καὶ ἐὰν κρίνω δὲ ἐμώ, ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἐμὴ ἀληθινὴ ἐστὶν, ὅτι μόνος οὐκ εἰμί, ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ. 18καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ δὲ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ γέγραπται ὅτι δύο ἀνθρώπων ἡ μαρτυρία ἀληθής ἐστιν. 19εἶπον οὖν τοῖς Ἐβραίοις· ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ καὶ μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ. 20εἶπον οὖν αὐτῷ· ποῦ ἐστιν ὁ πατήρ σου; ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· οὔτε ἐμὲ οἴδατε οὔτε τὸν πατέρα μου· εἰ ἐμὲ ᾔδειτε, καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου ἂν ᾔδειτε. 21Ταῦτα τὰ ῥήματα ἐλάλησεν ἐν τῷ γαζοφυλάκῳ διδάσκων ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ· καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπίασεν αὐτόν, ὅτι οὔπω ἐληλύθει ἡ ὥρα αὐτοῦ. 22εἶπεν πάλιν αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ ὑπάγω καὶ ζητήσετέ με, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ὑμῶν ἀποθανεῖσθε· ὅπου ἐγὼ ὑπάγω ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἐλθεῖν. 23εἶπον οὖν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις· μήτι ἀποκτενεῖ ἑαυτόν, ὅτι λέγει· ὅπου ἐγὼ ὑπάγω ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἐλθεῖν; 24καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· ὑμεῖς ἐκ τῶν κάτω ἐστέ, ἐγὼ ἐκ τῶν ἄνω εἰμί· ὑμεῖς ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου ἐστέ, ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμί ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. 25εἶπον οὖν ἑαυτῷ· ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν· ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν. 26εἶπον οὖν ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν· ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν. 27εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν· ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν. 28εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν. 29εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς· ὅταν ὑψώσῃ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τότε γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, καὶ ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ποιῶ οὐδὲν, ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐδίδαξέν με ὁ πατὴρ ταῦτα λαλῶ. 30Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος πολλοὶ ἑπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν.
μένει ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. 36 ὃν ὁ υἱὸς ἡμῶν ἔλευθερώση, ὄντως ἔλευθεροὶ ἔσεσθε. 37 ὅτι δὲ ἅπεκρίθησαν καὶ ἐίπαν αὐτῷ· ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν Ἀβραὰμ ἐστίν. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· εἰ τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ ἔστε, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ ἐποιεῖτε. 40 ὅτι οὐκ ἔστηκεν ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ οὐκ ἔστηκεν, ὅταν λαλῇ τὸ ψεῦδος, ἐκ τῶν ἱδίων λαλεῖ, ὅτι ψεύστης ἐστιν καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ. 45 οὐ δύνασθε ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμὸν. 46 τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας; εἰ ἀλήθειαν λέγω, διὰ τί ὑμεῖς οὐ πιστεύετέ μοι; 47 ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούει· διὰ τοῦτο ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀκούετε, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστέ. 51 ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐάν τις τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον τηρήσῃ, θάνατον οὐ μὴ θεωρήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. 52 εἴπον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι· νῦν ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι δαιμόνιον ἔχεις. Ἅβραὰμ ἐποίησαν καὶ οἱ προφῆται, καὶ οἱ προφητικοὶ ἔνεμον· εἰ τις τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσῃ, οὐ μὴ γεύσηται θανάτου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. 53 ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ ζητῶ τὴν δόξαν μου· ἔστιν ὁ ζητῶν καὶ κρίνων.
57εἶπον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πρὸς αὐτόν· πεντήκοντα ἔτη οὔπω ἔχεις καὶ Ἀβραὰμ ἑώρακας; 58εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί. 59ηραν οὖν λίθους ἵνα βάλωσιν ἐπ᾽ αὐτόν. Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐκρύβη καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ.

**Commentary on Λόγος in John 8:12-59**

Though the word λόγος itself appears only once in this passage within the material of the second edition (8:37), we must take a broader view, for, as I commented above, the author of the second edition sometimes expresses the concept of Jesus’ word as witness to his claims in ways other than the use the term λόγος. This fact helps to demonstrate that in this edition the λόγος of Jesus is not a single word but is the message of Jesus in its entirety.96 It is true, then, that “[t]hroughout chapter 8, there is a single-minded focus on the speaking and the reception of the word of Jesus.”97 This is so for both the second and the third edition passages.

Von Wahlde attributes the basic stratum of chapter 8 to the author of the second edition.98 When expanding this section with material of his own, the author of the third edition, while introducing material that reflected his own particular concerns, retained the second author’s focus on the word of Jesus, “especially in his most extensive addition in 38-49.”99 The result, von Wahlde points out, is that

96 See, for example, Bultmann, *Gospel*, 534, n. 3; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 265.


98 Ibid., I:389.

99 Ibid., I:390.
[i]n the Greek text, verbs for “speaking,” for “word,” and for “message” occur thirty-five times, and all have to do with the content of Jesus’ message: *eipon* (vv. 24, 55); *laleō* (vv. 12, 20, 25, 26 [twice], 28, 30, 38, 40, 44 [twice]); *legō* (vv. 22, 27, 33, 34, 45, 46, 48, 51, 52, 54, 58); *didaskō* (vv. 20, 28); *logos* (vv. 31, 37, 43, 51, 52, 55); *lalia* (v. 43); and *rhēmata* (vv. 20, 47). When we add to this words associated with “speaking” and “message,” words such as “to listen/to hear” (*akouō*) (vv. 26, 38, 40, 43, 47); the word “witness” itself (*martyria/martyreō*) (vv. 13 [twice], 14 [twice], 17, 18 [twice]); “truth” (*alētheia*) (vv. 32 [twice], 40, 44 [twice], 45, 46); “true” (*alēθēs; alēthinos*) (vv. 13, 14, 16, 17); “lie” (*pseudos*) (v. 44); “liar” (*pseustēs*) (vv. 44, 55), we have a total of twenty-six more words associated with, and developing, the overall discussion of the “word” of Jesus throughout the discourse!100

Von Wahlde makes the significant observation that the above list of terms having to do with “speaking” is all the more impressive given that it does not include terms for speaking used in the passage to introduce statements.101 Thus, “this massive focus on the ‘word’” indicates that this is the major theme of the discourse in 8:12-59, which can then be seen as developing the notion of the second essential witness to Jesus (recall that the testimony of the Baptist, since it is human witness, is not regarded as necessary by Jesus [5:34]) from the witnesses paradigmatically listed in 5:31-40. Von Wahlde also points to the “explicit discussion” between Jesus and the Pharisees in 8:13-18 regarding the value of Jesus’ witness as a further indication that the theme of the passage is Jesus’ word as witness.102

Beginning with the section of the discourse consisting of v 13b-20 (vv 12-13a are third edition; v. 16, concerning judgment, is also third edition), the validity of Jesus’

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100 Ibid., II:389-90.
101 Ibid., II:390, n. 10.
102 Ibid., II:390.
witness is challenged because he witnesses to himself.\footnote{Ibid., II:391.} Jesus answers: “Even if I bear witness to myself, my witness is true, because I know where I came from and where I am going” (v 14). He acknowledges that in the Law, “the witness of two persons is true” (v 17). He then asserts that there are indeed two witnesses to him, for he witnesses about himself and the Father who sent him also bears witness to him (v 18). As indicated above, Von Wahlde writes that we have in these verses an “explicit discussion" of the value of the witness of the word of Jesus.\footnote{Ibid., II: 390.}

Brown and Schnackenburg both see a connection between this section of Jesus’ discourse in chapter 8 and his words in 5:31-40. When commenting on John 8:12-20, Brown observes:

The verses which deal with Jesus’ witness have almost word-for-word parallels in 5:31-39, and it may well be that we are dealing with two different forms of the same discourse. Both 8:14a,b and 5:31 treat of the validity of Jesus’ witness for himself; both 8:18 and 5:37 stress that the Father gives testimony on Jesus’ behalf. Of course, 5:31-39 is a longer form of the discourse and spells out how the Father gives this testimony.\footnote{Brown, \textit{Gospel}, 343.}

Schnackenburg notes that as we read 8:18, the words of Jesus in 5:36-39, especially concerning the witness of the works and Scripture, come to mind.\footnote{Schnackenburg, \textit{Gospel}, II: 194.} However, it is not the testimony of the works and Scriptures that are mentioned in 8:18. Schnackenburg recognizes this:

\footnote{\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., II:391.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., II: 390.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{105} Brown, \textit{Gospel}, 343.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{106} Schnackenburg, \textit{Gospel}, II: 194.}
Here, though…the Father’s evidence clearly consists again [italics added] in the words and evidence of Jesus himself—his representative….as God’s representative he himself gives totally adequate evidence because in him the Father speaks (v 14). On the other hand, as God’s representative he can be distinguished from the one who sent him, and so there are two witnesses.107

Beasley-Murray writes that because Jesus knows that his origin and destiny (“where I came from and where I am going” v14) are in God, his testimony to himself is valid, for it “is grounded in his unity with the Father, from whom his revelation is derived. This has the consequence of identifying the revelation of God with the (self-) testimony of Jesus.”108 Following J. Blank, Beasley-Murray states that we are to understand Jesus’ reference to “the law of two witnesses” in Deuteronomy 19:15 (v 17) as “an analogical mode of speech,”109 for the Father does not publicly corroborate the independent witness of Jesus, but rather teaches him what to say with regard to judgment (see v 16 [third edition] and 5:30 [second edition]) and testimony (see vv 26, 28 [second edition]; see also 7:16-17 [second edition]). “Two complementary ideas are presented here: on the one hand the unity of the Father and the Son in the testimony and judgment declared by the Son and on the other hand their distinction.”110 Beasley-Murray cites Blank’s observation that this revelation-testimony actually “corresponds in eminent fashion to the principle

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107 Ibid., II:194.

108 Beasley-Murray, John, 129.


110 Beasley-Murray, John, 129.
of two witnesses,” for whereas the agreement of two different witnesses is an external reality, in the case of the Father and Son it is “an inner necessity, and conditions the material as well as the logical structure of the revelation-statement.”

In commenting on this passage, especially v 18, Bultmann asserts that Jesus’ statement is “not an argument at all but an expression of scorn: ‘The requirements of your law have been satisfied, indeed radically so, for here the two witnesses really are in unity, for the two witnesses are one!’”

In the next section of the discourse of chapter 8, vv 21-30, Jesus states explicitly that what he speaks are those things he heard (v26) and was taught (v 28) by the Father. (Both v 26 and v 28 are second edition material.) Thus this part of the discourse concludes by affirming that “the word of witness that [Jesus] speaks is really the word of the Father, just as he had affirmed in 5:37 when he said that the Father bore witness through the word that the ‘Jews’ rejected.”

Much of the remainder of chapter 8 is third edition material. However, in 8:37, which comes from the second edition, the word λόγος itself appears. Here Jesus says that the “Jews” seek to kill him because “my word [λόγος] does not dwell in you.” Within the second edition, we find a parallel to this statement in 5:38, where it is

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said that the Father’s word does not abide in the unbelieving “Jews.” This verse, as we have seen, is part of the paradigmatic list of witnesses to Jesus found in 5:31-40.

Beasley-Murray contrasts the faith of the Jews who believed in Jesus in vv 30-31 (identified by von Wahlde as third edition) with the lack of faith of those in v 37 who seek to kill him and in whom his word does not dwell. For Beasley-Murray, Jesus’ statement, “...my word does not dwell in you,” indicates that Jesus’ word “has not begun to penetrate their minds (see Schnackenburg, 490 n.82); their unbelief makes them wholly resistant to the word of Jesus.”

Though the concept of “abiding” is more prominent in the third edition, we see here in the second edition that the λόγος of Jesus, which, as the discourse of chapter 8 makes clear, is one with the λόγος of the Father, is a reality whose presence or absence within a person reveals who is a true believer.

*John 15:1-3 Jesus’ Word and the “Cleanness” of the Disciples*

Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινὴ καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ γεωργός ἐστιν. 2πᾶν κλῆμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μὴ φέρον καρπὸν αἴρει αὐτὸ, καὶ πᾶν τὸ καρπὸν φέρον καθαίρει αὐτὸ ἵνα καρπὸν πλείονα φέρῃ. 3δὴ υἱεὶς καθαροὶ ἐστε διὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν λελάληκα ὑμῖν.

Commentary on Λόγος in John 15:1-3

Jesus, in the context of the parables of the vine and the branches, tells his disciples: “Already you are clean because of the word (διὰ τὸν λόγον) that I spoke to you.” Von Wahlde points out that in this verse the preposition διὰ is not followed by the genitive form of λόγος, which would indicate instrumentality—that is, “by

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means of” — but by the accusative. The significance of this is that we are not to think of Jesus’ words as the means by which the disciples are cleansed. As with the link between Jesus’ λόγος and eternal life in 5:24 and between Jesus’ ῥήματα and Spirit and life in 6:63 (see discussion of 5:24 above), the connection between Jesus’ λόγος and the “cleanness” of the disciples is “elliptical,” to use the word von Wahlde used in his commentary on 6:63. Here von Wahlde cites J. H. Bernard to express the meaning in 15:3: “In so far as this [the message of Jesus] continued to ‘abide’ in them (v 7), in that degree they were clean.” As can be seen in the following paragraphs, other commentators have made this clarification.

Brown translates διά as “thanks to” and comments that it is not the case that “through or by his word Jesus declares his disciples clean....It is more a question of the working of the word of Jesus within the disciple.” In his more detailed comments on 15:3, Brown continues, “Jesus’ word may be said to make [the disciples] clean already because they have received his word and they are in the context of the ‘the hour’ [of Jesus’ glorification] which will make the working of that word possible.”

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119 Ibid., 660.

120 Ibid., 677.
Brown relates the statement of Jesus to the disciples in 15:3 “You are clean already,” to Jesus’ words in 13:10, also from the second edition, spoken in the context of his washing the disciples’ feet: “And now you men are clean” (Brown’s translation). In 13:10 Jesus’ words indicated that the disciples were cleansed through the washing, which Brown calls “Jesus’ parabolic action foreshadowing his death” and which, “on a secondary level,” pointed to the cleansing of Christians in Baptism. In 15:3, the cleansing is accomplished by the word of Jesus. For Brown, there is no contradiction. Rather, through Baptism Christians become “branches in Jesus” (a reference to the parable of the vine and the branches in the preceding and following verses) and are thus rendered clean and “fruit-bearing,” but in order to bear more fruit the disciples must live out the commandment of Jesus to love one another.121 “…[T]he power attributed here to Jesus’ word is perfectly consonant with other Johannine statements about this word: it is an active force that condemns the unbeliever on the last day (12:48 [third edition]), but for the believer it is both Spirit and life (6:63) [second edition; recall that the word for Jesus’ words in this verse is ρήμα].”122

In his commentary on this verse, Bultmann focuses on the initiative of the “Revealer”—that is, Jesus—in the believer’s movement, or growth, in the life of faith. No such movement would be possible if the believer did not already belong to God.

121 Jesus’ commandment to “love one another” is found in 13:34; 15:12, 17, all of which are identified by von Wahlde as third edition.

122 Brown, Gospel, 677.
“The reason for his purity lies outside himself...in the Revealer's word and that alone.” A little further on Bultmann writes: “The certainty of salvation is given to the believer: ‘you are already clean’; but in such a way that his attention is directed to the ‘Word.’”\(^{123}\) The quotation marks around Wort in the German original of this last clause\(^{124}\) and the capitalization of “Word” in the English translation here would indicate an understanding of λόγος in the sense that it is used in the Prologue, an understanding that I see as premature for this verse from the second edition. The point remains, however, that the disciples are “clean” because of the word of Jesus. Bultmann makes an important clarification here: “The perfect λελάλ[ηκα], summing up the whole of Jesus’ work, shows that the λόγος is not a single utterance, but the word of Jesus as a whole, as in 5:24 [see above]; 8:31; 12:48, etc.”\(^{125}\)

Beasley-Murray, like Brown, relates 15:3 to Jesus’ statement to the disciples in 13:10: “You are clean but not all of you,” spoken as Jesus washed Peter’s feet. Beasley-Murray sees these words of Jesus in 15:3 and 13:10 as complementary for...

...they illustrate a fundamental assumption of the Gospel that the ‘word’ and the ‘service’ of Jesus are inseparable; the revelation that he brings from God is through word and deed—through incarnation, sign, death, and resurrection as exegeted by the Lord and by the Spirit he sends. Self-evidently, the word spoken and enacted must be received and believed if its effect is be for life in the kingdom of God and not for loss of the kingdom....\(^{126}\)

\(^{123}\) Bultmann, Gospel, 534.


\(^{125}\) Bultmann, Gospel, 534 n. 3. See also Dodd, Interpretation, 265.

\(^{126}\) Beasley-Murray, John, 234; see also 272.
Thus, Beasley-Murray reminds us that, as the other commentators surveyed have observed, it is through an active acceptance of Jesus’ word that the disciples are clean.

**John 15:22-25 Failure to Respond to the Three Essential Witnesses**

22εἰ μὴ ἠλθον καὶ ἔλαλησα αὐτοῖς, ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ εἴχοσαν· νῦν δὲ πρόφασιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν περὶ τῆς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν. 23ὁ ἐμὲ μισῶν καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου μισεῖ. 24εἰ τὰ ἔργα μὴ ἐποίησα ἐν αὐτοῖς ἃ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐποίησεν, ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ εἴχοσαν· νῦν δὲ καὶ ἑωράκασιν καὶ μεμισήκασιν καὶ ἐμὲ καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου. 25ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτῶν γεγραμένος ὅτι ἐμίσησάν με δωρεάν.

Commentary on Λόγος in John 15:22-25

The theme of the witnesses to Jesus appears again in 15:22-25, a section of the Farewell Discourses to which von Wahlde gives the title, “Failure to Respond to the Witnesses.” Though the term λόγος is found in v 25, it is “the word written in their Law” that is referred to rather than the word spoken by Jesus. However, the theme of the word of Jesus “as a sufficient basis for belief,” that is, as witness to Jesus, is expressed in v 22, where Jesus says: “If I had not come and spoken [ἐλάλησα] to them, they would have no guilt of sin....” (Thus we have another instance of this theme where an expression other than the noun λόγος is employed by the author.) This is paralleled in v 24 by a statement by Jesus about his works: “If I had not performed works among them that no one else performed, they would not

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128 Ibid., II:688.
be guilty of sin....” Brown observes this parallel and remarks: “Once again we encounter the Johannine theme of the revelatory words and works of Jesus; cf. 14:10 [emphasis added].”

Further on, Brown writes: “Jesus has come to these men both with words (22) and with works (24)....Because the words and works of Jesus are the words and works of the Father (5:36, 14:10) rejection and hatred of Jesus are rejection and hatred of the Father....” Thus, while Brown does not clearly identify the word of Jesus as a distinct witness of the Father when he is dealing directly with 5:31-40 in his commentary (see above), he certainly sees the words of Jesus as a distinct witness from the works in 14:10 and 15:22, 24.

Verse 25, as observed above, refers to the Scriptures. Thus, as von Wahlde points out, these verses (22-25) constitute a summary of how Jesus’ words, his works, and the Scriptures—the three essential witnesses to Jesus paradigmatically listed in 5:31-40—have revealed the Father through him. Von Wahlde observes that this is the fourth time in the material of the second edition of the Gospel that this listing appears.

In his commentary on 15:22, 24, Bultmann maintains that the words and actions of Jesus “are a unity, only split up into synon[ymous] parallels for rhetorical

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129 Brown, Gospel, 688.
130 Ibid., 697.
131 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:688. In his discussion “The Four Witnesses and the Structure of the Gospel in the Second Edition,” II:261-3, von Wahlde writes that “[t]he arrangement of the material in 1:19-2:22 [a mix of material from all three editions] is due to the second author’s desire to show the disciples as responding to all four witnesses.” The listing is given paradigmatically in 5:31-40, and “provide[s] the basic theme for the major discourses of 6:30-59; 8:12-59; and 10:22-39.”
reasons.”\textsuperscript{132} I concur with Schnackenburg, however, who sees a difference between the words spoken by Jesus (v 22) and the works he performed (v 24).\textsuperscript{133} In his commentary on 15:22-24, Schnackenburg writes: “Jesus’ words and works are evidence of his divine origin and they provide this proof in an indissoluble relationship with each other....”\textsuperscript{134}

When commenting on 15:26, Schnackenburg states: “If the saying about the Paraclete is more closely connected with vv. 22-24, the Paraclete can be seen as having the same function as Jesus in his words and works on earth [emphasis added]. He is Jesus’ witness.”\textsuperscript{135} Von Wahlde sees the explicit statements of vv 26-27, both from the third edition, concerning the witness of the Paraclete (v 26) and of the disciples (v 27) as confirmation that vv 22-25 are indeed intended as a paradigmatic listing of witnesses. That is, even though the word “witness” does not appear in vv 22-25, the fact that the author of the third edition has explicitly identified his additions to this passage, the Paraclete and the disciples, as witnesses indicates that he understood the previous verses to be a listing of witnesses to Jesus.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{132} Bultmann, \textit{Gospel}, 551, n. 1.


\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., III: 116.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., III: 117.

\textsuperscript{136} von Wahlde, \textit{Gospel and Letters} II:688-89.
It is clear, then, that in 15:22-25, the word of Jesus is a distinct witness from that of his works and the Scriptures.

**John 17:6-19 The Word of the Father is Truth**

The next instance of the term λόγος in the second edition appears in 17:17, in Jesus’ prayer for his disciples, vv 6-19, part of Jesus’ longer prayer concluding the Farewell Discourses at the Last Supper. The section under discussion here, vv 6-19, is a mix of second and third edition material.

17:6-19 The Farewell Discourses: Jesus’ Prayer for His Disciples

Ἐφανέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὓς ἔδωκάς μοι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου. σοὶ ἤσαν κάμιν αὐτούς ἐδώκας καὶ τὸν λόγον σου τετήρηκαν. 7νῦν ἐγνώκας ὅτι πάντα σὰ δέδωκάς μοι παρὰ σοῦ εἰσιν· 8ὅτι τὰ ῥήματα ἐδώκας μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλαβον καὶ ἐμνήσαν ἀληθός ὅτι παρὰ σοῦ ἐξήλθον, καὶ ἐπιστέυσαν ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας. 9Ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐρωτῶ, οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι, ὅτι σοὶ εἰσίν, 10καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ πάντα σὰ ἔστιν καὶ τὰ σὰ ἔμα, καὶ δεδόξασαι ἐν αὐτοῖς. 11καὶ οὐκέτι εἰμὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰσίν, κἀγὼ πρὸς σὲ ἐρχομαι. πάτερ ἅγιε, τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, ἵνα ὄσιν ἐν καθὼς ἡμεῖς. 12ὅτε ἤμην μετ’ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι σου ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, καὶ ἀπώλετο εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου καθὼς ἐμέ ἐμὼ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου· 13ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον σου καὶ ὁ κόσμος εἰςαποστίτησαν αὐτοὺς, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσίν έκ τοῦ κόσμου καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ έκ τοῦ κόσμου. 14οὐκ ερωτῶ ἵνα ἀρησία αὐτοὺς εἶμι έκ τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τηρήσης αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. 15ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσίν καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου. 16ἀλλ’ ἵνα ἀρησία αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τηρήσης αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. 17ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἦν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου. 18καθὼς ἐμοὶ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, κἀγὼ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον· ἕμαυτόν ἵναι ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.
Commentary on Λόγος in John 17:6-19

In this prayer at the Last Supper, Jesus says to the Father: “Consecrate them [the disciples] in the truth. Your word is truth” [ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθεια ἐστίν] (17:17).

In his commentary on this verse, as in his commentary on 15:3, Bultmann emphasizes God’s initiative in sanctifying the community. He interprets 17:17 in light of the preceding verses in which Jesus declares that his disciples, though in the world, do not belong to the world (see vv 14-16). Bultmann writes that the community can only maintain its status of being apart from the world “in virtue of the revelation on which it is founded, which is nothing other than the word of God transmitted to it through Jesus.”137 Though verses 11[beginning with πάτερ ἅγιε]-16 are identified as third edition by von Wahlde, Jesus’ petition to the Father that he consecrate the disciples in the truth (17:17) is second edition, so Bultmann’s point that it is by God’s initiative that the community perseveres in holiness remains.

For Bultmann, the ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ of v 17 corresponds to the ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου of v 11b (third edition), so that “just as the ἀλήθεια of God is manifest reality in Jesus, so is the ὄνομα of God,” and this ὄνομα, given to Jesus (v 11) and which Jesus reveals (v 6) “is nothing other than the ρήματα, which God has ‘given’ him to utter (v 8).”138 Bultmann identifies the ρήματα of v 8 (second edition) with the λόγος of v 14 (third edition). Thus, Bultmann views the terms ὄνομα, ἀλήθεια, ρήματα, and λόγος as

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137 Bultmann, Gospel, 509.
138 Ibid., 502-3.
terms expressing the revelation given by God to Jesus and in turn revealed by Jesus to the disciples.  

Schnackenburg also comments that the “word of God” has the effect of separating the disciples from the world (v 14) and sanctifying them in the truth (v 17). Furthermore, like Bultmann, he sees a correspondence between the phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου in v 12\(^{140}\) and ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ of v 17. He relates the idea of sanctification in v 17 to v 18, “As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world” (translation: von Wahlde), by stating that “[t]he disciples have to be equipped for their activity in the world and they are in fact equipped by ‘the truth’, that is, by bearing within themselves the word of God mediated to them by Jesus Christ and by bearing it as reality and as power.”\(^{141}\)

Schnackenburg reflects on the notion of the sanctification of the disciples “not by any dramatic or ostentatious means, but only by the word of the one sent by God, which was proclaimed to all men, but only accepted by them.”\(^{142}\) He sees a similarity here to Gnostic ideas such as are expressed in a passage from the Mandaean literature: “You are set up and established, my chosen ones, by the

\(^{139}\)Ibid., see 503, n. 2. See also 498, n. 3.

\(^{140}\) Bultmann refers to v 11 (see previous paragraph above), but the meaning is the same and both instances are from the third edition.

\(^{141}\) Schnackenburg, Gospel, III: 185.

\(^{142}\) Ibid., 185.
discourse of truth that has come to you.” However, he observes this difference: it is not by a “discourse of truth” but in the very person of Jesus, “the historical revealer,” that “the word of truth” is revealed to the disciples.

According to Schnackenburg, the idea that the Johannine community is sanctified by the word of Jesus also sets that community apart from the understanding of sanctification in Judaism. Following the end of the sacrificial system in the Jerusalem Temple, the Jews sought holiness primarily through adhering to the divine commands of the Torah. For the Johannine Christians, the word of Jesus replaces the Torah:

John saw the Torah as superseded by Jesus’ word, which took over all the healing and sanctifying functions of the Torah—giving life (5:38ff; 8:51), purifying (15:3), granting freedom (8:31f) and making love, the “new commandment,” an obligation (13:34f; 15:12, 17). Jesus’ word, in which God’s word is present, becomes, in the Gospel of John, a frontier dividing Judaism from Christianity (see 5:38; 8:31, 37, 43; 12:48).

Conclusion

Having examined those instances of the use of λόγος in the second edition material which possess a meaning beyond the ordinary employment of that word, we can see that for the author of the second edition of the Gospel of John, the λόγος of Jesus is a witness to the truth of his claims, for it is in fact the λόγος of the Father.

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144 Schnackenburg, Gospel, III:185.

145 Ibid., III:185.
Therefore, the word of Jesus is a basis for belief in him beyond that of his miracles. In the second edition, Jesus’ λόγος is his message in its entirety (e.g. 5:24, 38; 15:3). This word of Jesus is on a par with Scripture (2:22) and its acceptance in faith leads to eternal life (5:24) and to the cleansing of those in whom it abides (15:3). The word of the Father, and therefore the word of Jesus, is truth (17:17).

In examining the use of the term λόγος to express the function of Jesus’ word as witness to his claims, we have observed a few examples in which other ways of expressing this concept were employed by the author of the second edition (e.g. 6:63; 14:10; 15:22). We shall see further examples of this when we address the use of λόγος by the author of the third edition.

Our investigation in this chapter has shown that, in many instances, the term λόγος often bears a theological weight in the second edition of the Gospel of John not evident in its appearances in the first edition. We turn now to an examination of the significance of λόγος in the piece of Johannine literature which, according to the position taken in this dissertation, was composed after the second edition of the Gospel but before the third—the First Epistle of John.
CHAPTER FOUR

ΛΟΓΟΣ IN THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

Introduction

In chapter 3 of this dissertation we examined the use of the term λόγος in the Gospel of John in those passages that Urban C. von Wahlde has identified as belonging to the first or the second editions of the Gospel. As we have seen, according to von Wahlde’s view of the chronology of the composition of the Johannine works, the First Epistle of John (I John) was composed after the second edition of the Gospel but before the third. Since I accept this view for reasons given in chapter 2, where I summarize von Wahlde’s position on this question, we will now turn to an analysis of the use of the word λόγος in the First Epistle of John. The reader will want to keep in mind that in this dissertation we are investigating whether or not there is a progression in the christological significance of the term λόγος from its appearance in the first edition of the Gospel through the second edition, the First Epistle, the third edition, and finally to the explicit identification of the concept with Jesus in the Prologue of the Gospel.

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first concerning the meaning of λόγος in the opening verse of the Epistle, that is, I John 1:1, and the second concerning the significance of the term in the remaining instances in the Epistle. The reason for this
is that the use of the term in 1 John 1:1 is quite possibly different from the other instances of the word in the rest of the letter. The meaning of the term in 1:1 is the subject of much debate in itself, for some have seen it as referring to Jesus himself, thus either echoing or foreshadowing its use in the Prologue of the Gospel, and others have seen the term here as a reference to the Gospel message of which Jesus is the embodiment.

In the other uses of λόγος in the Epistle, the issue is of a different nature. In these other instances, there is no question of the term referring to Jesus himself. Rather, the debate concerns what the λόγος, the “word,” is that the community has had “from the beginning.” For many scholars, it is obviously a synonym for ἐντολή/ἐντολαὶ, commandment or commandments, and therefore it must refer to Jesus’ commandment to “love one another.” In von Wahlde’s view, the word λόγος in 1 John refers to the message of God in its entirety as it was revealed by Jesus. This call to the disciples to be faithful to the whole message of Jesus, a fidelity which involves an acceptance of the identity of Jesus and the abiding importance of his “word,” is regarded by von Wahlde as the first of two commandments in the Johannine tradition, the command to mutual love being the second.¹

Because von Wahlde has written extensively on the number and content of the Johannine commandments and the arguments are sometimes complex, I have

reserved much of the discussion of his arguments for an Excursus on the Johannine
Commandment tradition which focuses on von Wahlde’s reasons for taking the
position that he does.

We begin now with an examination of the meaning of λόγος in the first verse of
the First Epistle of John.

**The Analysis of the Term Λόγος in the Prologue of
the First Letter of John (1:1-4)**

1ο ο ᾐν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ο ἀκηκόαμεν, ο ἐωράκαμεν τοῖς ὁρθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ο ἔθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν, περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς
ζωῆς καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐωράκαμεν και μαρτυροῦμεν και
ἀπαγγέλλομεν υμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ
ἕως ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν καὶ ἐωράκαμεν και ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ υμῖν, ἵνα καὶ υμείς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ’ ἡμῶν, καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα
μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ ἴου τοῦ ἤμου Ἡσυχεῖον Χριστοῦ, ἤ καὶ ταύτα
γράφομεν ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ἀπεπληρωμένη

History of Scholarship on the Verses

Scholars have identified the first four verses of the first chapter of 1 John as a
prologue to the Epistle, an introduction to the work which expresses the theme or
purpose of that work. The author begins by reminding the readers that what he and
his fellow laborers ("we") have proclaimed to them — τὴν ζωῆν τὴν αἰώνιον ἡτις ἦν
πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν — was a historical, tangible reality (1 John
1:1-2). The purpose of this reminder is so that the addressees “may have
fellowship” with the author and his co-laborers whose joy will be thus complete (1
John 1: 3-4).

The term λόγος appears in the first verse of the Prologue of 1 John as part of the
prepositional phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς — “concerning the word of life.” The
employment of the term here raises the question of whether or not the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς is in fact Jesus himself or his life-giving message. Scholars are quite divided on the answer to that question. In attempting to arrive at an answer, we must deal with the related issue of which came first, the Prologue of the Gospel of John, in which the λόγος is clearly identified with Jesus, or the Prologue of the First Epistle. This question in turn is intricately tied to the problem we addressed in chapter 1 of this dissertation, namely, that of the chronological relationship of the composition of the Epistle as a whole (since most scholars seem not to question that 1 John 1:1-4 is integral to the Epistle) to the composition of the Gospel.

Scholars have taken widely varied positions on these questions. (1) The Prologue of the Epistle was written after and modeled on the Prologue of the Gospel. The term λόγος refers to Jesus himself in both Prologues. (2) The Prologue of the Epistle was written after and modeled on the Prologue of the Gospel, but the Epistle author has rendered ambiguous or retreated from the explicit identification of the λόγος with Jesus in the Gospel Prologue. The author of the Epistle Prologue may, in fact, use the term to refer to the gospel message that Jesus proclaimed rather than to Jesus himself. (3) The Epistle Prologue was written before the Gospel Prologue and in both the λόγος is Jesus himself. (4) The Epistle Prologue was written before the Gospel Prologue and the ambiguous use of the term λόγος in the Epistle Prologue represents a stage in the movement toward the explicit understanding of Jesus as the λόγος in the Gospel Prologue. (5) The two Prologues were written independently of each other but drew on a common tradition in which the term λόγος was christologically significant.
One of the reasons that it is difficult to be certain that the term λόγος bears the same meaning in I John 1:1 as it does in the Gospel Prologue is that the passage is grammatically challenging (to put it kindly). The subject of the first relative clause and the object of each of the three subsequent relative clauses which constitute most of verse 1 and lead up to περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, as well as the object in the relative clause of v. 3 (which evidently takes up the thought from v. 1) is the neuter ὃ, which grammatically would not refer to the masculine λόγος or to the feminine ζωῆ. If the subject were expressed by the masculine ὃς (in the first clause) or its accusative form ὃν (in the following three clauses and at the beginning of v.3), the lines would refer to “he who was from the beginning; he whom we have heard...seen...observed and our hands have felt, etc....” It would be clear, then, that the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς was Jesus himself. As it is, we are presented with a riddle.

To complicate matters further it is not the meaning of the term λόγος which is developed in the following lines but that of ζωῆς: καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἥτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα….(1 Jn 1: 2). This fact leads some scholars to the conclusion that the concern of the Epistle Prologue is not the preexistent incarnate Word but the life-giving content of the message embodied in the historical life of Christ.

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4 See C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1946), 5-6; James D. G. Dunn: “It is not so much Christ the incarnation of the pre-existent Word that the author speaks of, but Christ whose life, death, and resurrection is the content of the proclamation and the means to
In the following pages, we shall examine the positions of seven prominent scholars who have written commentaries on the Epistles of John. Because each scholar’s view differs from those of the others in several respects, it is not possible to neatly categorize these writers according to their conclusions. Therefore, I have summarized the work of each chronologically according to the date of the publication of their respective commentaries. In those cases where I have used published English translations, I have placed them according to the publication date of the commentaries in their original language.

**C. H. Dodd (1946)**

Dodd demonstrates well the difficulties involved in interpreting the Epistle Prologue by providing a word-for-word translation of 1 John 1:1-3a without attempting to smooth over the grammatical awkwardness:

> That which was from the beginning; that which we have heard; that which we have seen with our eyes; that which we observed and our hands felt—concerning the word of life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and announce to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we announce to you also.⁵

Dodd accounts for the discrepancy between the neuter gender of ὃ (“that which”) and the masculine λόγος in v. 1 by asserting that the relative clauses beginning with ὃ express “the contents of the announcement,” while the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, which (together with v. 2) is of a different grammatical construction than the eternal life.” *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation.* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), 245-46.

relative clauses that precede it, expresses “the theme of the announcement.” He believes that by making this distinction, “we avoid the awkward necessity of taking the neuter pronouns (neuter in Greek and in English) in reference to Christ as the Logos. The Greek word λόγος is masculine, and if Christ is meant, masculine pronouns would be required in either language.”

We shall see in what follows that while several scholars accept Dodd’s distinction between the contents and the theme of the announcement, not all draw the same conclusion as he regarding the significance of λόγος in v 1.

In addressing directly the question of whether or not the word λόγος in the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1 possesses the “technical” meaning it has in John 1:1, 14, Dodd cites the use of the same or similar phrases in other writings of the New Testament and asserts that in each case they refer to the Gospel (Phil 2:16 [λόγος]; Acts 5:20 [ῥήματα]). In John 6:68, Jesus possesses “the words [ῥήματα] of eternal life.” In chapter 17 of John, the ρήματα come from God the Father “and are collectively the Word (λόγος) of God, which is truth, and which Christ gives to men (John 17: 6-8, 14, 17).” In Dodd’s view, “[i]t would be in accord with Johannine ideas to understand ‘the word of life’ in our present passage as the life-giving Word of God which came to men through Christ and is embodied in the Gospel.” Therefore, the author of 1 John means that the theme of his announcement,

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6 Ibid., 3.
as indicated by the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς, is the Gospel. It is his understanding of the Gospel that has been true “from the beginning.”

Though Dodd states explicitly that the Epistle author has “defined the Gospel as the Word of Life,” he goes on to say that “by ‘life’ [the author] does not mean any abstract idea, but the divine reality disclosed to men in the incarnate Christ...in whom the divine life which existed from all eternity was made accessible to human knowledge.” According to Dodd, then, the author of the Epistle Prologue is concerned with “the historical reality of the Incarnation,” which is verified by eyewitnesses. At the same time, however, it is clear that in Dodd’s view, the λόγος in the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς is the Gospel about the life incarnate in Jesus.

Rudolf Bultmann (1967)

After stating that the opening clause of 1 John (Ὅ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς) apparently means the same as the first line of John 1:1 (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), Bultmann asserts that the Gospel Prologue “served as the model” for the Epistle Prologue (vv. 1-4). He agrees with Dodd in saying that the neuter ὁ of the introductory relative clauses of I John can be explained by the fact that these clauses refer to the “subject matter,” or content, of the message that the author announces, while the phrase περὶ τοῦ

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7 Ibid., 3-5.

8 Ibid., 5-6.

9 Ibid., 5, 6.


11 Ibid., 8. See also 8, n. 5.
While he acknowledges that the subject matter of the message is the primary concern of 1 John 1:1-4 (as opposed to the person of Christ), he asserts that

[t]he fact that subject matter and person are basically identical becomes evident at the end of v. 3—("our fellowship is] with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ"). What is significant, however, is that subject matter and person are identical in a unique fashion: to speak of the subject matter is to speak at the same time of the person.

On this point, then, Bultmann disagrees with Dodd, who, as we saw above, held that ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς was the gospel message. For Bultmann, the primary meaning of λόγος in this phrase is “word,” so that ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς would then be the word that deals with life (objective genitive). He asks, however, why the author of the Epistle did not use the form τὸν λόγον τῆς ζωῆς. "Is not the meaning of ‘Logos’ as divine person also echoed in the term λόγος?" From his statement cited above, "...subject matter and person are basically identical...," it is clear that his answer is affirmative. He adds that understanding ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς as referring to a divine person would make τῆς ζωῆς a qualitative (which is to say “descriptive”) or

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12 Ibid., 8, n. 5. Bultmann cites Dodd, who, as we saw above, makes this distinction in Epistles, 32.


14 Ibid., 8.

15 Ibid., 8, n.5.

16 Ibid., 8, n. 5.
epexegetical (appositional) genitive, so that we would understand “concerning the Logos, which is life.”  

**J. L. Houlden (1973)**

We saw in chapter 1 that while Houlden, like so many other scholars, regards the teaching of I John on matters such as eschatology and christology as simpler and “more primitive” than that of the Gospel of John, it is his view that I John was written later than the Gospel by a different author. “[The Gospel and First Epistle] share many ideas, but the differences are of such a character as to indicate that the Epistle represents a time when Johannine thought had developed in new directions since the writing of the Gospel.”  

While the Epistle contains deep theological insights, the author of the Epistle places more emphasis on ecclesiastical and pastoral issues than the author of the Gospel, whose concern is more doctrinal.  

Regarding “the general christology” of 1 John, Houlden writes that Jesus is presented as “God’s agent, the Messiah...rather than the mediator who in his very being is one with God ([Gospel of John] 10:30).” Houlden notes that in 1 John 1:1f and 5:20f Jesus appears to be spoken of in “‘high’ terms,” but he regards these passages as ambiguous and asserts that the author of the Epistle appears to avoid making proclamations of high christology.

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17 Ibid., 8, n. 5.

18 Houlden, Epistles, 13-14.

19 Ibid., 38.

20 Ibid., 38.

21 Ibid., 14.
Houlden contends that the author of the Epistle Prologue (whom, he suggests, may have been different from the author of rest of the Epistle)22 “appears to have attempted to model himself upon the prologue of the Johannine Gospel.” The differences between the two Prologues, however, rule out for Houlden the possibility of common authorship. He finds the theology of I John 1:1-4 to be less profound than that of the Gospel Prologue and refers to the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1 as an example of this.23 In the Gospel Prologue, “the Word...clearly stands for Christ in his mediatorial role. In I John, however, it is quite unclear whether ‘the word of life’ (v 1) refers to Christ or the Gospel message.”24 Houlden asserts that the very fact that the four clauses that comprise the opening of I John begin with the neuter pronoun ὃ (“that which”) rather than the personal ὃν (“whom”) indicates that the author “is more concerned with the fact and content of orthodox belief” rather than “the person of Christ,” which is the focus of the Gospel Prologue.25 As further evidence of this, Houlden writes that the use of the word “beginning” in I John 1:1 differs from that of John 1:1. In the latter case, the term is used “in an absolute sense—for the very roots of all time and space.” In the former

22 Ibid., 46. Houlden bases his suggestion that “an editorial hand, less skilful [sic] than the simple but on the whole unconfused composer of the main work,” was responsible for the Epistle Prologue on the confused grammar of these opening verses.

23 Ibid., 46-7.

24 Ibid., 47.

25 Ibid., 48.
case, "[‘the beginning’] refers to the origins of the Christian preaching—‘the word of life.’ [emphasis added]"\(^{26}\)

Though Houlden maintains that the Epistle Prologue “depends in general upon the opening of the Gospel,” he raises the question of whether or not “the strong, personal sense of ‘the word’ (λόγος) applied to Jesus” that we find in the Gospel Prologue was so much a part of the Johannine tradition that we must understand the term in I John 1:1 in the same way. His response is negative, if the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς is taken by itself. Comparing the phrase to phrases in the Gospel of John such as “bread of life” (John 6:35), “resurrection of life” (John 5:29) and “words of life” (John 6:68), he asserts that “the natural sense [of ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1] is ‘the message that gives life.'” He also refers, as Dodd did before him (see above), to the use of the expression λόγον ζωῆς in Philippians 2:16. Houlden acknowledges the difficulty here: the verbs ἑωράκαμεν, ἐψηλάφησαν, etc., in this passage seem to require an understanding that the author is referring to a person. He argues, however, that “if ‘word’ refers to Jesus, it is strange to find the addition of the words ‘of life.’” One would expect “and the life,” such as we find in the Gospel of John 11:25 (“I am the resurrection and the life”) and 14:6 (“I am the way and the truth and the life”). He points again to the probability that if the author intended the phrase “word of life” to refer to Jesus, he would have used the masculine pronoun for “he whom” rather than the neuter “that which” in the clauses with which the Epistle Prologue begins. He would also have omitted the preposition περὶ (“concerning”) before ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς. Had this been the case, I John 1:1-4 “would then have been

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 49.
a development of [the Gospel of John] 1:14, with an opening reminiscence of [the Gospel of John] 1:1....” Yet, as if to highlight the confusing nature of I John 1:1-4, Houlden then asks, “On any showing, can ‘that which our hands felt’ have any other than a personal reference, and can the neuter pronoun, in this case at least, be other than inappropriate?”

For Houlden, an important consideration in deciding who or what ὁ λόγος refers to in the first verse of the Epistle is whether or not the reader should understand a break, or pause, before the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς. If there is no break intended, “‘word’[λόγος] may but need not signify Jesus—the writer is listing the numerous links with him [that is, in the four clauses that precede the phrase].” However, if we understand that a break should be placed before the prepositional phrase,

...then [“the word”] is more likely to mean “message,” and the four clauses and the phrase are simply two ways of referring to the same thing, that is, “the Christian proclamation”—the former by way of content, the latter by way of theme (cf. C. H. Dodd, Commentary, p.3).28

The issue for Houlden is how closely connected the sensory verbs in three of the four introductory clauses—ἀκηκόαμεν, ἑωράκαμεν, ψηλάφησαν—are to the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς. If there is no pause between the clauses and the prepositional phrase, the connection would be closer than if there is a pause, and (he seems to be saying) we would understand ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς to be the object of ὁ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὁ ἑωράκαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὁ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν

27 Ibid., 51.

28 Ibid., 51-2.
ἔψηλάφησαν (Jn 1:1). Houlden believes, however, that we should place a break before the prepositional phrase. He argues for this on the basis of his observation that the first of the four opening clauses (Ὁ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς) “must stand on its own,” so that the parallelism among the four clauses indicates that “it is better to treat all alike and provide a pause.”

Houlden asserts that the author may have been deliberately ambiguous, for Jesus both “gave the word and embodied it.” Nevertheless, it may rather be the case that the author did not fully understand the Gospel Prologue or preferred “a less speculative theology,” yet kept some of the same vocabulary, thereby expressing his thought “in terms already venerable in Johannine ears.”

Houlden observes that the following verse (as he translates it), “…and that life was revealed, and we saw and we testify and we announce eternal life to you…,” continues the ambiguity of “the word of life” in v. 1. He accepts that “the life” that was revealed can refer to Jesus and cross-references the Gospel of John 11:25 and 14:6, where Jesus refers to himself as “the life,” but states that “there is no parallel to the use of ‘eternal life’ (v. 2b) in this way….” He further argues that “the use of this term after ‘we saw’ (one of the verbs in v. 1) perhaps tips the balance in favour of

29 Ibid., 50. The scripture translation is Houlden’s.

30 Ibid., 50. This argument is, in my view, rather confused, for the issue Houlden raises here is whether or not there should be a pause before the prepositional phrase “concerning the word of life.” His observation that the four opening clauses—each beginning with “that which”—are parallel, says nothing about whether or not we should understand a pause before the prepositional phrase.

31 Ibid., 52; cf. 47.
the dominant reference in v. 1 being to the Christian message rather than to Jesus.”

Houlden is the only scholar referred to in this chapter who calls attention to a particular point that could have a bearing on the interpretation of λόγος in v. 1: verse 5, as Houlden translates it, reads: “And the message (ἡ ἄγγελία) which we heard from him and are announcing to you is this: God is light….” He maintains that the use of the words “message,” “announce,” and “heard” “echo the prologue and can easily be read as the writer’s final, successful attempt to ‘get out’ what he has been struggling to express for several lines.” The verse may also have been added by an editor, “smoothing the transition from the prologue to the opening of the first main section, with its key pronouncement that God is light.”

In either case, if we accept Houlden’s translation, the words “[a]nd the message...is this...,” following as they do immediately after the Prologue, could be taken to support the view that ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in v. 1 is the message of Jesus rather than Jesus himself.

**Raymond Brown (1982)**

In chapter I of this dissertation, we saw that Raymond E. Brown theorizes that the body of the Gospel was written ca. 90 CE and that the final redaction took place just after 100 CE. He acknowledges that “[a]ny such hypothesis makes it possible that I John was composed after some stages in the composition of [the Gospel of] John and

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32 Ibid., 52.

33 Ibid., 46.
before other stages."34 In his discussion of the chronological relationship between the Gospel and the Epistle, Brown distinguishes between the relationship of 1 John to the “basic composition” of the Gospel (“the work of the evangelist”), on the one hand, and to the final redaction of the Gospel on the other.35 Since Brown has identified “redactional elements” in the Gospel Prologue36 and, indeed, states in his Anchor Bible commentary on the Gospel of John that “it was probably...the redactor who added the Prologue to the Gospel...,”37 one would think that for Brown the possibility remains that I John, with its Prologue, was written before the Gospel Prologue. Brown, however, clearly rejects this view. Even though he cites the respective Prologues of the two works as an example of what some scholars have considered the “more ‘primitive’” character of certain passages of I John in comparison to related passages in the Gospel of John,38 he also states:

In the INTRODUCTION II C2 and V C1d [earlier sections of his AB commentary on the Johannine Epistles], the thesis was defended that I John was written after [the Gospel of] John, and I see no reason to exempt the Prologues from this sequence (although I acknowledge that, as a hymn, the G[ospel of] John Prologue once traveled separately in the tradition from the rest of [the Gospel of] John).39


37 Raymond Brown, Gospel, (AB 29), xxxviii.

38 Brown, Epistles, 33.

39 Ibid., 180, n. 13.
In fact, he proposes that the Epistle Prologue is a “reinterpretation” of the Gospel Prologue, “done in order to refute adversaries who are distorting the meaning of the G[ospel of] John Prologue.”

Relevant to our particular concern in this chapter, namely, the christological significance of the term λόγος in the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς of I John 1:1, Brown writes in his earlier work, The Community of the Beloved Disciple, that the Epistle Prologue was written “almost as a corrective” to the views of those who were “making much of the pre-existence motif” of the Gospel Prologue. He maintains that, in response to the “overemphasis on high christology [emphasis in the original]” on the part of the opponents of I John, the author of I John “stresses aspects of a lower Christology in instances where [the Gospel of] John stresses a higher Christology.” To demonstrate this, Brown cites the use of λόγος in the Prologue of I John and in the Prologue to the Gospel. In his view, the λόγος in I John 1:1 “seems to refer to the gospel-message about life, whereas in the [Gospel of] John Prologue it is clearly personified.”

Brown’s thesis is that the opponents of I John accepted that the preexistent divine Word “became flesh” in Jesus but did not regard what Jesus did in the flesh—his
earthly ministry and death—as significant.\footnote{Ibid., 180. Brown rejects the common view that the secessionists opposed by the author of I John were docetists who could not accept the Gospel of John Prologue. He therefore denies that the Prologue was intended to be anti-docetic. If the secessionists eventually did become docetists, “they would have reinterpreted the ‘became flesh’ of John 1:14 as ‘was manifest in the flesh’....” He points out that, in fact, “Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian gnostics had no problem about interpreting in a gnostic manner the [Gospel of] John Prologue in general and 1:14 in particular (Irenaeus, \textit{Adv. Haer.} 1.8.5).” \textit{Epistles}, 180, n. 16; see also 109, n. 252.} In order to refute such a view, the epistolary author did not attack the Gospel Prologue, for “as a Johannine Christian, he himself accepted its christology.”\footnote{Brown, \textit{Epistles}, 181.} Rather, he sought to show that his opponents had missed the import of the Gospel’s account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and, consequently, they had also failed to grasp the meaning of the Gospel Prologue that prefaced that account. In his composition of the Epistle Prologue, then, the author “reshapes some of the well-known and significant phrases of the Gospel of John Prologue” to highlight for his readers the “presuppositions” of the Gospel account. “The awkwardness of the I John Prologue, then, stems from an attempt to give familiar wording a different emphasis.”\footnote{Ibid., 181.}

In Brown’s view, the author of the Epistle Prologue “reinterprets the ‘Word’ from the Gospel of John Prologue to mean the message preached during his ministry by Jesus and afterward by the (Paraclete-inspired) witness-bearers of the Johannine School.”\footnote{Ibid., 181.} Brown asserts that without prior knowledge of the Gospel Prologue, one would “never” regard the λόγος of I John 1:1 as personified. The author does not portray the λόγος as performing any action, nor is λόγος personified when it
appears elsewhere in the Johannine Epistles (I John 1:10; 2:5, 7, 14; 3:18; III John 10.) Brown suggests that the author may have wished to “shift the emphasis” in his interpretation of the Gospel Prologue from his opponents’ “one-sided interpretation” of that Prologue in order to “remind his audience of the centrality of the proclamation of the gospel during Jesus’ lifetime—the word proclaimed by the Word.”

*Rudolf Schnackenburg (7th edition, 1984)*

Schnackenburg, who, in his commentary on the Johannine Epistles, clearly regards the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς of 1 John 1:1 as the Logos of the Gospel Prologue, offers an explanation for the neuter ὃ with which the relative clauses of the Epistle Prologue begin that differs from that of Dodd: the use of the neuter in the opening phrase “Ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἀρχής is “intentionally general...Its purpose is to suggest the depths that lead into the abysses of God.” Furthermore, he points out that “[t]he neuter gender often appears in Johannine usage for the masculine.” Two of the examples

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49 Ibid., 164.


cited by Schnackenburg from the Gospel and Epistle illustrate this usage well. The first is from the John 4:22:

\[ ὑμεῖς προσκυνεῖτε ὃ οὐκ οἴδατε, ἡμεῖς προσκυνοῦμεν ὃ οἴδαμεν, ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔστιν \]

This example seems particularly relevant because the neuter ὃ is being used to refer to the Father, named as the object of worship in v 23, in a vague and mysterious way.

John 6:37a refers to those whom the Father gives Jesus with the neuter πᾶν ὃ, whereas in 37b the very same are referred to with the masculine accusative τὸν ἐρχόμενον:

\[ πᾶν ὃ δίδωσιν μοι ὁ πατὴρ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἥξει, καὶ τὸν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς με οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω. \]

This Johannine use of ὃ for the masculine makes it possible for Schnackenburg to claim regarding the import of 1 John 1:1:

The message proclaimed “from the beginning” also includes the personal bearer of an archetypal Being (“him who is from the beginning,” 2:13-14). And the recipients of the letter must remain faithful not only to the doctrine (2:24) but also to the Revealer himself (2:27; 3:6). The very first word of the letter prepares the ground for this important demand. It refers not to the beginning of the proclamation but to the personal bearer of the archetypal Being. This is proved by the “was” and by the use of the phrase “concerning the word of life.”

Schnackenburg also suggests that the author of I John uses the prepositional phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς rather than the accusative form τὸν λόγον τῆς ζωῆς “because of the danger of misunderstanding,” by which he means the danger of interpreting the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1 as having the same meaning.

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52 Schnackenburg, *Epistles*, 57.
as in Phil 2:16, where it is the gospel message. (Thus he directly opposes Dodd, who, as we saw above, refers to Phil 2:16, as well as Acts 5:20, as support for the view that the ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in 1 John 1:1 is the gospel message.) For Schnackenburg, the use of περὶ excludes such an interpretation. Rather, the employment of this preposition allowed the author of I John to “express the personal character of the object [that is, ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς] better-- and that is the primary focus…” Schnackenburg states:

With “the word of life” we get a pregnant term with which the readers may be presumed to be familiar. In the light of all this there can be no doubt that the object is the same Logos as in John 1...the addition [“of life”] is therefore a genitive of quality or apposition. The Logos possesses “life” within himself and is “life” in his whole nature.

In Schnackenburg’s view, the phrase “was from the beginning” near the beginning of v 1 and the phrase “concerning the word of life” at the end of v 1 may be expressing the same idea:

The preexistent Logos, and subsequently the incarnate One, incorporates in himself the fullness of the divine life, an idea that is no more clarified here than it is in [the Gospel of] John. Only in the phrase “what was from the beginning” and in the term “the word” itself is there any emphasis on the eternal divine Being. Without dwelling on its meaning, the author at once directs our attention to the fact of its being made accessible in the incarnate Logos of life to the experience of faith.

53 Ibid., 59 and 59 n. 31.
54 Dodd, Epistles, 4-5.
55 Schnackenburg, Epistles, 59, n. 31.
56 Ibid., 59.
57 Ibid., 57.
I have quoted Schnackenburg at length to demonstrate the fact that there is no ambiguity in his view that the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς of I John 1:1 is identical with the Logos of the Gospel Prologue.

**Georg Strecker (1989)**

In dealing specifically with the question of the relationship between the Prologue of the Gospel of John and the Prologue of the First Epistle of John, Strecker, in a footnote, provides a chart comparing John 1:1-14 and 1 John 1:1-4. He is not as impressed by the similarities as Brown (see above): “The differences show that only a few concepts correspond⁵⁸; even the same words are used differently.”⁵⁹ Strecker points out that, among other differences, the absolute use of λόγος does not appear in I John; rather, the term τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς is used (I John 1:1) and “the incarnation is predicated in I John not of the Logos, who ‘became flesh’ and ‘tented’ among us [in the Gospel Prologue], but of ζωή.” He also finds it significant that the sequence of concepts and terms in the I John Prologue differs from that of the Logos hymn of the Gospel Prologue.⁶⁰ Strecker maintains, then, that the author of I John is not referring to the prologue of John (against Brown, Epistles, 178); what is cited is not even the pre-Johannine Logos hymn; rather, this author is

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⁶⁰ Ibid., 9, n. 8.
employing the independent language and world of ideas of the Johannine school, which is also used—even though in a sharply divergent manner—in John 1:1-14.61

In addressing the issue of the interpretation of the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, Strecker deals with the challenge to an understanding of ὁ λόγος as the person of Jesus presented by the neuter form ὃ at the beginning of each of the four relative clauses in v. 1 by asserting that ὃ, “despite its neuter form and despite the fact that it is paraphrased with the περὶ -expression in v. 1b62, in truth refers to nothing other than the Christ-event to which the author testifies.”63

While Strecker believes the proper translation of λόγος is “word,” which would allow understanding τῆς ζωῆς as an objective genitive (“word of life”),64 the appositional sense (“the word that is life”)65 and the descriptive sense (“the word that is characterized by life,’ the living or life-giving word”)66 of τῆς ζωῆς cannot be

61 Ibid., 9-10, n. 8.

62 Here Strecker cites Dodd, who, as we saw above, accounted for the apparent discrepancy between the neuter gender of ὃ and the masculine λόγος in v. 1 by asserting that the relative clauses beginning with ὃ express “the contents of the announcement,” while the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς expresses “the theme of the announcement” (Dodd, Epistles, 3). We also saw above that Dodd draws a different conclusion than Strecker does regarding the interpretation of the λόγος in v. 1b as a person.

63 Strecker, Letters, 10.

64 Here he cites BDF section 163; also I John 1:2 (ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ); p. 10, n. 12.

65 I.e.—an epexegetical genitive; see Strecker, p. 10, n. 13.

excluded from the interpretation of this phrase. The significance of this for Strecker is that

…the genitive ζωῆς does not necessarily reduce λόγος to an impersonal meaning (‘word’), but rather that the Logos can also be considered here as a person [italics added]; for life-giving power belongs not only to the proclaiming word but also to Christ as the preexistent and incarnate Logos. He finds support for his understanding of λόγος as a person in I John 1:1 in the parallels to the Prologue of the Gospel. This does not demonstrate a literary dependence between the two Prologues; rather, the two works draw on the common tradition of the Johannine school. He further asserts that to speak of the life and work of Jesus is to speak of the person of Jesus and that, for I John, the life and mission (“the cause”) and the person “are united in one.”

**Urban C. von Wahlde (2010)**

In chapter 2 of this dissertation, I gave a detailed summary of von Wahlde’s position that the Gospel of John was composed in stages and that the First Epistle of John was written after the second edition of the Gospel but before the third (that is, the final) edition. Furthermore, von Wahlde maintains that the Prologue of the Gospel was “probably a community hymn taken over by the author of the third edition, edited by him, and affixed to the Gospel.” While the composition of the Gospel Prologue itself will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 6 of this

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67 Strecker, Letters, 10.

68 Strecker, Letters, 10. Strecker cross-references Schnackenburg Epistles, 57, on p. 10, n. 16.

69 Strecker, Letters, 10-11.

dissertation, it is necessary to summarize here von Wahlde’s views on this question in a brief way in order to understand his position that the conceptualization of the λόγος in the Gospel Prologue is a further development of that found in the Epistle Prologue.  

Von Wahlde, along with many scholars, regards the Gospel Prologue itself as a composite work, consisting of an original hymn and later additions, and as literally independent of the rest of the Gospel. Though he writes that “a number of features associate the Prologue as a whole with the theology of the third edition of the Gospel—and with I John [emphasis in the original],” he also maintains that the theological vocabulary found in the Prologue but not in the rest of the Gospel suggests that “neither the original hymn nor the additions to it were composed by the author of the third edition....”  

In fact, he asserts that none of the three authors responsible for the composition of the rest of the Gospel was responsible for either the original hymn (referred to by von Wahlde as “the foundational material of the Prologue”) or for the additions.  

As we saw in chapter 2, von Wahlde proposes that, while many have described the theology of I John as “more primitive” or “less developed” than the theology of

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71 Ibid., III:30-31, 33 n. 2.

72 Ibid., II:17-18, cf. 24, 27. The seeming conflict between this statement and the one cited earlier from I:424, where von Wahlde refers to editing of the hymn by the original author, may reflect the difficulty involved in separating the content of the original hymn within the Prologue from the later additions and theorizing about the origin of each. See also von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II: 18 n. 4, where he comments that “it is not always possible to tell which [parts of the Prologue] are the work of the third author himself and which are proper to the hymn.”

73 Ibid., II:17.

74 Ibid., II:24.
the Gospel,75 the more accurate view is that the theology of I John is more developed than that of the second edition of the Gospel, and the theology of the third edition of the Gospel is more developed than that of I John.76 As one of his arguments for this position, von Wahlde compares the Gospel Prologue with the Epistle Prologue and states that while both “contain several similar ideas and expressions,” several of these ideas are more developed in the Gospel Prologue than they are in the Epistle Prologue.77 He singles out the use of the term λόγος in each Prologue as a specific example of this78 and states that while scholars have commonly regarded the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς as a verbal echo of the ὁ λόγος of the Gospel Prologue (1:1), “it is more likely (and more reasonable) that the Prologue of the Gospel represents the later (and more polished) development....”79

Before looking in detail at what von Wahlde says about the significance of the term λόγος in the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1, it should be noted that he does not address the question of what type of genitive is indicated by the words τῆς ζωῆς. We saw above that for other scholars such as Bultmann and Strecker the answer to this question is key to a proper interpretation of περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, since in the subsequent lines of the Epistle Prologue it is not the

75 Von Wahlde cites, for example, Brown, Epistles, 33-35. We saw above that this was the opinion of Houlden, Epistles, 13-14.


77 Ibid., I:383. Von Wahlde presents eight arguments for the priority of I John over the third edition of the Gospel in vol. I:376-85. The seventh of these arguments focuses on examples of the less advanced state of certain theological concepts in I John in relation to the third edition (I:381-5).

78 Ibid., I:383.

79 Ibid., III:33 n. 2.
meaning of the term λόγος ("word") that is developed but rather that of ἡ ζωή (καὶ ἡ ζωή ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἥτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα...[1 Jn 1: 2]). The question arose, then, as to whether or not what was said of ἡ ζωή applied just as much to ὁ λόγος. In other words, is “the life” that that author writes of here to be understood in an appositional or descriptive sense in relation to “the word,” so that the author is saying in effect that “the word” was “made visible” and “was with the Father,” thus indicating a usage of λόγος that is at least close to that of the Gospel Prologue? We have seen that some scholars have answered negatively, for they maintain that the presence of τῆς ζωῆς makes it unlikely that the λόγος in I John 1:1 is to be understood in the same way—that is, as a personal reference to Jesus—as in the Gospel Prologue.80 We also saw that Bultmann holds the opposite view81 and Strecker maintained that the term could embrace both ideas.82

Von Wahlde takes the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in its totality, and in his commentary on this phrase, he draws comparisons between this expression and the word ζωή itself in I John 1:1-4, on the one hand, and the use of the term λόγος in the Gospel Prologue, on the other hand, without entering into the debate over whether what is said of ἡ ζωή in the opening lines of the Epistle is predicated simultaneously

80 See, for example, Houlden, Epistles, 51.

81 See Bultmann, Epistles, p. 8 and p. 8, n. 5.

82 Strecker, Letters, 10-11.
of the λόγος. The relationship that von Wahlde sees between λόγος and ἡ ζωή will become clearer below.

In commenting on the significance of the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in the Epistle Prologue, von Wahlde points out that this precise expression is not found anywhere else in the Gospel or letters of John. At the same time, he notes that the “simple usage” of λόγος contained in the Gospel Prologue “does not appear in the Letters of John.” Still, he argues forcefully for the view that ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς and ἡ ζωή in the Epistle Prologue refer to Jesus himself rather than to the message he proclaimed. In fact, he twice uses the phrase “word of life” in apposition with Jesus’ name. Von Wahlde points out that “the ‘word of life’ is functionally a physical being that can be seen, heard, and touched (not an idea)” [emphasis added]. In ν 2, ἡ ζωή is ἐφανερώθη and ἑωράκαμεν [it], verbs that, as in verse 1, express “sense perception of a physical being...” Furthermore, von Wahlde asserts that the fact that ἡ ζωή was πρὸς τὸν πατέρα indicates that the author is referring to a “being” rather than to “a message.”

Von Wahlde then compares what is said of ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς and ἡ ζωή in the Epistle Prologue with what is said of the λόγος (“the Word”) in the Gospel Prologue. He sees the same functions that are attributed to the Word in the Gospel Prologue

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84 Ibid., III:30. What follows is a largely a summary of von Wahlde’s commentary on I John 1:1-4 in vol. III:30-35.
85 Ibid., III:32,33.
86 Ibid., III:30-31.
(where “the Word” is clearly personal) being attributed to ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς and η ζωή in the Epistle Prologue. In the Gospel Prologue, the Word is πρὸς τὸν θεόν (1:1, 2) and ἐν αὐτῷ ζωή ἦν (1:4). Von Wahlde regards the proclamation of John 1:14, Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, as “the functional equivalent of being ‘revealed’ in 1 John.” Von Wahlde further points out that, while in the Gospel the term λόγος is used as a title for Jesus only in the Prologue, in I John he is called ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς and η ζωή only in the opening verses, that is, the Prologue. Finally, he argues that “it seems unlikely that the author of I John would begin his tract by speaking about an abstract reality (either a message or ‘life,’ even divine life) rather than about the person of either the Father or the Son [emphasis in the original].”87

Nevertheless, von Wahle does not regard the λόγος of I John 1:1 as the exact equivalent of the λόγος of the Prologue of the Gospel of John. He describes its use in the Epistle Prologue as “more metaphorical in its expression than is the Logos of the Gospel...” and states that the notion of the preexistence of the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in I John is “less clearly articulated than it is in the Gospel.”88 Perhaps the key to the distinction between the usage in the two Prologues is to be found in von Wahle’s repeated use of the word “functional” to describe the manner in which ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς and η ζωή in I John refer to the person of Jesus. What is attributed to ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς functionally in I John is made explicit in regard to the λόγος of the Gospel Prologue. Thus, in accord with his view that the First Letter of John, including its

87 Ibid., III:30-31.
88 Ibid., I:383.
Prologue, was written before the Prologue (and third edition) of the Gospel, von Wahlde suggests that the use of the expression περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς in the first verse of I John, “or at least the community’s theology that lies behind this expression,” was “the catalyst for the full development of the notion of the Logos as it will appear in the Prologue of the Gospel.”89

An important factor supporting von Wahlde’s view that the concept of the λόγος is not as fully developed in the Epistle Prologue as it is in the Gospel Prologue is his understanding of the respective backgrounds, or worldviews, of the two Prologues. The worldview of I John as a whole (as well as that of the third edition of the Gospel) “is that of apocalyptic dualism similar to that of the [Sectarian Documents from Qumran] and the [Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs].” A few of the many features of I John that are identified by von Wahlde as demonstrating such a worldview are “the contrast between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Deception (4:1-6), between being children of God and being children of the devil (3:10),...between walking in the light (1:7) and walking in darkness (1:6, 2:9-11)....” Other apocalyptic features of I John include the references to “the last hour” (2:18) or “Day of Judgment” (4:17), the Antichrist (2:18, 22; 4:3), and the command to mutual love that embraces one’s “brothers” (e.g. 2:10; 3:10, 14, 16-18, 23; 4:11-12, etc.), but which is understood to exclude those who do not share the community’s faith (cf. 2 John 10-11).90

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89 Ibid., III:30-31; cf. I:383.
90 Ibid., III:18-19.
In discussing the background of the λόγος concept in the Prologue of the Gospel of John, von Wahlde observes that “[p]erhaps the most popular view today is that the Prologue was composed against the background of Jewish Wisdom literature.” However, he also summarizes the position of Thomas H. Tobin, who sees elements in the Gospel Prologue that point to the type of Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom speculation such as we find in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. Von Wahlde sees the Gospel Prologue’s description of the activity of the λόγος as exhibiting characteristics of both Jewish Wisdom speculation and apocalyptic.

Such an understanding of the different worldviews that lie behind the two Prologues supports the view that while the phrase λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1 refers to the person of Jesus rather than to a message, the λόγος concept here does not carry with it all the implications that it does in John 1:1. In the Epistle Prologue, the term λόγος is not used in an absolute sense—i.e. without qualification—as it is in the Gospel Prologue. Furthermore, there is nothing in the Epistle Prologue about all things coming into existence through the λόγος. There is no reason, then, to look for the provenance of the λόγος of I John 1:1 in schools of Greek philosophy or in Hellenistic Jewish speculation about Wisdom.

It is in his interpretation of I John 1:2 that von Wahlde’s understanding of the relationship between ὁ λόγος and ἡ ζωή becomes more explicit. Against his opponents, who have proclaimed new teaching that they claim has come to them

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92 Ibid., II:26-27.
from the Spirit, the author seeks to “anchor all else that [he] has to communicate in the Letter” by recalling what “was from the beginning” and was revealed in the historical ministry of Jesus whom they have seen and touched (v 1). This Jesus, as ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς “embodied this life” that, as v 2 declares, “was revealed” and “is eternal” and was “in the presence of the Father,” phrases by which the author indicates the preexistence of Jesus.

It is noteworthy as well that, if von Wahlde is correct regarding the chronology of the compositional history of the Gospel and Letters of John, it is here in the Prologue of the First Epistle of John that the notion of the preexistence of Jesus—that is, his divine existence prior to becoming human—appears in the Johannine literature for the first time.

Conclusion to the Analysis of the Term Λόγος

in the First Letter of John (1:1-4)

The precise meaning of λόγος in the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς in the first verse of I John is indeed difficult to determine. The tangled grammar accounts for much of that difficulty.

We have seen that περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς interrupts the sequence of clauses beginning with ὃ, a neuter relative pronoun that does not seem to refer to either the masculine λόγος or the feminine ζωή and that, as the author continues in v 2, it is the ζωή that is said to have been revealed and seen and that was eternally with the

93 Ibid., III:29.
95 Ibid., III:34.
Father. What precisely is it, then, that the author and his fellow witnesses have heard and seen with their eyes and touched with their hands? Is it the λόγος or the ζωή, and, whichever the case, does the noun refer to the message of Jesus or to Jesus himself?

I concur with von Wahlde that the fact that the author speaks of himself and his fellow witnesses as having seen with their eyes and touched with their hands the object in question is a strong indication that this object must have been a physical being. A message cannot be seen with the eyes or touched with the hands, nor does it make sense to speak of an impersonal message as having been “eternally with the Father.” If we do not insist on identifying with too much precision which type of genitive τῆς ζωῆς is (objective, appositional, or descriptive) and allow, as Strecker does, for the possibility that none of the three types need be excluded, we can consider ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς as a whole, that is, as a single object. Furthermore, as part II of this chapter will demonstrate further, the Epistle author’s style of writing is not characterized by exactitude and clarity.

For these reasons, I am persuaded that the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς is Jesus himself. Nevertheless, while the preexistence of the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς is indicated by verse 2, we do not see the term λόγος employed in the Epistle Prologue in the absolute sense that it is in the Gospel Prologue. Furthermore, while it is stated in the Gospel Prologue that everything came into existence in the λόγος (1:3), we do not find reference to this notion in the Epistle Prologue. Since, in agreement with von Wahlde, I am taking the position in this dissertation that I John was composed before the final edition of the Gospel, and that the Gospel Prologue was prefixed at
the time of the formation of that final edition, it is my view that in I John 1:1 we see that the author and his community had come to a notion of Jesus as the embodiment of the gospel message he preached, the gospel which leads to eternal life, but had not yet arrived at the point at which the term λόγος carried with it all the implications, involving possible connections with schools of Greek philosophical thought and/or the Jewish wisdom tradition, that scholars have seen in its use in the Gospel Prologue.

**The Use of Λόγος in the Remainder of the First Letter of John**

The Situation Addressed by 1 John

Before we examine the individual instances of the use of the term λόγος in the First Epistle of John apart from the Prologue (I John 1:1-4), it will be helpful to recall the general context of the writing of the Epistle, as scholars have reconstructed it from the words of the Epistle itself. The author of I John writes to members of his own community, that is, those who remained following the departure of certain schismatics, to affirm what he sees as the authentic interpretation of the community's tradition against the false claims of those who “went out from us...” (2:19). Scholarly reconstructions of the views of those who had separated from the author's community vary, of course. Here I can only attempt to summarize the views of a few prominent Johannine scholars, but I believe they are representative of the most common views.

Schnackenburg refers to the Epistle author's opponents as “the heretical teachers,” and understands their errors to have been both christological (as can be seen from the author's statements in I John 2:22 and 4:2-3) and ethical (as can be
seen from the author’s statements in, for example, 1:5-2:11). These errors demonstrate “a gnostic tendency,” but the doctrines of the “heretical teachers” differ in many ways from other heresies of the time. However, the heretics opposed by I John had certain views in common with several of those other movements: “They all play down the historic person of Jesus Christ as the unique and true savior. They all deny the way of salvation through his flesh and blood.” Schnackenburg states, nevertheless, that it is difficult to obtain a precise picture of the christology of the Epistle author’s opponents.

Georg Strecker asserts, contrary to Schnackenburg, that the “false teachers” opposed by the Epistle author were docetists who, as I John 2:22 shows, “rejected the identification of Jesus with the Christ.” I John 4:2-3 demonstrates that “the false teachers do not confess that ‘Jesus Christ has come in the flesh’ (Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα).” They drew “a sharp distinction” between the human Jesus of Nazareth who suffered and died, on the one hand, and the heavenly Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, they denied the doctrine of the incarnation.

Brown differs with Strecker on this point. The secessionists (as Brown calls them) did not deny the incarnation of the preexistent Son of God. On the contrary,

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97 Ibid., 18.
98 Ibid., 23.
99 Ibid., 23.
100 Ibid., 20-21.
101 Strecker, *Johannine Letters*, 69-76; see especially 70-71.
acceptance of this doctrine “bears within itself the possibility of relativizing the importance of Jesus’ earthly life.”

The secessionists, Brown suggests, “admitted the reality of Jesus’ humanity, but refused to acknowledge that his being in the flesh was essential to the picture of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.” They did not see the human life of Jesus in the flesh, nor his death by crucifixion, as salvific, at least not to the degree that the author of I John insists.

From the Epistle author’s statement that Jesus came “not in water only, but in water and in blood (I John 5:6),” Brown suggests that, based on their interpretation of elements in the tradition found in the Gospel of John, the secessionists might have “deemphasize[d] the crucifixion as a salvific ‘coming’ and…regard[ed] it simply as a continuation of that revelation of the glory of the preexistent [one?] which began through the Baptist’s baptizing with water ([Gospel of John] 1:14, 31).”

While von Wahlde shares Brown’s view that the opponents (as von Wahlde terms them) of the author of I John did not deny that Jesus was truly human but rather denied the significance of what Jesus did in the flesh, he differs from Brown on several points. We must recall that while Brown regarded the opposing views of the author’s community and the opponents as resulting from differing interpretations of the tradition found in the Gospel of John, von Wahlde sees these differing views as

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102 Brown, Epistles, 75.

103 Ibid., 76.

104 Ibid., 77-79.
“based on the community’s Gospel as it appeared in what [von Wahlde has] termed its ‘second edition.’”

Von Wahlde maintains that the opponents believed that it was through the ministry of Jesus that God had fulfilled his promises, found in various Old Testament passages, of “the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit,” and that Jesus not only announced but “embodied these promises.” Nevertheless, once Jesus had played this role, his task was completed. Now that they possessed the Spirit and the prerogatives the Spirit bestowed, there was no further role for Jesus or his message.

The group represented by the Epistle author “also believed that the outpouring of the Spirit had been accomplished through the ministry of Jesus....[but Jesus’] role was permanent and essential and inextricably linked to the role of the Spirit.” Therefore, the author agreed with his opponents on many points, making his task “a difficult one.” Von Wahlde maintains that it is because the author both shared many of the opponents’ views yet sought to correct their errors that “it has been so difficult to understand their respective positions.”

The First Epistle of John is difficult to interpret throughout. A unifying element, however, is that, as von Wahlde asserts, “every claim made by the opponents is tested in terms of correct belief and in terms of mutual love [or “ethics”] somewhere within I John.” At the same time, these claims and the author’s refutation of the

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106 Ibid., III:345.

107 Ibid., III:345-6.
opponents’ right to make them are “scattered so thoroughly” that it makes the reader’s task of interpretation a challenging one.\textsuperscript{108} As we shall see, Von Wahlde’s insistence that there are two essential issues in the conflict which led to the split within the community, namely, “correct belief and correct conduct,”\textsuperscript{109} will prove critical to his position that there are two commandments being referred to by the author of I John, one dealing with proper belief in Jesus and the abiding significance of his words, and the other with command to “love one another.” Most often, commentators recognize only the latter as a commandment within the Gospel and Letters of John.

The foregoing review of the situation that led to the composition of the First Epistle of John should prove helpful in understanding the debates surrounding the meaning of λόγος in the epistle apart from the Prologue, especially in regard to its use in I John 2:5 and 7. Those debates are complex, hampered not only by the factors referred to above but also by the fact that, as we saw in our discussion of I John 1:1-4, “the epistolary author is singularly inept in constructing clear sentences....”\textsuperscript{110} At times, our investigation may seem to stray far from the issue of the author’s use of the term λόγος, but I have considered it necessary in order to understand the relevant arguments.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., III:22.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., III:373.

\textsuperscript{110} Brown, Epistles, 453.
The Analysis of Λόγος in 1 John Outside the Prologue

In what follows, I will examine each of the instances of λόγος outside of 1:1-4, summarizing the views of major commentators. I will conclude with my own observations on the texts containing λόγος in 1 John.

Λόγος in 1 John 1:10

ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

Here the author addresses one of the claims made by his opponents, namely, the claim that they “have not sinned.” The author has previously addressed this claim in v 8, stating that ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

C. H. Dodd (1946)

Dodd writes that the Epistle author is saying that by denying that we have sinned, we not only deceive ourselves (v 8), but are guilty of “a presumptuous denial of the truth of the Gospel; for in proclaiming God to be a faithful, just, and forgiving God, [the Gospel] declares man to be a sinful creature needing forgiveness.” He interprets the clause ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν to mean: “[W]e have heard the Gospel, and thought we believed it; but we have not inwardly digested it.”111 Dodd, then, considers the λόγος to be the Gospel, as was the case with his interpretation of the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς of I John 1:1.

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111 Dodd, Epistles, 23.
Rudolf Bultmann (1967)

Bultmann interprets the meaning of λόγος here more broadly. He points out that the statement ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν "corresponds to ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν of v 8. God’s word is indeed the truth (as J[oh]n 17:17 expressly says)."

Bultmann then observes:

If, however, truth is reality...then it belongs to God’s reality that he is a God who bestows forgiveness, and that means, in turn, that he is a God who addresses man, for forgiveness is bestowed by the word—or, more broadly formulated, by revelation.\(^{112}\)

Though Bultmann goes on to state that this bestowal of forgiveness through the word or revelation “has occurred in Jesus, and therefore it can also be said of him who does not believe in the Son of God, that he makes God a liar (5:10),”\(^{113}\) he clearly states as well that the “λόγος of v 10 is, of course, not the preexistent Logos....”\(^{114}\)

Raymond Brown (1982)

Brown also comments that the λόγος of I John 1:10 is not the personified λόγος of the Prologue of John’s Gospel.\(^{115}\) In his commentary on what λόγος in the present verse does mean, he provides numerous examples from the Gospel of John to demonstrate that:

[The λόγος] is the divine revelation spoken by Jesus—a word that remains God’s word: “The word that you hear is not my own but

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\(^{112}\) Bultmann, *Johannine Epistles*, 22.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 22, n. 33.

\(^{115}\) Brown, *Epistles*, 212.
comes from the Father who sent me” (Jn 14:24). People are given this
divine word by Jesus (17:14); they hear the word (5:24); they believe
the word (4:50) or believe in Jesus through God’s word (17:20); they
keep the word (8:51-52; 14:23; 15:20; 17:6); they remember the
word (15:20); they remain in the word (8:31) and the word remains
in them (5:38; I Jn 2:14); and they are cleansed by the word (15:3).
On the other hand, the Johannine opponents cannot hear the word
(8:43); they are divided over it (10:19); they find it hard (6:60); they
question its meaning (7:36); it finds no place in them (8:37); they do
not keep it (14:24); and they are judged by it (12:48).\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{Rudolf Schnackenburg (7th edition, 1984)}

Schnackenburg’s comments on the λόγος of I John 1:10 are especially intriguing,
given the topic of this dissertation as a whole:

The “word of God” as it was given shape in revelation is presented
here as a substantial reality. This seems to be an earlier stage in the
personification (hardly a direct hypostatizing) of the word of God in
late Judaism. The next point of contact for this metaphor is found in
many of the sayings of Jesus in \cite{Johannine_Epistles}. The word of
God is not only the expression of his thoughts; it is the bearer of and
witness to the divine Spirit.\textsuperscript{117}

In the following sentence, however, Schnackenburg states clearly: “This has
nothing to do with the idea of the Logos as representing the preexistent Son of God
(cf. 1:1).”\textsuperscript{118}

\textbf{A Disputed Question: Λόγος in I John 2:5, 7}

The term λόγος appears in I John 2:5 and 7, within a section of the Epistle in
which the author writes of “keeping his [i.e. –God’s]\textsuperscript{119} commandments” (plural: vv 3,

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 212-13.

\textsuperscript{117} Schnackenburg, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, 84. In a footnote here, n. 59, Schnackenburg cites John 3:34;

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 84.

\textsuperscript{119} When one seeks to interpret the First Epistle of John, it is often difficult to know if the antecedent
of the masculine pronoun is God the Father or Jesus. Here I will follow Raymond E. Brown and U. C.
4) or of "the commandment" (singular: vv 7, 8). I have provided the text of I John 2:3-11 below because many commentators regard these verses as comprising a distinct unit. According to Brown, the theme of "commandment" binds these verses together, "as does also the thrice repeated participial pattern, 'The person who claims...'." In this section, the author is refuting three of the claims made by his opponents. The first is the assertion "Ἔγνωκα αὐτόν ("I have known him") in v 4. The second is the claim ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν ("to abide in him") in v 6. The third is ἐν τῷ φωτὶ ἐἶναι ("to be in the light") in v 9. The author does not deny the possibility that such claims can be true, for they are in keeping with ideas found in the Gospel of John or, according to von Wahlde, in the second edition of the Gospel of John, but he disputes his opponents' right to make such claims by asserting throughout vv 3-11 that if the person making them were speaking truthfully, he would keep God's ἐντολή/ἐντολαί ("commandment[s"] or λόγος ("word").

von Wahlde, who are in agreement that the antecedent for the masculine pronouns in the phrases γινώσκειν αὐτόν (vv 3, 4), τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ (vv 3, 4) τηρεῖν αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον (v 5), and εἶναι or μένειν ἐν αὐτῷ (vv 5, 6) is God. Brown asserts, "The problem that the author is dealing with is how to know the God who is light, not how to know Christ. All the secessionist-inspired claims in 1:5-2:11 concern God." Epistles, 249. Von Wahlde explains that in order to refute his opponents ("secessionists") on their own ground, the Epistle author attributes to God the Father those same characteristics that the authors of the second and third editions attribute to Jesus, since the opponents profess faith in God the Father and in the role of the Spirit but reject a permanent significance for Jesus (see chapter 2 of this dissertation). Thus, among the many examples of this that von Wahlde provides, we find that "[i]n I John, 'the commandments' are the commandments of God (2:3, 4; 3:22-24; 4:21; 5:2-3; 2 John 4, 6), rather than the commandments of Jesus ([Gospel of John] 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12 [all 3E[dition]]) as they are in the Gospel." Gospel and Letters, III: 20-21.

120 R. Brown, Epistles, 277.

121 See Brown, Epistles, 79-80.


The question arises: To which commandment or commandments is the author referring in I John 2:3-11? Closely connected to this question is the issue we are concerned with in this section: To what precisely does the term λόγος refer in vv 5 and 7? Is it simply a synonym for ἐντολὴ/ἐντολαί, or is its significance more complex? When the author writes in v 7: ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιά ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε (“The old commandment is the word that you heard”), is he referring to the commandment given by Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper, namely, “Love one another” (John 13:34-5; 15:12, 17)?

According to von Wahlde, I John 2:3-11 is a “complicated passage,” especially because

...the author interweaves his discussion of commandment with a discussion of three claims [mentioned above] regarding the possession of eschatological gifts of the Spirit. Because of this, the phrasing is awkward and confusing and thus could make it appear that “word” is simply a synonym for “commandment” (dabar). Some argue that the author is speaking only about the love commandment.124

Von Wahlde argues, however, that there are two commandments at issue in this passage, and that the term λόγος in vv 5 and 7 is a reference, not to the command to mutual love within the community, but to the command to remain faithful to the word of God as it has come to the disciples through Jesus.125

Von Wahlde’s view is complex and involves an analysis of all the texts dealing with ἐντολὴ/ἐντολαί, not only in I John, but also in II John and in the third edition of

the gospel. As a result, that discussion impinges not only on the present text but also on the discussion of those various other texts in I John as well as on texts in II John and in the third edition of the gospel. In order to make this discussion as easy as possible for the reader, I will present the detailed analysis of all the commandment texts in an Excursus and then present summaries of the analysis of the relevant texts at the appropriate places here and in the following chapter.

Since von Wahlde, who states that his commentary on the Letters of John was written primarily in dialogue “with the watershed commentary of R. E. Brown in 1982” and with publications since then,126 opposes Brown on so many points here, in my review of scholarship, I will present the views of Bultmann, Schnackenburg and Strecker first and reserve the discussion of Brown to the end in order to make the comparison between Brown and von Wahlde clearer.

Λόγος in I John 2:3-11

3Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. 4ὁ λέγων ὅτι Ἔγνωκα αὐτόν, καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἐστίν, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἁλθεια οὐκ ἔστιν: 5δὸς δ' ἂν τηρῆ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ἁλθθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἁγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἔσμεν: 6ὁ λέγων ὑπέμενεν ὡς ἐκεῖνος περιπατήσετε καὶ αὐτὸς ὡς ἐγερθεὶς περιπατεῖτε. 7Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολήν καὶνήν γράφω ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ἐντολήν παλαιὰν ἣν εἴχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς: ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιά ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε. 8πάλιν ἐντολήν καὶνήν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὅ ἐστιν ἁλθθής ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἡλθινὸν ἠδη φαίνετι. 9ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστιν ἐως ἄρτι. 10ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν: 11ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστιν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, καὶ οὐκ ὁδεῖν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.
When we begin to investigate the meaning of the term λόγος in 2:5, 7, it would seem evident at first that it is simply a synonym for ἡ ἐντολή (“commandment”) or its plural ἐντολαί, given the closeness of the phrase “keep his word” to “keep his commandments” (vv 3, 4) and especially given the statement in v 7, which seems to equate the two. This is the position of Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and Strecker.

**Rudolf Bultmann (1967)**

In his commentary on I John 2:5, Bultmann comments upon the use of τὸν λόγον τηρεῖν (“to keep [his] word”) in place of τὰς ἐντολὰς τηρεῖν (“to keep [his] commandments”) in the previous verse, as well as upon the appearance of ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται (“in him the love of God is perfected”) in v 5 rather than ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἔστιν [“the truth is in him”], which is what one would expect after the author has stated in v 4 that ἡ ἀλήθεια is not in the one who does not keep God’s commandments. After making these observations, Bultmann states: “It is easily understandable that λόγος (‘word’) replaces ἐντολαί (‘commandments’), since God’s ‘word’ is the revelation of his reality and thereby also of his demand (his ‘commandments’) and of his forgiveness as well.” The clause ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται demonstrates that “God’s reality and his love are identical, as stated in 4:8, 16: ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν (‘God is love’).” For Bultmann, this shows that the phrase ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ (“the love of God”) means “God’s love for men” rather than “[humanity’s] love for God”; therefore, it is God’s love which “is perfected” in the one who keeps God’s word. In this way, love for one’s brother, which is given
and perfected as part of God’s love, “is brought to fulfillment, and this is true, of 
course, only when it is characterized by ‘keeping his word.’”\(^{127}\)

Bultmann sees v 7 as an explanation of vv 3-6 and a preparation for vv 9-11. The 
latter set of verses concerns love versus hatred of one’s brother, and it is clear that 
Bultmann considers the commandment to “love one another” to be the 
commandment, or word, spoken of in v 7:

The fact that the author now speaks of “commandment” in the 
singular [as opposed to the plural in vv 3 and 4] is probably 
occaisioned by the fact that he has a traditional word in mind to which 
he refers in vss 7f. There is no material difference, for the 
“commandments” are included in the “commandment” to love, as the 
interchange of plural and singular in 3:22-24; 2 John 4-6 shows.\(^{128}\)

In a footnote here, Bultmann approvingly cites Herbert Braun: “…‘the 
commandments’ are ‘the commandment,’ ‘the word.’”\(^{129}\)

Furthermore, in his commentary on the previous verse (v 6), Bultmann states 
explicitly that the reference in that verse to walking as Jesus walked “is preparation 
for the fact that the commandments are summed up in the one commandment, the 
commandment to love, as vss 7-11 immediately indicate.”\(^{130}\)


\(^{128}\) Ibid., 26-7.


In the same vein as Bultmann, Schnackenburg, in his exegesis on the phrase “obeys his [God’s] word” in 1 John 2:5, writes that “[t]he divine commandments are now defined and summarized as God’s word.” In a footnote he remarks that “Λόγος is also a wider concept than ἐντολαὶ, insofar as it includes the word of revelation laid hold upon in faith,” but Schnackenburg’s explanation of this “word of revelation” does not refer to proper faith in Jesus. Rather, God’s word, is “a revelation of [God’s] will,” which requires obedience on the part of the believer. This obedience to the will of God, revealed in Jesus, “is a sign that one bears the divine love in oneself.” Schnackenburg mentions both truth and love as gifts granted to the believer, which “must be manifested in faith and in keeping the commandments”; however, there is no indication that by “truth” and “faith” he means correct belief in Jesus. Though in his commentary on the following verse, which speaks of the obligation to “walk as [Christ] walked,” Schnackenburg refers to “the teaching of Christ himself,” he equates this teaching with “the Christian’s code of conduct.” Christ teaches obedience to God not only in word but by example.

When commenting on vv 7-8, Schnackenburg looks ahead to the verses that follow and their relation to vv 7-8:

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131 Schnackenburg, Epistles, 97.

132 Ibid., 97, n. 117. Schnackenburg cross-references John 8:51; 14:23; 15:20; 17:6; Revelation 3:8, 10, verses in which Jesus speaks of keeping his λόγος, with the exception of 17:6, where he speaks of the fact that the disciples have kept the Father’s λόγος.

133 Ibid., 97-98.

134 Ibid., 99.
There is one commandment in particular that is the acid test of our obedience to [God]: the command to love brothers and sisters (vv. 9-11)....But before he gets to the point, the author inserts a section (vv 7-8) to show that this commandment is both old and new [emphasis added].

It is clear, then, that Schnackenburg regards the commandment referred to in v 7 as the command to mutual love. From his statement in his comments on 2:9, “At last we are told what the commandment is—the love of brothers and sisters,” we can see that Schnackenburg considers this to be the commandment referred to throughout the section of I John that he is interpreting, 2:3-11.

**Georg Strecker (1989)**

In Part 1 of this chapter, we saw that in the interpretation of Georg Strecker, the λόγος in the phrase λόγος τῆς ζωῆς of I John 1:1 is not necessarily impersonal; rather, “the Logos can also be considered here as a person; for life-giving power belongs not only to the proclaiming word but also to Christ as the preexistent and incarnate Logos.” In I John, he maintains, “the cause” of Jesus and the person of Jesus “are united in one.” Similarly, his interpretation of the ἐντολὴ/ἐντολαὶ in I John allows for more than one meaning, though these meanings are closely interrelated. In Strecker’s understanding, the commandment or commandments in the epistle include both the ethical command to “love one another” and proper christological belief. However, he clearly places the stress on the “love commandment,” for which proper belief concerning Jesus is the root.

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135 Ibid., 103-4.

136 Ibid., 107.

In his commentary on I John 2:5, Strecker refers to “the substitution of αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον” for the ἐντολάς of v 3 and explicitly states, “The ‘word’ is thus the same as the ‘commandments.’” In fact, in an excursus on the word ἐντολή in the Johannine corpus, he writes:

“Keeping the commandments” is to be equated, both in the Fourth Gospel and in the Johannine Letters, with “keeping the word” or “keeping the words.” Λόγος and ἐντολή are interchangeable (I John 2:4-5), since “the old commandment is the word that you have heard” (2:7) [emphasis added].

His explanation of what the author means by “keeping God’s commandments” (or “keeping God’s word”), however, includes both ethical behavior and faith in the Son:

...it is clear that the injunction to keep God’s commandments is not exhausted within the sphere of ethics, but remains open to the eschatological claim that, although it includes the ethical commandment, demands still more: it requires faith in the sending of the Son (cf. 5:4-5) and rests on the “word of life” (1:1b) [which for Strecker, as we reviewed above, can refer both to the “cause” and the person of Jesus]. In anyone who fulfills this claim, that is, by trusting in the “word of life,” the ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ has “truly” reached its goal.

From this it appears that Strecker believes there is a single injunction, namely, “to keep God’s commandments,” and that this injunction involves an “eschatological claim” that goes beyond the requirements of the ethical commandment, which is part of that claim, to require faith in Jesus as the Son sent by the Father. However, in saying that this injunction “remains open to the eschatological claim” that

138 Ibid., 41.
139 Ibid., 49.
140 Ibid., 41.
demands proper Christological belief, Strecker does not explicitly identify this eschatological claim as the object of the injunction.

In his discussion of 2:7, Strecker clearly understands ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιά which the community has had ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς and which is ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε as the commandment to “love one another.” In the aforementioned excursus on the meaning of ἐντολὴ in the Johannine corpus, he writes that in the Gospel and Letters of John, “…ἐντολὴ is never identified with the Mosaic Torah….Moreover, the use of the plural ἐντολαὶ does not refer to the OT Jewish law; instead, the ἐντολαὶ are emanations of the one ἐντολὴ.”

Thus, while his view on the supposed relationship between ἐντολὴ/ἐντολαὶ and the laws of Moses in the Johannine writings is the same as von Wahlde’s and opposed to Brown’s, Strecker maintains, like Brown and unlike von Wahlde, that there is one commandment in the tradition, the love commandment:

In the Fourth Gospel this concept occurs only in Jesus’ self-proclamation, as the Father’s instruction [singular] to the Son (John 10:18; 12:49-50; 15:10) and as Christ’s commandment [singular] to the disciples (John 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12); keeping the ἐντολαὶ [plural] appears as the sign of love for Jesus. This commandment [singular] is also at the heart of the Johannine Letters. On the basis of the observation that the plural ἐντολαὶ is always followed by the singular ἐντολὴ, or vice-versa (1 John 2:3-4, 7-8; 3:22-24; 4:20-5:3), one can clearly see that the love commandment is the true content of the ἐντολαὶ [emphasis added].

Nevertheless, Strecker recognizes the importance for the Gospel of John and I John of proper christological faith. He writes that in I John, “The commandment of

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141 Ibid., 48.

142 Ibid., 48.
love for the sisters and brothers can also be explained by saying ‘that we should believe in the name of [God’s] Son Jesus Christ’ (I John 3:23) [emphasis added],” since the unity of the Johannine community is expressed both in loving action and proper “creedal confession.”  In both writings “the christological roots of the love commandment are clear.” Mutual love within the community flows from “the love of God, who ‘sent [God’s] only Son into the world so that we might live through him’ (I John 4:9).” This christological affirmation leads to the commandment to love one another, as found in I John 4:19: “We love [or: let us love] because [God] first loved us.” In other words, love for one’s brothers and sisters is grounded in the love God has shown for us in sending his Son Jesus Christ.

Strecker most clearly expresses the Johannine view of the essential interrelationship of proper faith in Jesus and the commandment to love one’s brothers and sisters in his commentary on I John 2:6, which concerns “walk[ing] just as [Jesus] walked.” Regarding the expression περιπατεῖν itself, Strecker remarks that the author applies it to both Jesus and the Johannine Christians “in order to emphasize their mutual relationship....” This indicates that “it is the duty of every individual who believes in Christ to live as Jesus himself lived.” The meaning of περιπατεῖν “is determined by a norm that bestows on [the verb] a parenetical and ethical sense.” This norm is the commandment to mutual love, for “as early as 2 and

143 Ibid., 48.

144 Ibid., 49. The words in brackets are included in Linda M. Maloney’s English translation of Strecker’s German original. See p. xxvii.

145 Ibid., 45.
3 John [which Strecker believes to have been written by “the presbyter” before the Johannine school tradition produced the Gospel and I John\textsuperscript{146}], ‘walking in truth’ is associated with a commandment that determines this behavior, namely, the commandment of ἀγάπη (2 John 4, 6; 3 John 3-4).”\textsuperscript{147}

It is significant for our purposes that in his commentary on II John 4-6, Strecker equates the περιπατεῖν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ of v 4 with the περιπατεῖν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ of v 6: “Walking in truth is, concretely, walking according to God’s commandments. The community’s ethical way of life is fulfilled in obedience to the Father’s ἐντολή,” which, according to Strecker, is the ἀγάπη commandment.\textsuperscript{148}

Strecker puts all of this together in a clear statement in which he explicitly equates “walking in the truth” in v 4 with the commandment to mutual love:

The commandment “from the beginning” [vv 5, 6] leads to a division between the community and false teaching ([2 John] vv 10-11). The interpretation of the commandment’s content is shaped in terms of a broad parallelism: “Having received the commandment from the Father” means “walking in the truth” (v 4), that is, walking “according to [God’s] commandments,” namely, in love, and “abiding in the teaching of Christ” (v. 9), which means “loving one another” (v. 5b) [emphasis added].\textsuperscript{149}

Strecker notes that the fourth evangelist’s use of the verb περιπατεῖν is marked by “the dialectic of light and darkness, in which the disciples are represented as περιπατοῦντες...,” as can be seen in John 8:12, where Jesus uses the term in

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\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., xlii.

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 46.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 228.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 229.
speaking about the one who follows him (ἀκολουθεῖν), and in 12:35. “Thus περιπατεῖν is active human behavior in a particular realm, especially in the sphere of light or of darkness.”150 Furthermore, in John 13:34-35, in which Jesus gives the new commandment to the disciples to love one another as he has loved them, in I John 1:6-7, in which the epistolary author contrasts walking in darkness with walking in the light, and in I John 2:11, in which the author states that the one hating his brother walks in darkness, “the dialectic of walking in the light or in darkness is tied in the closest possible manner to the alternative ‘fulfilling the love commandment’ or ‘bringing about hatred’ toward the brothers and sisters.”151

Strecker makes the general comment that in the Johannine school tradition there is no question of choosing between faith and love. Though the object of πιστεύειν (“to believe”) in I John is belief in Jesus as “‘the Christ [who] has been born of God’ (I John 5:1a, 5), and eternal life is promised to those who believe (I John 5:10-13; cf. John 3:15),” Strecker states that “the parallel usage of πιστεύειν and ἀγάπα (I John 3:23; 5:1a, b) and of πίστις and ἀγάπη (5:3-4) shows that the two cannot be separated.” The one who believes in the Son demonstrates love for God and observes the commandments, “especially the commandment of ἀγάπη (2:5).” Thus Strecker specifically identifies the commandment of 2:5 to be the love commandment.152 Recall, however, that it is not the term ἐντολή that appears in

150 Ibid., 45; cf. 45, n. 47.
151 Ibid., 46.
152 Ibid., 46.
this verse but λόγος. As we saw above, for Strecker “[t]he ‘word’ is...the same as the ‘commandments.’”

One could not keep the commandment to “love one another” without “stand[ing] within the eschatological context of faith in the sending of the Son....” While Strecker recognizes the necessity of distinguishing between faith and love, “in the Johannine conception these two cannot be divorced.” It is clear, then, that for Strecker, there is one commandment in the Johannine tradition with two inseparable objects. This is especially clear in his comment regarding I John 3:23, in which he states, “The objects of the ἐντολὴ are πιστεύειν and ἀγαπᾶν, or better, the unity of faith and love.”

*Raymond Brown (1982)*

Brown, in commenting on the use of “commandment(s)” in the Gospel of John and in I and II John, writes that “λόγος ('word') ...is virtually interchangeable with ἐντολὴ, ‘commandment,’ in some of the usage just discussed.” What is the commandment or commandments at issue, according to Brown? In answering this question, Brown begins with the use of the term “commandment(s)” in the Gospel of John, since, as we saw in chapter 1 of this dissertation, he believes the composition of the body of the Gospel, or at least the tradition behind it, had taken shape before

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153 Ibid., 41.

154 Ibid., 46.

155 Ibid., 46, n. 50.

the writing of the First Epistle of John.\textsuperscript{157} Indeed, he includes the attribution of a commandment or commandments to Jesus in the Gospel (13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12) and to God in I John (2:3-4; 3:22-24; 4:21; 5:2-3; cf. II John 4-6) in a list of the differences in thought between the Gospel and the Epistle and refers back to this list in its entirety as evidence that I John constitutes “a reaction to an overemphasis on high Christology....[emphasis in the original].”\textsuperscript{158} In the Gospel, then, Jesus receives “a command [note the singular form] from his Father” concerning “his words, deeds, and death....This ‘commandment’ is, in turn, the prototype for Jesus’ commandment(s) to his disciples. Specifically he commands them to love one another ‘as I have loved you,’...[13:34; 15:12; emphasis added].”\textsuperscript{159} For Brown, the fact that the plural of the word “commandment” is sometimes used by the evangelist “does not mean that Jesus gives to his disciples a number of specific commandments (not recorded in [the] Gospel of John); rather the plural gives a comprehensive force to the commandment to love [emphasis added].”\textsuperscript{160} In Brown’s view, this commandment to love concerns “a whole way of life,” indicating how Christians are to relate to each other and to Jesus. “Such a way of life would include keeping the

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 35.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 35. We saw in chapter 2 of this dissertation that von Wahlde sees the very same feature—the attribution of actions or characteristics to God in I John and to Jesus in the Gospels—as evidence that the composition of I John preceded the third, which is to say final, edition of the Gospel, Gospel and Letters, I:383. The Gospel verses cited by Brown that attribute to Jesus the giving of the commandment(s) to the disciples—i.e. 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12—are all identified as third edition by von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:20-21.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 251.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 251.
Ten Commandments,” though Brown acknowledges that the Gospel never explicitly states this.\textsuperscript{161}

Brown observes that the First and Second Epistles of John also contain references to “a commandment in the singular” and states that “in I John 2:7-8 (implicitly) and in 4:21 and II John 5-6 it is a commandment to love one another (one’s brother) just as in [the] G[ospel of] John.”\textsuperscript{162}

Brown explains that the expression “keeping commandments” is an idiom that consists of the verb τηρεῖν with the plural form ἐντολὰς. We find this idiom four times in the Gospel of John (14:15, 21; 15:10 [twice]) and five times in the First Epistle of John (2:3, 4; 3:22, 24; 5:3).\textsuperscript{163} The significance of this idiom for our purposes is its similarity to the phrase “to keep the word” (τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον), a similarity which is one of the reasons that Brown makes the comment, cited above, that “λόγος ('word') ...is virtually interchangeable with ἐντολή, 'commandment,'...”\textsuperscript{164} In the Gospel, we find eight instances of some form of τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον: Jesus keeps the λόγος of the Father (8:55); the disciples keep the λόγος of Jesus (8:51, 52; 14:23; 14:24 [the plural τοὺς λόγους μου in this case]; 15:20); the disciples have kept the λόγος of God (17:6); and those who kept the λόγος of Jesus will keep that of the disciples (15:20). Brown calls special attention to John 14:21-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{161}Ibid., 251.
  \item \textsuperscript{162}Ibid., 251.
  \item \textsuperscript{163}Ibid., 251.
  \item \textsuperscript{164}Ibid., 252.
\end{itemize}
24, a passage in which Jesus uses both the expressions τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς and τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον in speaking of what the one who loves him will do:

21ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολάς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτὰς ἐκεῖνος ἔστιν ο ἁγαπῶν με: ο δὲ ἁγαπῶν με ἁγαπηθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός μου, κάγω ἁγαπήσω αὐτὸν καὶ ἡμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἐμαυτόν. 22Δέχεται αὐτῷ Ἰουδᾶς, οὐχ ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, Κύριε, [καὶ] τί γέγονεν ὅτι ἡμῖν μέλλεις ἐμφανίζειν σεαυτόν καὶ οὐχί τῷ κόσμῳ; 23ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐάν τις ἁγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει, καὶ ὁ πατὴρ μου ἁγαπήσει αὐτόν, καὶ πρὸς αὐτόν ἐλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ’ αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα. 24ὁ μὴ ἁγαπῶν με τοὺς λόγους μου οὐ τηρεῖ: καὶ ὁ λόγος ὃν ἀκούετε οὐκ ἐστίν ἐμὸς ἀλλὰ τοῦ πέμψαντός με πατρός. 165

The expression τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον appears once in the First Epistle of John, in 2:5, one of the two instances of λόγος under consideration here. Brown points out that the use of the phrase τηρεῖν αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον in v 5 follows two references to τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ (“keeping his commandments”) in vv 3-4. Furthermore, as we have seen, in v 7 the author writes: ἡ ἐντολή ἡ παλαιὰ ἔστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἕκούσατε.

For Brown,

[s]uch predication, confirming the interchangeability of the terms [i.e. of ὁ λόγος and ἡ ἐντολή], makes sense if we remember that in the O[ld] T[estament] (Hebrew and Greek) the technical name for the Ten Commandments was the “Ten Words” (Decalogue): Exod 20:1; 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4. Whereas the Hebrew of Deut 17:19 refers to a whole law code as “all the words of this Law,” the LXX reads “all these commandments”; and in both languages Ezra’s law code is called “the words of the commandments of the Lord” (Ezra 7:11). 166

In his notes on v 5a, Brown states unequivocally: “...I find no difference between ‘His word’ [in v 5a] and ‘His commandments’ of 2:3b, 4b....in this context it makes perfect sense if ‘word’ means God’s ethical demands, i.e., His commandments.”

165 See Brown, Epistles, 252.

166 Brown, Epistles, 252.
again points to the parallel in the Gospel of John between 14:21 (ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολὰς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτὰς) and 14:23 (τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει) as demonstrating the accuracy of this view.\footnote{Ibid., 254.}

Brown observes that in I John 2:4, the author states that “there is no truth” in the person who does not keep God’s commandments. In 2:5, therefore, “one might have expected [the author] to say that in whoever keeps the commandments (word) the truth of God has reached perfection [emphasis in the original; note that Brown has placed “word” in apposition to “commandments”]. Rather he speaks about the love of God reaching perfection.” For Brown, the author’s use of the word “love” in v 5 “is not haphazard, for that is the commandment of Jesus \textit{par excellence}.\footnote{Ibid., 282.}

Brown states that the commandment of which the author speaks in v 7a, Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, is certainly the commandment to love one another, for “it makes sense of the ‘Beloved’ address, and it prepares for the discussion of loving one’s brother in 2:9-11.”\footnote{Ibid., 264.} In his note on v 7c, ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε, for which he gives the literal translation “the old commandment is the word which you heard,” Brown argues that both the restrictive clause (“which you heard”) and the use of the article before λόγος “indicates a definite and well-known ‘word.’”\footnote{Ibid.,265. In support of this interpretation, Brown cites BDF 273 (1), p. 143, which states: “Predicate nouns as a rule are anarthrous. Nevertheless the article is inserted if the predicate noun is
commandment to love in John 15:12, 17, he said, ‘Remember the word that I have spoken to you’ (15:20)” and reiterates his view that “word” and “commandment” are interchangeable “in John” (by which he means both the Gospel and the Epistles),171 “reflecting a Semitic background where the Ten Commandments were the ‘words’ of God.” He therefore asserts that here in v 7c, “the epistolary author is implicitly equating the commandment of Jesus with the Decalogue, the covenant demand of the O[ld] T[estament] (Exod. 34:28: ‘Moses wrote upon the stone tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Words.’)”.172

Brown also makes this assertion in his commentary on v 6, where he states that the author’s demand to “walk just as Christ [ἐκεῖνος] walked” is an obvious specification of the Johannine commandment, ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ [emphasis in the original] (John 13:34; 15:12)....[The Epistle author’s] demand reflects the commandment that in Johannine circles is known simply as ‘the word’ of the New Covenant (I John 2:7c; see note), even as the Ten Commandments or stipulations of the Exodus covenant were known as ‘the words’ of the Lord in the O[ld] T[estament].173

Brown repeats his assertion that the commandment referred to in 2:7-8 is the commandment to mutual love in his commentary on the remaining verses of this unit, 9-11, which do indeed speak explicitly of loving one’s brother. In verse 9, the author seems to be refuting a claim made by his opponents: ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι. The person who

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171 See Brown, Epistles, 252.

172 Brown, Epistles, 265.

173 Ibid., 285-286.
hates his brother cannot claim to be “in the light.” Rather, it is the one who loves his brother who can make this assertion. In his commentary on these verses, Brown points out that the claim “to be in the light” is the third of three claims that the author seeks to refute in 2:3-11. In commenting on the false claim referred to in v 9, Brown writes that it draws not only on the theme of light mentioned in v 8, but also “on the theme of the new commandment in 2:7-8, which (implicitly) is the command to love one another....” In a statement which is especially significant for the issue under examination here, namely, the meaning of λόγος in 2:5 and 7, Brown gives an apt summary of his interpretation of I John 2:3-11:

Just as the three claims of knowing God, abiding in Him, and being in the light (2: 4, 6, 9) amount to substantially the same thing, so also the three conditions of keeping the commandments, walking as Christ walked, and loving one another amount to the same thing.

From all this, we can make the following statements about Brown’s view of the meaning of λόγος in I John 2: 5, 7, as well as in the Johannine Commandment tradition as a whole: first, λόγος (“word”) is synonymous with ἐντολή (“commandment”) or its plural ἐντολαί; second, despite the fact that the plural form ἐντολαί often appears in I John (and the Gospel), there is only one commandment in question; third, that commandment is the commandment given to the disciples by Jesus at the Last Supper: “Love one another as I have loved you”; fourth, the interchangeability in the Johannine Gospel and First Epistle of the terms λόγος and ἐντολή/ἐντολαί reflects the Semitic use, in both the Hebrew and Greek versions of

174 Ibid., 288.

175 Ibid., 289, n. 34.
the Old Testament, of the term “words” as another way of referring to God’s “commandments.”

Urban C. von Wahlde (2010)

U. C. von Wahlde directly opposes Brown on each of these points. Von Wahlde maintains the following: first, in 2:5 and 7, λόγος is not simply synonymous with ἐντολή/ἐντολαί; rather, when the Epistle author writes in v 7, “The ‘old’ commandment is the word [λόγος] that you heard,” “he is referring elliptically [that is to say, in a “shorthand” way] to (keeping) the word of God [emphasis added]” in its totality; there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition, the one concerning proper belief (regarding the identity of Jesus and the abiding relevance of his message) and the other concerning proper behavior (the commandment to “love one another”); of these two commandments, the first of these, concerning proper belief, is what is at issue in I John 2:5 and 7 and it is to this commandment that the term λόγος refers in these two verses; fourth, von Wahlde rejects the notion that the use of λόγος in v 7 with reference to the commandment(s) is a reflection of the Semitic use of the term, whether in Hebrew (dabar) or Greek (λόγος), as a way of referring to the Ten Commandments, since, if this were the case,

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176 As stated before, I have devoted an Excursus to von Wahlde’s views on the Johannine commandment tradition. There I give a more detailed account of his arguments, including those that oppose Brown’s understanding of this issue. From that more detailed discussion, it becomes apparent that von Wahlde supports his position on the number and content of the Johannine commandments not only in his exegesis of I John 2:3-11 but also by considering other “commandment texts” in I and II John and in the third edition of the Gospel of John.


179 Ibid., III: 58, 69.
it would be the only such instance of this usage in all of the Johannine writings. Von Wahlde’s contention is that λόγος, here and throughout I John, as well as in the Gospel passages concerning “keeping the word,” “always refers to the totality of the message delivered to the believer by God (in the case of the Letter) or by Jesus (in the case of the Gospel).”

In maintaining that the λόγος of I John 2:5, 7, refers not to the commandment to love one another but to a commandment to keep the entire “word,” or message, of God revealed by Jesus, an observance which involves proper faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son sent by the Father, von Wahlde differs not only from Brown, but from the other scholars whose views are summarized above. Von Wahlde presents an abundance of material from the Gospel and Letters of John to support his position. This evidence is presented in the Excursus on the Johannine Commandment tradition.

Λόγος in I John 2:14

ἔγραψα ύμίν, παιδία, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα. ἔγραψα ύμίν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς. ἔγραψα ύμίν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροί ἐστε καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

Within this verse, the author addresses three groups of people, the παιδία (“little children”), the πατέρες (“fathers”), and the νεανίσκοι (“young people”). In several ways, v 14 mirrors v 12, in which the author addresses the τεκνία (“little children”), and v 13, in which he speaks to the πατέρες and the νεανίσκοι. The words spoken to the νεανίσκοι in v 13 - ενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν (“you have conquered the evil one”) - are repeated in the author’s address to the same group in v 14, but preceded by

180 Ibid., III:59; cf. 67.
ἰσχυροί ἐστε καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει ("you are strong and the word of God abides in you.") As with the rest of I John, there are many ambiguities in vv 12-14 that make the interpretation of this passage difficult, but our concern is the meaning of ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ in v 14. Of the other issues involved in interpreting vv 12-14, the one that could affect one's understanding of ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ here is that of the precise meaning of τεκνία/παιδία, πατέρες, and νεανίσκοι: are they one group addressed in three different ways? Are they three different groups, or is the author speaking to the community as a whole when he speaks to the τεκνία/παιδία, then addressing two subdivisions within the community? If there is more than one group being addressed, whether two or three, does the distinction of terms refer to the physical age of the addressees, or to some role within the church community, or to their “spiritual age,” that is, their length of time as members of the (Johannine) Christian community? 181

While all of these positions have had their supporters throughout the centuries, the five scholars whose work I have consulted in the matter—Bultmann, Brown, Schnackenburg, Strecker, and von Wahlde—agree on one point: the terms τεκνία/παιδία are addressed to the author’s community as a whole, while the terms πατέρες and νεανίσκοι are directed at two subdivisions within that community. Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and Strecker, however, consider the terms πατέρες and νεανίσκοι to refer literally to older people and younger people, 182 whereas Brown

181 See Brown, Epistles, 297-300.

182 Bultmann, Epistles, 31; Schnackenburg, Epistles, 115-116; Strecker, Epistles, 56.
and von Wahlde maintain that the terms refer to the length of time that the addressees have been Christians. Specifically, the “Fathers” “have known the one [Jesus]” or the tradition about him “from the beginning.” The “young ones” have become Christian more recently.\(^{183}\) One’s understanding of the terms πατέρες and νεανίσκοι could make a difference in one’s interpretation of ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ in this verse, for understanding them as references to the “spiritual age” within the community of the two groups could allow for an interpretation ὁ λόγος as a particular instruction given to new converts, i.e., “the young,” as Brown suggests.\(^{184}\)

Whether or not ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ refers to a “word” of instruction, the question remains as to the precise meaning or content of that “word” here. The interpretations of the five scholars whose views are summarized in this section are in keeping with their respective interpretations of the meaning of λόγος in I John 2:5 and 7.

**Rudolf Bultmann (1967)**

In his exegesis of ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει, Bultmann refers to his earlier comment on τὸν λόγον τηρεῖν in 2:5 where, as we saw above, he argued that “God’s ‘word’ is the revelation of his reality...,” which is identical with his love given to humanity and in which the Christian’s love for his brother is included.\(^{185}\) Again, in his commentary on 2:7, Bultmann understands “the commandment” or “word” to


refer to the love commandment. The strength of the “young people” referred to in the clause ἰσχυροί ἐστε “rests on the fact that God’s word ‘abides’ in them and determines their existence.”

**Raymond Brown (1982)**

Brown writes that the λόγος of I John 2:14 “is not the personified Logos of the G[ospel of] John Prologue but the ‘word of life’ or divine message revealed by and in Jesus (I John 1:1) or, even more precisely, the word (or commandment) of loving one’s brother, stressed in 2:5-11...” He states more specifically later in his commentary that ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ in the present verse “is a reference to the commandment had from the beginning, ‘the word’ of brotherly love already heard (2:7).” As alluded to above, he suggests that this “one explicit commandment/word in the Johannine tradition, ‘Love one another as I have loved you,’” must have been taught to new converts in the Johannine community.

**Rudolf Schnackenburg (1984)**

Schnackenburg explains ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ in 2:14 as “the power of God at work within” the young people, which enables them to “overcome the evil one.”

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186 Ibid., 27.
187 Ibid., 32.
189 Ibid., 322.
Urban C. von Wahlde (2010)

In keeping with his view that the “word” referred to in I John 2:5 and 7 refers not to the commandment to mutual love but to the commandment to be faithful to the message of God in its entirety as it came to the disciples through Jesus, von Wahlde interprets the word of God which abides in the young people in contrast to the errors of the author’s opponents referred to in II John 9. There the author declares, “Everyone who is ‘progressive’ and who does not remain in the teaching of the Christ does not possess God.”

Thus, for von Wahlde, the word of God that abides in the young people is proper faith in Jesus and the abiding significance of his word.

Georg Strecker (1989)

I have reserved my summary of Strecker’s interpretation of I John 2:14 until the other views were examined because, as was the case with his position of the meaning of λόγος in 2:5 and 7, his interpretation of “the word of God” in the present verse includes both the command to mutual love (Bultmann, Schnackenburg, Brown) and proper faith (von Wahlde). In a footnote to his commentary on 2:14, Strecker cites Ernst Haenchen’s statement that the victory of the νεανίσκοι over the evil one was accomplished “simply through their holding fast to the true confession of faith.” Strecker writes that “[Haenchen] points to the supposed polemic against the Gnostics in this context (2:7-12) that then appears openly in 2:18-27.”

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191 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III: 80. The translation of 2 John 9 is von Wahlde’s, III:241. The translation of 2:5 is also von Wahlde’s, III:56.

then states his own view, which seems not to refer exclusively to I John 2:14 but to the thought of the Epistle as a whole, that "[i]n any case, the true mark of genuine Christianity consists in an ethical way of life and in the true confession of faith (cf. 2:22; 4:15-16.)"\(^{193}\)

If we look at I John 2:18-27, to which Haenchen refers in his comments on 2:14, it is clear that in vv 21-23 the epistolary author is concerned with *the truth*, and that this truth is expressed in the confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son:

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2:21 \text{οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτὴν, καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεύδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν. 22 τίς ἔστιν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὃ τῇ Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν. 23 πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει· ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱόν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει.}
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What is striking is that in the verse immediately following, the author writes:

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24 \text{ὑμεῖς ὅ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω· ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ ὃ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρί μενεῖτε.}
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Note that twice in this verse the author refers to ὃ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ("what you heard from the beginning"), and does so in a context that is clearly concerned with correct faith in Jesus. Indeed, vv 26-27 deal with the issue of true teaching, which comes from God. This lends support to von Wahlde’s position that in 2:7, the ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἢν εἴχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, which the author states to be ὁ λόγος ὁν ἡκούσατε, is not the love commandment but the commandment to remain faithful to the word of God that came to the community through Jesus.

Τεκνία, μη ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ μηδὲ τῇ γλώσσῃ ἀλλὰ ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

The meaning of this verse is relatively straightforward. If there is any issue regarding our particular concern, the meaning of the word λόγος, it would be whether or not the second noun in each pair of terms (γλώσσῃ, ἀληθείᾳ) is to be understood as the source of the idea expressed by the first noun in each pair, (λόγῳ, ἔργῳ), so that we are to understand the tongue as the source of words and truth as the source of (loving) works or deeds. Brown suggests that the answer is “yes,” while Strecker indicates that this relationship is not so obvious. Whatever the case, the author is clearly urging his readers to love one another not only in words but in action. There is no issue here of whether or not λόγος itself refers to the preexistent divine λόγος of the Gospel Prologue or to the commandment or commandments in the Johannine tradition.

Critical Analysis of the Views of Brown and von Wahlde

As we have examined the positions of the different scholars on the significance of the term λόγος in I John 1:10; 2:5, 7; 2:14; and 3:18, we have seen that there is not much disagreement regarding its use in 1:10 and 3:18. The real issue for debate is the significance of this term in 2:5 and 7. Each scholar’s interpretation of the meaning of λόγος in 2:14 depends upon his view of its meaning in those two verses. The questions we have dealt with in the examining the debate over λόγος (“word”)

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194 Brown, Epistles, 452. Here Brown is expressing his agreement with Ignace de la Potterie, La vérité dans Saint Jean (2 vols.; Anchor Bible 73-74; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977); II:663-73.

in 2:5 and 7 were the following: To what does λόγος refer in these verses? Is λόγος here a simple synonym for ἐντολή ("commandment") or its plural ἐντολαὶ, on the one hand, or is it a shorthand way of saying “to keep the word of God that has come through Jesus”? How many commandments are there in the Johannine tradition, one—the universally recognized commandment to love one another—or two, the aforementioned love commandment and another expressed in various forms that has to do with proper faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, whose word has abiding relevance?

In what follows, I would like to present my own responses to these questions and the particular considerations which led me to those conclusions.

The Number of Commandments in the Johannine Tradition

We have seen that Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and Brown understand λόγος in I John 2:5-7 to be a synonym for ἐντολή or ἐντολαὶ, and that the plural ἐντολαὶ are summed up in the single ἐντολή, which is the command given to the believers “to love one another.” Strecker also writes of a single ἐντολή, of which “the ἐντολαὶ are emanations,” and that “the love commandment is the true content of the ἐντολαὶ.”

Nevertheless, he also considers the possibility of mutual love to be inseparable from faith in Jesus as having been sent by God, and so in another place writes: “The objects of the ἐντολή [in I John 3:23] are πιστεύειν and ἀγαπᾶν, or better, the unity of faith and love.” Von Wahlde’s position is that the term λόγος of 2:5 and 7 is not a simple synonym for ἐντολή or ἐντολαὶ but rather an elliptical way of expressing

\[196\] Ibid., 48.

\[197\] Ibid., 46, n. 50.
the commandment to remain faithful to the word of God that has come to the community through Jesus, and that this commandment is distinct from the commandment to mutual love. Thus, there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition.

There can be little doubt that there are two issues at stake in the First Epistle of John, and that this fact is most clearly expressed in I John 3:23: “[God’s] commandment” is to “believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ” and to “love one another.” The question is whether or not these two issues constitute the objects of two distinct commandments. The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that, as we have seen, the author of I John alternates between the singular ἐντολὴ and the plural ἐντολαὶ in a way that is difficult to account for. Nevertheless, I believe von Wahlde is correct in maintaining that there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition, for in II John 4 the author identifies “walking in truth” as an ἐντολὴ that the community has received from the Father, and in the following verse he speaks of an ἐντολὴ he and his community have had ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, namely, to love one another.

Furthermore, as we saw when considering the views of Brown, in the Gospel of John 14:15 and 21, Jesus says that the one who loves him will keep his commandments (τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς), whereas in v 23 the one loving him will keep his word (τὸν λόγον μου) and in v 24 the one who does not love him will not keep his words (τοὺς λόγους μου). It is clear from this that to keep Jesus’ commandments (plural) is to keep his word or words. When we look at von Wahlde’s arguments in the Excursus, we shall see that in the same passage, Jesus
goes on to speak of the Holy Spirit, who will remind Jesus’ disciples of all (πάντα) that he has said (v 26). In these verses, then, in which “keep my commandments” and “keep my word(s)” seem to be used in the same way, the concern is, as von Wahlde points out, remembering and being faithful to all Jesus has taught.\(^{198}\)

Which of the Two Johannine Commandments Is Referred to in I John 2:5 and 7?

**New Versus Old**

I am not convinced by von Wahlde’s arguments, however, that the λόγος in I John 2:5, which is kept by the one possessing the love of God, and in 2:7, in which the “old commandment” that the community has had ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς is the λόγος that they heard, is the commandment to remain faithful to the entire message of God proclaimed by Jesus. It is true that in I John 2:24, the author twice refers to what his readers have heard ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς in a context where he is concerned with confession of the truth that Jesus is the Christ and the Son, a confession which von Wahlde sees as a variant expression of the content of the commandment referred to in 2:7 as “(keeping) the word (of Jesus).”\(^{199}\) Furthermore, we shall see in the Excursus that, according to von Wahlde, in II John 6 the antecedent of αὐτῇ in the expression ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατήτε is ἀληθείᾳ. If this is correct, and if he is correct in regarding this ἀληθείᾳ as proper christological belief, then this would be another instance in the Johannine writings in which adherence to the truth is said to be a commandment that the community has heard ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς. However, in II John 5, the love


\(^{199}\) Ibid., III:393-94.
commandment is also said to be one that the community has had ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, and the statement in this verse that this commandment is not a new one suggests an identification with the commandment in I John 2:7, about which the author makes the same statement in words that are almost identical to II John 5:

I John 2:7 Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω υμῖν, ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἦν εἰχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς: ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε.

II John 5 Καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφων σοι ἀλλὰ ἦν εἴχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἁγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.

In I John 2:8, the author continues his consideration of whether or not the commandment in question is new or old by saying that it is a new commandment “which is true in him [Jesus] and in you...”: πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω υμῖν, ὦ ἐστιν ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν υμῖν.... Bultmann, Brown, Schnackenburg, and von Wahlde are in agreement that the author’s meaning is that, while the commandment is not new in the sense of being something novel added to the Johannine tradition, as opposed to the teaching of the progressives (cf. II John 9), it is new in that it has recently been realized in Jesus and continues to be realized in the Johannine community. However, whereas Bultmann, Brown, Schnackenburg, and Strecker

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200 Bultmann, *Epistles*, 27; Brown, *Epistles*, 264-67; Schnackenburg, *Epistles*, 104-107; von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, III:62, 67-69. Strecker takes a different view of the sense in which “the commandment” is both old and new. It is his position that II and III John were written by “the presbyter” “at the beginning of the Johannine tradition,” whereas I John and the Gospel of John were later products of the Johannine school tradition, written independently of the presbyter’s letters (p. xiii). The presbyter wrote in II John 5 that the commandment to love one another is not new, but by the time I John was written, the understanding of this commandment had developed further so that “the newness enthusiasts’ in 2 John are now so thoroughly integrated into the Johannine circle that their teaching is no longer felt to be a divisive element.” Therefore, while the author of I John is indeed affirming in 2:7-8 that the love commandment is both old in that it dates back to the beginning of the Johannine tradition and new in the sense that it is revealed in “the Christ event,” he is not concerned here with opposing the novel teachings of false teachers; *Letters*, 49. Cf. 49, n. 10.
understand this commandment which is old (2:7) but in another sense new (2:8) to
be the "new commandment" to love one another, given by Jesus to his disciples at
the Last Supper (John 13:34).\textsuperscript{201} von Wahlde maintains that the distinction between
old and new is applied to "the commandment to keep the word of Jesus" in I John
2:7-8 and to the commandment to love one another in John 13:34.\textsuperscript{202}

\textit{To Walk – A Metaphor for Keeping Proper Belief or for Proper Conduct?}

Since the context in which a word appears is determinative of its meaning, we
have looked not only at the different scholarly commentaries on I John 2: 5 and 7
but at the surrounding verses as well. A significant question, then, has been the
meaning of the author’s statement in 2:6 that ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν ὄφειλεν καθὼς ἔκεινος μεριπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς ὁτῶς περιπατεῖν. What does it mean to “walk as
Jesus walked”? We have seen that for Bultmann, Brown, Schnackenburg, and
Strecker, the expression means to live as Jesus lived, to love as he loved.\textsuperscript{203} Von
Wahlde also states in his note on v 6 that

...the model for behavior is Jesus. If one claims to abide in the Father,
one must walk as Jesus walked. “Walking” is a metaphor for the
behavior urged by the second Johannine commandment, to love one
another. This was how Jesus walked.\textsuperscript{204}

In the section of his commentary especially devoted to the issue of the Johannine
commandments, von Wahlde writes that in v 6 the author tests the validity of the


\textsuperscript{202} Von Wahlde, \textit{Gospel and Letters}, II:634-35.


\textsuperscript{204} Von Wahlde, \textit{Gospel and Letters}, III:61.
opponents’ claim to be “in him [i.e., God]” by saying that if someone makes such a claim, he or she must accept “the activity of Jesus,” that is, “must walk as Jesus walked. That is to say, what God wants of humanity is demonstrated and defined in the life of Jesus.”

It is true that the verb περιπατεῖν is used with the phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ (“in truth”) in II John 4 (and possibly II John 6, depending on what the author intended as the antecedent of αὐτῇ in the expression ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε) and in III John 3, 4. Even here, Schnackenburg and Strecker assert that “in truth” refers to a way of life, that is, to obeying God’s commandments, commandments which are embraced by the love commandment. In his interpretation of II John 4, Brown states that, as we can see in II John 5, the commandment referred to when the author writes of “walking in truth just as we received a commandment [emphasis in Brown’s translation]” is the commandment to love one another, though he adds, “not simply ‘Walk in truth’ [emphasis added].” However,

[t]he commandment is meant to lead to walking in truth; and the context that follows suggests that walking in truth involves both loving one another (vv 5-6) and confessing Jesus Christ come in the flesh (v 7).

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205 Ibid., III:388.

206 Schnackenburg, Epistles, 281-83; Strecker, Letters, 228. Schnackenburg states in his comment on II John 4: “‘In truth’—contrary to v 1 and III John 1—here denotes the genuine Christian way of life corresponding to the true nature of the children of God.” P. 282. In his comment on II John 6, he writes: “…[T]he author wants love to be demonstrated by concrete behavior….The phrases ‘walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father’ (v 4), and ‘that we walk according to his commandments’ (v 6b) express this idea in different ways.” P. 283.

207 Brown, Epistles, 663.
Because the overriding concern of the author of II John is clearly belief in “Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh” (v 7) and the failure of the “progressives” to “remain in the teachings of the Christ” (v 8),208 I concur with von Wahlde that when the epistolary author writes of “walking in the truth, just as we received a commandment from the Father (v 4),” his concern is “proper belief” in Jesus and that this proper belief is “the object of a commandment given by God.”209 However, in I John 2:6, the verb “to walk” is not followed by “in truth.” Therefore, it is not clear that “walking as Jesus walked” means the same as “walking in truth.”

**The Evidence of the Remainder of 2:3-11**

Another consideration in determining the content of “the old commandment” which is the λόγος the community has heard (v 7) is that vv 7-8 are followed immediately by verses (9-11) which are clearly concerned with the issue of loving one’s brother. I do not see any evidence that the author has shifted focus from one commandment to another in moving from v 8 to v 9.

**Conclusion to Analysis of Λόγος in I John 2:3-11**

If we focus on the issue of whether or not the commandment to which the epistolary author refers in I John 2:7-8, the commandment that is the λόγος his readers have heard, is new or old, then this old commandment (v 7) which is also new (v 8) would seem to be the love commandment. This is strongly indicated by the fact that in II John 5 the epistolary author is referring to the love commandment when he states that he is not writing (regarding) a new commandment and that in

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209 Ibid., III:237.
the Gospel of John, the third author portrays the moment when Jesus gives to the disciples the commandment to love one another and calls it “a new commandment” (John 13:34). It is true that when the author of I John states in 2:8 that the commandment is “new,” he is referring to the fact that it has been recently realized in Jesus and continues to be realized in the community. “New” seems to have a different sense here than it does in John 13:34. Still, the fact that the commandment referred to in I John 2:7-8 would be the object of a discussion of new vs. old strongly suggests to me that the author of I John is referring to a particular commandment that had been known to his readers “from the beginning” and which could be considered both old and new. While such statements are made of the love commandment in other places in the Johannine literature (II John 5; John 13:34), there is no place in the literature where the commandment to proper christological belief is called either “old” or “new” unless one interprets the commandment of I John 2:7-8 in this way. However, there is not enough evidence, in my view, to support that interpretation.

If, however, we were to see the verb “to walk” in I John 2:6 in relation to II John 4-6, “to walk in truth,” then the old commandment in I John 2:7, which they have had from the beginning, could concern proper christological belief, and the λόγος of vv 5 and 7 could then refer to the commandment to be faithful to the word of God that has come to the community through Jesus, which von Wahlde sees as a variant form of the commandment to proper faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God.210

However, the verb “to walk” in I John 2:6 is not followed by “in truth,” so there is no

210 Ibid., III:393-94.
clear indication that the verb is used here in the same sense that it is used in II John 4. I John 2:6 is concerned with Christology, but in the sense that it highlights the essential importance of Jesus as the proper role model for the believer with regard to behavior. In his commentary on I John 2:6, Von Wahlde writes that, for the author of I John, one's acceptance of the way Jesus lived ("walked") as the demonstration of "what God wants of humanity" is a test of the truth of one's claim to be "in him [i.e. God]."\textsuperscript{211} This comment seems to connect the issue of accepting the permanent relevance of Jesus' word (teaching) with "acceptance of the activity of Jesus."\textsuperscript{212} However, I do not see the connection between the believer's acceptance of the permanent role of Jesus' teaching and the believer's acceptance of Jesus' way of life being made by the author in this verse or in the passage I John 2:3-11 as a whole. I John 2:6 is concerned with a way of life, with one's conduct, that is, with loving.

Furthermore, as I observed above, the verses which speak of keeping God's λόγος (v 5) and of the "old commandment" that is the λόγος that the readers have heard (v 7), and which contain the discussion of whether the commandment in question is new or old (vv 7-8), are followed immediately by verses which are clearly concerned with the issue of loving one's brother (vv 9-11), with no indication that the author has switched from writing of one commandment to writing of another.

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., III:388.

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., III:388.
From these considerations I am led to conclude that, while there are indeed two commandments in the Johannine tradition, one concerning proper faith in Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of the Father and, consequently, in the abiding significance of his word, and the other concerning mutual love within the community, it is the love commandment which is the subject of I John 2:3-11, a commandment which has come to be regarded by the Johannine community as “a traditional word,” or λόγος, given to them by God through Jesus.

**Conclusion to Analysis of Λόγος in the First Letter of John**

Our discussion of the term λόγος in I John has been long and detailed. Yet I John represents a major stage in the articulation of the Johannine tradition and so the results will inevitably be of considerable significance for my study.

The meaning of the term λόγος in the majority of instances has much the same meaning as in the material of the Gospel’s second edition. That is, it refers to the message of Jesus as a whole. However there are three instances of the term that are the subject of debate.

Of these, two (1 John 2:5, 7) are of relatively less significance for my study. Both of these seem to refer to individual declarations by Jesus rather than to his full message. However the remaining instance, the use λόγος in I John 1:1, is of greater significance. My analysis has shown that the use here is much more complex. It is difficult to determine with precision just exactly what it means here. Does it refer to the message of Jesus as a whole or does it point to some sort of process by which the message begins to be identified with the person of Jesus? A final answer is perhaps

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not possible at this point and so a more definitive explanation must be made after
the next stages of our investigation are complete.
EXCURSUS:

THE THEORY OF URBAN C. VON WAHLDE CONCERNING THE JOHANNINE
COMMANDMENT TRADITION

Introduction

In part II of chapter 4 of this dissertation, I summarized the positions of several
Johannine scholars regarding the use of the term λόγος in the First Epistle of John
apart from its appearance in the first verse of the Epistle’s Prologue (I John 1:1).
Much of the discussion concerned the meaning of λόγος in I John 2:5, 7, for there the
epistolary author writes of keeping God’s λόγος (v 5) and states that “the old
commandment is the λόγος that you heard,” thereby connecting God’s λόγος with a
commandment. For most of the scholars whose views are presented in chapter 4,
the term λόγος itself in I John 2:5, 7, is synonymous with ἐντολή, expressed in other
verses of the Epistle (and the Gospel of John) in the plural form ἐντολαὶ, and this
ἐντολή is the commandment to love one another, a commandment said to be from
God in I John (2:5; 3:23; 4:21) and given by Jesus to his disciples in the Gospel of
John (13:34; 15:12, 17).

We also saw in chapter 4, however, that U. C. von Wahlde disagrees with the
common interpretation of the meaning of λόγος in I John 2:5 and 7. Von Wahlde
maintains that in these two verses, λόγος refers, not to the commandment to mutual love, but to another commandment in the Johannine tradition, to keep the word, or message, of God in its entirety as it was handed down from Jesus. For both Raymond E. Brown and von Wahlde, commenting upon I John 2:5, 7, is the occasion for discussing the notion of “commandment” in the broader Johannine tradition.

Von Wahlde has written extensively on the Johannine commandment tradition and takes issue at some points with Brown in particular. Because von Wahlde’s arguments regarding the number and content of the commandments in the Johannine tradition are numerous and complex, these arguments are presented in this excursus. They involve not only passages containing the word λόγος but other texts dealing with the Johannine commandment(s) as well, since both Brown and von Wahlde support their respective positions on the meaning of λόγος in I John 2:5, 7, by looking at these other passages in I John, in II John, and in the Gospel of John.

Consequently, an appropriate discussion of this topic requires going into detail that would detract excessively from the flow of the individual chapters of this dissertation where these texts are dealt with. As a result, I have decided to discuss the commandment texts comprehensively here in an excursus and then to refer to this discussion when referring to the various pertinent texts. We shall look at each of the points on which von Wahlde disagrees with Brown and the arguments that von Wahlde presents for his views.
Von Wahlde's Interpretation of Λόγος in I John 2:5, 7: “Keep the Word”

Most of the scholars whose views are summarized in chapter 4 discuss the meaning of λόγος in I John 2:5 and 7 within the larger context of what they see as a distinct unit, namely, I John 2:3-11:

3Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. 4ὁ λέγων ὅτι Ἐγνώκα αὐτόν, καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἔστιν, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἢ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν. 5δὲ δὲ ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἢ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἔσμεν: 6ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν ὀφείλει καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς [οὕτως] περιπατεῖν. Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἴχετε ἄπ’ ἀρχῆς: ἡ ἐντολή ἡ παλαιά ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε. 7πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὅ τι ἐστίν ἀληθῆς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει. 8ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστίν ζωῆς ἀρτι. 9ὁ λέγων τὸν ἀδελφὸν μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ μένει, καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν: 10ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστίν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.

According to von Wahlde, in I John, the “word of God” in 1:1 (more specifically, ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς, “the word of life”) and in 1:10; 2:5, 7; and 2:14 signifies “the message that has been handed down” to the members of the Johannine community.

The description of “the word” in 2:7 as ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε (“the word that you have heard”) is taken by von Wahlde to support this view.¹ This raises the question: if the term λόγος in the Epistle refers to the “overall message” of God to the believers, “why is ‘the word’ seemingly equated with commandment in v 7c?”

Von Wahlde acknowledges that

[t]he common explanation is that ‘word’ in v 7c is simply a synonym for commandment....That is, just as the Ten Commandments are called ten ‘words’ (dabarim) in the Old Testament (cf. Exod 20:1; 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4), so here the author uses ‘word’ as a synonym for ‘commandment.’

We saw in chapter 4 that this is Raymond Brown’s position. Von Wahlde maintains that such an understanding would mean that v 7c is saying: “The old commandment [ἐντολὴ] is the commandment [λόγος] that you heard.”

Von Wahlde finds fault with this common interpretation of v 7c for several reasons. First, in v 7b, the author refers to the commandment about which he is writing as “one that you have had from the beginning.” To say immediately afterwards in v 7c that “the commandment is the commandment that you heard,” as it would be rendered if λόγος is taken as a synonym for ἐντολὴ, would add little to the reader’s understanding. Furthermore, it would be “redundant and awkward.” What von Wahlde considers to be a “greater problem” is that if λόγος is taken here to be a synonym for ἐντολὴ as the Hebrew dabar/dabarim was used to refer to the commandment(s) of God, it would have a meaning in v 7c that it has “nowhere else in the Johannine tradition!”

A further argument von Wahlde makes against understanding λόγος as ἐντολὴ in v 7c is that, wherever reference is made to the “commandment(s)” in the Gospel and Letters of John, “the general statement of the need to keep the commandments [in

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2 Ibid., III:58.
3 Ibid., III:58.
the plural) is followed by the mention of a specific commandment [in the singular].”

That specific commandment will have to do with either correct belief or correct behavior. In I John, we see this in the present passage: in 2:3, 4, the author writes of keeping God's commandments (plural); here in v 7 he writes of "the commandment" in the singular. If we take λόγος here to be simply a synonym for ἐντολή, then this “would be the only instance in the [Johannine] corpus in which the pattern of general exhortation to keep the commandments (plural) is not followed by a specific commandment presented in the singular.”

The First Johannine Commandment: τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον

Von Wahlde maintains that in v 7c the term λόγος, rather than being a synonym for ἐντολή/ἐντολαί, is actually an elliptical, or shorthand, way of referring to keeping the word, or message, of God (that came through Jesus) in its entirety. In support of this view, von Wahlde points out that in v 5 the author wrote of the one who keeps God's word (τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον). Furthermore, the author states in v 7 itself that he is not writing to his readers "about a new commandment but an old one that you have had from the beginning. The 'old' commandment is the word [λόγος] that you heard." This language echoes that of the beginning of the letter, 1:1-3: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard...whatever we have seen and we have heard, we proclaim to you..." These echoes suggest that

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5 Ibid., III:67; cf. III:387.
6 Ibid., III:387.
7 Ibid., III:67.
here in 2:7, as in 1:1-3, the author is writing of the *message* that the community has heard “from the beginning.”

In a summary of the evidence he has presented for his interpretation up to this point, von Wahlde writes:

Thus, all the evidence points to the conclusion that a specific commandment is being referred to here (although it is obscured by the elliptical way it is expressed) and that in full v7c would read: “This old commandment is [to keep] the word that you heard....[T]here is no reason to think that the author has spoken of anything other than the obligation to keep the message which they heard from the beginning.”

Though von Wahlde acknowledges that the epistolary author’s “line of thought throughout vv 6-8 has been difficult to follow,” he asserts that “for the author, the importance of these verses is that the commandment of God is to keep the word of God, that is, *to remain faithful in correct belief* [emphasis added].”

Von Wahlde supports his view that the phrase “keep the word” in v 5 and the elliptical reference to the same injunction in v 7 refer to keeping the totality of God’s message (received through Jesus) by turning to the use of the expression in the Gospel of John. As we saw in chapter 4 when we were considering the views of Raymond Brown, some form of τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον appears eight times in the Gospel (8:51, 52, 55; 14:23, 24; 15:20 [twice]; 17:6). Von Wahlde writes: “[I]n all of these instances, [the expression ‘keep the word’] is generally recognized to mean ‘keep

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8 Ibid., III:67-8.
9 Ibid., III:68.
10 Ibid., III:69.
the message’ (that is, be faithful to the message) of Jesus.” As can be seen from
passages such as John 8:38—50 and John 14:24, the word of Jesus is the word of the
Father. In von Wahlde’s view, all eight occurrences of the expression τηρεῖν τὸν
λόγον in the Gospel are from the third edition. Thus, contrary to Brown, he
maintains that these “were added to the Gospel after the writing of I John and so
were undoubtedly motivated by the author of I John’s insistence on the importance
of remaining faithful to the historical words of Jesus.”11 Recall that it is the position
of von Wahlde that the opponents of the author of I John were guilty, not of docetic
views of Jesus’ humanity, but of emphasizing the role of the Spirit to such a degree
that they claimed to have received from the Spirit, among other prerogatives,
revelation that went beyond the teaching of Jesus (see II John 9) and so denied the
abiding importance of that teaching.12

Von Wahlde observes that the verb τηρέω occurs seven times in the First Epistle
of John.13 One of those occurrences is in 2:5, one of the two verses under
consideration here. This is the one instance in the Epistle where the verb appears
with τὸν λόγον. In five of the other six instances, the verb appears with τὰς ἐντολὰς
(2:3, 4; 3:22, 24; 5:3). While von Wahlde acknowledges that this could be taken to
support the view that the phrase “keep the word” is simply another way to say
“keep the commandments,” which would indicate that λόγος itself is synonymous

11 Ibid., III:59.
13 Ibid., III:59.
with ἐντολή/ἐντολαί, he offers four arguments against that view: first, as stated above, the other occurrences of λόγος in I John refer to the entirety of the message of God received through Jesus rather than to a “commandment” or “commandments.” Second, throughout the third edition of the Gospel, the expression “to keep the word” refers to keeping the word of Jesus. Third, in John 14:15-24, in verses which come from the third edition, Jesus speaks of keeping his commandments (vv 15, 21) and of keeping his word (vv 23, 24) or words (v 24), thus “indicating that the third author also understands the injunction to ‘keep the word’ of Jesus as a commandment.”¹⁴ That is, keeping, or remaining faithful to, the message of Jesus is the object of a commandment in itself,¹⁵ distinct from the commandment to “love one another.” Fourth, in the Letters of John there are two passages that refer to a commandment that is clearly not the commandment to love one another (namely, I John 3:22-23 and 2 John 4; see below). It is also clear, as stated above, that in the Gospel of John 14:15-24, the commandment Jesus speaks of is not the commandment to mutual love.¹⁶

The import, then, of von Wahlde’s insistence that in I John 2:7 λόγος is not simply synonymous with ἐντολή/ἐντολαί is to show that in the Johannine tradition there are two commandments, not one as Brown maintains, and that the object of the first commandment (first, that is, in order of its appearance in I John and, therefore, in

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¹⁴ Ibid., III:59.

¹⁵ Ibid., II:660.

¹⁶ Ibid., III:59.
the Johannine tradition) is to be faithful to the word of God that came through Jesus. This is a distinct commandment from the more easily and therefore more universally recognized commandment to “love one another.”

Von Wahlde’s view that there are two distinct commandments in the Johannine tradition finds further expression in his interpretation of vv 9-11. We saw in chapter 4, when reviewing Brown’s interpretation of the same verses, that these verses constitute the Epistle author’s response to the claim of the opponents to be ἐν τῷ φῶτι (“in the light”), the third of three claims that the author disputes. It is clear in vv 9-11 that the author regards loving one’s brother as the test of the truth of that claim. As we have seen, Brown considers this assertion of the necessity of mutual love as an expression of the commandment which is referred to in 2:7, where “the old commandment is the word that you heard.” Furthermore, the expression of the love commandment in 9-11 is, in Brown’s view, a variant of the author’s insistence on the need to keep God’s commandment(s) or “word” (vv 3-5) and to “walk as [Christ] walked” (v 6). Thus, for Brown, throughout I John 2:3-11 there is one test of the truth of the opponents’ claims, namely, whether or not they keep the single commandment to love one’s brother.

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17 See, for example, Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, III:67-69, 386-89.

18 The first of the three claims is “Εγνώκα αὐτόν (“I have known him”) in v 4. The second is the claim ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν (“to abide in him”) in v 6.

Von Wahlde, however, refers to the issue of proper behavior (i.e. whether or not one loves one’s brother) in vv 9-11 as “the second test [emphasis added]” of the opponents’ claims. He regards the reference to the commandment to mutual love in 9-11 as “the first mention of mutual love in I John (and, therefore, in the Johannine tradition) [emphasis added]).”20 While he recognizes that the appearance here of vv 9-11, following immediately as they do after the verses concerning the commandment to “keep the word,” might lead to the conclusion that the commandment in question in vv 4-8 is “to love one another,” he insists that

[i]n vv. 4-8, [the Epistle author] has said that claims to spiritual prerogatives have to be tested by the criterion of correct belief (do they truly keep the word of God?). Now [in vv. 9-11] he argues that such claims should also be tested by the other essential category of correctness: correct behavior, which is encapsulated in mutual love [emphasis added]. 21

According to von Wahlde, then, there are two commandments referred to by the epistolary author in I John 2:3-11, the first concerning correct belief and the second concerning correct behavior (though the latter is not explicitly called a commandment in this passage). The two are connected in that the object of the second commandment, namely, to love one’s brother, “is a result of the knowledge and light that comes from keeping the word [λόγος] of God. Thus, the author ends by using correct love as a test of correct belief.”22


21 Ibid., III:69.

22 Ibid., III:389.
The Other Commandment Texts in the Johannine Epistles

In order to understand fully von Wahlde’s view that there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition, that the first is “to keep the word” of God that was revealed by Jesus, and that the author of I John is referring to this first commandment when he refers to the λόγος in I John 2:5 and 7, we must also examine other passages in the Johannine corpus that, even though the term λόγος itself does not appear in them, have to do with the notion of “commandment.” The first two we shall consider are found in the First Epistle itself and are referred to by von Wahlde as the second and third of the commandment texts in the Epistle (the first being 2:3-11).


In I John 3:22-24, we read:

22καὶ δὲ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ,
+ὅτι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἁρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν.

23καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ,
+ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὄνοματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
καὶ
+ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους,
+καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολήν ἡμῖν.
Note that in v 22 the author speaks of commandments (τὰς ἐντολὰς) in the plural. Then, in v 23, he speaks of “his commandment” (ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ) in the singular, but, curiously, proceeds to state explicitly two commandments: “to believe in the name of [God’s] Son Jesus Christ” and to “love one another.” (The plural/singular order of the references to “commandment(s)” is then reversed due to the chiastic structure of this passage.) Von Wahlde sums up the significance of this passage thus:

In I John 3:22-23, we see one of the clearest references to the two commandments, together with a specification of each....In some ways, this passage is paradigmatic for the presentation of the commandments in the Letters. We see that the author first speaks of the commandments in the plural and then in the singular.... We also notice that there are references to two specific commandments: one dealing with proper belief and the other dealing with proper behavior. Finally, we notice that these are identified as commandments “of God,” as is typical in the Letters. Here the theology of commandment is clear, as is the existence of two Johannine commandments.

23 In reproducing the Greek text of I John 3:22-24, I have followed von Wahlde in presenting it so that the chiastic structure is evident (see von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:127). BDF defines a chiasmus, or chiasm, simply as “the literary pattern a b/b a” (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, A Translation and Revision of the ninth-tenth German Edition incorporating supplementary notes of A. Debrunner by Robert W. Funk, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961; § 477.) In looking at the passages in I John that von Wahle identifies as chiasms, we can see that there can, in fact, be several elements. Several statements are made, then the ideas, not necessarily with identical wording, are repeated in reverse order. Von Wahlde explains that the recognition of such chiasms is important because this structural arrangement, which has the effect of highlighting “similarities and contrast between ideas,” helps to clarify “the meaning of words, phrases or a passage in cases where the parallelism between features is clear but where the meaning of one element may be ambiguous.” (Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:24-25.) While von Wahle presents the text in English translation and I have reproduced it in the original Greek, this creates no difficulty in presenting the chiastic arrangement just as von Wahle does, for, as he explains in his commentary on John 1:1-18, he has placed some of the words of his English translation in parentheses to indicate where he has rearranged the word order of the English to follow that of the original Greek text (von Wahle, Gospel and Letters, II:19, n. 8. Thus, the lines are indented as they appear in von Wahle’s commentary, and, as in his commentary, a “+” at the beginning of a line indicates the individual elements of the chiasm (III: 24, n 14).
[emphasis in the original]. At the same time, the formulation of the first commandment is not precisely the same as in the first passage [i.e. I John 2:3-11, where the first commandment is expressed by the phrases τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον and ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε], yet both clearly deal with correct belief and that correct belief essentially involves Jesus (cf. 2:6, 8b...).24

The phrase “to believe in the name of [God’s] Son Jesus Christ” makes clear what the content of the commandment concerning correct belief was. We saw in chapter 2 of this dissertation that according to Von Wahlde, the opponents of the epistolary author acknowledged the divine status of Jesus (in keeping with the high christology of the second edition of the Gospel), but denied that this status was unique. Having received the gift of the Spirit, they regarded themselves as “anointed” (i.e. “christs”) and as children of God in the same sense that Jesus was God’s son.25 Von Wahlde writes that we can see that the author was responding to the opponents’ denial that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God (in a unique sense) from the frequency with which the author affirms these titles and denounces those who reject them (1:3, 7; 2:13, 22, 23; 3:8, 23; 4:2-3, 9, 10, 14, 15; 5:1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20; cf. 2 John 3, 7, 9).26 Thus when the author of the Epistle reminds his readers in 2:5 that they are commanded to “keep the word of God” and refers (in an elliptical manner) to this same commandment in 2:7 as “the word that you heard,” his concern is correct belief about Jesus and the abiding importance of the word of God spoken through


25 Ibid., I:419-20; III:4, 173.

26 Ibid., I:420-21; III: 136.
him. Here in 3:23 this commandment is expressed in terms of belief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God.27


The third of those passages that von Wahlde refers to as the commandment texts in the First Epistle of John is I John 4:21-5:5.

4:21 καὶ ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔχομεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.

5:1 Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰς τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν: καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖαι οὐκ εἰσίν, ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον: καὶ ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ θεός τοῦ θεοῦ;

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In 4:21, the author explicitly refers to the notion that “the one loving God should also love his brother” as “this commandment from him [God].” This is followed by an exceedingly complex series of statements in chiastic form that begins with a declaration concerning those possessing proper belief in Jesus as the Christ (5:1) and concludes with a declaration concerning the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (5:5). Between these two declarations are others by which the author seeks to express the connection between various concepts of great importance in his theology: between correct faith in Jesus (as defined in 5:1 and 5:5), on the one hand, and the believer’s having been begotten of God and having conquered the world, on the other; between loving “the begetter” (God) and loving “the one begotten of him” (the child of God); and between the believer’s love of God and the believer’s keeping of God’s commandments, which together demonstrate the believer’s love of the children of God.\(^{28}\) While it would be difficult to unravel the precise line of argumentation here (if there is a single “line”), our concern is that in this passage, I John 4:21-5:5, the author clearly speaks of both the importance of proper belief in Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of God and the importance of loving the children of God (one’s “brothers”), as well as of the connection between the two—that is, between proper belief and the need for mutual love.\(^{29}\)

Von Wahlde points out that, while within the chiasm consisting of I John 5:1-5, neither proper belief nor proper behavior is referred to explicitly as a


\(^{29}\) Ibid., III:391.
“commandment,” proper behavior (loving one’s brother) is identified as such in 4:21. Thus, in 4:21-5:5 we have the reversal of the case in I John 2:3-11, where proper belief (“keeping the word”) is said to be a commandment, while the proper love spoken of is not. We have also seen that the two commandments are explicitly stated in parallel form in I John 3:23 (though the word “commandment” immediately before these explicit statements is in the singular), a verse which is part of the second “commandment text” in I John, namely, 3:21-24. “Thus, once again [in I John 4:21-5:5] the author has provided an interplay between the necessity of proper belief and the necessity of mutual love.”

The Fourth Commandment Text in the Epistles of John: II John 4-6

The fourth commandment text from the Letters of John identified by von Wahlde is not from I John but from II John, specifically verses 4 to 6. As was the case with the last two commandment texts we considered, I John 3:21-24 and 4:21-5:5, the noun λόγος does not appear in II John 4-6. It does not appear at all in this Letter. Nevertheless, as with the previous two texts, II John provides support not only for von Wahlde’s contention that there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition rather than one, but also for his view of what the content of each commandments is. Again, this could be seen as lending indirect support for his position on the meaning of λόγος in I John 2:5 and 7.

30 Ibid., III:391, especially notes 7 and 8.
31 Ibid., III:390.
32 Ibid., III:391.
Both Brown and von Wahlde maintain that all three Johannine letters were written by the same individual, who refers to himself at the beginning of II and III John as ὁ πρεσβύτερος. Whatever position one takes as to whether or not the same person wrote I John and II John, II John is obviously a part of the Johannine tradition that is expressed in the Gospel of John and the three Letters of John. While von Wahlde specifically identifies vv 4 to 6 as a commandment text due to the fact that “walking in truth” (i.e. proper belief) and mutual love are both referred to here as commandments, we shall see in more detail below that these very same concerns, so prominent in I John, are expressed throughout the first half of II John, vv 1-6, while the rest of the letter focuses on proper belief in particular. Furthermore, the language used to express these ideas is not only similar but often the same as in I John. It is, therefore, quite reasonable to appeal to the Second Epistle to support one’s interpretation of the First.

In order to compare and contrast the views of Brown and von Wahlde on the number and content of the commandments the author of II John was referring to in vv. 4-6, we shall consider their respective commentaries on the letter as a whole.

The text of the entire letter is provided here:

1 ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν,
2 διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ μεθ’ ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.
3 ἔσται μεθ’ ἡμῶν χάρις εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ

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33 Brown, AB 30:19, 679-80. Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:6. Brown suggests that “the Presbyter” may have been a disciple of the Beloved Disciple (p. 679), while, as we saw in chapter 2 of this dissertation, von Wahlde considers the Presbyter to be the individual honorifically referred to as the Beloved Disciple (or, more precisely, “the disciple whom Jesus loved”) by the author of the third edition of the Gospel (III:6).
It is important to note that while Brown acknowledges that ἐν ἀληθείᾳ can be taken adverbially to mean “truly” or “sincerely,” he agrees with those scholars who take “all the ‘in truth’ phrases in II John 1-4 theologically (i.e. ‘truth’ is the sphere from which the activity flows)....”

The epistolary author, therefore, is not merely saying that he truly loves the “Elect Lady and her children.” Rather, ...the Presbyter with intensity states three times that his love for the church addressed is based on truth [emphasis added]: “In truth I love you”; “And not only I but also those who have come to know the truth”; “This love is based on the truth that abides in us” (vv. 1b, 1c, 2a)....[S]uch a preoccupation to relate love to truth needs an explanation....

Brown sums up this relationship of love to truth in the Johannine tradition by stating:

In my judgment the truth-love statements of II John 1-2 help to prove that in Johannine theology love of one another or love of brother means loving one’s fellow Johannine Christians who share the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—a truth that is not simply an abstract doctrine but a salvific principle.

In his notes on II John 4, Brown states that the commandment to which the author refers when he writes of “walking in truth just as we received a commandment [emphasis in Brown’s translation]” is the commandment to mutual love, “not simply 'Walk in truth [emphasis added],’” as is made clear in v 5.

However,

35 Ibid., 681, n. 5.

36 Ibid., 680-1.

37 Ibid., 681. Brown cites John 20:31 and I John 5:20 as verses where it is clear that true knowledge of Jesus leads to eternal life, 681, n. 6.
[t]he commandment is meant to lead to walking in truth; and the context that follows suggests that walking in truth involves both loving one another (vv 5-6) and confessing Jesus Christ come in the flesh (v 7).\(^{38}\)

In support of this interpretation of “walking in truth just as we received a commandment,” Brown points to I John 3:23, in which, as we saw above, believing in the name of [God’s] Son, Jesus Christ, and loving one another are both identified as a commandment from God.\(^{39}\)

In his commentary on v 4, Brown suggests that the author

...is speaking of a general attitude, involving both belief and behavior, which shows that those who so walk have the truth abiding in them (see v 2). Jesus’ own ministry of preaching and healing was considered as a word or command given him by the Father (John 8:55; 10:18), i.e., a living out of the Father’s will, which was his own will (10:30). Correspondingly the Christian child of God who has received Jesus’ life and Spirit comes under the commandment or the expressed will of the Father.\(^{40}\)

The important point to note here is that Brown, though he mentions “both belief and behavior” in his interpretation of “walking in truth,” consistently uses the singular form of “command” or “commandment” in speaking both of what Jesus has been instructed to say and do by the Father and what the disciple has in turn been instructed to do. We saw earlier that, in contrast to von Wahlde, Brown maintains

\(^{38}\)Ibid., 663.

\(^{39}\)Ibid., 663.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., 682-3.
that there is one commandment in the Johannine tradition and that this is the commandment to mutual love.\textsuperscript{41}

The latter point can be seen again in Brown's interpretation of II John 6, the grammar of which is typically difficult. Brown translates and divides this challenging verse as follows:

Now this is love: \textit{(b)} that we walk according to His commandments. \textit{(c)} That \[\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\] is the commandment \[\eta \varepsilon\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\acute{\iota}\]. \textit{(d)} As you heard it from the beginning, \textit{(e)} so must you walk in it.

Note that Brown has translated the \(\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\) of 6c as “that” rather than “this,” reflecting his view that the pronoun refers back to v 5, which explicitly speaks of “a commandment that we have had from the beginning: Let us love one another.”\textsuperscript{42}

Furthermore, after reviewing the three possible candidates for the antecedent of \(\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\) in the prepositional phrase \(\varepsilon\nu \alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\) (“in it”) – \(\varepsilon\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\acute{\iota}\) (6c), \(\alpha\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta\) (6a), and \(\alpha\lambda\acute{\eta}\theta\epsilon\alpha\) (v 4) – Brown decides in favor of the antecedent closest to \(\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\), \(\varepsilon\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\acute{\iota}\), which, as we have just seen, he regards as a reference to the commandment to mutual love in v 5.\textsuperscript{43}

Verses 7-11 of II John are concerned with proper Christological belief. The author warns against those “who do not confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh” (v 7). The addressees of the epistle are not even to greet such persons, since to do so would be

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 251.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 645, 668.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 667-68.
to participate in their evil deeds (10-11). Particularly relevant for our purposes is Brown’s commentary on v 9, which he translates as

“Anyone who is so ‘progressive’ that he does not remain rooted in the teaching of Christ does not possess God, while anyone who remains rooted in the teaching possesses both the Father and the Son.”

Brown maintains that the phrase “the teaching of Christ” refers primarily to “teaching that comes from Christ.”

Turning to the Gospel of John, Brown demonstrates the significance of this rootedness in the teaching of Christ for the Johannine community by citing Jesus’ words in 16:12-15, in which Jesus declares that “[the Paraclete] will not speak on his own, but will speak only what he hears and declare to you the things to come….It is from me that he receives what he will declare to you.” Brown sums up the import of these words for the Presbyter who wrote the Epistles:

“This passage would explain why the Presbyter condemns teachers who do not remain rooted in the teaching of Christ—even the Paraclete remains rooted in what was “from the beginning.” We are very close here to I John’s insistence on the necessity of proclaiming what was heard, seen with the eyes, looked at, and felt with the hands (1:1).”

In his commentary on II John, then, Brown’s views sound very close to those of von Wahlde. This is true of his commentary on other passages in I and II John. When commenting on I John 3:23, for example, Brown states that the verse “not only implicitly ascribes the commandment to God but makes it twofold….” He also writes

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44 Ibid., 645.

45 Ibid., 674-75.

46 Ibid., 687-8.
that it is “interesting” that in II John 4, “walking in truth” is described as “a commandment we have received from the Father....” He suggests that “these passages show the tendency to move beyond brotherly love to general behavior and faith [emphasis added].”47 In his commentary on I John 2:6 (“The person who claims to abide in Him ought himself to walk just as Christ [ἐκεῖνος] walked”), he maintains that this reference to the necessity of imitating Christ “shows that the struggle with the secessionists over moral principles is really rooted in a struggle with the secessionists over christology...” and refers to his theory that the error of the secessionists (=opponents of the Epistle author) was in attributing the gift of eternal life “primarily to the incarnation of Jesus, not to his life and death. Since they attribute no importance to the way he ‘walked,’ they attribute no importance to the way Christians walk.”48

Considering all of this, we might suppose that Brown, like von Wahlde, considers proper belief, which concerns the identity of Jesus and the abiding significance of his words, and proper behavior, namely, the command to love one’s brother, as two distinct commandments for the Johannine author and his community. However, we saw in chapter 4 and in the present excursion that, though he acknowledges the use of the plural ἐντολαὶ in the Gospel and First Epistle of John, he maintains that there is one commandment in the Johannine tradition, the commandment to love one another. “...[T]he plural gives a comprehensive force to the commandment to

47 Ibid., 251.

48 Ibid., 285.
love.” In his commentary on I John 2:6, referred to above, after stating that the conflict with the secessionists over moral principles was “rooted in a struggle... over christology,” Brown adds that

[...]he author [of the First Epistle] insists on both [the importance of the way Christ walked and of the way Christians walk] and sees the obligation to walk just as he [Jesus] walked as an obvious specification of the Johannine commandment, ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John 13:34; 15:12) [emphasis in the original].

Furthermore, we can see in the citation above from Brown’s comments on 3:23 that even though he speaks of the twofold nature of God’s commandment, he still uses the word “commandment” in the singular. It can safely be said, then, that despite his recognition that both faith and behavior are at issue in I and II John, Brown clearly maintains that there is one commandment in the Johannine tradition, the commandment of mutual love.

Turning to von Wahlde’s commentary on the Second Epistle of John, we see that, given the fact that the epistolary author’s concerns are quite clear, there are places in von Wahlde’s interpretation that are the same as Brown’s. At other points, there are, of course, differences in interpretation. These have to do once again with the difference in the two scholars’ views over the number of distinct commandments in the Johannine tradition and the content of what von Wahlde calls the “first” commandment.

49 Ibid., 251.
50 Ibid., 285-6.
Like Brown, von Wahlde holds that the phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ in the clause οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ (II John 1) is not to be understood adverbially, as if the author were saying, “Truly I love you,” but rather that the author’s love for those whom he is addressing “is rooted in the truth.” Within the context of the whole epistle, it is most probable that the author is saying that “his love is coupled with and the expression of correct belief.” The “truth” to which the author refers is that which is the subject of conflict in the community. Thus,

[e]ven before he gives the greeting customary at the beginning of the letter, he recalls what he values most in his relation to the community and in so doing reveals what is most on his mind: his concern for the truth…[H]is love [for the community addressed] is rooted in the truth. This is the truth that the community confesses and that is shared by the Elect Lady and her children.

In the greeting of the letter itself (v 3), ἕσται μεθ’ ἡμῶν χάρις ἐλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρός, καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρός, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ, the fact that the “grace, mercy, and peace” that the author wishes for the community are not from the Father alone but “from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the son of the Father,” reveals the nature of one of the central conflicts that was tearing the community apart. In this verse, “Jesus is paralleled with the Father…[and] is identified as both Christ and as the Son of the Father....” Recall that “Christ” and

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51 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III: 234.
52 Ibid., III:225.
53 Ibid., III:234.
“Son of God” or “Son of the Father” were titles that the opponents of the epistle author denied that Jesus possessed uniquely.54

The nature of the conflict is further reflected in the final words of the greeting ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ. Von Wahlde calls this phrase “a model of the succinct summation of the two essential elements of the believer’s life as it was understood in the Johannine tradition.” The words “truth” and “love” identify the objects of the two Johannine commandments, which the opponents are guilty of violating.55

I have reproduced the text of II John 4-6 in the chiastic form that von Wahlde identifies as the structure of the greater part of these verses.56

4 Εὐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὗρηκα

   + ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ,
   
   + καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἔλαβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός. 5 καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε,
   
   κυρία, σύχ ὃς ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφων σοι ἂλλὰ ἢν εἶχομεν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς,
   
   +ίνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.
   
   +6 καὶ αὐτή ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπη,
   
   +ίνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ: αὐτή ἢ ἐντολὴ ἐστιν,
   
   καθὼς ἥκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς.

54 Ibid., III:234-5.

55 Ibid., III:226.

56 Ibid., III:223-4; 235-6. In recognizing vv 4-6 as a chiasm, von Wahlde is in agreement with Ignace de la Potterie, La vérité dans Saint Jean (2 vols.; Anchor Bible 73-74; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977); II:652, though von Wahlde states that he has altered de la Poterie’s arrangement somewhat in order to “show the symmetry more clearly.” P. 236.
+ ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε.

As we saw when analyzing I John 3:22-24 and 5:1-5, von Wahlde considers the recognition of the chiastic structure of these passages as important, for the parallelism resulting from this structural arrangement itself helps to clarify the meaning of the passage in cases where it would otherwise be unclear. In the present case, “[t]he two outermost elements of the chiasm (v. 4b [as von Wahlde divides these verses; v. 6d [6e in Brown]) speak about ‘walking in truth’ (correct belief).” (As we saw above, however, the antecedent of αὐτῇ in the clause ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε in v 6d is a matter of dispute. We shall look at von Wahlde’s arguments in support of ἀληθεία as the antecedent below).

Moving to the second (vv. 4c; 5ab) and second-last (v. 6bc) elements of the chiasm, we find that “to walk in truth” is identified as a commandment. In commenting on v 4c, von Wahlde writes: “This is one of the clearest instances of the ‘first’ of the Johannine commandments, the commandment about proper belief, to ‘walk in truth’.” Furthermore, in the second element of the chiasm, the commandment to love one another is said to be one that the author and his audience have had ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, and in the second-last element the same is said of the

57 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:24-25.

58 Brown, AB 30:645.

59 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:236.

60 Ibid., III:237.
commandment to walk ἐν αὐτῇ (“in it”; 6d), which, as mentioned above, von Wahlde takes as referring to “the truth.”

“The third (v. 5c) and third-to-last (v. 6a) elements of the chiasm constitute the double central element of the chiasm.” Verse 5c states the content of the commandment referred to in the previous elements (v. 5ab): “that we love one another.” Verse 6a introduces the definition of “the love” which will immediately follow.

From what has been said thus far, we can see that von Wahlde’s interpretation of II John 4-6 supports his view that there are two commandments at issue, one of which concerns correct belief, expressed by the phrase “to walk in truth.” He supports his position by pointing out that both the first and last elements of the chiasm consisting of vv 4b-6d speak of walking in truth. His argument depends in part on taking the antecedent of αὐτῇ in 6d as the ἀληθείᾳ of v 4b. We saw above that Brown takes the antecedent to be the ἐντολή of 6c, which in turn refers to the command to love one another in v 5.

Von Wahlde gives three arguments in favor of his view that the antecedent of αὐτῇ in 6d is ἀληθείᾳ in 4b. First, we do not find περιπατέω used with ἀγάπη (“walking in love”) anywhere else in the Johannine corpus, and when this verb is used with ἐντολή, the noun ἐντολή is in the accusative form after the preposition κατά. Therefore, von Wahlde considers it “unlikely” that the antecedent of αὐτῇ in

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61 Ibid., III:236.
62 Ibid., III:236.
6d is ἑντολή. Second, as we have discussed, since vv 4b-6d constitute a chiasm, and, as is usual in a chiasm, “the two outermost elements of the chiasm reflect the same notion,” 6d must speak of walking in truth, since it is the parallel element to 4b, which speaks of “walking in truth.” “Third, the sole topic of the Letter is ‘truth’ and perseverance in the proper teaching,” as can easily be seen in the rest of the letter. It is particularly significant to von Wahlde that “immediately after v 6, the author discusses the failure in matters of correct belief that is evident in those who do not confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh [v 7].” Therefore, von Wahlde asserts that the antecedent of αὐτῇ in the clause ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε in v 6 is the ἀληθείᾳ of 4b, so that in vv 4-6 the author of II John has twice identified correct belief as the object of a commandment (vv 4 and 6), a commandment that the community has heard ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (v 6). In v 5, the commandment that the community has had ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς is the commandment to love one another.63

In support of his position regarding the antecedent of αὐτῇ in v 6d, von Wahlde points out that v 7, which, as we have just seen, deals with correct belief in Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, begins with ὅτι, which is rendered as “for” in the English translations of the scriptural texts in the commentaries of Bultmann,64 Brown,65 and Strecker (though in brackets),66 and as “because” by von Wahlde.67

63 Ibid., III:228-9.
65 Brown, Epistles, 645.
This would seem to connect the concern of vv 7 ff, proper christological belief, with what was stated immediately before. Brown comments on this connection but maintains that the commandment to mutual ἀγάπη is the antecedent of the αὐτῇ of v 6. Consequently, he regards what he sees as the transition to the issue of christological truth in v 7 as “a complexity added to the complexities discussed above [where he dealt with several grammatical difficulties in this passage].” Brown explains the presence of the causal ὅτι at the beginning of v 7 as demonstrating the close connection between the love commandment and proper christological belief. Von Wahlde’s contention that the antecedent of αὐτῇ in the phrase ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατήτε is ἀληθείᾳ rather than ἀγάπη would mean that there is no awkward transition from vv 4-6 to v 7 but rather a continuation of the last idea referred to in v 6. As Brown acknowledges, if the antecedent of αὐτῇ is ἀληθείᾳ (a position he rejects), “it would explain how the Presbyter easily turns to ‘deceivers’

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68 Brown, *Epistles*, 668; Strecker, *Letters*, 229, n. 11, states that that “[i]n v. 6b [as he divides the verse] ἐν αὐτῇ does not refer to ἐντολή but to ἀγάπη (v. 6a)” and cites Brown (*Epistles*, 684) as among those who take the same view; however, Brown states explicitly that the phrase “in it” in 6e [as he divides v. 6], “refers to the nearest antecedent, ‘commandment,’ a commandment to love.” P. 668.


by way of contrast at the beginning of the next line [v 7].”

Interestingly, Brown also acknowledges that “[s]ince the Presbyter has already spoken of walking in truth (and elsewhere no Johannine work speaks of walking in a commandment or walking in love....), Johannine usage favors [understanding the antecedent of αὐτῇ to be αὐθεντεία].” Nevertheless, as we saw above, Brown’s position is that the antecedent of αὐτῇ is ἐντολή, which, in turn, is a reference to the commandment to mutual love in v 5.

Von Wahlde traces the line of argument in vv 4-6. First, the author begins with an expression of his joy that the recipients of his letters are “walking in truth, just as [they] received a commandment from the Father.” The author then moves on to speak of the commandment to “love one another” and defines love as “walking in the commandments.” He then returns to mentioning a specific commandment, namely, that the community members walk in truth.

Von Wahlde summarizes the significance of the progression of thought in II John 4-6 by saying:

Thus, by means of definition and logical deduction, the Elder has shown not only that the commandment to walk in the truth is a commandment in its own right but also that the commandment to love requires that [the community members] keep all the commandments and therefore that the commandment to love also requires that they walk in truth. And so, the Elder shows that the love commandment and the commandment of correct belief are

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72 Ibid., 667.

73 Ibid., 668.

interrelated; one leads to obedience to the other. True love of one another will also lead the person to walk in the truth.\textsuperscript{75}

Von Wahlde’s insistence that there are two distinct commandments in the Johannine tradition leads him to criticize Brown’s statement, cited above, that the author “may be speaking [in v 4] of a general attitude, involving belief and behavior.”\textsuperscript{76} While Brown’s statement comes close to expressing the same view as that of von Wahlde, von Wahlde objects that the issues of proper belief and proper behavior (i.e. mutual love) “are not blended together.” Rather, they are the respective objects of the two commandments in the Johannine tradition.\textsuperscript{77} This makes II John 4-6 “the third such chiasm that attempts to define and/or interrelate the two commandments of the Johannine tradition,” the other two being I John 3:22-24 and I John 5:1-5.\textsuperscript{78} It is the fourth, including I John 2:3-11, of what von Wahlde terms the “Johannine commandment texts” in the First and Second Epistles of John.

**Other Passages in I and II John Referring to the Issue of Proper Belief**

Von Wahlde states that the four Johannine commandment texts we have just examined “constitute the primary discussion of the commandments in the Letters.” However, he points out that there are many other passages in which proper belief is dealt with without being explicitly referred to as the object of a commandment:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Ibid., III:239.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Brown, Epistles, 682-83.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:392, n. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid., III: 236, n. 4.
\end{itemize}
Thus, the other references to having the word in them (1:10; 2:14), to proper confession of Jesus (e.g., 2:22, 24; 4:2, 14, 15; 5:10), to the necessity of “having” Jesus (e.g., 2:23; 5:12; cf. 1:3), and to believing in the name of Jesus (e.g., 5:13) all speak of the content of the commandment without explicit references to the term “commandment” itself [emphases in the original].

The same is true of the topic of mutual love….Thus, we see the centrality of these two topics not only in passages where they are labeled as the object of a commandment but also within the general content of the Letters.79

**Pairs of Verses in I and II John concerning Proper Belief and Proper Behavior**

As a further demonstration of the centrality of the issues of proper belief and proper conduct for the author of the Johannine Epistles, von Wahlde lists other pairs or sets of verses from I John (as well as II John 5 and 6, which are part of the fourth commandment text) that deal with these two issues.80 These verses are not juxtaposed as they are in the four passages we have just examined, but they are linked to each other by the fact that each member of the pair, one dealing with proper belief and the other with proper behavior, is a response by the Epistle author to one of the many claims made by the believer in Jesus.

In [the author’s] view, one cannot legitimately make these claims if one does not believe and act correctly. Although the distribution of these many statements throughout the Letter seems to be without pattern, the remarkable way in which so many claims are linked to both proper belief and action removes all doubt that such dual concerns were prominent in the mind of the author.81

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79 Ibid., III:393; see III:375-77.

80 These are found in Appendix 4, chart E-6 of von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:375-77.

81 Ibid., III:373.
Von Wahlde points to other ways in which the Johannine Letters reveal the centrality of the author’s concern for correct belief and correct behavior. In line with previous scholars, von Wahlde sees the First Epistle as consisting of two halves, the first focusing on God as light, a concept that symbolically refers to proper belief, and the second focusing on the need for mutual love. The primary focus of II John is on “walking in truth,” that is, “correct belief and remaining in the teaching of the Christ,” and the primary focus of III John is on “correct (loving) action as manifest in the acceptance of others in love.” Furthermore, the author of the third edition of the Gospel of John takes up these themes and provides “the overriding thematic structure” of the Gospel by emphasizing Jesus as “‘the light’ of correct belief...” during his public ministry and by emphasizing the love of Jesus exhibited in his Passion.82

The Johannine Commandment Tradition in the Gospel of John

According to von Wahlde, the author of the third edition of the Gospel further develops the commandment tradition that first appears in the Epistles of John83 We turn to the Gospel, then, in order to demonstrate how the commandment texts in the third edition support von Wahlde’s contention that in there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition, not one, the first (in order of appearance in the First Epistle of John) concerning proper belief and the second concerning proper behavior.

82 Ibid., III:374.
83 Ibid., III:395.
Von Wahlde asserts that in the material of the third edition of the Gospel, we find that the author writes about two commandments which the Father has given to Jesus, who in turn gives two commandments to his disciples. The commandments that Jesus gives to his disciples correspond to the two given by the Father to Jesus.\(^8^4\)

In John 12:49-50, Jesus says:

\[\text{ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐξ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐκ ἐλάλησα, ἀλλ' ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ αὐτός μοι ἐντολὴν δέδωκεν τί εἴπω καὶ τί λαλήσω. καὶ οἴδα ὅτι ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιός ἐστιν. ἃ οὖν ἔγῳ λαλῶ, καθὼς εἴρηκέν μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὕτως λαλῶ.}\]

Thus we find in these verses from the third edition an explicit statement that the Father has given Jesus a commandment regarding τί εἴπω καὶ τί λαλήσω (“what I should say and what I should speak”). It follows, then, according to von Wahlde, that there is surely an obligation upon the disciples to hear and remain faithful to what Jesus says [for Jesus spoke what he was commanded to say by the Father]. That will be the third author’s equivalent of the first Johannine commandment as it appeared in I John.\(^8^5\)

There is a parallel in content, then, between the first commandment given by the Father to Jesus and one of the two commandments that Jesus gives to his disciples (in the course of his Farewell Discourses at the Last Supper).\(^8^6\) In verses from John 14 that are identified by von Wahlde as belonging to the third edition, Jesus says to his disciples:

\(^8^4\) Ibid., III:395.
\(^8^5\) Ibid., III:395.
\(^8^6\) Ibid., III:396.
15 Ἐὰν ἀγαπᾷ με, τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἔμας τηρήσετε....

21 ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολὰς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτὰς ἐκεῖνὸς ἔστιν ὁ ἄγαπῶν με: ὁ δὲ ἄγαπῶν με ἀγαπηθήσεται ύπὸ τοῦ πατρός μου, κἀγὼ ἀγαπήσω αὐτὸν καὶ ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἐμαυτὸν....

23 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ἀγαπήσει αὐτὸν, καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ' αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα. 24 ὁ μὴ ἄγαπῶν με τοὺς λόγους μου οὐ τηρεῖ: καὶ ὁ λόγος ὃν ἀκούετε οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸς ἀλλὰ τοῦ πέμψαντός με πατρός. 25 Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν παρ' ὑμῖν μένων:

26 ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἐκεῖνος διδάσκει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει πάντα ἃ ἔχων ὑμῖν [ἐγώ].

As von Wahlde states clearly: "The disciples are to keep the word of Jesus, the word that Jesus was commanded to speak."87

In 14:15 and 21, Jesus says that the one who loves him will keep his commandments (τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἔμας), whereas in v 23 the one loving him will keep his word (τὸν λόγον μου ) and in v 24 the one who does not love him will not keep his words (τοὺς λόγους μου). We have seen that for Brown, the obvious parallelism here between keeping Jesus’ commandments and keeping Jesus’ word or words is part of the evidence for his position that in the Johannine commandment tradition ἐντολὴ/ἐντολαὶ is “virtually interchangeable” with λόγος.88 For von Wahlde, the same passage indicates that λόγος and ἐντολὴ/ἐντολαὶ are not simply synonymous; rather, the commandment here is to keep the word of Jesus, that is, “to remain faithful to his message.” Jesus’ statement in v 24 that the λόγος his disciples

87 Ibid., III:396.

hear is not his but is “of the Father” “identifies this term with the use of ‘word’ elsewhere in the Gospel to refer to the message of Jesus.”89 The point is that the commandment Jesus gives to his disciples here in John 14 to remain faithful to the word or words he has spoken “is the same ‘first’ commandment that the author of I John spoke of (I John 2:3-8) when he reminded the community that the words of Jesus that they had heard ‘from the beginning’ (I John 2:7) had a unique and permanent value...”90

Von Wahlde sees the statements of Jesus in vv 25-26 as providing further support for his view that keeping the word of Jesus means to remain faithful to all he has taught. In v 26, Jesus declares: “ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιόν ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὄνομά μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ ἔιπον ὑμῖν [ἐγώ].” Von Wahlde summarizes the content of John 14:23-26 as follows:

Thus, all of vv. 23-26 deals with the importance of the word of Jesus. In vv. 23-24, the third author, echoing the thought of I John, reminds the readers that keeping the (historical) words of Jesus was a commandment given to them by Jesus. In the next two verses (vv. 25-26) the third author reminds the readers that the Spirit is linked to the words of Jesus and has as its purpose to remind the believer of Jesus' words.91

Von Wahlde sees the second commandment Jesus received from the Father expressed in John 10:15b-18, all of which is from the third edition:

89 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:645; cf. 660, n. 16.
90 Ibid., II:660.
91 Ibid., II:652-53.
καὶ τὴν ψυχήν μου τίθημι ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων. 16 καὶ ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῆς αὐλῆς ταύτης: κάκεινα δεῖ με ἀγαγεῖν, καὶ τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούσειν, καὶ γενήσονται μία ποίμνη, εἰς ποιμῆν. 17 διὰ τούτο με ὁ πατὴρ ἁγαπᾷ ὅτι ἐγὼ τίθημι τὴν ψυχήν μου, ἵνα πάλιν λάβω αὐτήν. 18 οὐδεὶς αἱρεῖ αὐτήν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ τίθημι αὐτήν ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ. ἔξουσιαν ἔχω θεῖναι αὐτήν, καὶ ἔξουσιαν ἔχω πάλιν λαβεῖν αὐτήν: ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου.

While Jesus speaks in this passage of the Father’s love for him (v 17), there is, as von Wahlde points out, “no explicit mention of love on the part of Jesus....”

Nevertheless, he speaks of the laying down of his life as a commandment that he received from the Father, and it can be understood that his fulfillment of his Father’s commands demonstrates Jesus’ love for his Father, as can be seen from John 14:31.

At the same time, the love that Jesus shows in laying down his life is love “for his own,” that is, for his followers. This can be seen from John 15:13 (third edition), where Jesus states: μείζονα ταύτης ἀγάπην οὐδεὶς ἔχει, ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῇ ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ. Furthermore, in 13:34 (also third edition), the love of his disciples for each other is to be modeled on his love for them:

ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους: καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους.

The command to “love one another” in the verse just cited, 13:34, is one of the two commandments that Jesus gives to his disciples at the Last Supper. Von Wahlde

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92 Ibid., III:396.

93 Ibid., III:396, n. 14.

94 Ibid., III:396.
writes that the relation of this verse to I John 2:7 is indicated by the fact that in John 13:34, Jesus speaks of the commandment to mutual love as “a new commandment,” whereas in I John 2:7, the Epistle author tells his audience: “...I am not writing to you about a new commandment but an old one....” However, it must be kept in mind that, as we have seen in detail, von Wahlde maintains that the commandment referred to in I John 2:7 concerns “keeping the word,” that is, remaining faithful to the word of God received through Jesus, not the love commandment. Von Wahlde maintains that the distinction between old and new is applied to “the commandment to keep the word of Jesus” in I John 2:7-8 and to the commandment to love one another in John 13:34.95

The second commandment (in order of appearance in I John), that the disciples are to love one another as Jesus loved them, is found again in John 15:9-17, all from the third edition. This commandment of Jesus to his disciples is stated explicitly in verses 12 and 17 and corresponds to the second commandment given to Jesus by his Father, of which Jesus speaks in John 10:15b-18.96 Of course, as we have seen in detail, the command to the disciples to love each other is found in several verses of I and II John (e.g. I John 3:23; 4:21; II John 5).

**Summary of the Respective Positions of Brown and Von Wahlde**

We have now considered the arguments of Brown and von Wahlde for their opposing views on how many distinct commandments there are in the Johannine

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95 Ibid., II:634-35.

96 Ibid., III:395-97.
tradition and what the content of the commandment or commandments is. The
differences between the two scholars are most evident when they address the
problem of what precisely the term λόγος refers to in I John 2:5 and 7. Brown’s
position, namely, that in the clause ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐστίν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε (v
7), ὁ λόγος is simply a synonym for ἡ ἐντολὴ and that ἡ ἐντολὴ is the commandment
to “love one another,” seems obvious. However, von Wahlde presents abundant
evidence for his position that there are two commandments in the Johannine
tradition, the first (in order of appearance in I John) concerning correct belief and
the second concerning correct behavior (the love commandment), and that the term
λόγος in v 7 is an elliptical way of expressing the contents of the first
commandment, keeping the word of God that came through Jesus (correct belief).

We have also seen that von Wahlde’s arguments for his position are sometimes
complex and that, while the Johannine commandment to mutual love is easily
recognized, the existence of the commandment concerning proper belief is harder to
demonstrate and less universally accepted by scholars.97 A major difficulty is that
the first Johannine commandment is expressed in varied ways, more so than the
second. One of the reasons for this, according to von Wahlde, is that “the
[commandment] texts are dealing with various aspects of belief....”98 There is more
than one issue at stake in what it means to profess correct belief—which is to say,
correct belief in Jesus. Von Wahlde identifies these issues in a series of questions

97 Ibid., III:386.
98 Ibid., III:394.
that express the nature of the conflict between the Epistle author and his followers, on the one hand, and his opponents, on the other: “How does [Jesus’] sonship differ from ours? What is the role of his historical words as contrasted with the teaching of the Spirit? What is his role in the forgiveness of sin and the giving of life?”

This complexity of the content of the first commandment may have presented a challenge for the Epistle author as he sought, perhaps for the first time in the developing Johannine tradition, to “develop a consistent way of expressing the content of this commandment with the precision demanded by the context.” As a result of these circumstances, we find the commandment to proper belief expressed in the variety of ways that we have seen in our examination of the Johannine commandment texts.

Von Wahlde provides a helpful summary:

The articulation of the first commandment in 2 John is perhaps the most general: the believer is to “walk in truth” (2 John 4ab, 6cd). In 1 John 3:23ab it is expressed as believing “in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” That is, their belief in God is to be that belief which is defined by the message “of his Son Jesus Christ.” In 1 John 2:5-8, the commandment is defined most diffusely. In v 5, the obligation is expressed as “keeping the word of God.” In v 7 (where the singular of the term commandment appears), it is simply defined as the word, but it is the word that has come to be realized in Jesus. Because of the orientation of 1 John to God (rather than to Jesus), it is specified here as keeping the word of God but it is the word manifest in Jesus [emphases in the original].

Von Wahlde observes, in keeping with his view that the third edition of the Gospel of John was formed after the composition of the First Epistle of John, that in the third

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99 Ibid., III:373.
100 Ibid., III:394.
101 Ibid., III:393-94.
In chapter 4 of this dissertation, we discussed the possible meaning of the term λόγος within the Prologue of the First Epistle of John and in the rest of the Epistle. The latter instances involved a consideration of the number and content of the commandment or commandments in the Johannine tradition. In the present excursus, we have looked in detail at the views of U. C. von Wahlde regarding the Johannine commandment tradition as it is found in passages from I and II John and in the Gospel of John. In chapter 5, we shall briefly review the relevant Gospel texts as part of our examination of the uses of λόγος in the third edition of the Gospel, of which these texts are a part.

CHAPTER FIVE

A STUDY OF ΛΟΓΟΣ IN THE THIRD EDITION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine the uses of the term λόγος in those verses or parts of verses which von Wahlde has identified as the work of the author of the third (and final) edition of the Gospel of John. Since von Wahlde’s treatment is so extensive, and since in many instances a distinctly different view is presented by the eminent Johannine scholar Raymond E. Brown, I will focus my analysis on their respective views rather than commenting on the views of other commentators who have not given the topic as thorough a treatment as these two. After looking at their positions in detail, I shall present my own view in the conclusion.

It would be good to recall at the outset that, in von Wahlde’s view, the additions to the Gospel by the “third author” were made after the writing of the First Epistle of John. The third author seeks to incorporate into the Gospel the interpretation of the tradition that is put forth by the author of I John as the authentic interpretation. At the same time, the third author sometimes goes beyond or further develops the thought of the epistolary author.¹

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In the following pages, the Gospel verses from the third edition that contain the word λόγος are not always treated in the order that they appear in the Gospel. Because there are, at times, several instances of a particular use of the term, I have thought it best in those cases to group these verses together in order to address their meaning in a coherent fashion. Seven categories will be analyzed: (1) belief of Jesus’ word [pp 2-3]; (2) remaining in Jesus’ word [pp3-12]; (3) hearing Jesus’ word [pp 12-13]; (4) keeping the word of Jesus (a) in chapter 8 [pp 14-16]; (b) in the commandment texts [pp 16-26]; (5) giving your word [pp 26-27]; (6) the fulfillment of Jesus’ word [pp 27-28]; (7) that the word of Jesus will judge [pp 28-33]. An eighth category contains instances that are not significant theologically [pp 34-35].

Belief Because of Jesus’ Word

4:41 καὶ πολλῷ πλείους ἐπίστευσαν διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ...

In commenting upon the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-42), Brown refers to the evangelist’s abilities as a dramatist. In the conclusion of this story, “the woman who was so important in Scene 1 (4:4-26) is recalled because it is on her word [διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναῖκος] that the townspeople believe.” Nevertheless, the “harvest” of Samaritans, that is, those Samaritans who come to accept Jesus, will have more lasting results, a “greater durability; for the townspeople come to believe on Jesus’ own word that he is the Saviour of the world.” Brown believes that the evangelist intended for his readers to see the contrast between “the unsatisfactory faith of the Jews in 2:23-25 based on a
superficial admiration of miracles” and “the deeper faith of the Samaritans based on the word of Jesus [emphasis added].”

While Brown accounts for the difference between the townspeople’s belief based on the woman’s word and their belief based on the word of Jesus by seeming to indicate that the latter type of faith was more solid (“greater durability”) than the former, von Wahlde accounts for the difference by referring to his theory of the multiple stages in the composition of the Gospel.

Von Wahlde identifies v 39, in which many Samaritans come to believe in Jesus based on the woman’s word, as being from the first edition. Verse 41, “many more believed because of his [i.e. Jesus’] word [διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ],” is from the third edition. Von Wahlde comments that in the first edition of the Gospel, much value was placed on belief based on the testimony of another (such as that of the Samaritan woman), a kind of coming-to-belief that von Wahlde calls “chain-reaction belief.” However, “in the third edition, the focus is on the word of Jesus itself.” Von Wahlde writes that there are two aspects to this focus on Jesus’ word in the third edition. First, as John the Baptist had to “decrease” in importance when Jesus came on the scene in order that Jesus “might increase” (John 3:30; third edition), so in

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3 The identification of the material of the three editions can be found in von Wahlde’s translation of the Gospel of John, Gospel and Letters, i:561-609. I have supplied the Greek text of the relevant passages, but the identification of the different editions corresponds to von Wahlde’s translation.
4:42, from the third edition, the people of this Samaritan town no longer base their belief on the woman’s report (λαλιάν), but on the λόγος of Jesus himself.4

Another aspect of this focus on Jesus’ word is related to the first: We saw in chapter 4 of this dissertation that one of the key points of conflict within the Johannine community at the time of the composition of I John was whether or not Jesus and his words possessed a permanent significance. In the view of the opponents of the author of I John, once they had received the Spirit, Jesus and his teaching, or words, were no longer necessary. To counter such a view, the author of the third edition emphasizes “the role of Jesus’ word in true belief.”5 We will review this understanding of the third edition’s portrayal of Jesus’ role and the abiding importance of his “word” when we analyze the relevant verses in what follows.

“Remain in My Word”

John 8:31: “Ἐλεγεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πρὸς τοὺς πεπιστευκότας αὐτῷ Ἰουδαίους, Ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, ἀληθῶς μαθηταί μοῦ ἔστε,

Before examining the phrase μένειν ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ as a whole, it is necessary to look at the significance of the verb μένειν in itself in the Johannine literature for, as Brown states, “it is a favorite Johannine verb” which appears forty times in the Gospel of John, twenty-four times in I John, and three times in II John. Brown comments that the verb “has a wide range of meaning,” but for the purpose of

5 Ibid., II:195.
understanding its use in the Johannine literature, “remain” and “abide/dwell” are sufficient for translation.\(^6\)

Brown states that of the different possible meanings of μένειν, the definition “to be intimately united with someone” is the most relevant for understanding its use in the Johannine literature,\(^7\) and that “John likes to use μένειν to express the permanency of relationship between Father and Son and between Son and Christian.”\(^8\) Permanence, according to Brown, is a characteristic of God in the Old Testament, as can be seen, for example, in Daniel 6:27: “He is the living God enduring [μένων] forever.” In Wisdom (of Solomon) 7:27, it is said that, as Brown phrases it, “Wisdom too is enduring in herself and renews all things [καὶ μένουσα ἐν αὐτῇ τὰ πάντα καὶ πίετε].” In the New Testament, the First Letter of Peter 1:25 contains an echo of Isaiah 40:8: “τὸ δὲ ρῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.” Brown asserts: “This atmosphere of the permanence of the divine had its influence on the Johannine predilection for μένειν.” In John 12:34, the crowds challenge Jesus’ statement that the Son of Man must be lifted up by responding: “…Ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἐκ τοῦ νόμου ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα….” Brown writes: “…[S]ince John presents Jesus as the Messiah and as the Son of God, all that pertains to Jesus must be permanent and remain forever.” Thus, in John 1:32, John (the Baptist) says that he saw the Spirit remain (ἔμεινεν) on Jesus; Jesus tells the crowd in 6:27 to work for


\(^7\) Brown, AB 29:511.

\(^8\) Ibid., 510.
the food that remains unto eternal life [...τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν μένουσαν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον] which he, the Son of Man, will give; in 15:16, Jesus tells his disciples that he chose them to bear fruit that remains [μένῃ].

Brown observes that in studying the Johannine use of μένειν, especially as part of the expression μένειν ἐν, we enter into the difficult area of “the Johannine theology of immanence, i.e., a remaining in one another that binds together Father, Son, and the Christian believer.” Brown and other scholars refer to this “immanence,” or “remaining in one another,” as “indwelling.” Brown points to an expression of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son in John 14:10-11:


In John 17:20-23, Jesus prays, not only for his disciples present but for all who believe on account of the disciples’ word (διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν), that they may be one so that the world may believe that the Father sent him:


Thus, according to Brown, the disciples are “to be in” the Father and the Son as the Father and the Son are in each other. In v 17:21 ἵνα is used to express Jesus’

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9 Ibid., 510.

10 Ibid., 510.

11 Ibid., 510.
wish that the disciples “be in” himself and the Father, but in 14:10 we see the notion of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son expressed by both μένειν ἐν and εἶναι ἐν. Brown maintains that the two expressions are synonymous, “except that μένειν has the added note of permanence.”12

Brown observes that in the Johannine corpus, μένειν and its equivalent expressions are used “not only for the indwelling of the Father and the Son in the Christian, but also for the indwelling of divine attributes, gifts and powers.”13 Among the divine gifts that dwell in the Christian disciple is the “word” of God or of Jesus. In chapter 3 of this dissertation, we addressed John 5:38, where Jesus says that his listener’s do not have the Father’s λόγος abiding (μένοντα) in them. This verse is identified as part of the second edition by von Wahlde. In chapter 4 of this dissertation, we dealt with I John 2:14, in which the author tells the “young ones” of the community that “...ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει...” We also saw that in I John 2:24, the epistolary author admonishes his readers to let “what [they] have heard from the beginning remain in [them]”: ὑμεῖς ὃ ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω· ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ ὃ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἦκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. In the verse under consideration here, John 8:31, Jesus tells his listeners: “Εἶν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, ἀληθῶς μαθηταί μοι ἐστε...”14

12 Ibid., 510.
13 Ibid., 511.
14 See Brown’s chart in AB 29:511.
In some of the passages cited above, we see that the Father and the Son are said “to be in” or “to remain” (abide/dwell) in each other (John 14:10-11; 17:21).

Likewise, the believer can be said “to be in” or to remain in the Father and the Son (John 17:21; I John 2:24) and the Father and Son can be said to dwell in the believer (John 14:23). At times, the mutual indwelling of God and the believer (I John 4:15-16) or of Jesus and the believer (John 6:56; 15:4-5) is explicitly expressed. In 17:23, Jesus speaks of himself being “in” the disciples and his Father being “in” him. As this indwelling among the Father, the Son, and the believer can be expressed as going in one direction or the other (e.g. believer in the Father and Son or Father and Son in the believer), or both, so it is with “the word” and the believer. Thus, in John 5:38 (second edition) and in I John 2:14, the λόγος, or “what [the community] has heard” (I John 2:24), remains in the disciples, whereas here in John 8:31, Jesus speaks of his true disciples remaining in his λόγος. Regarding this reversal of the “direction” of indwelling, Brown expresses his agreement with J. H. Bernard “when [Bernard] says that it is really the same thing to abide in the word and to have the word abide in oneself.”

Von Wahlde makes the observation that, while in the second edition of the Gospel the notion of “immanence” (“indwelling,” “abiding/remaining in”) is employed “solely to describe the relation between Jesus and the Father...,” in the third edition

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15 See Brown, AB 29:511.

this relationship between the Father and the Son is extended “to affirm that it is possible for the believer to have this same kind of intimate relationship with the Father and Son and Spirit.”

Regarding the content of John 8:31-41, Brown observes that John 8:31-41 is concerned with the issues of freedom versus slavery and what it means to be true children of Abraham. He regards the discourse as mainly addressed to “the Jews” as this term is ordinarily used in the Gospel of John, namely, as a designation for “those [Jews] who are hostile to Jesus.” Nevertheless, Brown believes that much of the discourse has “a secondary applicability to the situation of the Jewish Christians,” who were struggling with choosing between their ancestral traditions and participation in the synagogue, on the one hand, and their faith in Jesus, on the other. According to Brown, “In particular, v 31 would clearly remind the Jewish Christians that what distinguishes the true disciples of Jesus is abiding in his word, not any special loyalty to the Law.” Here Brown understands the word of Jesus as the revelation that “the Son of God has brought....” This revelation is “the truth [that] has set free those who believe in it ([vv] 32, 36).”

In the charts Brown provides in his commentaries that list verses that demonstrate “the indwelling [in the believer] of divine attributes, gifts, and powers,”

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17 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, I:186.

18 Brown, AB 29:362.
under the category of the “word(s)” of God or of Jesus, Brown includes John 15:7, where the Greek for “words” is not λόγος or λόγοι but ῥήματα:

ἐὰν μείνητε ἐν ἐμοί καὶ τὰ ῥήματά μου ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ, δέ ἐὰν θέλητε αἰτήσασθε καὶ γενήσεται ὑμῖν.

The reader will recall that in chapter 3 of this dissertation, we addressed the issue of whether or not ῥήματα, which does not appear in the singular in John’s Gospel, is a synonym for the λόγος of Jesus in the body of the Gospel. In his note on John 15:7, Brown states that “[i]t is dubious that the plural ‘words’ (ῥήματα) is to be distinguished from the singular ‘word’ (λόγος) of 3 [i.e. John 15:3, where Jesus tells his disciples that they are already clean on account of the word (διὰ τὸν λόγον) he has spoken to them]....” Brown observes that in 15:4-5, Jesus refers to his remaining in the disciples (and the disciples in him); here in v 7 Jesus speaks of his ῥήματα remaining in the disciples. Brown concludes from this that “Jesus and his revelation are virtually interchangeable, for he is incarnate revelation (the Word).” (Note the capitalization of “Word,” indicating that Brown is associating the revelation which is Jesus with the λόγος of the Gospel Prologue.)

Brown writes that:

the second line of [v] 7 [ὁ ἐὰν θέλητε αἰτήσασθε καὶ γενήσεται υμῖν] explains the first line [ἐὰν μείνητε ἐν ἐμοί καὶ τὰ ῥήματά μου ἐν υμῖν μείνῃ]: indwelling involves a life lived in harmony with Jesus’ revelation [here Brown refers to his note on “words” which we have summarized in the previous paragraph] and in obedience to Jesus’

19 For these charts, see Brown, AB 29:511 and AB 30:260.

commands (compare ‘my words’ in [v] 7 with ‘my commandments’ in [v] 10).\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, those in whom the words of Jesus remain, that is, “those who have conformed themselves to Jesus,” will make requests that are “harmonious with what Jesus wants....”\textsuperscript{22}

I believe Brown best summarizes his understanding of the Johannine notion of “indwelling,” that is, what it means to remain/abide in God the Father, in Jesus, or in a divine gift such as the λόγος of God or of Jesus, in the following lines:

Divine indwelling is an intimate union that expresses itself in a way of life lived in love....To remain in Jesus, or in the Father, or in one of the divine attributes or gifts [e.g. ὁ λόγος] is intimately associated with keeping the commandments in a spirit of love (John 15:10; I John 4:12, 16), with a struggle against the world (I John 2:16-17), and with bearing fruit (John 15:5)—all basic Christian duties. Thus, indwelling is not the exclusive experience of chosen souls within the Christian community; it is the essential constitutive principle of all Christian life.\textsuperscript{23}

Like Brown, von Wahlde writes that the idea of “remaining” in 8:31 signifies a permanent relationship, but he explains further that what is implied is that Jesus’ listeners “have received the word, and now the question is one of a permanent relation with that word, i.e., continuing to believe [emphasis added].” This same idea

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 679.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 679.

\textsuperscript{23} Brown, AB 29:511-12.
is "expressed in an ‘active’ sense by the expression ‘keep my word’ (8:51, 52, 55; 14:23, 24; 15:20 [twice]; 17:6).”

Von Wahlde identifies 8:31-32a (32a: καὶ γνώσεσθε τὴν ἁλήθειαν…) as the work of the author of the third edition who seeks to make this passage “relevant to the circumstances of his community by identifying the opponents as ‘the Jews who had believed in him.’” In the second edition of the Gospel, “the Jews” are portrayed as consistently united in their opposition to Jesus. There is no question of their ever having believed. However, in vv31-32a,

...the combination of a reference to those [Jews] who believe[d] in Jesus [τοὺς πεπιστευκότας αὐτῷ Ἰουδαίους] with the exhortation to “remain in his word” strongly suggests that this is not the situation of the second edition where ‘the Jews’ never believe, but that of the third edition where the issue is the need for those who have already come to believe to keep the (historical) word of Jesus [emphasis in the original].

Verses 31-32a, then, represent a time when the conflict was not with the synagogue leaders, as was the case at the time of the writing of the second edition, but rather a time of conflict within the Johannine community, a conflict evident in I John and in the third edition of the Gospel. Thus, the words of Jesus in the work of the author of the third edition are aimed at “those who had come to believe but who

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24 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:399.
25 Ibid., II:408.
26 Ibid., II:403.
have not remained in Jesus’ word and who, consequently, were not truly his disciples and who ‘did not know the truth.’”

As we reviewed when commenting on 4:41, one of the central points of conflict within the Johannine community at the time of the composition of I John was whether or not Jesus and his words possessed a permanent significance. In the view of the opponents of the author of I John, once they had received the Spirit, it was the Spirit who taught them. Jesus and his teaching, or words, were no longer necessary. From the perspective of the epistolary author, his opponents had failed to “keep the word” of God as it had been revealed by Jesus and handed on within the community “from the beginning.” The author of the Second Letter of John (considered by both Brown and von Wahlde to be the author of the other two letters as well) warns his readers that those who go beyond the historical words of Jesus do not possess God.

Von Wahlde explains that for the author of the third edition of the Gospel, the issue is one not merely of belief but of proper belief, which includes acceptance of the permanent importance of the word of Jesus. Thus, the disciple will “know the truth” (8:32a), an apocalyptic expression that involves “an understanding of the

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27 Ibid., II:408.


29 Ibid., II:408.
entirety of revelation (whether from the Law, as earlier, or from Jesus.)” Jesus' word is permanently valid and is essential for understanding God's revelation.30

Von Wahlde comments that although the situation of the Johannine community at the time the third author added verses 31-32a was that of internal conflict rather than conflict with the synagogue, as was the case with the second edition, these verses “fit” here in chapter 8, a chapter in which (from the time of the second edition) there is such a focus on the word of Jesus (received from the Father) as one of the witnesses to the truth of what he says. Von Wahlde sums up the difference between the second edition material and that of the third edition with regard to Jesus' λόγος by saying: “In the second edition, the focus was on accepting the word of Jesus; at the time of I John (and in the third edition) the focus is on remaining in the word of Jesus [emphasis in the original].”31

To Hear His Word

43διὰ τὴν λαλιὰν τὴν ἐμὴν οὐ γινώσκετε; ὅτι οὐ δύνασθε ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν.

Brown notes that the object of ἀκούειν in this verse is in the accusative case (as opposed to the genitive). Ἀκούειν with the accusative, says Brown, usually signifies physical hearing “rather than listening with understanding.” What this

30 Ibid., II:408.

31 Ibid., II:408.
demonstrates about Jesus’ audience is that “[t]hey have become so obdurate that they cannot even hear him; they are deaf.”

Von Wahlde considers this verse within its larger context, a fierce debate between Jesus and his audience, “the Jews.” Immediately after v 43 is the famous, or infamous, statement of Jesus to “the Jews”: ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστὲ καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν θέλετε ποιεῖν (8:44). The reason, then, that Jesus’ listeners do not know his message (τὴν λαλιὰν τὴν ἐμὴν) and, in fact, are not able to hear his word (τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν) is “because they have a different father, the devil; and they do his wishes (v 44a).”

**Keep His Word (τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον)**

In chapter 4 of this dissertation and in the Excursus on the Johannine Commandment tradition, we examined the phrase τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον in the Gospel of John, for both Brown and von Wahlde see its use in the Gospel, especially in John 14:23, 24, as support for their respective positions on the meaning of the term λόγος in the First Epistle of John. Since the present chapter deals with the meaning of λόγος in the third edition of the Gospel, the edition in which, according to von Wahlde, we find all eight instances of τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον that appear in the Gospel, there is necessarily some repetition of the previous discussions of this phrase here.

32 Brown, AB 29:357.


34 Ibid., III:59.
Some form of the expression τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον appears in John 8:51, 52, 55; 14:23, 24; 15:20 [twice]; 17:6. Brown states that “‘[k]eeping’ Jesus’ word or commandment is a common Johannine theme...”35

According to von Wahlde, “[I]n all of these instances, [the expression ‘keep the word’] is generally recognized to mean ‘keep the message’ (that is, be faithful to the message) of Jesus,” for the word of Jesus is the word of the Father. Von Wahlde maintains that these verses containing the phrase τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον “were added to the Gospel after the writing of I John and so were undoubtedly motivated by the author of I John’s insistence on the importance of remaining faithful to the historical words of Jesus [emphasis in the original].”36 Thus, by emphasizing the permanent validity of the words that Jesus spoke during his earthly life as they had been handed down “from the beginning,” both the author of I John and, after him, the author of the third edition of the Gospel sought to counter their opponents’ claim to have received from the Spirit teaching that went beyond the teaching of Jesus (see II John 9).37

The eight instances of the phrase τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον can be divided into two groups: those that appear in Jesus’ discourse concerning the witness of his word in chapter 8 of the Gospel, and those that appear in the Farewell Discourses of Jesus at the Last Supper.

35 Brown, AB 29:366.
36 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:59.
37 Ibid., I:311.
(a) Τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον in Chapter Eight

In chapter 3 of this dissertation, we saw that in the material identified by von Wahlde as the second edition of the Gospel, Jesus speaks of four witnesses to the truth of what he is saying: John the Baptist, Jesus’ works, Jesus’ words (which are, in fact, the word of the Father), and the Scriptures. Jesus speaks of these witnesses in 5:31-40, a passage from the second edition that, as we have seen, von Wahlde regards as “paradigmatic,” for this listing of witnesses provides much of the structure of the second edition. Then, within the Gospel, there is a particular discourse of Jesus dedicated to each of the three essential witnesses (the witness of John the Baptist is “human testimony,” and therefore not accepted by Jesus [5:34]): the witness of Scripture (6:1-50), of his words (8:13-59), and of his works (9:1-10:38).

We also saw in chapter three of this dissertation that while the word λόγος itself appears only once in the material of the second edition within chapter 8, if we consider all the words that have to do with speaking and teaching, there is in chapter 8 what von Wahlde calls a “massive focus on the ‘word’.” To this second-edition material, the author of the third edition has added his own material, including three verses that contain the phrase τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον:

38 Ibid., I:198.
39 Ibid., II:256-57.
40 Ibid., I:198. See also von Wahlde’s “Addendum: The Role of the Witnesses to Jesus and Belief,” II: 109-110.
41 Ibid., II:389-90.
In v 51, Jesus promises that whoever keeps his word will have eternal life. “The Jews” repeat Jesus’ claim with disbelief in v 52.

Brown writes that the injunction to keep the word of Jesus “means to hear and obey.” Therefore, Jesus’ promise of eternal life to the one who keeps his word is similar to his statement in 5:24:

Nevertheless, Brown suggests that to keep the word may possess a meaning beyond to hear (ἀκούειν) the word: “it echoes the notion of the word of Jesus which abides in the believer....” He comments further: “The word of Jesus is the antidote to the sin and death which the devil brought into the world in the Garden of Eden.” He justifies this interpretation of Jesus’ promise of eternal life to the one who keeps his

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42 Brown, AB 29:366.

43 Brown, AB 29:366. Brown refers here to his note on 8:31, p. 355. In that verse Jesus speaks of the believer who abides in his word, but Brown expresses his view, in agreement with J. H. Bernard, “that it is really the same thing to abide in the word and to have the word abide in oneself.” See Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, (2 vols.; Ed. A. H. McNelle; Edinburgh: Clark, 1928), II: 305.
word in v 51 by referring to Jesus’ statement in 8:44 that the devil “was a murderer from the beginning....”\(^{44}\)

Von Wahlde states in his commentary that in 8:51 we find the first use (in the Gospel) of the verb \(\tau\eta\rho\varepsilon\iota\nu\) with the object \(\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu\). He makes the important point that “[to keep my word]’ is a quasi-technical expression for remaining faithful to the historical words of Jesus and is central to the theology of the third edition.”\(^{45}\)

In the addition to v 55 by the author of the third edition, Jesus states: “...I keep his word,” that is, the word of the Father.

In these verses from the third edition, according to von Wahlde, “the word” that Jesus speaks of keeping is “the message of Jesus conceived of as a whole.”\(^{46}\)

(b) \(\tau\eta\rho\varepsilon\iota\nu\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu\) as One of the Two Johannine Commandments in the Farewell Discourses

Some form of the phrase \(\tau\eta\rho\varepsilon\iota\nu\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu\) appears five times in the Farewell Discourses of Jesus at the Last Supper (14:23, 24; 15:20 [twice]; 17:6). As we recalled in the introduction to this section, both Brown and von Wahlde employ these verses, especially 14:23, 24, to support their respective positions on the meaning of \(\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu\) in I John 2:5 and 7. Furthermore, both scholars examined the larger context of vv. 23 and 24, especially vv. 15 and 21, in which Jesus speaks of

\(^{44}\) Brown, AB 29: 366.

\(^{45}\) Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:418.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., I:312.
keeping his commandments (τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολὰς), due to the similarity between the expressions τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολὰς and τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον.

All of the following verses from John 14 are identified by von Wahlde as being from the third edition of the Gospel:

15 Ἐὰν ἀγαπᾶτέ με, τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε....

21 ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολὰς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτὰς ἐκεῖνος ἐστιν ὁ ἀγαπῶν με: ὁ δὲ ἀγαπῶν με ἀγαπηθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός μου, κἀγὼ ἀγαπησόμεθα αὐτὸν καὶ ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἐμαυτόν....

23 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐὰν τις ἀγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ἀγαπήσει αὐτόν, καὶ πρός αὐτὸν ἔλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ’ αὐτὸν ποιησόμεθα.

24 ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν με τοὺς λόγους μου οὐ τηρεῖ: καὶ ὁ λόγος ὃν ἀκούετε οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸς ἀλλὰ τοῦ πέμψαντός με πατρός.

25 Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν παρ’ ὑμῖν μένων:

26 ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὄνομά μου, ἐκεῖνος διδάσκει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν [ἐγώ].

We can observe that in 14:15 and 21, Jesus says that the one who loves him will keep his commandments (τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς), whereas in v 23 the one loving him will keep his word (τὸν λόγον μου ) and in v 24 the one who does not love him will not keep his words (τοὺς λόγους μου). In chapter 4 of this dissertation, when considering the views of Brown regarding the significance of λόγος in I John 2:5 and 7, we saw that he regarded the close similarity between the expressions τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολὰς in John 14:21 and τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον in 14:23 as supporting his contention that "λόγος ('word') ...is virtually interchangeable with ἐντολή,
For him, the fact that the evangelist sometimes uses the plural ἐντολὰς rather than the singular ἐντολὴ does not indicate a plurality of commandments given by Jesus to the disciples. “[R]ather the plural gives a comprehensive force to the commandment to love.” Brown writes of one commandment which Jesus received from his Father concerning “his words, deeds, and death….This ‘commandment’ is, in turn, the prototype for Jesus’ commandment(s) to his disciples. Specifically he commands them to love one another ‘as I have loved you,....’

In further support of his view that the alternation between the singular and plural of ἐντολὴ is “not of clear theological significance,” Brown points out that both the singular and plural of λόγος appear in John 14:24 “without apparent distinction in meaning....” In the course of his commentary on 1 John 2:7, Brown refers to John 14:23 and asserts:

> [t]he equivalence between “word” and “commandment” stems from the O[ld] T[estament] where the Ten Commandments are referred to as the “words” of God (Exod 20:1; Deut 5:5, 22—indeed “word,” Hebrew dabar, may be a technical term for covenant stipulation)....

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47 Brown, AB 30:252.

48 Ibid., 251.

49 Ibid., 251.

50 Brown, AB 29A: 641.

51 Ibid., 641-42; see AB 30:252.
Brown sees vv 23 and 24 as Jesus’ indirect answer to Judas’ question in v 22:
“…[W]hat can have happened that you are going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world? [Brown’s translation].”\(^{52}\) Brown observes that in 14:23, one of the “necessary conditions” Jesus speaks of for the indwelling of the Father and Jesus in the disciple is that the disciple keep his (i.e. Jesus’) word.\(^{53}\) He sees a connection between this condition and that spoken of in vv 15 and 21: in v 15, keeping Jesus’ commandments is necessary for receiving the Paraclete, and in v 21 it is the condition for the presence of Jesus in the believer.\(^{54}\) In v 24, then, Jesus returns “obliquely” to Judas’ question: the one who does not love Jesus does not keep his words (plural), but his word (singular) is not his own but that of his Father. In his comments on this verse, Brown refers to John 12:48, where Jesus says that the λόγος he has spoken will judge the one who rejects him on the last day. Brown writes: “We see here [in 14:24] that it does this by cutting him off from the source of life that the true disciple of Jesus enjoys.”\(^{55}\)

Recall that in Von Wahlde’s view, the author of the third edition of the Gospel further develops the “theology of commandment” that was introduced in the First

\(^{52}\) Brown, AB 29A: 635. Von Wahlde explains the indirectness of Jesus’ reply to Judas’ question by attributing v 22 to the author of the second edition and vv 23-24 to the author of the third edition; Gospel and Letters, II:642, 651. This is an example of one of the aporias within the Gospel that persuade me of the correctness of von Wahlde’s position that there were several stages in the composition of the Gospel.

\(^{53}\) Brown, AB 29A: 647.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 644, 647.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 648.
Epistle of John. For von Wahlde there are two commandments at issue in the First and Second Epistles: proper faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of the Father, and the command to the Johannine Christians to love one another. Von Wahlde maintains that the first of these commandments, proper christological faith, is expressed in the Johannine epistles in variant forms as keeping God’s word (as it came through Jesus, I John 2:5, 7) and “walking in truth” (II John 4, 6).

Recall also that, according to von Wahlde, in the third edition of the Gospel, the commandments that Jesus gives to his disciples correspond to the two previously given to Jesus by the Father. In 12:49-50 (third edition), Jesus makes an explicit statement that the Father has given him a commandment regarding τί εἴπω καὶ τί λαλήσω (“what to say and what to speak”). Von Wahlde sees a correlation between this commandment, the first of the two given by the Father to Jesus, and Jesus’ statements to his disciples at the Last Supper that the one who loves him keeps his commandments (14:15, 21) or his word (14:23, 24). “In content, the first commandment given to the disciples by Jesus parallels the first commandment given to Jesus by the Father: the disciples are to keep the word of Jesus, the word that Jesus was commanded to speak.”

57 See, for example, von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:393-94.
58 Ibid., III:395.
59 Ibid., III:396.
60 Ibid., III:396.
We have seen that for Brown, the parallelism between the expressions τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολὰς in John 14:21 and τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον in 14:23 indicates that in the Johannine tradition “λόγος (‘word’) ...is virtually interchangeable with ἐντολὴ, ‘commandment,’...” For von Wahlde, the same verses show that λόγος and ἐντολὴ/ἐντολαὶ are not simply synonymous; rather, by repeating the elements of vv 15 and 21 in vv 23 and 24 but at the same time substituting the phrase τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον for τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολὰς, the Jesus of the third edition “specif[ies] the content of the commandment he has in mind.” The content of the first commandment which Jesus gives his disciples is to keep the word of Jesus. Von Wahlde observes that, “[a]s if to drive the point home again,” Jesus repeats in v 24 what he had said at the beginning of his statement in v 23, but in the negative form: “The one who does not love me does not keep my words....” Likewise, as he had said in v 21 that the one who keeps his commandments is the one who loves him and will therefore be loved by the Father, in v 23 Jesus says that the one who loves him keeps his word and the Father will love that person.

Von Wahlde lays out the parallels as follows:

15 Ἐάν ἄγαπᾶτέ με, τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε....
23 Ἐάν τις ἄγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει....

21 ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολὰς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτὰς ἐκεῖνος ἐστιν ὁ ἄγαπῶν με....

61 Brown, Epistles, 252, 254.
62 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:645.
63 Ibid., II:659.
For von Wahlde, these parallels, including the way in which Jesus speaks first of keeping his commandments in general and then of the specific commandment to keep his word, “demonstrate... the way the author [of the third edition] presents ‘keeping the word’ of Jesus as the first of his commandments.”64 Thus, in von Wahlde’s view, the commandment Jesus gives to his disciples here in John 14 to remain faithful to the word or words he has spoken is the same “first” commandment that the author of I John spoke of (I John 2:3-8) when he reminded the community that [contrary to the views of the opponents] the words of Jesus that they had heard “from the beginning” (I John 2:7) had a unique and permanent value....65

Furthermore, Jesus’ statement in John 14:24 that the λόγος his disciples hear is not his but is “of the Father” “identifies this term with the use of ‘word’ elsewhere in the Gospel to refer to the message of Jesus.”66

Von Wahlde supports his interpretation of the content of the first commandment Jesus gives to his disciples, namely, to remain faithful to all that he has taught, by

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64 Ibid., II:659. Recall that von Wahlde refers to “keeping the word” of God (in the Epistle) or of Jesus (in the Gospel) as the “first” of the two Johannine commandments because, in light of his interpretation of I John 2:3-11, this commandment is the first to make its appearance in the Johannine corpus. The commandment to mutual love is the second; Gospel and Letters, III:387, n. 2.

65 Ibid., II:660.

66 Ibid., II:645.
pointing to the statement of Jesus in v 26: “ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιον ὁ
πέμψει ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ ὄνοματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς
πάντα ἃ ἐίπον ὑμῖν [ἐγώ]. That is, the Spirit will remind the disciples of *everything* that Jesus has told them.⁶⁷

In Von Wahlde’s view, the *second* commandment which Jesus gives his disciples is
the commandment to love one another as he has loved them (13:34; 15:12, 17).
This commandment corresponds to the commandment Jesus had received from the
Father to lay down his life for his sheep (10:15b-18).⁶⁸ (Recall that for the other
scholars whose positions we reviewed regarding I John 2:5, 7 in chapter 4 of this
dissertation, the commandment to mutual love is the one commandment, or the one
expression of the sum of Jesus’ commandments, in the Johannine tradition and is the
commandment the epistolary author writes about in I John 2:3-11.)

Von Wahlde calls attention to the fact that whereas in I John the commandment to
“keep his word” (I John 2:3-7) is said to be “of God,” in the Gospel (i.e. in the third
edition of the Gospel, according to the view adopted in this dissertation), this
commandment is given by Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus first received a commandment
from the Father about “what to say and what to speak” (12:49), so that “by keeping
the word of Jesus, the disciples are still (ultimately) keeping the word of God.” Still,
the fact that in the Gospel the injunction to “keep my word” is portrayed as
delivered by Jesus alters the portrayal in I John so that, in the Gospel, “the primary

⁶⁷ Ibid., II:652-53.
⁶⁸ Ibid., I:427.
focus [is] on the role of Jesus.”  

We saw in chapter 2 of this dissertation that, while many scholars have taken the view that what was first attributed to Jesus in the Gospel is subsequently attributed to God in the Johannine epistles, von Wahlde states that “[t]his would be a curious ‘development.’ It is almost inconceivable that the community would shape its conception of God in the light of its conception of Jesus.”

In this verse, the expression τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον appears twice, though the second time the object τὸν λόγον is understood. Jesus tells his disciples that they can expect the same treatment from “the world” that he has received: “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours” (von Wahlde’s translation). The last part of this verse indicates, according to Brown, “that the word of Jesus’ disciples will have the same effect as the word of Jesus himself….The word of Jesus will now be communicated through the preaching and teaching of the disciples.” The disciples will bear God’s word as did the prophets of the Old Testament, and as in the case of those prophets, God’s words to Ezekiel in

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69 Ibid., I:440.

70 Ibid., I:383.

71 Ibid., II:684.
Ezek 3:7 will be true for the disciples as well: “They will not listen to you because they will not listen to me.”  

Von Wahlde reminds the reader that τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον is the same expression used in other verses of the third edition of the Gospel “to refer to the commandment to ‘keep the word’ of Jesus....” The appearance of this expression in the third edition is a response to the world’s hatred (15:18-19) for the Johannine Christians who remain faithful to the tradition handed down “from the beginning,” that is, the teaching of the Jesus of the ministry, as it was interpreted by the author of I John and the author of the third edition. Von Wahlde regards this as an example of how “the third author tended to blend the ‘actors’ of the second edition with those of the third.” In the second edition, in which we see Jesus declare that his word, which is the word of the Father, is one of the witnesses to the truth of what he proclaims, the issue was the hatred directed at the Johannine Christians by “the Jews” who did not accept Jesus. In the third edition, the author employs the command to keep the word of Jesus as an “updated” response to the hatred now experienced by the Johannine community from the opponents, secessionists from the community itself, against whom the author of I John had written.

John 17:6 Ἐφανέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὓς ἔδωκάς μοι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου. σοὶ ἦσαν κἀμοὶ αὐτοὺς ἔδωκας, καὶ τὸν λόγον σου τετήρηκαν.

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72 Brown, AB 29A: 696.

73 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:688.
Brown notes that while in other passages of John’s Gospel (e.g. 8:51; 14:23), people are to keep Jesus’ word, here Jesus says that his disciples have kept “your”—that is, the Father’s—word. There is no discrepancy, however, for the word of Jesus comes from the Father (cf. John 7:16).74

Brown favors the view that “the name” of the Father that Jesus has revealed to people is “I AM” (expressed in the Septuagint form of Exodus 3:14, where God reveals his sacred name to Moses, by the participial form as ὁ ὄν). According to Brown, Isaiah 52:6—“On that day my people shall know my name, that I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) He who speaks”--is especially relevant for understanding John 17:6. It is this name, ἐγώ εἰμι, that Jesus claims for himself in the Gospel (e.g. 8:28).75 The relevance of this for the significance of Jesus’ statement that his disciples have kept his Father’s word is that “…in the O[ld] T[estament] knowledge of God’s name implied a commitment of life (‘Those who know your name put their trust in you,’ Ps 9:11 [10])….” Jesus has revealed his Father’s name to his disciples and they have kept the Father’s word.76

As with the other instances of τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον in the material of the third edition, von Wahlde considers the appearance of the phrase in 17:6 to refer to what he regards as the first of the two Johannine commandments, to keep the word.77

74 Brown, AB 29A:743.

75 Ibid., 756.

76 Ibid., 754.

77 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:724.
Von Wahlde writes that there are “two distinct aspects to v 6”: Jesus’ statement that he has revealed the Father’s name to those whom the Father has given him “out of the world,” and what von Wahlde calls “the extended description of the disciples.”

Regarding the first element, von Wahlde, like Brown, maintains that the name of the Father which Jesus has revealed to the disciples is “I AM” and cites as evidence the LXX translation of Exodus 3:14 (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν….ὁ ὄν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς υμᾶς). In addition, he refers to LXX Isaiah 43:25: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἐξαλείφων τὰς ἀνομίας σου (I am I AM...) and this is the name which the Jesus of the third edition claims for himself (8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:6).

Regarding the second distinctive feature of 17:6, the detailed description of the disciples, von Wahlde writes that this description is probably intended to “set forth for those qualities that Jesus considered necessary for one to receive the divine name.” One of these necessary qualities is that the disciples have kept the Father’s word. (Like Brown, Von Wahlde notes that this is the only Gospel verse where it is said that the disciples keep the Father’s word, whereas elsewhere in the Gospel

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78 Ibid., II:731.

79 Ibid., II:724. In his list here of verses in which the Johannine form of God’s name appears, von Wahlde has 18:5 rather than 18:6, but he indicates that 18:5 is from the first edition of the Gospel, whereas the repetition of Jesus statement in 18:6 is from the third (see II:744). In his notes on these verses, von Wahlde explains that in v 5 ἐγώ εἰμι may have the ordinary meaning of “I am he,” but in the vv 6 and 8, which are part of the additions by the third author, the statement is understood as the divine name, as indicated by the reaction of the cohort in v 6 to Jesus’ declaration; Gospel and Letters, II:748-749.
Jesus speaks of the disciples keeping his (i.e. Jesus’) word. In I John the disciple keeps God’s word.\(^{80}\)

“I have given them your word....”

17:4 ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον σου, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ἐμίσησεν αὐτούς, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου καθώς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου.

In this verse, which, like 17:6, is part of Jesus’ prayer to his Father at the Last Supper, we see Jesus’ concern not only for his own glorification but for those his Father has given him “out of the world” (17:6), that is, his disciples. In 17:9, Jesus says to his Father that he does not pray for the world, but only for these men that the Father has given him. Brown comments that while some try to interpret 17:9 in a way that “softens the harshness” displayed in Jesus’ refusal to pray for the world, “...this attempt to tone down John 17:9 does not do justice to Johannine dualism.”\(^{81}\)

In the dualistic view of the world typical of apocalyptic, which is in itself, according to von Wahlde,\(^{82}\) characteristic of the third edition of the Gospel, there is no place for loving one’s enemies, as in the Synoptics (Matt 5:44; cf. Lk 23:34). Rather, Jesus has given the Father’s word to his disciples (v 14) and sends them into the world (v 18), but the world hates them for it (v 14).\(^{83}\)

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\(^{80}\) Ibid., II:731. See also II:731, n. 4.

\(^{81}\) Brown, AB 29 A:763.

\(^{82}\) See von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, I:231ff.

\(^{83}\) See Brown, AB 29A:763.
That the Word of Jesus Might Be Fulfilled

18:9 ἵνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὃν εἶπεν ὅτι Οὓς δέδωκάς μοι οὐκ ἀπώλεσα ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐδένα

18:32 ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πληρωθῇ ὃν εἶπεν σημαίνων ποίῳ θανάτῳ ἤμελλεν ἀποθνῄσκειν.

Brown observes that it is only in these two verses that the verb πληροῦν, used in other passages of the New Testament to express the fulfillment of Old Testament passages, is used to refer to the fulfillment of the words of Jesus. Interestingly, Brown writes,

Such usage implicitly puts Jesus’ words on a level with the words of the Jewish Scriptures and is the beginning of an attitude that would lead toward the recognition of canonical Christian writings alongside the Jewish ones.84

According to Brown, the basis for the Johannine treatment of Jesus’ words as equal to those of Scripture is that “Jesus’ words have been given to him by God (17:8) and that Jesus’ revelation surpasses the Torah given through Moses (1:17).”85

Von Wahlde refers to the words “so that...might be fulfilled” as a “formulaic expression.” In 18:9 (ἵνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὃν εἶπεν) and 18:32 (ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πληρωθῇ ὃν εἶπεν...) it is specifically the word of Jesus that is being fulfilled. Like Brown, von Wahlde maintains that this would indicate that in these verses the word of Jesus “is seen as on a par with Scripture.” Regarding the two verses, von Wahlde states: “Both describe events that are seen to be fulfillment of the word of

84 Ibid., 811.

85 Ibid., 811.
Jesus, both use the same formula of fulfillment typical of the third author, and both refer to earlier statements of Jesus that were inserted into the Gospel by the third author."\(^8^6\)

We saw this same equivalence between the word of Scripture and the word of Jesus being made in John 2:22, a verse from the second edition, though there it was expressed differently, without the use of πληροῦν.

**A Unique Use of Λόγος: The Word Will Judge**

12:47 καὶ ἕαν τίς μου ἀκούσῃ τῶν ῥημάτων καὶ μὴ φυλάξῃ, ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω αὐτόν, οὐ γὰρ ἠλθὼν ἵνα κρίνω τὸν κόσμον ἀλλ' ἵνα σώσω τὸν κόσμον.

12:48 ὁ ἀθετῶν ἐμὲ καὶ μὴ λαμβάνων τὰ ῥήματά μου ἔχει τὸν κρίνοντα αὐτόν: ὁ λόγος δὲν ἐλάλησα ἐκεῖνος κρυνεὶ αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ:

The use of the term λόγος, or perhaps we could say the “activity” of the λόγος, in John 12:48 is unique in the Gospel of John. Von Wahlde recalls the comment of C. K. Barrett: “There seems to be no precise parallel to this statement."\(^8^7\) The λόγος seems to possess an almost independent existence: while Jesus will not judge the one who hears but does not keep his ῥημάτα (v 47), his λόγος will. I concur with von Wahlde, however, when he states that “attempts to see this as a direct reference

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\(^8^6\) Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, II:749. Von Wahlde writes that the “word” of Jesus which is referred to in 18:32 is his statement in 12:32: καὶ γὰρ ἔαν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας ἑλκύσω πρὸς ἐμαυτόν. Von Wahlde, II: 774. As for the “word” of Jesus that is stated in 18:9 to be fulfilled, von Wahlde writes that the “generally accepted candidates are 6:39; 10:28-29; and 17:12.” Von Wahlde, II:747.

to Jesus as the incarnate Word of the Prologue are erroneous."\(^{88}\) Clearly, Jesus does not identify himself as the λόγος; rather, his λόγος seems to act almost apart from him in judging the unbeliever.

After pointing out that in this verse we see both realized eschatology (i.e. the one not accepting Jesus’ words [τὰ ῥήματά μου] has the one judging him, namely, “the word [ὁ λόγος] that [Jesus] has spoken”) and final eschatology (this judgment will take place “on the last day”), Brown writes of “the many echoes of Deuteronomy” in 12:48 ff.\(^{89}\) In general, “[t]he thought that God will punish the failure of His people to hear the words of his messenger is, of course, an ancient one.”\(^{90}\) Brown focuses in particular on Deuteronomy 18:18-19, concerning God’s promise to send a prophet like Moses:

> I shall put my words in his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I command him. And whoever does not hear the words which the prophet will speak in my name, I shall take vengeance on him [the translation and the emphases are Brown’s].\(^{91}\)

Following M.-E. Boismard,\(^{92}\) Brown points out several ways in which John 12:48 and Deuteronomy 18:18-19 are similar. In John 12:47, Jesus speaks of those who listen to [ἀκούειν] his words [τὰ ῥηματὰ] and do not keep them, and in 12:48 he

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\(^{90}\) Brown, AB 29:491.

\(^{91}\) Ibid., AB 29:491-92.

speaks of those who do not accept [λαμβάνειν] his words [τὰ ρήματά]. The
Masoretic text of Deuteronomy 18:19 uses the verb ὑστερεῖ to express the action of the
one who does not hear or listen to the prophet like Moses, whereas the Aramaic
Targum pseudo-Jonathan uses the verb qᵉbal, “which means both ‘to accept’ and ‘to
hear’.”

In John 12:47-48, the Greek word for “words” is τὰ ρήματά, and in the
Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 18:18, God says that he will put τὸ ρήμα μου in
the prophet’s mouth.

Brown writes that the thought of Deuteronomy 18:18-19 seems to continue to be
reflected in John 12:49-50, for as in Deut 18:18 God says that he will put his words
in the mouth of the prophet that he is promising, so in John 12:49-50, Jesus says:

ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐξ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐκ ἐλάλησα, ἀλλ’ ὁ πέμψας με πατὴρ αὐτός μοι ἐντολὴν δέδωκεν τί εἴπω καὶ τί λαλήσω. καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιός ἐστιν. ἃ οὖν ἐγὼ λαλῶ, καθὼς εἰρηκέν μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὕτως λαλῶ.

In Deut 18:18, the prophet like Moses will speak all that God commands him to
speak; in John 12:49-50, Jesus says that the Father has given him a command
regarding τί εἴπω καὶ τί λαλήσω, that is, “what [he] should say and what [he] should

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93 Brown, AB 29:492. Interestingly, in his English translation of Deuteronomy 18:19 in Targum
Pseudo-Jonathan, Ernest G. Clarke renders qᵉbal as “obey”; Ernest G. Clarke with Sue Magder, Trans.,
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94 Brown, AB 29:492.

95 See Brown, AB 29:492.
speak.” The Father’s command is eternal life. Thus, as Brown points out, “the theme of command runs through both passages.”

Finally, while in the Masoretic text of Deuteronomy 18:19 it is God who will exact vengeance on the one who refuses to hear his (i.e. God’s) words spoken by the prophet in God’s name, in Targum Neofiti I and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, “it is God’s memra or word that takes vengeance.” Brown points out that the latter rendition from Neofiti I and Pseudo-Jonathan provides a parallel to John 12:48, where it is Jesus’ λόγος that will condemn the one who rejects his ρήματα.

Brown writes that there are other passages in Deuteronomy which constitute a parallel to Jesus’ statement that his word will condemn the one who rejects his words. In Deut 31:19, God commands Moses to write out a song (found in Deut 32) that will “be a witness for me against the Israelites” when they are unfaithful, and in Deut 31:26 Moses orders the Levites to place the book of the law next to the ark of the covenant for the same purpose.

Brown notes that in John 12:49-50 Jesus speaks in strong terms of the commandment that he has received from the Father, a commandment regarding what to say. For Brown, the one commandment Jesus has received also concerns what he is to do, for in 10:18 Jesus speaks of the command from the Father to lay down his life. As indicated in 12:50, the commandment that the Father has given

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96 Ibid., AB 29:492.
97 Ibid., AB 29:492.
98 Ibid., AB 29:492.
Jesus leads to eternal life for humanity, for it concerns Jesus’ words and deeds, which “are themselves the source of eternal life (6:68, 10:10).” Brown again sees a background in Deuteronomy for this understanding: in Deut 46-47 Moses says that the words he is giving the people will lead to a long life, and in Deut 8:3 “man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

Brown points out, however, that the command of God in the Johannine tradition, the command that leads to eternal life, goes beyond any commandment from the Old Testament: “[The command of God] is the word of God spoken through Jesus that now sums up the covenant obligations of the believer....[In John 12:49-50] Jesus spells out in a positive manner that it is in his word that men do have eternal life.”

According to von Wahlde, vv 46-50 of John 12 were added by the author of the third edition and exhibit the dualistic worldview characteristic of apocalyptic. The judgment Jesus speaks of in these verses is not of the world as a whole but of the individual, and it takes place not only in the present (realized eschatology) but also “on the last day” (future eschatology). Though Jesus “did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (v 47), the individual will be judged. However,

it will not precisely be Jesus who judges the unbeliever on the last day....[Rather] the word of Jesus will judge humanity [v. 48] because that word is intended to evoke a response, and the nature of one’s response (belief or unbelief) will lead one to life or to judgment.

99 Ibid., AB 29:492.

100 Ibid., AB 29:492-93.

101 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:569.
Von Wahlde understands vv 47-48, in which Jesus states that the one who does not keep his ρῆματα will be judged on the last day by the λόγος he has spoken, in the context of his understanding of the theology of commandment found in the First Epistle of John and in the verses of the third edition of the Gospel. Recall that for von Wahlde, the commandment Jesus speaks of in 12:49 as one he has received from the Father, a commandment concerning “what to say and what to speak,” and the commandment Jesus says in 10:18 that he received from the Father, namely, to lay down his life “for [his] sheep” (see 10:11, 14), are two distinct commandments, and that each of these commandments has its counterpart in the two commandments that Jesus gives to his disciples at the Last Supper. Thus, the disciples are to “keep the word” of Jesus that he was given to speak by the Father, and they are to love one another as Jesus has loved them, a love he would demonstrate in laying down his life for them.¹⁰²

We have seen that in von Wahlde's view, the commandment to “keep the word” of God as it came through Jesus was introduced into the Johannine corpus by the author of I John, beginning with chapter 2. At issue was the importance that was to be attached to proper belief in Jesus as the Son sent by the Father and the abiding relevance of his words. The opponents of the author of I John placed such emphasis on the role of the Spirit that they claimed that the Spirit had revealed to them teachings that went beyond the historical words of Jesus (see II John 9). In response to his opponents’ claims, the author of I John insists on the necessity of “keeping the

¹⁰² Ibid., II:570-71.
word,” that is, professing proper christological belief and remaining faithful to the historical words of Jesus.\footnote{Ibid., I:311.} The author of the third edition of the Gospel incorporates the epistolary author’s position into the final edition of the Gospel and, as mentioned above, writes of the two commandments given by the Father to Jesus (10:18; 12:49-50), which issue in the two distinct commandments given by Jesus to his disciples.\footnote{Ibid., II:570-71.}

**Five Remaining Instances of λόγος in the Third Edition**

The remaining occurrences of the word λόγος in the third edition of the Gospel are not relevant for the purposes of this study.

\begin{quote}
4:37 (ἐν γὰρ τούτῳ ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀληθινὸς ὅτι Ἅλλος ἐστὶν ὁ σπείρων καὶ Ἀλλος ὁ θερίζων)
\end{quote}

In this verse from the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus makes this statement to his disciples. Both Brown and Von Wahlde translate ὁ λόγος as “the saying.”\footnote{Brown, AB 29: 168; Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:185.} Von Wahlde writes that it was “evidently a common saying.”\footnote{Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:194.}

\begin{quote}
10:19 Σχίσμα πάλιν ἐγένετο ἐν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις διὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους.
\end{quote}

Here, τοὺς λόγους τούτους has the ordinary meaning of “these words.”
In this verse, λόγος is a prophetic oracle which is to be fulfilled. The verse is not pertinent to our study of the word of Jesus/God as set forth in the proposal.

Here Jesus is referring to the fact that he made this same statement earlier (John 13:16). In the same verse, there are two instances of the idiom “to keep the word,” which are dealt with above. Brown translates τοῦ λόγου οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον ύμῖν simply as “what I told you....”

Brown translates ἐξῆλθεν οὖν οὗτος ὁ λόγος as “This is how the word got around....” Here it has no theological meaning.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have analyzed the use of the term λόγος in those verses of the Gospel of John which von Wahlde identifies as having been added by the author of the third, which is to say, the final, edition of the Gospel. Apart from those uses in which the term has the ordinary meaning of “speech, report, etc.,” we have seen that

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107 Brown, AB 29A: 685.
109 Brown, AB 29A:1102.
in the third edition the λόγος of Jesus is the message that he proclaimed, his teaching, which he in turn received from the Father. This in itself is not so different from the theologically-significant instances of λόγος in the second edition of the Gospel, but in the second edition the λόγος of Jesus is primarily viewed as one of the three essential witnesses to the truth of what Jesus proclaims. In the third edition, the emphasis is on Jesus’ λόγος, or teaching, as something to which the disciple must remain faithful. This understanding includes the recognition that Jesus’ λόγος has an abiding validity and essential importance, contrary to what the opponents of the author of I John and of the author of the third edition of the Gospel maintained. As we saw earlier in this chapter, von Wahlde sums up the difference between the focus of the second edition and that of the third in their respective portrayals of the importance of the λόγος of Jesus thus: “In the second edition, the focus was on accepting the word of Jesus; at the time of I John (and in the third edition) the focus is on remaining in the word of Jesus [emphasis in the original].”

We have observed that in their interpretations of most of the instances of λόγος in the verses examined in this chapter, Brown and von Wahlde differ only a little, while each brings a particular insight or emphasis to his interpretation. However, their differences are more pronounced in dealing with the expression τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον (8:51, 52, 55; 14:23, 24; 15:20 [twice]; 17:6), for here we are again in the realm of the Johannine Commandment tradition and, as we saw when analyzing the term λόγος in the First Epistle of John, Brown and von Wahlde differ regarding the

\[^{110}\text{Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, II:408.}\]
number of commandments in the Johannine tradition and which one the word λόγος refers to. Brown repeatedly refers to a single commandment in the tradition, and that is the commandment of Jesus to his disciples to love one another as he has loved them, a commandment referred to as the λόγος of Jesus. Von Wahlde, as we have seen, maintains that there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition, the commandment to love one another and the commandment to keep the word of Jesus, that is, to remain faithful to the entirety of his message, the observance of which involves the recognition that Jesus received what he taught from the Father who sent him.

Because both Brown and von Wahlde employed verses from the Gospel of John to support their respective positions on what commandment was at issue in 1 John 2:5 and 7 when the author speaks of the λόγος, and because those Gospel verses are identified by von Wahlde as being from the third edition and are, therefore, the verses analyzed in this chapter, my conclusion in the present chapter is the same as it was in chapter 4. There, I agreed with von Wahlde that there are two commandments in the Johannine Commandment tradition, one concerning proper faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son sent by the Father, and whose “word” therefore has permanent validity, and another, the well-known command of Jesus to his disciples to love one another. I disagreed with von Wahlde, however, regarding which of these two commandments was being referred to by the author of I John in 2:5 and 7.
Regarding the commandment or commandments given by Jesus to his disciples in
the Gospel of John, here, as before, I concur with von Wahlde that there are two.
Certainly, one of these is to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12, 17). We saw,
however, that in John 14:15 and 21, Jesus says that the one who loves him is the one
who keeps his ἐντολάς, the plural of ἐντολή, while in 14:23 Jesus says the one who
loves him keeps τὸν λόγον μου, and in 14:24 he says that the one not loving him
does not keep τοὺς λόγους μου.... The substitution of the singular λόγον and the
plural λόγους for the plural ἐντολάς makes it clear that, for the Johannine Jesus,
there is more than one commandment. Brown does not give sufficient weight to the
use of the plural forms of “commandment” and “word” in these passages. Rather, as
we have seen, his position is that “the plural [form ἐντολάς] gives a comprehensive
force to the commandment to love.”

In von Wahlde’s view, the content of the first of the two commandments that Jesus
gives to his disciples is to “keep the word” of Jesus, which means to remain faithful
to all that he has taught. I agree with von Wahlde that this understanding is
supported by 14:26, in which Jesus tells his disciple that the Paraclete whom he will
send will remind them of all (πάντα) that he had said to them.

The position that the Johannine Jesus gives two commandments to his disciples is
supported, though not necessarily proved, by the fact that in the Gospel, there are

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111 Brown, AB 30: 251.

112 See for example von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:399.
two occasions when Jesus speaks of a commandment given him by his Father, and one is quite different from the other. We saw that in John 12:49, Jesus refers explicitly to an ἐντολή that the Father has given him regarding what he should say and speak. In 10:15b-18, Jesus speaks of the ἐντολή he received from the Father to lay down his life for his sheep. Again, I maintain that Brown glosses over the very different content of these two commandments when he writes that Jesus receives “a command [singular] from his Father” concerning “his words, deeds, and death...”113 A commandment to “say and speak” a certain message is quite distinct from a commandment to die for the sake of others. Thus, I believe von Wahlde is correct when he says that Jesus received two commandments from his Father. While it does not necessarily follow from this that Jesus gave two corresponding commandments to his disciples—to remain faithful to his word and to love one another—it does seem more probable.

Summary of the Study Up to This Point

Thus far, we have seen that while the word λόγος appears in each edition of the Gospel of John with its ordinary meanings such as “word,” “speech,” “report,” etc., in the second edition of the Gospel, in the First Epistle of John, and in the third edition of the Gospel, the term often possesses a particular theological significance, a significance that is peculiar to that edition or to the Epistle. In the second edition, the λόγος of Jesus, which he received from the Father, is one of three essential witnesses to the truth of his teaching. In the First Epistle and in the third edition of

113 Brown, AB 30: 251.
the Gospel, the λόγος of God that comes through Jesus is a commandment which the believer must keep, whether that be the command to mutual love or, as von Wahlde maintains, to proper belief in Jesus as the Christ and the Son whose word possesses abiding relevance even after the coming of the Spirit. We have seen only one instance, in I John 1:1, where the term λόγος could possibly refer to Jesus himself. We now turn to the Prologue of the Gospel of John, where there is no ambiguity—Jesus is the λόγος become flesh.
CHAPTER SIX

A STUDY OF ΛΟΓΟΣ IN THE PROLOGUE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Text of the Prologue of the Gospel of John (John 1:1-18)

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος.
2 ὁ λόγος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.
3 πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἐν. ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ἦν καὶ ἤ γέγονεν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων:
4 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.
5 Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης:
6 οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ.
7 οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ’ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.
8 ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.
9 ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ οὐκ οὐκ οὐκ ἔγνω.
10 εἰς τὰ ἱδία ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἱδίοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.
11 ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύσωσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,
12 ὁ οὐκ ἔχει μαρτυρίαν ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ’ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.

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14 Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐκσήκωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἔθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

15 Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων, Ὁ ὁπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἐμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

16 ὅτι έκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἠμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν, καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος:

17 ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο.

18 θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε: μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὄν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός ἐκεῖνος εξηγήσατο.

**Introduction**

We have now examined the significance of the term λόγος in the first edition of the Gospel, in the second edition of the Gospel, in the First Letter of John, and in the third edition of the Gospel. We now come to perhaps the most famous passage in the Johannine corpus, the passage in which the divine λόγος is explicitly identified with Jesus of Nazareth, namely, the Prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18). The term λόγος occupies center stage in the Prologue, appearing three times in v 1 and once in v 14. At the beginning of his commentary on the Prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1-18), Raymond Brown provides a succinct description of it: “An early Christian hymn, probably stemming from Johannine circles, which has been adapted to serve as an overture to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate Word.”

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A clarification must be made, however. Jesus is identified with the λόγος, or “Word,” only in the Prologue. After this “overture,” he is not called the λόγος in the rest of the Gospel.

In this chapter we shall first look at what may have been the “history” of the Prologue in order to distinguish between the original hymn and the Prologue’s present form. This brief look will include a review of Urban C. von Wahlde’s position on where the Prologue stands chronologically in relation to the three editions of the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. Then, using Raymond Brown’s excursus on “the Word” in his Anchor Bible commentary as a guide, we shall look at the various suggestions that scholars have made for the possible provenance, or background, of the personified λόγος in the Gospel Prologue. We shall then focus on two of these suggestions as the most likely and show how, together, they may account for many of the features of the λόγος in the Prologue. Next, we must give special attention to the elements of the Prologue’s description of the λόγος that cannot be explained by the proposed backgrounds in order to appreciate the author’s unique understanding of what the λόγος is. Finally, we shall situate the Prologue’s conceptualization of the λόγος figure in relation to the meaning of λόγος in the three editions of the Gospel and in the First Epistle of John.
Structure and Formation of the Prologue

There exists a variety of opinions among scholars as to which lines of the Prologue comprise the original hymn and which, if any, are additions. Brown observes that there is “general agreement” that vv. 1-5, 10-11, and 14 are part of the original hymn. “With great hesitancy,” Brown proposes a particular outline of how the Prologue was formed. He provides the following chart showing how, in his view, the original hymn was structured:

Second strophe: 3-5. The Word and Creation.
Third strophe: 10-12b. The Word in the World.²
Fourth strophe: 14, 16. The Community’s Share in the Word.³

Brown regards vv. 12c-13 and 17-18 as “explanatory expansions.” The verses concerning John the Baptist—6-9 and 15—may have constituted the original opening lines of the Gospel, which were “displaced when the Prologue was prefaced to the Gospel by the final redactor.”⁴ If Brown is correct, the original hymn contained in the present form of the Prologue would be as follows:

² Brown understands the third strophe, vv 10-12b, as referring to “the Word incarnate in the ministry of Jesus.” According to this view, v 14 “give[s] poetic expression to what the career of the Word means in the life of the community” (AB 29:28, 30). Scholars disagree, however, regarding at which point the Prologue hymn begins to speak of the incarnate Word. Thomas Tobin, S. J., for example, understands the first reference to be v 14 (Tobin, “The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation,” CBQ 52 (1990):252-69. Indeed, the statement “And the Word became flesh” seems to be a rather straightforward statement of the event of the Incarnation.

³ Brown, AB 29:22.

⁴ Ibid., 22.
First Strophe

1a) Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος,
b) καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν,
c) καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

Second Strophe

3a) πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο,
b) καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἐν.

4a) ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν,
b) καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων:

5a) καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει,
b) καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

Third Strophe

10a) ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν,
b) καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο,
c) καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω.

11a) εἰς τὰ ἱδία ἦλθεν,
b) καὶ οἱ ἱδίοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.

12a) ὁσοὶ δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν,
b) ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι
Fourth Strophe

14a) Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο
   b) καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν,
   c) καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ,
   d) δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός,
   e) πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

16a) ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ
   b) ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν,
   c) καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος:

Brown provides a table showing the views of different scholars regarding the verses that comprised the original hymn. The key point for our consideration in relation to these various reconstructions is that vv 1 and 14, the verses that explicitly speak of the λόγος, are considered by the majority of scholars to be part of the foundational hymn.5 This could have a bearing on the question of where the Prologue’s use of the term λόγος stands in relation to its use in the rest of the Gospel. Does the personified λόγος of the Gospel Prologue represent the climax of a trajectory of development in the theology of the λόγος beginning with the first edition of the Gospel, or is it unique even within the Johannine corpus?

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5 Brown, AB 29:22.
The Prologue of the Gospel in Relation to the Three Editions of the Gospel

We saw in chapter 4 of this dissertation that von Wahlde, like Brown and the majority of Johannine scholars, regards the Gospel Prologue itself as a composite work, consisting of an original hymn and later additions, and as literally independent of the rest of the Gospel. Though he writes that “a number of features associate the Prologue as a whole with the theology of the third edition of the Gospel—and with I John [emphasis in the original],” he also maintains that the theological vocabulary found in the Prologue but not in the rest of the Gospel suggests that “neither the original hymn nor the additions to it were composed by the author of the third edition....” In fact, he asserts that none of the three authors responsible for the composition of the rest of the Gospel was responsible for either the original hymn (referred to by von Wahlde as “the foundational material of the Prologue”) or for the additions.

As stated above, the term λόγος is not used as a title for Jesus in the Gospel of John after the Prologue. This points, in my view, to the probability that the Prologue (minus the verses about John the Baptist, with which the Gospel may have originally begun) was prefixed to the Gospel after the body of the Gospel had reached the final stage of its composition. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why, at the

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7 Ibid., II:17.

8 Ibid., II:24.
beginning of the Gospel, the term λόγος is used to speak of the divine principle that has become flesh in Jesus and then is never used again in the Gospel as a christological title.

At the same time, this is not to say that the foundational part of the hymn, which speaks of the activity of the λόγος, was necessarily composed after the Gospel had reached its final form. As we have seen, Brown, von Wahlde, and other scholars maintain that the hymn existed independently of the rest of the Gospel within the Johannine community before it became the preface of the Gospel. This means that the identification of the λόγος with Jesus of Nazareth could have been made within Johannine Christianity before the final edition of the Gospel was composed. However, if this was the case, one would expect to find the term λόγος used as a christological title in the body of the Gospel itself. Indeed, as we saw in chapter 4 of this dissertation, von Wahlde proposes that, while scholars have commonly regarded the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1 as a verbal echo of the ὁ λόγος of the Gospel Prologue (1:1), “it is more likely (and more reasonable) that the Prologue of the Gospel represents the later (and more polished) development....” 9 This would indicate that the composition of the original form of the Prologue, that is, the foundational hymn describing the λόγος and its activity, probably took place after the composition of the First Epistle of John.

9 Ibid., III:33, n. 2.
Proposals for the Background of the Λόγος in the Prologue of John’s Gospel

In this section, I shall provide an overview of the theories which have been proposed thus far for the background of the term Logos in the Prologue of the Gospel of John. In his Anchor Bible Commentary on the Gospel of John, Raymond Brown provides a summary of these proposals which is still very useful today. I shall use his summary as a guide, with help from other works, including Brown’s later An Introduction to the Gospel of John.

Proposals for Possible Hellenistic Background

Brown divides the proposals that have been made for the possible background of the λόγος in the Gospel Prologue into two groups, those with a “Suggested Hellenistic Background” and those which are “Suggestions for a Semitic background.” In addressing the question of a Hellenistic background for the theology of the λόγος in the Prologue of John’s Gospel, Brown makes an important distinction between two possibilities:

...first, that the idea of the λόγος came from the Hellenistic world of thought; second, that the basic components of the idea of “the Word” came from a Semitic background, and when this idea was translated into Greek, λόγος was chosen to express it because of the connotations this term had in the Hellenistic world.

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12 Brown, AB 29:519.
Brown cautions, however, that it is difficult to demonstrate with certainty what the author’s intention was in choosing his words. Therefore, he opts to focus on the possible source of “the idea of a personified Word of God” as opposed to concentrating on the question of why the Prologue author (or, more precisely, the author of the original hymnic sections of the Prologue) chose the term λόγος. Nevertheless, the second possibility Brown mentions, that of a Semitic background for the concept of “the Word” that was “translated” for a Hellenistic audience, reminds us of another important distinction Brown makes when commenting on possible influences on the Gospel of John as a whole:

There was a strong Hellenistic element already present in the Judaism of N[ew] T[estament] times, both in Palestine and Alexandria. Therefore, if John was dependent on contemporary Judaism, there was inevitably a Hellenistic influence on Johannine thought.

The following is a list of examples of the use of the term λόγος in the thought-world of Hellenism that Brown regards as “significant”:

**Heraclitus**

In the 6th century B.C., Heraclitus “first introduced λόγος into Greek philosophical thought.” According to Brown, Heraclitus made use of the term to express the concept of “the eternal principle of order in the universe. The λόγος is what makes the world a κόσμος.” However, while it is clear from the few fragments that

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13 Ibid., 519.
14 Ibid., lvi.
15 Ibid., 520.
survive that Heraclitus used the term λόγος with its “more common meanings (proportion, account, explanation),” scholars disagree as to whether or not he used the term to speak of the principle of order in the universe.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Stoic Philosophy}

Stoic philosophers used the term λόγος for “the mind of God (a rather pantheistic God who penetrated all things), guiding, controlling, and directing all things.”\textsuperscript{17} According to Brown, the Johannine use of the word λόγος is different from that of Stoic philosophy.\textsuperscript{18} The Stoics considered God, the λόγος, and nature to be one.\textsuperscript{19} In their view, the λόγος was "the basic fiery substance of matter itself."\textsuperscript{20} While in the Prologue of the Gospel of John it is said that “all things came to be” in the λόγος, the λόγος is not identified with the material world.

\textit{Philo of Alexandria}

Philo, the Hellenistic Jewish biblical interpreter of the first century CE, sought to interpret the Septuagint version of the Jewish Scriptures in Hellenistic terms. In his


\textsuperscript{17} Brown, AB 29: 520.

\textsuperscript{18} Raymond E. Brown, \textit{An Introduction to the Gospel of John}, (Ed. Francis J. Moloney; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 129.

\textsuperscript{19} Tobin “LOGOS,” 349, citing Diogenes Laertius 7.135; Plutarch, \textit{De Stoicorum repugnantiis} 34, 1050A.

works the λόγος theme appears over 1200 times.\textsuperscript{21} “For Philo the λόγος ... was the intermediary between God and His creatures...almost a second god, the instrument of God in creation...”\textsuperscript{22} We shall say more about the parallels between Philo’s λόγος and the λόγος of the Gospel Prologue below, after our consideration of scholarly suggestions for a possible Semitic background to the Prologue.

\textit{The Hermetica}

“In the later Hermetic literature, the λόγος was the expression of the mind of God, helping to create and order the world.”\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{Hermetica} is a collection of seventeen philosophical and theological tractates produced in Egypt between the second and fifth centuries CE. Brown describes this literature as “a syncretism of (Middle) Platonic and Stoic philosophy with the religious tradition of the Near East, including Judaism.”\textsuperscript{24} Brown states that, in “the common view,” it is not the case that the Prologue is dependent upon the \textit{Hermetica} or vice-versa. Rather, they are both drawn from a similar religious milieu:

In their use of terms such as “light,” “life,” “word,” they are both dependent on a theological terminology more ancient than either of them: namely, the terminology that sprang from the combination of Oriental speculation on Wisdom and Greek abstract thought. Such a

\textsuperscript{21} Brown, AB 29:520.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 520.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 520.

\textsuperscript{24} Brown, \textit{Introduction}, 130-32.
combination is already exemplified in the pre-Christian period in the deuterocanonical Book of Wisdom.\footnote{Ibid., 132.}

**Mandaean Liturgies**

Phrases such as “the word of life” and “the light of life” in Mandaean liturgies “may be distant echoes of borrowings from Christian thought.”\footnote{Brown, AB 29:520.} Brown explains: “The Mandaeans are a baptizing sect still extant in Mesopotamia. Their theology...is a highly syncretistic mixture of Jewish lore, Gnostic myth, and Nestorian and Syrian Christianity.”\footnote{Brown, *Introduction*, 121.} Due to the relative lateness of the earliest extant forms of Mandaean theology (4\textsuperscript{th} century CE) and the fact that there is nothing in the Mandaean literature resembling the Gospel of John, Brown rejects the possibility that Mandaean thought influenced the Gospel as a whole.\footnote{Ibid., 121.} Certainly this judgment applies to the Prologue of the Gospel.

**Gnosticism**

Another example Brown gives of the use of the term λόγος in Hellenistic thought is from “the more general field of Gnosticism.”\footnote{Brown, AB 29:520.} The term “Gnostic” is used to refer to an array of complex belief systems that, at least in their developed forms, included a dualistic view of the world in which the spiritual realm was good and the...

\footnote{Ibid., 132.}
\footnote{Brown, AB 29:520.}
\footnote{Brown, *Introduction*, 121.}
\footnote{Ibid., 121.}
\footnote{Brown, AB 29:520.}
material realm evil. Salvation consisted of the liberation of the soul from the
material world through secret knowledge revealed to a chosen few by a saving
revealer. Gnosticism is known to have existed in its more developed forms in the
second century CE.\footnote{Brown, Introduction, 116-117; cf. AB 29:liii.}

Some scholars in the twentieth century, most notably Rudolf Bultmann,
attempted to reconstruct an earlier Christian or pre-Christian Gnosticism that would
have influenced (the author or authors) of John or against which John was reacting.
Some see evidence of this in the Johannine dualism between “God and the world,
light and darkness, truth and falsehood, above and below.” Some have posited the
existence in the early Christian era (or before) of a Gnostic redeemer myth. This
myth involves the fragmentation of an \textit{Urmensch} into small particles of light, which
become the human souls, now contained in a corporeal “world of darkness.” God
sends his Son in bodily form to liberate these souls from their material bodies by
revealing to these individuals the truth about their spiritual origins. With this
knowledge, the liberated could ascend to the spiritual home whence they originally
came. According to some scholars, then, Jesus is the historicization of this Gnostic
redeemer figure. The points of connection that these scholars see with the Gospel
Prologue include the presentation of Jesus as “a preexistent being (1:1) who became flesh (1:14) and ultimately returned to God.”31

A collection of mostly Gnostic or semi-Gnostic texts was discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. These tractates, which are thought to have been buried around 400 CE, are contained in thirteen Coptic-language codices translated from second-century Greek texts.32 Brown cites a verse from one of these tractates, the Gospel of Truth: “The Word who came from the πλήρωμα who is in the thought and mind of the Father, the Word who is called the Saviour” (xvi 34-37). Brown points out that this tractate is “considerably later than John.”33 In his An Introduction to the Gospel of John, he writes of the parallels between the Prologue of John’s Gospel and the Gnostic tract The Trimorphic Protennoia (or The Three-formed [Divine] First Thought),34 in which there are “three comings of the divine thought/word, a light hidden in silence who the third time comes in bodily form and is not recognized.”35 John D. Turner comments that the parallels between the Protennoia and the Fourth


32 Brown, Introduction, 117.

33 Brown, AB 29:520.


35 Brown, Introduction, 117-118; 122.
Gospel, especially its Prologue, are “striking.” 36 In the aretological section of the third tractate of the Protennoia, the Protennoia says of herself:

I taught [them the mysteries] through the [Voice that exists]...and I became a foundation for them all, and [I empowered] them (47.8-10).

The second time I came in the [Speech] of my Voice...(47.11-12).

The third time I revealed myself to them [in] their tents as Word and I revealed myself in the likeness of their shape. And I wore everyone's garment and I hid myself within them, and [they] did not know the one who empowers me (47.13-19). 37

Turner writes:

[T]he third and last stage of composition [of the Trimorphic Protennoia] seems to have involved a deliberately polemical incorporation of Christian, specifically Johannine Christian, materials into the aretological portion of the third subtractate.” 38

While it is evident that the Prologue does not depend on the Trimorphic Protennoia, some scholars have asserted that the gnostic work stems from pre-Christian sources. For example, P. Hofrichter has suggested that “a basic set of pre-Christian theological motifs visible in a pre-redactional reconstruction of the Prologue has been Christianized in John and undergone a Gnostic development in [the Protennoia].” 39


Thomas H. Tobin thinks it probable that both the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Prologue of John's Gospel were “distinct, dualistic developments of the traditions of Jewish Wisdom speculation.”

Interestingly, Turner suggests that what we find in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* is a combination of “Sophia's two unsuccessful descents in 1 Enoch 42 and her successful one in Sirach 24.” He maintains that “[t]his is the same pattern that underlies the Johannine Prologue, which...was likely also a product of a similar form of wisdom speculation.”

Brown summarizes well one of the main difficulties with the theory that John was influenced by or a reaction against pre-Christian forms of Gnosticism:

> The problem of pre-Christian Gnosticism remains difficult. The attested Gnosticism of the second century A.D. is an amalgamation of different strains of thought, certain of which are truly ancient. But were they really *joined* into Gnosticism in the pre-Christian era? Although we have evidence for Jewish and pagan Gnosticism, the figure of Christ seems greatly to have catalyzed the shaping of proto-gnostic attitudes and elements into definable bodies of Gnostic thought.

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**Brown’s General Comments on Possible Hellenistic Background**

Having presented his brief survey of scholarly proposals for the possible background of the Johannine λόγος in Hellenistic thought, Brown reminds his readers that

the Gospel of John and some of these Hellenistic works had a common heritage in the Wisdom Literature of the O[ld] T[estament] (which certainly influenced Philo and some of the Gnostic Odes), and that parallels can therefore be traced back to Semitic roots.\(^{43}\)

Brown considers some of the parallels between the Prologue and Hellenistic literature to be “on a surface level....” He summarizes his views on possible Hellenistic influences on the author of the Prologue hymn by saying:

The deep blending in the Prologue of motifs from Gen[esis] 1:1 (“In the beginning,” creation, light, life, darkness against light) and from the Sinai theophany (tent or Tabernacle, glory, enduring love) suggests that the basic imagery of the hymn comes from the O[ld] T[estament]. The activity of “the Word” in creation, in the world, and above all in the history of salvation indicates that this concept is closer to the dynamic implications of [the] Heb[rew] dābār [see below] than to the intellectual abstraction implicit in the philosophical usages of the Gr[eek] λόγος.\(^{44}\)

**Proposals for a Possible Semitic Background**

Brown also lists several proposals which suggest a Semitic background for the Johannine λόγος. He observes that none of these proposals taken individually offers a complete explanation of the use of λόγος in the Gospel Prologue, but taken

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\(^{43}\) Brown, AB 29:520.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 520.
together they do provide "considerable background against which such usage would be quite intelligible."\textsuperscript{45}

\textit{"The Word of the Lord (d\textsuperscript{e}bar YHWH; logos kyriou)"}

The phrase "the word of the Lord" appears throughout the Old Testament and Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal books and possesses a broad range of meanings, including not only "spoken word," but also "'thing,' 'affair,' 'event,' action.' And because it covers both word and deed, in Hebrew thought dābār had a certain dynamic energy and power of its own."\textsuperscript{46} As a Septuagint translation of the Hebrew dābār, "λόγος often took a more dynamic meaning than it originally had in Greek...There is a sense of power and dynamism in this use of λόγος that was not part of its semantic range in secular Greek."\textsuperscript{47}

Brown provides several examples of the dynamic nature of the d\textsuperscript{e}bar YHWH/logos kyriou in the Old Testament. We read in the prophetic books, for example, that "the word of the Lord" came to the individual prophets (e.g. Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1). This "word" was more than "informative revelation"; it was a challenge to the prophet himself. The word, once accepted, then compelled the prophet to proclaim it to others. "This was a word that judged men." In Deuteronomy 32: 46-47, fulfilling "the words of this law" (τοὺς λόγους τοῦ νόμου τούτου) is "no empty

\textsuperscript{45}Brown, AB 29:520.

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 520-521.

\textsuperscript{47}Tobin, "LOGOS," 350.
matter” (οὐχὶ λόγος κενὸς)⁴⁸; it means life for the Israelites. In Psalm 107:20, the Lord’s word can heal. For the author of the Wisdom of Solomon, the Lord’s word (λόγος) heals all things (Wis 16:12); the Lord’s word (ῥῆμα) preserves those trusting in him (Wis 16:26).⁴⁹

Regarding these uses of “word” in the Old Testament, Brown comments: “We see here many of the functions ascribed to the Word in the Prologue: the O[ld] Testament ‘word of the Lord’ also came, was accepted, was empowered and gave life.”⁵⁰

Another function of the “word of the Lord” in the Old Testament was its role in creation, as is the case with the λόγος of the Prologue. In Genesis 1, God speaks and the various things of the world come into being. In the Prologue it states that everything came into being through the λόγος (John 1:3). Psalm 33:6 says: “By the word of the Lord (τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ Κυρίου) the heavens were established....” The sage of the Wisdom of Solomon declares: “O God of my fathers...who have made all things by your word (ἐν λόγῳ σου).” Brown summarizes: “Thus there is good O[ld] Testament background for the statement of John 1:3 that through the Word all things came into being.”⁵¹

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⁴⁹ Brown, AB 29:520-21.

⁵⁰ Brown, AB 29:521.

⁵¹ Ibid., 521.
Brown recalls that while “the word of the Lord” is not personified in Hebrew thought, “in Hebrew outlook a word once spoken had a quasi-substantial existence of its own.” He cites several Old Testament passages in which the word of God functions independently in a way which is “almost personal.” In Isaiah 55:10-11, for example, God says through the prophet:

10 For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, 11 so shall my word (dāḇār/ῥῆμα) be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it (NAB).

Brown sees here “the same cycle of coming down and returning that we encounter in the Prologue.” Referring to the death of the firstborn of Egypt, Wisdom 18:15 states:

15 Your all-powerful word (λόγος) from heaven's royal throne bounded, a fierce warrior, into the doomed land, 16 bearing the sharp sword of your inexorable decree. And as he alighted, he filled every place with death; he still reached to heaven, while he stood upon the earth (NAB).

Brown finds it “interesting” that here the Angel of Death is referred to as the word of God, “for the activities of the angel border on the personal.”

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52 Ibid., 521.
53 Ibid., 521.
54 Ibid., 521.
**Personified Wisdom**

In the Wisdom tradition found in Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom is personified as a woman who invites mortals to learn from her and who was present with God at the creation. The activity of the Logos in the Prologue of John bears a marked resemblance to that of Old Testament Wisdom.

Before citing the various parallels between the figure of Wisdom and the Word of the Gospel Prologue, Brown makes the important observation “...Wisdom is never called the word of God.” Nevertheless, the parallels between Wisdom and the Word are many. For example, in Sirach 24:3, Wisdom declares: “From the mouth of the Most High I came forth...in the highest heavens I dwelt” (translation, including emphasis, in Brown’s commentary). Particularly striking is the parallelism between God’s λόγος and God’s σοφία in Wisdom 9:1-2: “God of my fathers, LORD of mercy, you who have made all things by your word (ἐν λόγῳ σου) and in your wisdom (τῇ σοφίᾳ σου) have established man to rule the creatures produced by you...” Wisdom says of herself in Proverbs 8:22-23: “The Lord created me at the beginning...from of old I was poured forth, at first, before the earth was created” (Translation, including emphasis, in Brown’s commentary). Like the λόγος of the Prologue, then, “[Wisdom] existed at the beginning before the creation of the world.”

Sirach 1:1 states: “All wisdom comes from the LORD and with him (μετ’ αὐτοῦ) it remains forever” (NAB).

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55 Brown, AB 29:522.
Similarly, in the Prologue, the λόγος was “with God” (πρὸς τὸν θεόν; 1:1) and “ever at the Father’s side” (Brown’s translation; εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς; 1:18).56

Brown points out the difficulty of defining precisely how Wisdom is related to God in the Wisdom literature. In both Proverbs 8:22 (LXX) and Sirach 24:9, Wisdom says that the Lord created (ἔκτισε) her. Yet in Wisdom 7:25-26, the sage calls Wisdom “an aura of the might of God and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty (άτμης γάρ ἐστι τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως καὶ ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ Παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινής)...” and “the refugence of eternal light (ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστι φωτός ἀϊδίου)....” Brown comments, then, that while Wisdom is not called “God” in Hebrew thought, as it is said in the Prologue that “the Word was God,” “nevertheless Wisdom is divine.” An “interesting” parallel can be seen in the fact that in the Prologue, the λόγος is twice said to be μονογενής, that is, the only Son, (John 1:14, 18), and in Wisdom 7:22, Wisdom is said to possess a spirit that is μονογενές, that is, unique.57

Another important parallel between Wisdom and the λόγος of the Prologue is that both are portrayed as having an active role in creation. The author of the Book of Wisdom addresses God, saying, “And wisdom was with you” (καὶ μετὰ σοῦ ἡ σοφία) and was “present when you made the world” (καὶ παροῦσα, ὅτε ἐποίεις τὸν κόσμον) (Wis 9:9). In 7:22, Wisdom is “the artificer of all” (ἡ πάντων τεχνῖτις). Throughout

56 Brown, AB 29:522.

57 Ibid., 522.
Proverbs 8:22-31, Wisdom tells how she was present before and during the creation of the world, and refers to herself as God’s “craftsman” (ἁρμόζουσα). In the Gospel Prologue, it is said that “all things came to be” through the λόγος (πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἔν).\textsuperscript{58}

In the Prologue, the λόγος is associated with light and life: “What came to be in him was light, and the life was the light of men” (ὅ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ᾤν, καὶ η ἡ ἀνθρώπων) (1:3-4). In Ecclesiastes 2:13, Wisdom is compared to light: “I saw that Wisdom is more profitable than folly, even as light is more profitable than darkness.” In Wisdom 7: 10, 29, Wisdom is greater than light. In Proverbs 8:35, Wisdom declares: “He who finds me finds life...”\textsuperscript{59}

The Prologue speaks of the λόγος being in the world and being rejected by the world (1:10); in particular, he came “to his own” (Israel) and was not accepted (1:11). Likewise, Wisdom came to humanity. In Wisdom 9:10, Solomon beseeches God to send Wisdom forth from his heavens that she might be with him. Wisdom describes herself in Proverbs as “playing over the whole of his earth, having my delight with human beings” (Prov 8:31 [NAB]). In the apocryphal Book of Enoch, it states: “Wisdom came to make her dwelling place among the children of men and

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 522.

\textsuperscript{59} Brown, AB 29:522. See also Brown, Introduction, 260-261.
found no dwelling place” (En 42:2). The author of Baruch 3:12 explains the reason for Israel’s exile: “You have rejected the fountain of Wisdom.”

There is a particularly striking parallel between John 1:14 and Sirach 24:8. In John 1:14 the λόγος is said to have “made his dwelling” or, more literally, “pitched his tent among us” (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). In Sirach, Wisdom declares: “Then the Creator of all gave me his command, and my Creator chose the spot for my tent (τὴν σκηνήν μου). He said, ‘In Jacob make your dwelling (κατασκήνωσον), in Israel your inheritance.’” There is yet another parallel between John 1:14 and Sirach 24: The Prologue author and his audience have seen the glory (δόξα) of the λόγος, “full of grace and truth” (πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας). (Brown translates the latter phrase as “filled with enduring love” or “with covenant love.”) In Sirach 24:16, Wisdom describes herself as a tree that spread its branches of glory and grace (κλάδοι δόξης καὶ χάριτος).

Brown concludes his presentation on the Jewish Wisdom tradition as background for the λόγος concept of the Johannine Prologue by saying:

Thus, in the O[ld] T[estament] presentation of Wisdom, there are good parallels for almost every detail of the Prologue’s description of the Word. The Prologue has carried personification further than the

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60 Brown, AB 29:522-23.
61 Ibid., 4.
62 Ibid., 523.
63 Ibid., 523.
Old Testament did in describing Wisdom, but that development stems from the Incarnation. Brown states: “The title, ‘the Word [in the Gospel Prologue],’ is closer to the prophetic ‘word of the Lord’; but the description of the activity of the Word is very much like that of Wisdom.”

**Jewish Speculation on the Torah**

“In later rabbinical writings the Law is pictured as having been created before all things and as having served as the pattern on which God created the world. The ‘in the beginning’ of Genesis 1:1 was interpreted to mean ‘in the Torah.’” Brown writes that the tendency to “idealize” the Law probably originated in the last centuries before Christ. In Sirach 24:23, Wisdom seems to be identified with the Torah. After Wisdom “sings her own praises” (24:1), the author writes: “All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the Law which Moses commanded us as a heritage for the community of Jacob” (NAB). In chapter 3 of Baruch, the author speaks of personified Wisdom. Then, in 4:1, he declares: “She is the book of the precepts of God, the law that endures forever; all who cling to her will live, but those will die who forsake her” (NAB). The parallelism between Torah and the word of the Lord (LXX: λόγος Κυρίου) in Isaiah 2:3 suggests the terms are “almost interchangeable”: “Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and out of Jerusalem the word

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64 Ibid., 523.
65 Ibid., 522.
66 Brown’s translation has “this” instead of “she” for αὐτή; AB 29:523.
of the Lord.” These passages indicate to Brown that “the speculation on the Law has much in common with other themes that we have cited as background for the Prologue’s use of ‘the Word’.”

The following are some of the examples Brown cites of parallels between Jewish speculation on the Law and the Gospel Prologue in particular: In Proverbs 6:23, Torah (LXX: ἐντολὴ νόμου) is said to be light. Similarly, in the Prologue, what came to exist in the λόγος was life, and this life was light (1:4). The composer of Psalm 119, in a context in which he is speaking of the value of God’s precepts, proclaims: “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path” (Ps 119:105). Interestingly, Brown comments that in some Septuagint manuscripts, the word “Law” is used in place of “word” in this verse. Whereas, in the Prologue, what came to be in the λόγος was life, for the rabbis it was the study of Torah that brings life: “Great is Torah, which gives life to those who practice it in this world and in the world to come....”

The Prologue says that the λόγος which became flesh, that is, the “only Son coming from the Father,” was “filled with grace and truth” (πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας) (1:14). Brown translates χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας as “enduring love” and sees the pairing of these adjectives in the Prologue as a reflection of “the famous Old

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67 Brown, AB 29:523.

Testament pairing of *hesed* and *emet.* 69 “While the Prologue stresses that Jesus Christ is the unique example of God’s enduring love (*hesed* and *emet*), the rabbis taught that the Law was the supreme example.” 70

Brown cautions his readers that while the rabbinic documents often “preserve very early material going back to the time of Jesus and even before,” they were written after the rise of Christianity. Consequently, “it is often impossible to prove that [a particular] parallel reflects the thought of 1st-century Judaism.” 71

**The Targumic Use of Memra**

Brown points out that at times, when the author(s) of the Gospel of John cites Scripture, the source is neither the Hebrew nor Septuagint versions but rather the Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Targums. In the Targums, *memra* is the word for “word.” Brown makes the important observation that “[t]he *Memra* of the Lord in the Targums is not simply a translation of what we have spoken of as ‘the word of the Lord’; rather, it is a surrogate for God Himself.” 72 Two of the examples Brown provides come the Targum Onkelos version of the Book of Exodus:

If in Exod[us] 3:12 God says, “I will be with you,” in Targum Onkelos God says, “*My Memra* will be your support.” If in Exod[us] 19:17 we

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69 Brown, AB 29:14.


71 Brown, AB 29:lxi.

72 Ibid., pp. 523-524.
are told that Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, in Targum Onkelos we are told that they were brought to the Memra of God.\textsuperscript{73}

While Brown does say that “the use of Memra serves as a buffer for divine transcendence,” he makes the important distinction that this does not constitute personification. Rather, the term is “a paraphrase for God in His dealings with men....”\textsuperscript{74} Clearly, then, in Brown’s view, the Memra of the Targums is not a distinct “being,” occupying a middle ground between the transcendent God and the material world. Nevertheless, Brown thinks it possible that, since the term was used in the Targums as a “paraphrase” for God’s activity among humans, “the author of the Prologue hymn may have seen fit to use this title for Jesus who pre-eminently incorporated God’s presence among men.” The actual personification of the Word that we find in the Prologue “would...be part of the Christian theological innovation.”\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{Brown’s General Comments on Possible Semitic Background}

Having considered the various proposals that have been offered by scholars for the background of the λόγος concept in the Prologue, Brown draws these elements together in a key paragraph:

In sum, it seems that the Prologue’s description of the Word is far closer to biblical and Jewish strains of thought than it is to anything

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 524.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 524.

purely Hellenistic. In the mind of the theologian of the Prologue the creative word of God, the word of the Lord that came to the prophets, has become personal in Jesus who is the embodiment of divine revelation. Jesus is divine Wisdom, pre-existent, but now come among men to teach and give them life. Not the Torah but Jesus Christ is the creator and source of light and life. He is the Memra, God’s presence among men. And yet, even though all these strands are woven into the Johannine concept of the Word, this concept remains a unique contribution of Christianity. It is beyond all that has gone before, even as Jesus is beyond all who have gone before.\textsuperscript{76}

It is important to note the adverb “purely” in Brown’s statement that the use of λόγος in the Prologue is “far closer to biblical and Jewish strains of thought than it is to anything purely Hellenistic.” Recall that Brown also pointed out that the influence of Hellenism was present even in Palestinian Judaism in New Testament times and that, consequently, “there was inevitably a Hellenistic influence on Johannine thought.”\textsuperscript{77} A chief example of the kind of Hellenistic Jewish thinking that may provide a key to the background of the Prologue hymn is found in the writings of the first-century writer Philo of Alexandria. We turn now to look more closely at possible parallels between his statements concerning the λόγος and those of the Prologue of John’s Gospel.

\textbf{Philo, the Λόγος, and Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom Speculation}

Thomas H. Tobin is a major proponent of the view that the portrayal of the λόγος in the Prologue contains elements which are drawn from the same thought-world as the λόγος in the works of Philo. According to Tobin, the λόγος hymn which

\textsuperscript{76} Brown, AB 29: 524.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., lvi.
constitutes the original part of the Prologue of the Gospel of John is “rooted in...the tradition of Jewish wisdom speculation...The various attributes and activities ascribed to wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature are ascribed to the λόγος in the hymn of the Prologue.”\textsuperscript{78} (See above). However, there are three significant ways that what is said of the λόγος in the Prologue goes beyond what is said of wisdom in the Jewish wisdom literature—the description of the reality and functions of the λόγος, the association of the λόγος with light and life and the antithetical nature of the relationship between light and darkness, and the “becoming flesh” of the λόγος in Jesus of Nazareth.\textsuperscript{79} We shall now look in detail at each of these three ways:

The Reality and Functions of the Λόγος

The Prologue differs from the Jewish wisdom literature in its use of λόγος in place of σοφία. The most probable explanation for this is that the hymn of the Prologue was a part of the thought-world of Hellenistic Judaism and “more specifically, of the speculative biblical interpretations of Hellenistic Judaism represented by such a figure as Philo of Alexandria,” whose writings consist primarily of “interpretations

\textsuperscript{78} Tobin, “Prologue,” 253-54. Tobin refers here to Gerard Rochais, “La formation du prologue [Jn 1, 1-18],” ScÉs 37 [1985]. Tobin writes “Rochais points to texts from Proverbs (8:22-31, 35), Sirach (1:15; 24:3-12), the Wisdom of Solomon (6:12; 7:22-8:1; 8:13, 26; 9:9), and Baruch (3:12, 31; 3:37-4:1) which all offer parallels to the λόγος in the hymn, in the creation of the world, in wisdom’s dwelling in the world of human beings, and in wisdom’s rejection by human beings”; “Prologue,” 254, n. 8.

\textsuperscript{79} Tobin, “Prologue,” 254-55.
of the LXX version of the Pentateuch...in the light of Greek, primarily, Middle Platonic, philosophy.”

Philo, in line with previous Hellenistic Jewish interpreters, “identified wisdom (σοφία) with λόγος (L.A. 1.65; Her. 191; Somn. 2.242-45) and gave both some of the same attributes....” In Legum Allegoriarum, for example, when interpreting allegorically the meaning of the river in the Garden of Eden, Philo writes that the river “issues forth out of Eden, the wisdom of God (τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ σοφίας), and this is the Reason of God (ὁ θεοῦ λόγος)....” In De Confusione Linguarum, Philo says of the λόγος: “And many names are his, for he is ‘the Beginning (ἀρχή),’ and the Name of God and his logos (λόγος), and the Man after his image, and ‘he that sees,’ that is Israel.” In L.A. I.43, Philo says almost the same of wisdom: “...the sublime and heavenly wisdom is of many names; for [Moses] calls it ‘beginning’ and ‘image’ and ‘vision of God.’”

In Philo’s thought, the λόγος was the “intermediate reality” between the transcendent God and the world. In addition to its cosmological functions as the image of God and the paradigm of the ordering of the universe, the λόγος “was

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80 Ibid., 255-56.
81 Ibid., 257.
82 Philo, Legum Allegoriarum, 1.65 (The Loeb Classical Library; vol. 1; trans. G. H. Whitaker; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929.)
83 Philo, De Confusione Linguarum, 146 (The Loeb Classical Library; vol. 4; trans. F. H. Colson; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1932.)
84 Philo, L.A. 1:43 (Whitaker, LCL).
instrument through which (δι᾽ οὗ) the universe was ordered.”  

A key passage is

from *De Cherubim*:

God is the cause not the instrument (ὄργανον), and that which comes into being is brought into being not through an instrument, but by a cause. For to bring anything into being needs all these conjointly, the “by which” (τὸ ὑφ᾽ οὗ), the “from which” (τὸ ἐξ οὗ), the “through which” (τὸ δι᾽ οὗ), and the “for which” (τὸ δι᾽ ὅ), and the first of these is the cause, the second the material, the third the tool, and the fourth the end or object....We shall see that [the universe’s] cause is God, by whom it has come into being, its material the four elements, from which it was compounded, its instrument the Word of God through which it was framed (ὄργανον δὲ λόγον θεοῦ δι᾽ οὗ κατεσκευάσθη), and the final cause of the building [here, a metaphor for “universe”] is the goodness of the architect.

The author of the hymn in the Prologue, who is commenting upon the creation story of Genesis 1, likewise considers the λόγος to be “the intermediate reality through which (δι᾽ αὐτοῦ) the world was made” (John 1:3, 10). Like Philo, the author uses the preposition διά with the genitive form of the pronoun to speak of the instrumentality of the λόγος in the creation of the world. In the earlier Jewish wisdom writings, the instrumental dative (τῷ λόγῳ) is used to describe God’s creative act. Tobin gives two reasons for maintaining that the use of διά with the genitive in the Prologue hymn is not a mere variant of the instrumental dative:

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85 Tobin, “Prologue,” 257.
87 Tobin, “Prologue,” 258.
88 As examples of the use of the instrumental dative form of λόγος in the Jewish wisdom literature to express an association between God’s λόγος and God’s act of creation, Tobin cites Psalm 33:6; Sirach
First, the phrase [δι’ αὐτοῦ] is used twice (John 1:3, 10), and so the author wants to emphasize the specific role of the λόγος in creation. Second, the same formula (δι᾽ οὗ) is found elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2) and in both cases the context is that of the creation of the world through an intermediate figure (1 Cor 8:6, Jesus Christ; Heb 1:2, a son). The use of the prepositional phrase δι᾽ οὗ to express the activity of an intermediary in the act of creation is an example of the “metaphysics of prepositions” found in Middle Platonism. This Middle Platonic topos “was taken up by Hellenistic Jewish interpreters.” Tobin suggests that the author of the Prologue hymn may have drawn on this Hellenistic Jewish tradition of interpretation to describe the role of the λόγος as the instrument through which (δι᾽ οὗ) all things came to be.

In addition to the cosmological function just described, the λόγος performed an anagogical function, according to the thought of Philo and of the author of Prologue hymn. In De Confusione Linguarum, Philo identifies the λόγος with “God’s man (ἄνθρωπον θεοῦ)” (Conf. 41). In another passage from the same work, Philo writes:

For that man [i.e. the incorporeal man referred to in Zechariah 6:12, cited by Philo a few lines before] is the eldest-son (πρεσβύτατον υἱόν), whom the Father of all raised up, and elsewhere calls his first-born (πρωτόγονον), and indeed the Son thus begotten (ό γεννηθείς) followed the ways of his Father.

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39:17, 31; 43:10, 6; Wisdom 9:1-2 (“Prologue,” 254, notes 9 and 10.) In Sirach 39:17; 43:10, 26; Wisdom 9:1-2, the dative of λόγος follows the preposition ἐν. In Sirach 39:31, the word λόγος is in the accusative form. Tobin makes the important point that in these passages, דָּבָר/λόγος “refers to God’s command (see Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26: ‘And God said...’) and not directly to some cosmic principle of order as such”: “Prologue,” 254, n. 9.


90 Tobin, “Prologue,” 259-60.

91 Philo, De Confusione Linguarum; translation is from Tobin, “Prologue,” 260.
Similar language is clearly applied to the λόγος in *Conf.* 146-47, part of which was cited above:

But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God [υἱός θεοῦ], let him press to take his place under God’s First-born, the Word [τὸν πρωτόγονον αὐτοῦ λόγον], who holds the highest rank among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names are his, for he is called “the Beginning,” and the Name of God, and His word [λόγος], and the Man after the image [κατ’ εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπος]….For if you have not yet become fit to be thought sons of God yet we may be sons of his invisible image, the most holy Word [τῆς ἀειδοῦς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ, λόγου τοῦ ἱερωτάτου]. For the Word is the eldest-born image of God [θεοῦ γὰρ εἰκὼν λόγος ὁ πρεσβύτατος].

Thus, those who are still unworthy to be called “sons of God” can become sons of the λόγος, who is the “eldest-born image of God.” Similarly, in John 1:12, the λόγος empowers those who did accept him to become children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ).

The Contrast of Light and Darkness

The hymn of the Prologue associates the λόγος with life, which was “the light of men.” The darkness did not overcome this light (John 1:4-5). This suggests that the background for these verses has to do with “the continuation of some sort of interpretation of Genesis 1:2-5, the creation of light and the separation of the light from darkness.” However, there are two ways in which the statements of John 1:4-5 go beyond Genesis 1:2-5. First, in the Prologue, light and darkness are antithetical.

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92 Philo, trans. Is from Tobin, “Prologue,” 260-61, except that I have gone with Colson (LCL) in translating ὁ πρεσβύτατος as “eldest-born” rather than “highest born.”

Second, the λόγος is life. In both Philo (Op. 29-34) and in John 1:4-5, the contrast between light and darkness is associated with “life.” The fact that “this linkage takes place in the context of an interpretation of Gen[esis] 1:2-5” points to the world of Hellenistic Jewish speculative interpretation of Genesis as background for the λόγος hymn.

The Λόγος and the Heavenly Man

Philo identified the λόγος with “the man after [God’s] image” (Conf. 146), a reference to the man created in Genesis 1:27. This “heavenly man” is not corporeal but is the paradigm for the earthly man whom God creates in Genesis 2:7. Thus, “the heavenly man...was for Philo and his tradition one of the many paradigms found in the λόγος (e.g. Op. 20).”

This assimilation in Hellenistic Judaism of the λόγος to the figure of the heavenly man may have served as an important step in the kind of reflection that led to the identification of the λόγος with a particular human being, Jesus of Nazareth, in the hymn in the Prologue of John.

Thus, λόγος=heavenly man=particular man (Jesus). Such an identification would have been unthinkable for Philo. The identification of the λόγος with Jesus of Nazareth is uniquely Christian.

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94 Ibid., 262.
95 Ibid., 265.
96 Ibid., 267.
97 Ibid., 267.
98 Ibid., 267.
99 Ibid., 267.
The Meaning of Λόγος in the Prologue of the Gospel of John: An Assessment

Having looked at the various proposals for the possible background of the use of λόγος in the Gospel Prologue, we are in a better position to address the question of what the λόγος is for the author of the Prologue hymn. We cannot hope to give a precise, metaphysical definition, for, as Brown points out:

there is not the slightest indication of interest in metaphysical speculation about relationships within God or in what later theology would call Trinitarian processions. The Prologue is a description of the history of salvation in hymnic form...not the origins of the Word but what the Word does is important.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, we must still consider the meaning of the Prologue’s assertion that “the Word was with God and the Word was God,” and that this very same Word became flesh in Jesus. This is the main point, I would say, of the Prologue.

Our overview of the possible background for the λόγος concept of the Prologue helps us to understand more fully “what the Word does.” I cited above Brown’s statement that “...the description of the activity of the Word [in the Prologue] is very much like that of Wisdom” such as we find in the books of Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon.¹⁰¹ We have also seen that, as Tobin points out, the Prologue hymn makes declarations about the λόγος that “cannot be explained

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⁹⁹ Ibid., 268-69.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, AB 29:24-25.

¹⁰¹ Brown, AB 29:522.
simply on the basis of texts from Jewish wisdom literature.” Tobin has demonstrated that there are parallels between the Prologue and the writings of Philo of Alexandria with regard to the use of the term λόγος rather than σοφία, the instrumentality of the λόγος in the act of creation (Cher. 125-27; John 1:3, 10), the filial relationship of the λόγος to the Father (Conf. 62-63, 146; John 1:14), the role of the λόγος as the source of “life” and “light” in opposition to darkness (Op. 31, 33-34; John 1:4-5), and the capacity of the λόγος to establish a filial relationship between God the Father and human beings (Conf. 146-47; John 1:12). These parallels indicate to Tobin that both the biblical interpretations of Philo and the hymn of the Prologue were “part of the larger world of Hellenistic Jewish speculative interpretations of biblical texts,” especially of Genesis 1-2.

Still, there are two ways that what is said of the λόγος in the Prologue goes beyond the Jewish wisdom tradition or anything that Philo would assert. The first was only briefly alluded to above. The Jewish wisdom tradition does not equate the figure of Wisdom with God, whereas the hymn of the Prologue states that “the Word was God.” This statement also goes beyond Philo’s thought, for Philo “drew a clear distinction between [the λόγος] and God.”

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103 Ibid., see esp. 268-69.
104 See Brown, AB 29:522.
The second way in which the Prologue’s statements about the λόγος go beyond the Jewish wisdom tradition, Philo, and, in fact, anything in Hellenistic thought is in the assertion that “the Word became flesh” in Jesus. As Brown pointed out: “[N]o Hellenistic thinker would see a climax in the Incarnation, just as no Gnostic would triumphantly proclaim that the Word had become flesh.”\(^\text{106}\) This identification of the λόγος with Jesus of Nazareth is “a unique contribution of Christianity.”\(^\text{107}\)

Regarding the first of these two assertions of the Prologue concerning the λόγος, namely, that “the λόγος was God,” the issue is more complex than it would at first appear. In the English translation, the statement seems straightforward enough. In the Greek original, however, the absence of the article before θεὸς in the clause καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος is problematic. Brown writes that some have sought to explain this absence “with the simple grammatical rule that predicate nouns are generally anarthrous.”\(^\text{108}\) However, he points out that this rule does not necessarily apply when the intent is to express identity between the subject and predicate noun.\(^\text{109}\)

The absence of the article before θεὸς, then, seems to indicate that the author of the

\(^{106}\) Brown, AB 29:24. Here Brown cites C. H. Dodd, “The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and Christian Worship,” in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. F. L. Cross; London: Mowbray, 1957), 15. Recall, however, as noted in chapter 4 of this dissertation, that Brown maintained that, in fact, “Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian gnostics had no problem about interpreting in a gnostic manner the Gospel of John Prologue in general and 1:14 in particular (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.8.5).” This is part of his argument that the author of 1 John is not engaged in opposing a docetic view of Jesus’ humanity but rather the secessionists’ denial of the relevance of what Jesus did “in the flesh”; AB 30:180, n. 16; see also 109, n. 252.

\(^{107}\) Brown, AB 29:524.

\(^{108}\) Brown, AB 29:5, citing BDF §273.

\(^{109}\) Brown, AB 29:5.
Prologue hymn is not positing a simple identity of the λόγος with God. I would add that v 1b, “and the Word was with God,” also implies a distinction between the Word and God. At the same time, however, as Brown points out, to understand καὶ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος as simply “the Word was divine,” that is, divine but to a lesser degree than God, “seems too weak.” Had the author of the hymn intended this, he could have used the adjective θεῖος rather than the noun θεός. It is not out of place in the Johannine tradition for the author of the hymn to assert that the Word that became flesh in Jesus was God. Recall that in John 20:28, Thomas exclaims upon seeing the risen Jesus: Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. Indeed, Brown thinks that “the affirmation of [John] 1:1 is almost certainly meant to form an inclusion with 20:28....”

How are we to understand the statement καὶ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος when it seems that the author understood there to be a distinction between ὁ θεός (“God” with the article, we might say) and ὁ λόγος? If the author intended to assert that the λόγος that became incarnate in Jesus was God, why did he not use the article before θεός?

Brown points out that statements in which Jesus is said to be God are not frequent in the New Testament. Most of the passages that are seen by some to make such a predication (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:8; II Peter 1:1) appear in hymns or doxologies, “an indication that the title ‘God’ was applied to Jesus more quickly in liturgical formulae than in narrative or epistolary literature.” The “reluctance” on the part of New Testament writers to simply state “Jesus is God”

110 Ibid., 5.
can be understood “as part of the N[ew] T[estament] heritage from Judaism. For the Jews ‘God’ meant the heavenly Father; and until a wider understanding of the term was reached, it could not be readily applied to Jesus.” Brown asserts:

In vs. 1c the Johannine hymn is bordering on the usage of ‘God’ for the Son, but by omitting the article it avoids any suggestion of personal identification of the Word with the Father. And for Gentile readers the line also avoids any suggestion that the Word was a second God in any Hellenistic sense.

While Brown makes an important point in saying that the Prologue hymn, by omitting the article before θεός in ν 1c, avoids a personal identification of the λόγος with ὁ θεός, I do not think that saying the hymn “is bordering on the usage of ‘God’ for the Son” does full justice to the statement καὶ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος. The statement does more than “border on” asserting that the Word was God. As noted above, such an assertion would “fit” the Johannine tradition, especially as it is found in the third edition of the Gospel. As Brown himself points out, Thomas calls Jesus “my God” in John 20:28. One thinks also of Jesus’ application to himself of the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμί (8:24, 28, 58; 13:9), which is the Septuagint rendering of God’s sacred name (LXX Isa 45:18; possibly 43:25).

How do we hold together the declaration of the author of the hymn that “the λόγος was God” and the fact that he makes a distinction between God and the λόγος?

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111 Ibid., AB 29:24.
112 Ibid., AB 29:24.
113 Ibid., AB 29:5.
114 See Brown, AB 29:536.
I suggest that the author does in fact want to affirm in v1c that the λόγος is God (not merely divine in the sense of θεῖος), but as a monotheist he understands the term "God" to refer to the Father. Thus it is not a case of simple identity between the λόγος and θεός in v 1c. However, the author is either not concerned with the metaphysical implications of his statements or he lacks the language to express what he knows from his experience of Jesus.

I believe that another way of getting at what the author of the Prologue hymn understands the λόγος to be is by saying that he would agree with the following statements:

There is one God.

The term "God" refers to the Father of Jesus Christ.

The Word that became flesh in Jesus is God.

The Word is not the Father.

I see the apparent contradictions in these statements and take seriously Brown’s caution that “the reader [of the Prologue] must divest himself of a post-Nicene understanding of the vocabulary involved.” However, the apparent contradiction in distinguishing between God and the λόγος, on one hand, and stating that the λόγος was God, on the other hand, foreshadows the christological debates of subsequent centuries, debates which eventually led to the declaration of the Council of Nicea that the λόγος was ομοούσιος with the Father. While such metaphysical

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115 Brown, AB 29:24.
refinement was beyond the concern or capacity of the author of the Prologue hymn, another statement from Brown remains true: “[F]or 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’ is quite correct.”116 Thus, while Nicea’s declaration lay centuries in the future, the elements of which it consists are present in John 1:1.

The Λόγος of the Prologue of the Gospel in Relation to the Three Editions of the Gospel and I John

The use of the term λόγος in the Prologue of John’s Gospel is unique within the Johannine corpus. In the course of our investigation of the use of λόγος in the three editions of the Gospel and in the First Epistle of John, we have seen that in the first edition the term has the ordinary meaning of “report” or “account” (4:39), or “words” (19:13, where the term is in the plural), or of the word spoken by Jesus to affirm that the official’s son is healed (4:50). In the second edition, the theologically significant uses of the term λόγος are in Jesus’ statements including his word, which is the word of the Father, as one of the witnesses to the truth of what he claims. In the First Epistle apart from the opening verse and in the third edition of the Gospel, the theologically significant uses of the term are in reference to a commandment given to the disciples by God (the Epistle) or by Jesus (third edition). In none of this

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116 Ibid., 5.
are we prepared for the Prologue’s statement that the λόγος was God (1:1) and became flesh in Jesus (1:14).

It is true that in I John 1:1, the author of the Epistle speaks of “the word of life” and I have expressed agreement with those who maintain that this refers to Jesus himself. Nevertheless, as we saw in chapter 4, there is such ambiguity about the meaning of the term in the Epistle Prologue that scholars are divided on the question, with many maintaining that “the word of life” is the message that Jesus proclaimed. Furthermore, in I John 1:1, nothing is said about the role of “the word of life” in the creation of the world. There is nothing to connect the phrase with either Greek philosophy or with Jewish speculation on the God’s creative word or God’s wisdom. In the Prologue of the Gospel, however, all things came to be in the λόγος.

It may be that the ambiguous phrase “the word of life” in the Epistle Prologue, if it does indeed refer to Jesus himself, is a stepping stone toward the explicit identification of the λόγος with the man Jesus in the Gospel Prologue. As we saw in part I of chapter 4 of this dissertation, several scholars have suggested this. It is possible, then, that within the history of the Johannine community there was a development in understanding, such that we move from seeing Jesus as the one who proclaims the λόγος of God to being the λόγος of God incarnate. However, the explicit assertion of the Prologue of the Gospel that the λόγος who was with God in the beginning and that was God “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” in
Jesus is beyond anything in the three editions of the Gospel of John or in the First Epistle of John.

**Conclusion**

We have seen the numerous parallels between the figure of personified Wisdom in the Jewish wisdom literature and the λόγος of the Prologue, especially in regard to their role in the creation of the world. The parallels strongly suggest that the background for the λόγος of the Prologue can ultimately be found in the Wisdom tradition of the Jews in the last centuries before the birth of Jesus.

As Thomas H. Tobin has pointed out, however, there are features of the λόγος of the Prologue that go beyond what is said of heavenly Wisdom in the Old Testament. We have seen that Tobin looks to the writings of the Hellenistic Jewish interpreter Philo of Alexandria as a prime example of a type of biblical interpretation, carried out in the context of Hellenistic thought, that may account for some of those features. As was the case with the Jewish wisdom literature, the parallels between Philo’s thought and the hymn of the Prologue are impressive. Tobin does not assert that the author of the Prologue hymn knew the writings of Philo; rather, both Philo and the author of the Johannine hymn to the Word were drawing on a common thought-world, “the larger tradition of Hellenistic Jewish biblical interpretation and speculation,” particularly as applied to the creation accounts of Genesis 1-2.\(^{117}\) A key element indicating that this is the case is Philo’s identification of the λόγος with

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\(^{117}\) Tobin, “Prologue,” 268.
σοφία (see above). I concur with Tobin that the world of Hellenistic Jewish biblical interpretation is the most plausible background for some of those elements of the conceptualization of the λόγος in the Gospel Prologue that are not found in the depiction of Wisdom in the Old Testament wisdom literature.

However, we have also seen that the Prologue’s statements that the Word was God and that this Word became flesh in a particular human being go beyond anything in the Jewish wisdom tradition or in the tradition of Hellenistic Jewish biblical interpretation exemplified by Philo. In this way, the Prologue’s portrayal of the personified λόγος and “his” incarnation is, in the words of Raymond Brown, “the unique contribution of Christianity. It is beyond all that has gone before, even as Jesus is beyond all who have gone before.”

118 Brown, AB 29:524.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY OF THE TERM ΛΟΓΟΣ

IN THE GOSPEL AND LETTERS OF JOHN

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I shall present to the reader my reason for choosing my topic and how the project evolved. Then I will summarize the findings of each chapter in order to provide a coherent view the use of λόγος in the Johannine literature. Finally, I shall present my conclusions regarding the topic and the questions I have addressed in this dissertation.

Beginning and Evolution of the Project

In writing this dissertation, I have attempted to investigate what might have led to the conceptualization of the divine λόγος in the Prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18). More specifically, how did the author of the hymn that constitutes the original form of the Prologue come to use a term common in the Greek philosophy of the time to speak of a divine reality that “became flesh” in Jesus of Nazareth?

The attempt to answer these questions entailed learning more about the “the word of the Lord” and the figure of personified Wisdom in the Old Testament. It also required some deepening of my knowledge of the use of the word λόγος in different schools of philosophy in the Hellenistic world. I came to appreciate more than ever how different streams of thought, flowing from several sources, converge in the
hymn with which the Gospel of John opens. At the same time, I realized that this convergence does not account for that which is unique in the hymn. In this dissertation I have expressed my agreement with those who maintain that the Prologue was, in fact, the culmination of the development of Johannine thought concerning the λόγος, not the beginning. While certain themes from the Prologue appear as motifs in the body of the Gospel, Jesus is not referred to again as the λόγος after 1:14. This is one of the indicators that the Prologue was prefixed to the Gospel after the body of the Gospel had been written. Having accepted this position, I then asked if it was possible to trace a line of development within the Gospel showing how the Johannine Christians moved from seeing Jesus as one who proclaimed the λόγος of God to seeing Jesus as the λόγος of God.

During my coursework, I had studied the theories of Urban C. von Wahlde regarding the different stages in the composition of the Gospel of John and the relation of the First Epistle of John to those stages. Von Wahlde maintains that there were three stages in the formation of the Gospel of John and that the First Epistle was written between the second and third stage. Furthermore, in von Wahlde’s view, the Prologue was prefixed to the Gospel at the time of the composition of the third edition.¹ In my dissertation, I decided to take von Wahlde’s approach as a

working hypothesis and to determine what light this proposal would shed on the use of λόγος in the Johannine literature.

I was also intrigued by an article by Ed. L. Miller in which Miller asserts that one can trace the growth in christological significance of the term λόγος in the Johannine literature. We saw in chapter 1 of this dissertation that Miller sees this trajectory as beginning with the body of the Gospel, where λόγος refers to the preaching and teaching of Jesus. Next in the order of the composition of the Johannine literature, we encounter the term λόγος in the Prologue of the First Epistle, where it is part of the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς. Here, the use of the word λόγος is “confused but still more elevated and theologically enriched” than its use in the body of the Gospel. Finally, we see the term λόγος being used as an explicit Christological title in the Prologue of the Gospel.²

After reading Miller’s article, I began to wonder how his views might correlate with those of von Wahlde. Specifically, would it be possible to trace an increasing christological significance in the use of the term λόγος within the body of the Gospel, that is, through the three stages of the Gospel’s composition posited by von Wahlde? If I analyzed the use of the word in the first edition, the second edition, the First Epistle, the third edition, and, finally, in the Prologue of the Gospel, would I find a steady progression in the meaning of λόγος from its ordinary meanings to its

explicit use as a christological title in the Gospel Prologue? Determining whether or not such a trajectory can be detected has been my main task in writing this dissertation. With this objective in mind, I shall summarize here what I have presented in each chapter.

**What We Have Seen**

Before examining the use of the term λόγος in each edition of the Gospel and in the first Epistle of John, I wished to present the reader with my reasons for accepting von Wahlde’s view that there had been different editions of the Gospel. This required a review of “the Johannine Problem,” that is, the question of how the different pieces of Johannine literature are related to each other and of their authorship. In Chapter 1, then, I summarized the opinions of various Johannine scholars regarding the history of composition of the Gospel and letters of John, especially with respect to the chronological relationship between the Gospel and the First Epistle. We saw that most of these scholars maintained that the Gospel was composed largely as a unified whole and that, subsequently, a disciple of the Evangelist, a disciple possessing inferior theological insight and writing skills to those of his mentor, wrote the First Epistle to address a specific challenge. What I found intriguing was the fact that, despite agreement among these various commentators that the theology of the Epistle was more primitive—that is, closer to the doctrines of early Christianity—than that of the Gospel, they still maintained the chronological priority of the Gospel over the Epistle. At the same time, many of
these scholars acknowledge the possibility of later additions to the Gospel, perhaps by someone other than the Evangelist.

There have been a few commentators who recognize that it is more likely that theological development among the Johannine writings progressed from more “primitive” doctrine to more refined. Some of these scholars assert that the Epistle was written before the composition of the Gospel. Others, such as J. A. T. Robinson and Ed. L. Miller, maintain that the First Epistle was composed after the writing of the body of the Gospel but before the composition of the Prologue.

The complexity of the Johannine Question was demonstrated by the many differences among Johannine scholars regarding the solution to this question. This can be seen especially in the seeming discrepancy between their recognition of the more primitive character of the Epistle’s theology in comparison to that of the Gospel and their insistence upon the Gospel’s priority. These considerations led to a summary in chapter 2 of the theories of Urban C. von Wahlde regarding the compositional history of the Gospel and Letters of John.

We saw that for von Wahlde, the many apparent disjunctures, or *aporiai*, in the text of the Gospel of John as we have it indicate that several hands were at work in its composition. Many commentators have recognized that different theologies can be found side-by-side in the Gospel of John, especially in the areas of christology,

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eschatology, and pneumatology. For example, Jesus says that the believer has already “passed from death to life” in 5:24, but in 5:28, 29, he speaks of a future resurrection from the dead. Different views of the value of material reality can be seen in 6:51-59, where Jesus speaks of the necessity of eating his flesh, and in 6:63, where he declares that “the flesh is of no avail.” There are also apparent corrections of what was stated before (e.g. Jesus baptized [3:22; 4:1]; Jesus himself did not baptize [4:2]) and places in which Jesus’ response to a question seems to be no response (e.g. 14:22-24). While many commentators attempt to smooth over these aporiai, von Wahlde takes them as indicators of where the work of one author ends and that of another begins. Through the identification of these literary seams, von Wahlde has been able to separate one strand of composition from another. This in turn has enabled him to detect patterns in vocabulary and theological orientation within each strand. In this way, von Wahlde has identified three stages, or editions, in the composition of the Gospel. He argues further that the First Epistle of John was written after the composition of the second edition and before the composition of the third. Once the work of identifying the different layers of material has been accomplished, it becomes possible to see the theological development that took place from the first edition to the second, from the second edition to the First Epistle, and from the First Epistle to the final form of the Gospel.4

4 Von Wahlde sets forth his method and criteria especially in Gospel and Letters, I:22-34.
Having accepted von Wahlde’s theories concerning the different stages in the composition of the Gospel, I turned to consider the meaning of the word λόγος in each of those stages and in the First Epistle of John. In chapter 3 I analyzed the use of λόγος in the first and second editions of the Gospel. The word appears three times in the material of the first edition. In 4:39, it possesses the ordinary meaning of “report” or “account.” In 19:13, the plural form means simply “words.” In 4:50, an official believes the “word” of Jesus that the official’s son will live.

In the second edition, while the word λόγος sometimes possesses one of its ordinary meanings, in other instances it carries more theological weight. In 5:31-40 and in the second edition material contained in 8:13-59, the λόγος of Jesus—what he speaks—functions as one of the three essential witnesses to the truth of what he proclaims, for his word is the word of his Father. As a witness to what he says, Jesus’ λόγος becomes a basis for believing in him, as opposed to belief based solely on his miracles. His λόγος is the totality of his message (5:24, 38; 15:3). It possesses the same authority as Scripture (2:22). Acceptance of Jesus’ word leads to eternal life (5:24) and to being cleansed (15:3). As ultimately the word of the Father, the word of Jesus is truth (17:17).

In chapter 4, I examined the instances of λόγος in the First Epistle of John, for I concurred with von Wahlde that the Epistle was written after the second edition of the Gospel and before the third. The author of the First Epistle is seeking to correct his opponents’ faulty interpretation of the second edition of the Gospel.
Due to the many grammatical peculiarities of the author’s style of writing, it was difficult to know what the term λόγος referred to in some instances. The first and most important of these instances is in the opening verse of the letter, where the author writes of what he and other witnesses have seen with their eyes and touched with their hands - περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς (“concerning the word of life”). The phrase is grammatically disconnected from the clauses that lead up to it. The relative pronoun introducing each of those clauses is the neuter ὁ, which can refer neither to the masculine λόγος nor to the feminine ζωῆς. The following verse elaborates on “life” rather than on “the word.” For these reasons, it is not possible to be certain what the phrase “the word of life,” or “the word” in particular, signifies.

We saw that some scholars maintain that the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς is Jesus himself. Others maintain that the phrase refers to his message. Since it is most likely that “what we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands” implies a physical object, I took the view that the λόγος in this phrase refers to Jesus himself. However, the term is not used in an absolute sense (that is, without a modifier), nor is there any reference to a role for this λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in the creation of the world. The usage here is therefore not identical to that of the Prologue of the Gospel.

Since the Prologue of the Gospel speaks explicitly of the λόγος that was God and became flesh, whereas it is less certain that the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς of the Epistle Prologue refers to Jesus himself, and since the role of the λόγος in the Gospel Prologue is more developed than it is in the Epistle Prologue, I concur with von
Wahlde when he writes that “it is more likely (and more reasonable) that the Prologue of the Gospel represents the later (and more polished) development....”5 If this is correct, then it may be, as von Wahlde suggests, that the use of the expression περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς in the first verse of I John, “or at least the community’s theology that lies behind this expression,” was “the catalyst for the full development of the notion of the Logos as it will appear in the Prologue of the Gospel.”6

After analyzing the use of λόγος in I John 1:1, we examined its use in the remaining five instances in the Epistle. In 1:10, the λόγος is the totality of the message that was given by God to the believers. In 3:18, the term simply means “spoken word” as opposed to action. We saw that the issue for debate is the significance of λόγος in 2:5 and 7. The position of each scholar on this question determined his view on the meaning in 2:14.

In 2:5 author writes of the one who “keeps his [i.e. God’s] word,”(τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον) and in v 7 the author tells his readers that he is not writing to them about a new commandment but rather an old one and states: “The old commandment is the word that you heard” (Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ἀλλ’ ἐντολὴν παλαιάν ἦν εἶχετε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς: ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκόουσατε.)

The majority of scholars whose views were presented understand the λόγος in 2:5 and 7 to be a synonym for “commandment,” and this old commandment is the

5 Ibid., Gospel and Letters, III:33, n. 2.
6 Ibid., III:30-31; cf. I:383.
commandment to love one another. Von Wahlde, however, maintains that the term λόγος here refers to another commandment, the commandment to keep God’s word as it has come through Jesus. This word is the message of God in its entirety and recognizing its abiding value entails accepting the continuing importance of the messenger, Jesus, who was sent by the Father. In von Wahlde’s view, then, the λόγος of 2:5 and 7 is the object of the first of two commandments in the Johannine tradition. This first commandment is expressed in 2:5 and 7 as “to keep the word,” but this is a variant form of the commandment to believe in Jesus as the Son and as the one sent by the Father. The second commandment is that which the Jesus of the Gospel of John calls “a new commandment,” namely, to love one another. The first commandment concerns proper belief; the second concerns proper behavior.7

According to von Wahlde, then, ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ which abides in the young people (2:14) is the first commandment—to have proper faith in Jesus and the abiding significance of his word.8 For the other scholars, the word of God that abides in the young people addressed is the commandment to mutual love.

Because the arguments regarding the number and content of the commandments in the Johannine commandment tradition are complex, I devoted a separate Excursus to the issue. I focused primarily on von Wahlde’s evidence for his position.

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8 Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:393.
that there are two Johannine commandments, one concerning proper belief in Jesus and the other commanding mutual love within the community. In this Excursus, I referred to Raymond E. Brown as representative of the more common view that there is one commandment in the Johannine tradition, the commandment to love one another. Both Brown and von Wahlde made use of evidence from the Gospel of John (for von Wahlde, the third edition of the Gospel of John) to support their respective positions on what λόγος in I John 2:5 and 7 referred to—the commandment to proper christological belief (von Wahlde) or proper behavior (Brown).

Based on other passages from I John (e.g. 3:22-24; II John 4-6) and the Gospel (e.g. 14:15, 21, 23-26), I agreed with von Wahlde that there are two commandments in the Johannine tradition: first, to believe in Jesus as the Son sent by the Father and in the abiding significance of his word, and, second, to love one another. However, I disagreed with von Wahlde regarding which of these two commandments the author of I John was referring to in I John 2:5 and 7. In my view, the word λόγος in these two verses refers to the commandment to mutual love within the community.

The discussion of the term λόγος in relation to the Johannine commandment tradition was continued in chapter 5, which dealt with λόγος in the third edition of the Gospel. As was the case in the other two editions, λόγος in the third edition sometimes has the meaning of “speech,” “report,” etc. The term is also used, as in the second edition, to refer to the entirety of the message that Jesus proclaimed, a
message he received from the Father. However, whereas in the second edition, Jesus’ word is presented as one of the essential witnesses to the truth of his claims, in the third edition his word is something that his disciples are to keep. Thus, it is the object of a commandment—τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον (8:51, 52, 55; 14:23, 24; 15:20 [twice]; 17:6). Fidelity to the word of Jesus entails the recognition that Jesus received this word from the Father and that it therefore possesses permanent validity. For von Wahlde, then, the command “to keep the word” is concerned with proper christological belief. This commandment, given by Jesus to his disciples, corresponds to the commandment to keep the word of God in I John. It is the first of two commandments in the Johannine tradition, the second being the commandment to mutual love (13:34; 15:12, 17).

We saw that Brown maintains that there is one commandment in the Johannine tradition, namely, the love commandment. However, in John 14:15 and 21, Jesus tells the disciples that the one who loves him will keep his ἐντολάς, the plural of ἐντολή, while in 14:23 he says the one who loves him keeps τὸν λόγον μου, and in 14:24 he says that the one not loving him does not keep τοὺς λόγους μου. This substitution of the singular λόγον and the plural λόγους for the plural ἐντολάς persuades me that, for the Johannine Jesus, there is more than one commandment. This position is supported by the fact that in the


Gospel, there are two occasions when Jesus speaks of a commandment given him by his Father, and one is quite different from the other. In 12:49, Jesus speaks explicitly of an ἐντολή that the Father has given him regarding what he should say and speak. In 10:15b-18, Jesus speaks of the ἐντολή he received from the Father to lay down his life for his sheep.\(^{11}\)

We saw a unique use of λόγος in John 12:48, a verse from the third edition. After saying in v 47 that he will not judge the one who does not keep his ῥήματα, Jesus says that the word that he has spoken, ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα, will judge the one who rejects him. This suggests that the word Jesus has spoken has an independent existence of its own. At the same time, Jesus clearly speaks of this λόγος as something different from himself.

In chapter 6, I address the meaning of λόγος in John 1:1-18, the Prologue of the Gospel of John. The λόγος is the very subject of the Prologue. Here it is said that the λόγος that was with God, that was God, and in whom all things came into existence “became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

Because λόγος is used as a christological title only in the Prologue and never again in the Gospel, I expressed agreement with those scholars who hold that the Prologue was prefixed to the Gospel after the body of the Gospel had been written. This means that, in terms of the three stages of the composition of the Gospel, the

\(^{11}\) Von Wahlde, Gospel and Letters, III:395-97.
Prologue was added after or at the time that the author of the third edition gave the Gospel its final shape. The original verses of the Prologue may have comprised an independent hymn within the Johannine community before it was made the introduction to the Gospel, thus allowing for the possibility that the identification of the λόγος with the human being Jesus took place before the Gospel reached its final form. Nevertheless, the hymn seems to make explicit what was hinted at in the opening verse of the First Epistle of John. The “word of life” in I John 1:1, which the author and others had seen, had touched, and that was eternally with the Father becomes in John 1:1 “the Word” that was with God in the beginning and was God, “the Word” through which all was created. While the phrase “word of life” is ambiguous, so that scholars today are divided as to whether this word is Jesus himself or his message, in the Gospel Prologue there is no such ambiguity.

In an effort to determine how the author of the Prologue hymn, or the community behind it, could have come to see Jesus as the incarnate λόγος, we looked at the various suggestions scholars have made for the possible background for the portrayal of the λόγος in the hymn. Following the summary of the different proposals provided by Raymond Brown, we considered briefly the supposed parallels between the hymn and Greek philosophy, Gnosticism, Mandaean liturgy, the writings of Philo of Alexandria, the notion of “the word of the Lord” in the Old Testament, the Jewish wisdom tradition, the concept of the Memra in the Aramaic
Targums, and Jewish speculation that attributed a creative function to the Torah.\textsuperscript{12}

Since the parallels between the Prologue, on the one hand, and the Jewish wisdom literature and the writings of Philo, on the other, were the most impressive, we focused especially on these two proposals.

We saw that the parallels between the personified Wisdom figure of Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon and the λόγος of the Gospel Prologue were numerous. Brown reminds us that “...Wisdom is never called the word of God” in the Jewish wisdom literature, but in Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-2, God’s λόγος and his σοφία are placed in a parallel relationship. Wisdom, like the λόγος, was present with God at the creation of the world (Prov 8:22-31; Wis 9:9) and was God’s craftsman (Prov 8:30) and “the artificer of all” (Wis 7:22). In the Gospel Prologue, the λόγος “pitched his tent” or “made his dwelling among us.” In Sirach 24:8, Wisdom says that “the Creator of all...chose the spot for my tent” and directed her to make her dwelling in Israel. According to the Apocryphal Book of Enoch, “Wisdom came to make her dwelling place among the children of men and found no dwelling place” (En 42:2). Similarly, the λόγος of the Prologue “came to his own, and his own did not receive him” (John 1:11).\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13} See Brown, AB 29:521-23.
These parallels leave little doubt that the author of the hymn of the Prologue was strongly influenced by the portrayal of Wisdom in the Jewish wisdom literature. It is worth repeating here Brown’s apt summary statement of the relationship between personified Wisdom and the λόγος of the Prologue: “The title, ‘the Word,’ is closer to the prophetic ‘word of the Lord’; but the description of the activity of the Word is very much like that of Wisdom.”

Thomas H. Tobin agreed that “[t]he various attributes and activities ascribed to wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature are ascribed to the λόγος in the hymn of the Prologue.” However, he pointed out that there are three important ways in which what is said in the Gospel Prologue about the λόγος goes beyond what is said of Wisdom in the Jewish wisdom literature. First among these is the Prologue’s use of the term λόγος rather than σοφία. In relation to this first element, Tobin also observes that the functions attributed to the λόγος surpass those attributed to σοφία. Second, in the Prologue the association of light and life with the λόγος (1:4) is closer than the association of light and life with σοφία in the wisdom literature. Furthermore, in the Prologue there is an antithetical relationship between light and darkness (1:5) that we do not find in the wisdom literature. Third, the statement

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14 Brown, AB 29:522.

that “the λόγος became flesh” has no parallel in the portrayal of Wisdom in the Jewish wisdom texts.\(^\text{16}\)

In seeking to account for some of the elements of the Prologue hymn which cannot be explained by recourse to the Jewish wisdom literature, Tobin highlights parallels between the λόγος of the Prologue and the λόγος in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, who interpreted the Septuagint version of the Pentateuch in Middle Platonic terms. We listed some of these parallels in chapter 6. Of central importance is that both in the Prologue and in the writings of Philo, the λόγος is the instrument through which God created the world.\(^\text{17}\) Tobin is not claiming that the author of the Prologue hymn knew the works of Philo. Rather, “the parallels do show that both the author of the hymn and Philo of Alexandria were part of the larger tradition of Hellenistic Jewish biblical interpretation and speculation.” In this case, both Philo and the author of the hymn are engaged in a type of Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2.\(^\text{18}\)

It is especially noteworthy that we find in Philo, specifically in *Legum Allegoriarium*, the identification of the λόγος with σοφία (L.A. 1.65). We also find that Philo list attributes of σοφία in one place and lists the same attributes for the λόγος in another (L.A. 1.43/Conf. 146). It is not necessary to assert that the author

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\(^{16}\) Tobin, “Prologue,” 254-255.

\(^{17}\) See Tobin, “Prologue,” 257-58; 268.

\(^{18}\) Tobin, “Prologue,” 268.
of the Prologue hymn read the works of Philo. The identification of God’s word with God’s wisdom seems to have been part of the intellectual atmosphere within Hellenistic Judaism in the first century C.E. We might again think of Wisdom 9:1-2, in which God’s word and God’s wisdom are spoken of in terms that parallel each other. Perhaps this helps explain why in the Prologue the divine principle that becomes flesh in Jesus is called λόγος but its activity is that of Old Testament σοφία.19

Next, we addressed two ways in which what the Prologue says of the λόγος surpasses what the Jewish wisdom tradition said of σοφία or what Hellenistic Jewish interpreters of Genesis such as Philo would say of λόγος/σοφία. The first of these is the statement: καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (John 1:1c). I agreed with Brown that the author intended to say more than “the λόγος was divine.”20 At the same time, I recognized that the previous part of the same verse (1b: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν), together with the lack of an article before θεός in 1c, indicated a distinction between God and the λόγος. I asserted that we need to give due weight to the statement “and the Word was God” without ignoring the distinction made by the author. I do not claim that the author of the hymn had developed a doctrine of the λόγος/Son as distinct from the Father yet ὁμοούσιος with him, but I do maintain

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19 See Brown, AB 29:522.

20 Ibid., 5.
that in John 1:1 and 14 the elements are present for what the Council of Nicaea would declare centuries later.

The second way in which the Prologue’s portrayal of the λόγος goes beyond anything in the Jewish wisdom tradition or the tradition of Hellenistic Jewish biblical interpretation is in its assertion that ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν. Neither Jewish sages writing about Wisdom nor Hellenized Jews nor Greek philosophers conceived of God’s word or God’s wisdom becoming a human being. Tobin suggests, however, that Philo’s identification of the λόγος with “the Man after [God’s] image” (Conf. 146) “may have served as an important step in the kind of reflection that led to the identification of the λόγος with a particular human being.” This “Man after [God’s] image” is the man whom God creates in Genesis 1:27. Philo understood this Heavenly Man to be the spiritual and incorporeal paradigm for the creation of the corporeal earthly man in Genesis 2:7. Tobin reminds us, however, that while this identification of the λόγος with the Heavenly Man, the paradigm of the earthly man, “does make the identification of the λόγος with a particular man more understandable,” Philo and other Hellenistic Jewish interpreters would not have made such an identification.21

Having reviewed the various uses of the term λόγος in the three editions of the Gospel, the First Epistle of John, and the Prologue, I shall now present my

conclusions as to whether or not we can trace the development of the λόγος doctrine from the first edition through to its climax in the Prologue of the Gospel.

**What I Have Learned**

As I explained at the beginning of this chapter, my motivation in choosing the topic of this dissertation was the desire to better understand how the author of the hymn of the Gospel Prologue came to identify Jesus of Nazareth with the λόγος through whom God created the world. In order to achieve this goal, I tried to determine whether or not there is a steady progression in the christological significance of the term λόγος through the three editions of the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. Would I find a neat trajectory in which λόγος possessed its ordinary meanings in the first edition and then continued to move toward personified, divine status through the second edition, the First Epistle of John, and the third edition of the Gospel, culminating in the Prologue of the Gospel, where it is said that the λόγος was God and became flesh in Jesus?

In fact, I did not find a neat, linear development through the stages of the Johannine literature from the λόγος as the word Jesus preached to Jesus as the Word. We have reviewed the meaning of λόγος in each edition of the Gospel and in the First Letter of John. We saw that in the first edition, the word is used with its ordinary meanings. In the second edition, the λόγος that Jesus speaks, since it ultimately comes from the Father, is one of the essential witnesses to the truth of what he claims. In the First Letter of John, apart from the opening verse of its
Prologue, λόγος refers in some verses to a command given by God through the Son, either the command to “love one another” or to remain faithful to Jesus’ message, which entails maintaining proper faith in him. The same is true for the third edition: Jesus says that those who love him keep his “commandments” (John 14:15, 21) or his “word” (14:23); the one not loving him does not keep his “words” (14:24).

In 12:47-48, Jesus says that he will not judge the one who does not keep his ρήματα; the λόγος that he speaks will judge that one who rejects him. This is the only instance I see in the three editions of the Gospel where the λόγος seems to have an independent existence, but it is clear that Jesus distinguished between this λόγος and himself.

Thus, while the term λόγος has a distinct theological meaning in some instances in the second and third editions of the Gospel and in I John, it is only in the first verse of the first chapter of the First Epistle of John that the word is used in such a way that it approximates the divine λόγος of the Gospel Prologue. There is no progression toward personification, hypostatization, or divinization of the λόγος, or toward identification of that λόγος with Jesus of Nazareth, as we move through the three editions of the Gospel and I John.

In chapter 4 of this dissertation, we discussed the meaning of λόγος in the prepositional phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς in I John 1:1. I took the view that the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς was indeed Jesus himself and not his message, since the author refers to this “word of life” as that which he and others have seen with their eyes.
and touched with their hands. However, the concept of the λόγος in I John 1:1 is not as developed as it is in John 1:1-18. Therefore, I concur with those scholars who see the Gospel Prologue as the further development of the Epistle prologue. If this is correct, the ambiguous use of λόγος in the Epistle Prologue represents a stepping stone toward the explicit identification of the λόγος with the man Jesus in the Gospel Prologue.

Nevertheless, between the λόγος of I John 1:1 and the λόγος of the Prologue of the Gospel stands the third edition, in which λόγος refers to a commandment or commandments that Jesus gives to his disciples. This point further demonstrates that there is not a steady progression in the christological significance of λόγος as we move chronologically through the Johannine literature.

It is clear, then, that the term λόγος is used in the Johannine writings both with its mundane meanings and in theologically significant ways, but that significance does not increase in a neat, step-by-step progression over the course of the composition of the Gospel and the First Epistle.

Nevertheless, this investigation has heightened my awareness of two points. The first is that, as the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς of the first verse of I John suggests, there was a within the history of the Johannine community a growth in its awareness of the relationship between Jesus and the λόγος he proclaimed. Though it is not evident in the three editions of the Gospel, in moving from the Epistle Prologue to the Gospel Prologue, I am left with the impression of a deepening of the community’s insight
into the mystery of Jesus, the mystery of “what was from the beginning,” what they
had seen with their eyes and touched with their hands. The author of the First
Epistle and his community had come to understand Jesus as the embodiment of “the
word of life” that he had brought them. This understanding would reach new
heights in the Prologue of the Gospel.

The second point I have come to appreciate more deeply is that, even if we regard
the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς of the Prologue of I John as a stepping stone on the way to the
λόγος of the Gospel Prologue, there remains much that is unique in the latter
portrayal of the λόγος. As I stated above, various streams of thought, originating
from distinct sources, converge in the Gospel Prologue in a way not seen in the
Epistle Prologue. If in the Epistle Prologue Jesus is the very embodiment of the
“word of life” which was “eternally with the Father,” in the Gospel Prologue he is
even more. Here in John 1:1-18, the insights of the Johannine community evident in
I John 1:1 come to their full—and beautiful—flowering. Here it is proclaimed that
the personified, divine λόγος who was with God in the beginning and who was God,
the λόγος through whom the world was created, took flesh and became one of us in
Jesus of Nazareth.
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