

Jesus on the Way to Galilee

The Movement of the Word in John 1-4

John Among the Gospels

The readers of the Gospel of John enter a new world. From the beginning they hear a new language. Jesus' announcement of the coming of the Kingdom of God gives room to a new conceptual world. Already the Prologue is characterized by this change of paradigm. There is talk about the divine Logos which brings Light and Life, but also about the forces of Darkness. There is talk about the Truth which Jesus both brings and is, and about the lie which opposes him. In particular the extended discourses of Jesus in the first half of the Gospel and the controversies with the "Jews" are characterized by this language, but also the Farewell Discourses before Jesus' Passion. Even as late as in his dialogue with Pilate Jesus will confess himself as the king who came to give witness to Truth. This is a tone as yet unheard in the Gospels.

Characteristic of the Gospel of John is its dualistic language and conceptual world. Distinct from the Synoptic Gospels, this dualism is not temporal, but spatial. Jesus comes "from above", his opponents "from below." They are "of this world", he is "not from this world." Jesus brings Life, he even is the Life (Jn 14,6). Whoever opposes him walks in the darkness. Jesus brings the Truth, he even is the Truth (14,6), his adversary is "the Father of Lie" (8,44). The "world" can be the arena of Jesus' mission, but also the symbol of everything which opposes Jesus and his message. The representatives of

¹ Johannes Beutler SJ is professor emeritus at the *Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen*, Frankfurt a Main, and at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome. He was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission from 1993 until 2001 and Academic Vice-Rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University from 1998 to 2000.

this “world” opposed to Jesus are the “Jews” in a specific sense (specifically probably the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, but in a larger sense also all adherents of the Jewish religion who refuse to believe in Jesus).

The multiplicity of Jewish groups which we encounter in the Synoptic Gospels has given way to one single group, that of the Pharisees. This fact may be due to the relatively late time of composition of the Fourth Gospel. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. the Sadducees, the Zealots and the Essenes had lost their importance. The only remaining significant group was that of the Pharisees. They are identified in the Gospel of John with the “Jews.”

The impression that for this reason the Fourth Gospel would be anti-Jewish is nonetheless mistaken. Hardly any Gospel has been influenced as strongly by Judaism and its institutions as the Gospel of John. This is already attested by the structure of this Gospel. As will be shown later on, the Jewish Feasts of Pilgrimage have a structural importance for the Gospel of John. Between the first Passover of Jn 2,13 and the last of 11,55, there are the unnamed feast of 5,1 which can be interpreted as Pentecost, and Tabernacles of 7,2, followed by the Feast of Dedication in 10,22. Disregarding for the moment the Passover of 6,4, we can see the whole public life of Jesus according to John integrated in one annual cycle of Jewish Feasts. Jerusalem and the Temple are the privileged places of Jesus’ teaching and activity. Individual places like the Pools of Siloam (9,7) or Bethesda (5,23) are named explicitly.

In John the sequence of events of the life of Jesus does not always correspond to that in the Synoptic Gospels. In John, the Purification of the Temple takes place already on the occasion of Jesus’ first visit to Jerusalem on the Feast of Passover (2,13-22). This way, a dramatic tension is created since from this moment there is the dangerous conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities (with a vague analogy in Mk 3,6 where we find the counsel of the Pharisees and Herodians to eliminate Jesus after a healing on a Sabbath).

If Mark deliberately selects from the miraculous deeds of Jesus, this tendency is reinforced in John. The Fourth Evangelist does not report any exorcism or healing of a leper, and the number of miracles of Jesus is strongly reduced in his Gospel. The remaining ones are the healing of the son of a Royal Officer (4,46-54), the healings of a paralytic (5,1-9) and of a man born blind (9,1-7) before the resurrection of Lazarus

(11,1-44). But these miracles are reflected theologically as “signs” of Jesus’ authority, in part by the extended dialogue scenes and discourses of Jesus which follow the miracle account or accompany it. This is also the case in the narrative of the multiplication of the loaves in Jn 6. The account of the transformation of water into wine at the Wedding of Cana which is only attested by John calls this deed of Jesus again a “sign” (2,11), even though an interpreting discourse or dialogue is missing. The miraculous catch of fish in 21,1-14 does not follow this scheme, but is in its turn characterized by symbolic elements.

The Parables of the Kingdom, so characteristic for the Synoptic Gospels, are missing in John, but he likes metaphorical language. This language serves to illustrate the identity of Jesus, in particular in the so-called “I-am-Sayings”, characteristic of John, in which Jesus expresses what he means for the believing person. In two texts we encounter in John a literary genre similar to the parable or similitude which is called “*paroimia - Bildrede*”: 10,1-5 the *paroimia* about the Good Shepherd and 15,1-8 the one about the true vine. In this form of speech which is related to allegory, the metaphorical level and the real level penetrate each other.

Mark begins his Gospel with the activity of John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke begin their report much earlier and integrate an account of Jesus’ infancy into their Gospels. The Fourth Evangelist goes a step further and follows in his Prologue (1,1-18) the origin of Jesus back to his provenance from the Father from eternity. Who Jesus is and where he comes from is no longer illustrated biographically but theologically in the form of a hymn.

Already in the Prologue we find the characteristic theology of the Fourth Evangelist, it even finds there its unique expression. The Divine Word, Jesus, not only comes from God, but is God, i.e. of divine essence. This affirmation frames the Prologue of John (1,1.18). Thomas will resume this statement at the end of the Gospel, before the additional chapter 21, and will make it his confession of faith and that of the reading community of John in 20,28: “My Lord and my God.” This way, the confession of the divinity of Christ frames as well the whole Gospel of John in its original extension. That Jesus is the Son of God is a key issue in the Gospel of Mark (see Mk 1,11; 9,7; 14,61; 15,39), but becomes the leading Christological title in John. Besides, Jesus is also called the “Son” and the “Son of Man”, this again in correspondence with the

Synoptic Gospels. The attributes of this “Son of Man” correspond in John to those of the Isaian Servant of God: he will be “exalted and glorified” (Is 52,13 LXX), once his “hour” has come.

With this, Johannine eschatology comes to the fore. In John, there is no discourse on the coming end of the world and destruction of Jerusalem as in Mk 13 par. The end time will not come at a given moment or even soon, but has begun already, perhaps with recourse to Synoptic texts as Mt 12,28; Lk 11,20. In John, this can mean: “The hour is coming and now is”, the hour of the true worshippers in the Spirit in the end time (Jn 4,23) and at the same time the hour in which the departed will hear the voice of the Son of Man and rise for judgment or salvation (5,25). In particular by locating the final judgment and eternal life in the present, John goes beyond the Synoptics. The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus are the turning point of history, in Johannine language the “hour” of his “exaltation” on the cross and to the Father. It is from this perspective that the words of Jesus must be understood. In particular in the Farewell Discourses in Jn 13-17 we hear the voice of the Exalted One. He is no longer visible among his own, but he will send his representative, the Paraclete, who will introduce the disciples of Jesus into all truth (16,13). Thus, the community of the disciples lives after Easter in the end time and shares God’s eschatological promises.

The Structure of John

In all times up to the present there have been very varied opinions about the structure of the Gospel of John. Until recently there was a doubt, particularly in German language research, whether it would be possible at all to find a convincing structure of this Gospel. This scepticism can be observed among other contributions in the voluminous commentary of John by Rudolf Schnackenburg.¹ The reason for this cautious attitude lies in part in the fact, that authors like him consider the Gospel of John to be the product of a long process of redaction on the basis of various sources, with the consequence that its original shape can hardly be reconstructed any longer.

¹ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, 3 vols. (New York, 1980-1982).

The most recognized interpreters of the Gospel of John in the 20th Century structure the Fourth Gospel predominantly *thematically*. Thus, R. Bultmann² divides this Gospel in his commentary into two main parts: “The revelation of the δόξα to the world” (Jn 2-12) and “The revelation of the δόξα to the community” (13-20). Chapter one with the Prologue serves as introduction, chapter 21 as Epilogue or Supplement. Similarly, C. H. Dodd³ divides the Gospel of John in chapters 2-12 “The Book of Signs” and 13-20 “The Book of the Passion.” Raymond E. Brown⁴ modifies Dodd’s proposal and calls the second part “The Book of Glory” which seems to be more appropriate. The first half of the Gospel is divided by Brown into three sections: “From Cana to Cana” (chapters 2-4); “Jesus and the principal feasts of the Jews” (chapters 5-10), and chapters 11-12 which Brown rightly recognizes as a transitional section towards Jesus’ Passion, Death and Resurrection. Here besides thematic criteria, topographical, chronological and liturgical ones are also respected.⁵

Other authors see a division of the Gospel of John according to *dramatic* criteria. For J. Louis Martyn,⁶ the “drama” of the conflict between Jesus and the “Jews” who refuse to believe in him determines the narrative of the Fourth Gospel. Since this conflict pervades the whole Fourth Gospel, this point of view is of limited utility for the discovery of the structure of John. Dramatic elements are also important for Mark Stibbe⁷ in his various publications and for Ludger Schenke in his commentary on John.⁸ The latter divides the Gospel of John into two main sections: “The activity of Jesus in front of humanity as ‘descent from heaven’” (Jn 1,19-12,36) with eight scenes and a first Epilogue in 12,37-50, and then: “The activity of Jesus in front of the disciples

² Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. George R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford, 1971).

³ Charles H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953).

⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. Anchor Bible 29, 29A, (Garden City, NY, 1966-1970).

⁵ This approach is followed by Francis J. Moloney in his Commentary, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina Series 4 (Collegeville/MN, 1998).

⁶ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, 1968).

⁷ See Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and The Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1992); idem. *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives*, Selected and Introduced by Mark W. G. Stibbe (Leiden, 1993); idem. *John’s Gospel*, New Testament Readings, (London, 1994).

⁸ Ludger Schenke, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Urban-Taschenbucher 446 (Stuttgart et al., 1992).

as ‘ascent/exaltation to heaven’” in 13,1-20,29 in three scenes and a second Epilogue in 20,30-31, an appendix in 21,1-24 and the conclusion of the book in 21,25. Here, the influence of Bultmann can still be observed. Similar to Schenke also Hartwig Thyen⁹ structures the Gospel of John according to dramatic criteria, following to a large extent his Danish precursor G. Østenstad.¹⁰ His proposal to structure the Gospel of John according to *acts and scenes* appears so strongly influenced by the literary genre of drama that the multiplicity of criteria relevant for the structure of John cannot be respected any longer.

Proposals to see the structure of John determined by *chronological* and *liturgical* criteria seem to come closer to the text and its structural signals. Thus, Donatien Mollat recognizes in his commentary on John in the *Jerusalem Bible*¹¹ after an “inaugural week” (1,19-2,12) the Jewish Principal Feasts as Pilgrimage Feasts in their importance for the structure of John: the first Passover in Jerusalem, to which Jesus departs (2,13), then the unnamed feast of 5,1, possibly Pentecost, the Passover in Galilee of 6,4, Tabernacles (7,2) with the successive Feast of the Dedication (10,22) and then the last Passover (11,55; 12,1; 13,1, until 19,42). This proposal recommends itself because of its combination of thematic, spatial and temporal structural elements. We shall return to it later on.

More recently, *topographical* elements have found stronger attention in the attempt to find the structure of John. Matthias Rissi¹² distinguishes in his proposal three journeys of Jesus before his last journey to Jerusalem. These journeys start in non-Jewish or pagan territory, pass by Galilee and finally lead to Jerusalem: 1,19-3,36; 4,1-5,47; 6,1-10,39. Jesus’ final departure for Jerusalem starts here: 10,40-12,41, with the Farewell of Jesus to his own 13,1-14,31 (chapters 15-17 are additional), and Jesus’ return to his Father 18,1-20,31 (chapter 21 has been added). At the beginning is found

⁹ Hartwig Thyen, “Joh 10 im Kontext des Vierten Evangeliums,” in *The Shepherd Discourse of John 10 and its Context*, ed. Johannes Beutler, Robert T. Fortna, Society For New Testament Studies, Monograph Series 67 (Cambridge, 1991), 116-134.163-168, now in idem. *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 214 (Tübingen, 2007), 134-154.

¹⁰ Gunnar Østenstad, “The Structure of the Fourth Gospel: Can it be Defined Objectively?,” *Studia theologica Lundensia* 45 (1991): 33-55.

¹¹ Donatien Mollat, *L'évangile selon Saint Jean*, in idem. François-Marie Braun, *L'évangile et les épîtres de Saint Jean*, (SB[J]), Paris ²1960, 7-193: 32-36.90.

¹² Mathias Rissi, “Der Aufbau des Vierten Evangeliums,” *New Testament Studies* 29 (1983): 48-54.

the Prologue. Thus results a division of John in seven sections, with twice three sections after the Prologue and the turning point in 10,40.

J. Staley¹³ takes over from M. Rissi especially the turning point in John 10,40 (with which also H. Thyen agrees), with the only modification that for him the new section starts in 11,1 (similarly in H. Thyen). Staley sees the idea of the “journey” already prepared in the Prologue which describes the descent and ascent of the Logos. Thus there can be observed a structure of four journeys: 1,19-3,36; 4,1-6,71; 7,1-10,42 and 11,1-21,25. The journey of Jesus in the first half of the Gospel (1,19-10,42) brings him from Bethany on the Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem (1,28; 11,1.18). The most important accompanying person is John the Baptist, first named in 1,28 and last named in 10,42. He will be “replaced” by Lazarus, “whom Jesus loved” (11,5) and then by the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (for L. Devillers¹⁴ these are the three witnesses of Jesus).

F. F. Segovia sees more clearly in his two contributions¹⁵ that the journeys of Jesus lead regularly to Jerusalem. Like M. Rissi he recognizes three journeys of Jesus (1,19-3,36; 4,1-5,42; 6,1-10,42) before the last and decisive one from 11,1. These journeys allow the reader to participate in the ventures of the hero. The importance of the Jewish Feasts for the journeys of Jesus and for the structure of John seems to be overlooked.

Still more recently, there are proposals which try to combine formal and thematic criteria for the discovery of the structure of John. This procedure can be observed in the dissertation of G. Mlakuzhyil¹⁶ from the school of I. de la Potterie of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. According to this author, Christology is of decisive importance for the understanding and the structure of the Gospel of John. After a Christocentric introduction (1,1-2,11) the author distinguishes the “Book of Signs” with the account of the Wedding at Cana as a transitional passage (2,1-12,50) and the “Book of the

¹³ Jeffrey Staley, “The Structure of John’s Prologue: Its Implications For The Gospel’s Narrative Structure,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 241-264.

¹⁴ Luc Devillers, “Les trois témoins. Une structure pour le quatrième évangile,” *Revue Biblique* 104 (1997): 40-87.

¹⁵ Fernando F. Segovia, “The Journeys of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel,” in *The Fourth Gospel From a Literary Perspective*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, Semeia 53 (Atlanta/GA, 1991), 23-54; idem. “The Journeys of Jesus to Jerusalem,” in *John and the Synoptics*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 101 (Leuven, 1992), 535-541.

¹⁶ George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of The Fourth Gospel*, Analecta Biblica 117 (Rome, 1987).

Hour of Jesus” (11,1-21,25) with 11,1-12,50 as another transition (see above for H. Thyen and others). Less convincing is the restriction of the cycle of Jewish Feasts to the great controversies of Jesus with the “Jews” in Jerusalem in 5,1-10,42.

The proposal of Ch. H. Giblin¹⁷ combines in its turn formal and thematic criteria for the division of John. The author takes his starting point from spatial and temporal indications in the text as well as from dramatic ones. In 1,19-4,54 the universal mission of Jesus is described, in 5,1-10,42 the hostility against him in the great controversies, from 11,1 Jesus’ love for his own until the end. The formal transition to the second part comes only in 13,1 so that the classical division of the Gospel of John into two halves retains its value. Again, the question is whether spatial and temporal indications in John have found the attention they deserve.

In the following I shall try to combine the criteria of division so far proposed. Thus, I shall pay attention to topographical, chronological, liturgical, formal and thematic elements. From Mollat I should like to adopt the role of the Jewish Feasts for the structure of John, from M. Rissi, J. Staley and F. F. Segovia the importance of the journeys up to Jesus’ last journey to Jerusalem. It is recommended that one sees in the journeys of Jesus pilgrimages to the principal Feasts of the Jews. Probably there have been additions to the original text. It can be assumed that a one year cycle of Jewish Feasts formed the framework of the narrative part of the Fourth Gospel between 2,13 and 11,55. Four times Jesus departs for Jerusalem: for the first Passover in 2,13, for the unnamed feast of 5,1 (presumably Pentecost), for Tabernacles in 7,2 and for the last Passover in 11,1 (mentioned in 11,55; 12,1; 13,1). For the Passover of 6,4, Jesus does not seem to depart for Jerusalem. The whole of chapter 6 could have been added to the text of John under the influence of the Synoptic Gospels.¹⁸ The Feast of Dedication in 10,22 fits into the framework and does not require a new pilgrimage to Jerusalem, since Jesus finds himself already in the town. From the theological point of view, Jesus

¹⁷ Charles H. Giblin, “The Tripartite Narrative Structure of John’s Gospel,” *Biblica* 71 (1990): 440-468.

¹⁸ See Johannes Beutler, “Joh 6 als christliche ‘relecture’ des Pascharahmens im Johannesevangelium,” in *Damit sie das Leben haben (Joh 10,10)*, ed. Ruth Scoralick, Festschrift für Walter Kirchschräger zum 60. Geburtstag (Zürich, 2007), 43-58; now in idem. *Neue Studien zu den johanneischen Schriften / New Studies on the Johannine Writings*, Bonner biblische Beiträge 167 (Göttingen, 2012), 165-180.

brings to perfection the Sacred Times and the Sacred Places of Israel (at the beginning and at the end stands the Temple). With good reasons, authors see at the beginning an “inaugural week” leading into the public life of Jesus in 1,19-2,12 with a scheme of seven days and at the end the week of Jesus’ departure to the Father which starts with Jesus’ anointing “six days before the Passover” in 12,1. The seven days of the Lazarus story in Jn 11 announce and prepare this final week.

On the basis of the given criteria I would propose the following structure of John:

- The Divine Word enters into the World (1,1-4,54)
- Jesus reveals himself to his people (5,1-10,42)
- Jesus on the way to his Passion (11,1-12,50)
- The Farewell of Jesus (13,1-17,26)
- The “Hour” of Jesus: Passion, Death and Resurrection (18,1-20,31)
- The Epilogue: Jesus, Peter, and the Beloved Disciple (21,1-25)

In this proposal, particularly the first part may need explanation. We integrate the Prologue into this first part and see in it the introduction to the theme of the first four chapters. Jesus, the Divine Word, enters this world in his incarnation. John the Baptist becomes his witness. Then, Jesus calls the first disciples, works his first “sign” at the Wedding of Cana and departs for the participation of his first Passover Feast in Jerusalem. We shall try and show how we encounter here a movement of Jesus which comes from the Father, enters the world, starts in Jerusalem and then directs itself more and more to the periphery: to Judea, Samaria and Galilee. This shall be shown in the next section. The two miracles worked at Cana in Galilee (the changing of water into wine at the Wedding of Cana in 2,1-11 and the healing of the Son of the Royal Officer in the same town in 4,46-54) frame the first part of Jesus’ public activity and show the coherence of the whole introductory section of the Gospel of John with its movement towards Galilee.

The Structure of Jn 1-4: Jesus on the Way to Galilee

The Gospel of John opens in a solemn way with the Prologue (1,1-18). This hymn sings of the incarnation of the Divine Word. In his Word, God enters human history and becomes part of it. Often, the Prologue is placed in front of the remainder of the

Gospel as a separate unit. However, there are reasons for seeing it in connection with the following chapters. The witness of the Baptist (1,19-34) had already been prepared in the Prologue (1,6-8.15). Jesus Christ, who already had been called by this name in the Prologue (1,17), is now announced by John the Baptist. The Baptist also leads the first disciples to Jesus (1,35-51) who will become witnesses of the first miracle of Jesus in Cana in Galilee (2,1-12). The first Feast of Passover leads Jesus to Jerusalem where he cleanses the Temple (2,13-25) and has a conversation with the Member of Council Nicodemus (3,1-21).

From here onwards we see Jesus in concentric circles on his way towards new areas: from Judea (3,22-36) through Samaria (4,1-42) to Galilee (4,43-45) where Jesus works his second sign in Cana (4,46-54). Distance from Jerusalem means at the same time opening towards new groups of people: the Samaritans who are not fully united with the Judeans in their faith and liturgical practice, and the Galileans whose country is the one of “Zebulon and Naphtali”, called by Isaiah the “Galilee of the Gentiles” (see Isa 8,23; Mt 4,15). Thus, after his first pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover, Jesus begins a journey which leads him to places which are more and more distant from Jerusalem, its cult and its belief. This will change from Jn 5,1 when Jesus uses the Jewish feasts of pilgrimage in order to reveal himself to his people and its leaders (with the exception of the Passover of Jn 6 in Galilee which we already mentioned). In this regard it is advisable not to see (with R. Bultmann) in 2-12 “The revelation of the $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ to the world” or with the German Ecumenical Translation (1979) in 5-12: “Jesus’ self-revelation to the world”, but to distinguish between the revelation of Jesus to the world in 1-4 and his revelation to his people in 5-10, with a backward look in 12,37-43 and a last call to faith in 12,44-50.

How conscious is the Fourth Evangelist of the geographical structure in 2-4? The starting point in 2,13 is obvious. The Passover of the Jews is at hand, and Jesus decides to go up to Jerusalem. By this, he starts the annual cycle of Jewish feasts which he attends as a pilgrim and makes Jerusalem the point of arrival of the following journeys, but also the starting point for the next travel project: the one to Judea, Samaria and Galilee.

“Judea”, the country of the Judeans, is used in the Gospel of John in a twofold way. In chapters 3-4 there is the movement from Jerusalem to Judea and then to Samaria and Galilee. In 3,22, Jesus leaves Jerusalem for Judea, specifically the land along the river

Jordan, and baptizes there. Here, the disciples of John have a dialogue with a “Judean” about forms of baptism (3,25). The Baptist himself takes position and presents himself as the friend of the bridegroom who is glad to hear the voice of the bridegroom (3,29). Later on, there will be flashbacks to Jesus’ departure from Judea towards Samaria and Galilee in Jn 4. In 4,3 we read, that Jesus “left Judea and departed again to Galilee.” The same formula is resumed in 4,47: when the official “heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went” Once again in 4,54 the topic is resumed at the end of the account of the healing of the son of the official: “This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.” The insistence upon the way of Jesus from Judea to Galilee is obvious. Jesus is on his way to the periphery, from the centre of Jewish faith and religion to the people on the margin.

In another group of texts, Jesus moves from Galilee to Judea. They all are found in the section about Jesus’ pilgrimages to the feasts of the Jews in 5-11. In 7,1, Jesus first refuses to go to Judea for the celebration of Tabernacles since he is afraid of Jewish or Judean opposition, and his brothers exhort him to take the risk and go to Judea (7,3). In 11,7 Jesus invites his disciples to join him on his last journey to Judea, the one of the final Passover and of his arrest and execution before his resurrection. Thomas will express the readiness of the disciples to share his destiny in 11,16.

The difference between the two movements from Judea to Galilee and from the periphery to Judea is obvious. What concerns us here is Jesus’ movement to Judea from Jerusalem in 2-4. It calls to mind Jesus’ command before his ascension in the Acts of the Apostles (1,8): “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” Here again, this geographical structure determines the narrative of the following chapters.

Between Judea and Galilee there is Samaria. The episode of Jesus’ visit to this region and his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well seem to be inserted into a report which shows Jesus on the way from Jerusalem and Judea to Galilee. Apparently, for the author of John, Samaria had an important role in Jesus’ movement to the populations outside Judea. Besides historical reasons, including the early existence of Christian communities in this part of the Holy Land, there are also theological ones. The Samaritans stand between orthodox Jewish faith as represented by the Jewish community of Jerusalem and Judea and the area of the Galileans open to the sea and to

non-Jewish cults and religions of the region. In this sense, that Jesus on his way from Judea to Galilee “had to pass through Samaria” (4,4) may be more than a geographical remark. From orthodox Jewish faith to the syncretism of Galilee there was the need to pass through the country of the “separated brothers” in Samaria. Jesus’ dialogue with the Samaritan woman will deal with this topic, until the inhabitants of Sychar, the Samaritan town, recognize in Jesus the “Saviour of the world” (4,42). This word opens new horizons.

Jesus’ departure for Galilee had been reported in Jn 4,1-3. After the episode in Samaria, which interrupts the narrative, the subject is resumed in 4,43-45. The text makes good sense if we restrict it to vv. 43 and 45 after 4,1-3: Jesus sees himself threatened in Judea and departs for Galilee, interrupts his journey in Samaria, and upon his arrival in Galilee he is well received by the Galileans. The reason for this is his reputation due to the miracles he had worked in Judea and of which the Galilean pilgrims had been witnesses on the Feast of Passover.

The problem lies in v.44. Jesus refers in his decision to a Saying: “A prophet has no honour in his own country.” A particular problem arises from the conjunction γάρ “for.” Classical literary criticism has tried to solve the problem by the distinction of sources and layers. A late representative of this approach is J. Becker.¹⁹ According to this author, 4,44 is a late gloss by a copyist which only later found its way into the text. In any case this proposal has not found wide acceptance, and the majority of interpreters read the text as a coherent unit. Thus, the question remains which is Jesus’ πατρίς, “own country”, and which sense could have the γάρ “for”.

The oldest interpretation sees in the “own country” of Jesus Judea or Jerusalem. This position is already found in Origen²⁰ and Theodore of Mopsuestia.²¹ In recent times, this position is held predominantly in the Anglo-Saxon world,²² but also by some

¹⁹ Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 4,1 (Gütersloh-Würzburg, ³1991), 1:222f.

²⁰ Origenes, *In Ioann.* 13,54-55, Sources Chrétiennes 222, (ed. C. BLANC), 236-243.

²¹ Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium 116 (ed. J.-M. VOSTÉ with translation from the Syriac), Louvain 1940, 68.

²² See among others Edwyn C. Hoykyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis N. Davey (London, 1941), 1, 277; most recent commentaries in English; Dodd, *The Interpretation* (see above, footnote 3), 352; slightly different in idem. *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1963), 238-241; Johannes Willemse, “La patrie de Jésus selon Jean IV,44,” *New Testament Studies* 11 (1964-65):

authors on the continent.²³ We shall come back to the arguments later on, once the opposite position has been described.

The interpretation which sees in the “own country” of Jesus Galilee or Nazareth refers normally to the Synoptic parallels in Mk 6,1-6 par. Mt 13,53-58; Lk 4,16-30. Another version of the saying of the prophet who is not accepted in his own country and the doctor who performs no healings among his own is attested, without the narrative framework, in EvThom 31 and in POxy 1,6. This version might go back, anyhow, to the Synoptics, in particular to Luke who also has the motif of the doctor. The interpreters which refer the Saying of Jesus to Galilee or Nazareth are found predominantly, although not exclusively, in the German speaking area.²⁴ The problem of this interpretation is that the conjunction γάρ “for” in v. 44 seems to refer to the preceding context, that is Jesus’ departure from Samaria for Galilee. If Jesus leaves for Galilee and his motif is that a prophet has no honour in his own country, the consequence would be that he deliberately seeks his refusal. On the other hand the Galileans receive him according to v. 45 with open arms, although their faith is imperfect, based on the seeing of signs. Thus, the Saying of v. 44 could be a case of “Johannine irony.” The readers know that Jesus is not seeking the honour from men, but wants to fulfil the will of the Father. A possible translation of the γάρ could be in this case “however”.

Occasionally there are other interpretations of Jesus’ “home.” John Chrysostom²⁵ thinks of Capernaum, others think of Palestine,²⁶ again others of the Jewish People (Judeans and

349-364; Wayne A. Meeks, “Galilee and Judea in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 159-169; Robert T. Fortna, “Theological Use of Locale in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Gospel Studies in Honor of Sherman Elbridge Johnson*, ed. Massey Hamilton Shepard, Edward C. Hobbs, Australian Theological Review, Supplement Series 3 (Evanston/IL, 1974), 58-95; Jouette M. Bassler, “The Galileans. A Neglected Factor in the Johannine Community,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1983): 243-257.

²³ See for instance Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 6 (Tübingen, 2005), 284-286.

²⁴ See for example the commentaries of Rudolf Bultmann and Rudolf Schnackenburg (see above, footnotes 2 and 1) ad l.; Gilbert van Belle, “The faith of the Galileans. The Parenthesis in John 4,44,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 74 (1998): 27-44; Alois Stimpfle, “Das sinnlose γάρ in Joh 4,44. Beobachtungen zur Doppeldeutigkeit im Johannesevangelium,” *Biblische Notizen* 65 (1992): 86-96. According to Jeremy Corley, “The Dishonoured Prophet in John 4,44. John the Baptist foreshadowing Jesus,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 200, ed. Gilbert van Belle (Leuven, 2007), 625-634.

²⁵ In *Ioann. homiliae*, PG 59, 200.

²⁶ Thus Alfred Loisy, *Le quatrième évangile. Les épîtres dites de Jean* (Paris, 1921), ad l.

Galileans) in opposition to the Samaritans, who represent the Christians,²⁷ still others of heaven.²⁸

The option for Judea and Jerusalem as the “home” of Jesus seems to be for me the better founded one. As Theodore of Mopsuestia²⁹ had already observed rightly 4,43-45 refer back to 4,1-3. In Judea Jesus found himself in an increasingly dangerous situation so that it seemed advisable to retreat to Galilee. The section about his encounter with the Samaritan woman and her fellow citizens in 4,4-42 appears then as an insertion. At its end (v.40) Jesus staying for two days in the town of the Samaritans had been mentioned. These two days recur in 4,43. The “leaving” of v.3 gives way to the “departing” of Jesus from the town of the Samaritans in v.43. Again, Galilee is indicated as the destination of the journey. This landscape is important for the evangelist, more than individual names of places, as the occurrence of the word also in the following verses shows (vv.45.47.54).

Jesus’ departure for Galilee finds its reason according to the evangelist in a causal clause (γάρ). This clause seems to refer to vv.1-3, the preoccupation of the Pharisees with Jesus’ success in baptizing. It is impossible to know from the text, when and where Jesus should have “attested” the word about the prophet who does not find honour in his own country or town. Here it gives, in any case, the reason for Jesus’ departure from Judea to Galilee. From this it follows that the “home” of Jesus should be Judea or Jerusalem. Jesus is not from this city, but he has the centre of his activity here precisely according to the Gospel of John. Here is the home of the prophets, and here his destiny will be fulfilled. Origen³⁰ refers here to the fate of the prophets according to Heb 11,37 and Acts 7,52, but also the desire of the Jews to have Jesus crucified according to Jn 19,15 and the building of the tombs of the prophets without internal repentance according to Mt 23,29 and Lk 11,47. The sages of Greece had no better fate according to Origen: they also were not recognized in their own town and had to face threats, if not execution.³¹

²⁷ Thus S. Augustin, Hom. in *Ev. Ioann.* 16,3; similarly now John Pryor, “John 4:44 and the Patris of Jesus,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 254-263.

²⁸ Robert Henry Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel. A Commentary*, ed. Christopher F. Evans (Oxford, 1960), 34-36.

²⁹ See above, footnote 21.

³⁰ See above, footnote 2.

³¹ *Ibid.* Some concrete examples are found in vol.3 of the edition of Origen by C. Blanc, 241, note 3.

If the wording of Jn 4,44 corresponds to a large extent to the one of Mk 6,4; Mt 13,56; Lk 4,24, it does not necessarily follow that the same “home” is intended. Already in POxy 1,6 and EvThom 31 the logion is transmitted in an isolated way. John could have used the Saying in a free form in order to give a reason for the rejection of Jesus in the centre of Jewish faith and of the Jewish People.

Often authors remark that also for the Fourth Evangelist the home of Jesus is Nazareth or Galilee. But we have to pay attention to the question who is the speaker. In Jn 1,45f. it is Philip and Nathanael, the latter being scandalized by Jesus being from Nazareth. In 7,41.52 it is the “Jews” on the Feast of Tabernacles or the Members of the Council who cannot imagine a Messiah coming from Galilee. In the perspective of John, the true origin of Jesus can only be perceived by faith (see Jn 7,27-29; 8,14; 19,9-11), since he comes from the Father.

After Jesus’ departure for Galilee, there follows in v. 45 his arrival in this part of the country. The Galileans receive him there with open minds (ἐδέξαυτο) which reminds the reader of a similar formula, used critically, in Lk 4,24 (δεκτός ἐστίν), but stated here in a positive way. The reason for their attitude is given in the miraculous deeds which the Galileans had seen as pilgrims to the Feast in Jerusalem. Often authors try to play down this statement, pointing to Jesus’ critical attitude towards a faith of the Judeans based on signs in 2,23-25. According to 4,48 a faith based on signs and wonders is not sufficient. But signs can lead to faith. This holds true for the disciples present at the Wedding of Cana in 2,11 and is stated as the purpose of the Gospel in the concluding verses 20,30f. The official of Capernaum shows his faith in the power of Jesus already before the miraculous healing of his son (4,47.49) and believes on the basis of Jesus’ word (v.50), before the evangelist can report his faith and the faith of his whole house at the end of the story (v.54). The “Galileans” (v.45) appear here contrasted in a positive way to the “Judeans” who close themselves up increasingly towards Jesus and his claims.

The section 4,43-45 comes close to the conclusion of the first major section of the Gospel of John which can be described as “The Divine Word enters into the world” (Jn 1,1-4,54). After the prelude in the Jordan Valley in Judea with the call of the first

Further examples can be found in *Neuer Wettstein, Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechenland und Hellenismus I/2*, ed. Udo Schnelle et al., (Berlin-New York, 2001), 257-260.

disciples begins a cycle sometimes called “from Cana to Cana” (Jn 2-4). After the narrative about the Wedding at Cana (2,1-12) we see Jesus on a journey which leads him first to Jerusalem (2,13-3,21) and then to the whole of Judea (2,22-36). On his way to Galilee Jesus first addresses the Samaritans (4,4-42). Only then does he definitely depart for Galilee. Already now the acceptance of Jesus in Jerusalem and Judea and his acceptance in Galilee appear opposed to each other. The inhabitants of Jerusalem only arrive at an imperfect faith. Nicodemus is left behind with his doubts and questions. The further Jesus moves from the centre of Jewish faith, the more readily he is received. This is clearly manifested upon his arrival in Galilee.

The Johannine Jesus does not simply break with Judaism, but he questions it in its traditional form and frees himself from the authorities of Jerusalem. Only the person who recognizes him has understood the sense of the religious tradition of Israel and of its cult. “People on the margin” have understood this message better than those who see themselves at the centre of the faith of Israel.

Thus our text invites us to reflect about “centre” and “periphery.” As the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels shows his preference for the socially marginalized, for publicans and prostitutes, so the Jesus of the Gospel of John shows his preference for those marginalized for religion: The Samaritans and the Galileans. Here lies a lasting challenge for all those who have to transmit the message of Jesus.

One final thought comes to me on the Island of Malta. Malta belonged to the world of the gentiles in antiquity. According to the Acts of the Apostles, it heard and accepted the Gospel message from Saint Paul. The distant island came to faith in Christ. Today this Island finds itself at the same time on the margin and on the crossroads between West and East, North and South. In the perspective of the Gospel of John, those on the margin are the privileged recipients of the Gospel message. May they receive the attention they deserve.

Elsheimerstr. 9
D-603 22 Frankfurt
Germany

Johannes.Beutler@jesuiten.org