

# THE TWELVE

## Another Perspective: John 6, 67-71

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Almost from the beginning of Christian history it has been recognized that the fourth gospel is radically different from the other three gospels in the New Testament. During Patristic times, the difference was epitomized in the characterization of the fourth gospel as “the spiritual gospel” and the choice of the eagle as a symbol to represent its author who was, as it were, considered capable of soaring to the heights of heaven.

In the early years of the historical critical era, the difference between the fourth gospel and the others was summed up in the characterization of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as “the synoptic gospels,” a category from which the fourth gospel was obviously – and for good reason – excluded. The difference between the Synoptics and the fourth gospel received symbolic expression in the printed synopses, beginning with Griesbach’s work in 1774, which contained only the first three of the canonical gospels.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the difference between the fourth gospel and the Synoptics was summed up in the views of radical critics, such as Alfred Loisy, who considered that only the Synoptics provided material useful for historical investigation into the life of Jesus and relegated the fourth gospel to the status of an imaginative theological exposition on a Jesus who had become virtually a myth.

In popular piety, the difference between the fourth gospel and the synoptics is symbolized in the choice of “John the Divine” to identify its author, while the authorship of the Synoptic gospels is simply attributed to Matthew, Mark, and Luke or, at best, Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, and Saint Luke.

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As historical-critical scholarship has continued to probe the fourth gospel during the past four decades, these views of earlier times have been virtually abandoned. It is now almost universally recognized that the fourth gospel also has its roots in the historical ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Published synopses of the gospels now commonly print in parallel columns Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These names are generally considered to be but symbols designating whoever the author of the respective texts might have been. With regard to the fourth gospel, there is a wide consensus of opinion that it was not written by John, at least, not by the John who was the son of Zebedee.

Despite the fact that contemporary biblical scholarship is now accustomed to treat the fourth gospel in the same way, and for the same purposes, that it examines the other three canonical gospels, contemporary biblical scholarship shares with the older ecclesiastical, critical, and pious views the conviction that the fourth gospel is quite different from the Synoptics. The difference, quite obvious when the plan of the fourth gospel is compared to that of the Synoptics, is a difference that goes down to small details and extends to a wide variety of viewpoints. As a case in point, this essay will briefly consider the appearance of "The Twelve" in the New Testament.

### **The Synoptics**

Christians commonly speak and write about "the twelve apostles" and Jesus' "twelve disciples." Whenever they do so, they are, in fact, echoing the language of the Synoptic gospels. To speak about the twelve apostles or Jesus' twelve disciples is a manner of speaking that is foreign to the tradition of the fourth gospel.

### **Mark**

The earliest of the gospels to mention "The Twelve" is Mark, the first of the gospels. He does so on only one occasion, that is, when he lists the names of twelve men, Simon, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot whom Jesus appointed to be with him, to go out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons (Mark 3, 14-19a).

### **A Textual Problem**

Although the three-fold mission of the twelve is clearly described in Mark 3, 14b-15, the status of Mark's presentation formula (Mark 3, 14a) is

not so clear. "And he appointed twelve" (*kai epoièsen dòdeka*) is the simple formula used by the *RSV* to introduce the mission statement of vv. 14b-15. However, many editions of the *RSV* offer a footnote to the effect that in v. 14a "other ancient authorities add *whom also he named apostles*."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, many of these same editions provide for v. 16 a footnote which reads "So he appointed the twelve."

In fact, the twenty-sixth edition of Nestle-Aland includes *hous kai apostolous ònomasen* ("whom also he named apostles") in 3, 14a as a bracketed part of the Greek text. The editors have included the disputed words because of the weight of the manuscript tradition (including the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Ephraemi Rescriptus codices). However, they have given the disputed words only a C rating<sup>2</sup> and opine that the clause is most likely an interpolation into the Markan text brought about because of the influence of Luke 6, 13.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of v. 16, a bracketed *kai epoièsen tous dòdeka* ("So he appointed the twelve") appears in N-A<sup>26</sup>. With the inclusion of these words, a neat *inclusio* is formed around the triple mission statement of Mark 3, 14b-15. However, the editors once again offer but a C rating for the bracketed clause, opining that the words have come into the text as a result of scribal dittography.<sup>4</sup>

The revised edition of the *NAB*, following N-A<sup>26</sup>, includes both sets of disputed words in brackets. In contrast, most of the principal recent English-language editions of the NT do not admit the disputed words of v. 14.<sup>5</sup> Generally, however, they do incorporate the disputed words of v. 16 into the English-language text.<sup>6</sup>

### A group of twelve

Mark does not particularly speculate on the significance<sup>7</sup> attached to the fact that this group of Jesus' special companions, appointed by him to share in his ministry of preaching and exorcism, were twelve<sup>8</sup> in number.

1. For example, Nestle-Aland, *Greek-English New Testament* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart<sup>2</sup> 1985) 96.

2. Meaning that there is "a considerable amount of doubt".

3. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies; London/New York 1971) 80.

4. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 80-81.

5. In addition to the *RSV*, *JB*, *NEB*, *NAB*, and *NJB* do not include the disputed words, while the *NIV* does include the words in the text of v. 14.

6. The *JB*, *NEB*, *NIV*, *NJB*, *NAB* include the words, while the *RSV* does not.

7. Similarly, the evangelist does not speculate on the significance of the enigmatic names "Peter" and "Boanerges", notwithstanding the fact that he does translate the latter expression into Greek.

8. Cf. Ernest Best, "Mark's Use of the Twelve," *ZNW* 69 (1978) 32, 34. Best holds that "the twelve" is an element of the tradition that has come down to Mark.

However, given the eschatological nature of their mission it is likely that their being twelve in number had some eschatological significance.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, other texts in the New Testament suggest that "twelve" is symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel and therefore points to the eschatological nature of the mission to which these twelve were appointed. Matthew and Luke (Matt 19, 28 = Luke 22, 30) have taken a logion on the Son of Man and the twelve tribes of Israel from their Q source and incorporated it into a short discourse on discipleship. Horsley suggests that that this saying of Jesus on the twelve thrones evokes a concrete social context.<sup>10</sup> If so, the Q-logion is concerned with a concrete manifestation of the "reign of God," a powerful eschatological symbol in the apocalyptic context within which Jesus spoke. In any event, the Son of Man is patently an eschatological quantity, as in the notion of the judgment to come. Applied to the disciples in Matthew and Luke, the Q-logion highlights their eschatological role.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, within a single, relatively short passage (Rev 21, 12-14), the book of Revelation speaks of the twelve tribes of Israel and mentions the names of the twelve apostles, without, however, citing each of the names in turn.

While Mark does not explicitly exploit the eschatological significance of the twelve, it is clear that "the twelve" has qualitative significance for his gospel.<sup>12</sup> In his narrative of Jesus' feeding the five thousand, Mark indicated that the pieces of the broken bread and the fish that had been gathered up after the meal filled twelve baskets (Mark 6, 43), apparently in reference to the appointed group of twelve (see Mark 6, 37. 41). The

9. The point is emphasized by Jean Giblet, "Les douze, histoire et théologie," in J. Giblet, *et al.*, *Aux origines de l'Eglise*. (RechBib, 7; Desclée de Brouwer; Bruges 1965) 61-64. In this article Giblet strongly defends the view that the twelve were, in fact, a group which was gathered together during Jesus' historical ministry – a view rejected by many modern critics. Since the present essay is dealing with the way in which the different evangelists treat of the tradition about the twelve, we will not enter here a discussion of the relationship between the tradition and the Sitz-im-Leben Jesu.

10. See Richard Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (Harper & Row; San Francisco 1987) 201-202.

11. Trilling correctly notes that this does not necessarily imply that the logion was originally addressed to a group of twelve. Cf. W. Trilling, "Zur Entstehung des Zwölferkreises: Eine geschichtskritische Überlegung," in R. Schnackenburg, ed., *Die Kirche des Anfangs. Fs. H. Schürmann* (St. Benno; Leipzig 1977) 213-222.

12. Since Rigaux' 1960 study it has become common for commentators to note that Mark's mention of the twelve is frequently found in the redactional verses of the gospel. The redactional insertion of the twelve does not take away from the fact that "the twelve" is an element of the tradition received by Mark. See B. Rigaux, "Die 'Zwölf' in Geschichte und Kerygma," in H. Ristow and K. Matthiae, eds., *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus: Beiträge zum Christusverständnis in Forschung und Verkündigung* (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt; Berlin 1960) 468-486.

Markan Jesus subsequently draws attention to those twelve baskets (Mark 8, 19) as he confronts the disciples' lack of understanding.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, in the Passion narrative, Mark identifies Judas three times as "one of the twelve" (Mark 14, 10. 20. 43), thereby underscoring the heinousness of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Mark's group of twelve are portrayed as having been Jesus' special companions (Mark 3, 14; 4, 10). They were the group with whom Jesus celebrated his final Paschal meal (11, 11). To the twelve Jesus gave particular instructions. In fact, Mark emphasizes that Jesus specifically chose the twelve for this instruction (Mark 9, 35; 10, 32).<sup>14</sup> Finally, the twelve were sent out, in pairs, as an extension of Jesus' ministry of exorcising (Mark 6, 7).

For Mark, the twelve are a group of special companions of Jesus,<sup>15</sup> who were especially taught by him and who were sent out into mission by him. From this perspective, the Markan resumé which serves as an introduction to the list of the names of the twelve in Mark 3, 14-16 provides a sketch of the image of the twelve which is then fleshed out in the remainder of the gospel.

### Matthew and Luke

Mark's portrayal of "the twelve" is substantially reflected in Matthew and Luke, the canonical gospels clearly dependent on Mark. Despite their general similarity with Mark, each of these later gospels portray the twelve with nuances that are specific to the respective evangelists. The purpose of the present essay does not allow for an in-depth study of "the twelve" in Matthew or Luke. However, it might be useful to identify a few traits which differentiate the understanding of the twelve in Matthew and Luke from that found in Mark.

### Twelve

To begin, although Matthew (5 times) and Luke (7 times) explicitly mention "the twelve" (*dōdeka*) less frequently than does Mark (10 times), each of these evangelists patently portrays "the twelve" as representing a

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13. The discussion is not found in Luke. It is present in Matthew, but Matthew's syncopated version of the confrontation (Matt 16, 8-12), is focused more on the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees than on the disciples' misunderstanding *per se*. In abbreviating the dialogue, Matthew has omitted any explicit reference to *the twelve* baskets in v. 9.

14. See also Mark 4, 10.

15. Best, however, states that "although the twelve are commissioned to be with Jesus this does not imply a special relation between them and Jesus", Best, "Mark's Use", 34.

full complement. Unlike Mark,<sup>16</sup> both Matthew and Luke identify the group as “the eleven” after Jesus’ passion and death (Matt 28, 16; Luke 24, 9. 33). Judas was one of the twelve (Matt 26, 47; Luke 22, 47). Because of his defection the group was not up to its full complement; they were only eleven in number.<sup>17</sup>

At the beginning of the second part of his two-part work, Luke tells the story of the choice of Matthias as the group is brought up to its full numerical strength. Then, after the mission-enabling gift of the Spirit, Peter, standing with the eleven (Acts 2, 14) utters his speech at Pentecost, the paradigm of Acts’ kerygmatic (missionary) speeches. According to Luke the twelve continue to enjoy a leadership function within the church of Jerusalem (Acts 6, 21).<sup>18</sup>

### Disciples and Apostles

Matthew and Luke identify the twelve as disciples and apostles (Matt 10, 1-2; Luke 6, 13). The similarity stops, however, with the nomenclature. Each of the two evangelists has a particular view of the relationship between discipleship and apostleship.

Matthew’s list of the twelve (Matt 10, 2b-4) is formally introduced with the statement: “The names of the twelve apostles are these” (Matt 10, 2a). This is the only place in the New Testament where the expression “twelve apostles” (*dōdeka apostoloi*) occurs;<sup>19</sup> and it is the only time that Matthew writes about the “apostles.” Matthew, however, clearly identifies these twelve apostles with the disciples of Jesus. In his vision of Jesus’ ministry, there are (only) twelve disciples (Matt 10, 1)<sup>20</sup> and these twelve are identified as the twelve apostles of Matt 10, 1-4.

While formally acknowledging that the twelve are disciples, Luke states that the twelve have been chosen from among the disciples. It is only the select group of twelve that are named apostles (Luke 10, 13). Luke has highlighted the importance of Jesus’ selection of the twelve by presenting Jesus at prayer during the night before he made his choice (v. 12).

In sum, Mark’s significant group, identified as “the twelve,” have become Matthew’s “twelve disciples” and Luke’s (twelve) “apostles.” The

16. See, however, Mark 16, 14. This verse belongs to the canonical gospel but textual critics generally hold that the entire passage (Mark 16, 9-20) was not part of the original gospel text.

17. Significantly, these passages (Matt 28, 16; Luke 24, 9. 33) along with Acts 1, 26 and 2, 14 (+ Mark 16, 14) are the only places in the NT where the numerical adjective “eleven” (*endeka*) is to be found.

18. Where “twelve” (*dōdeka*) is a hapax occurrence in Acts.

19. See, however, “the eleven apostles” (*hoi endeka apostoloi*) in Acts 1, 26.

20. Cf. Matt 11, 1; 20, 17; 26, 20.

difference of terminology is apparent in the three evangelists' description of Jesus' passover meal. While Mark tells that Jesus came with "the twelve" (Mark 14, 17), Matthew states that Jesus sat at table with "the twelve disciples" (Matt 26, 20) and Luke states that Jesus sat at table with "the apostles" (Luke 22, 14).

Matthew, of course, has his own view of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, emphasizing the point that the disciples are those who have been particularly formed by Jesus much in the same way that a Jewish rabbi shaped his disciples by the teaching which he imparted. On the other hand, Luke has a particular understanding of apostleship, one that he "unpacks" throughout the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>21</sup>

### The Names in Matthew

The names of the twelve appear somewhat differently in Matthew and Luke from the way that they are given in Mark. According to N-A<sup>26</sup>, Matthew's roster of "the names of the twelve apostles" (Matt 10, 2-4) includes the twelve names found in Mark 3, 16-19a. However, some ancient manuscripts read "Lebbaeus,"<sup>22</sup> "Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus,"<sup>23</sup> or "Judas the Zealot"<sup>24</sup> in Matt 10, 3. By listing "Lebbaeus" as the tenth name on Matthew's rota, the King James Version and the NEB attest to the confusion present in the manuscript tradition.

A comparison of Matthew's list with that of Mark shows that the name of Andrew appears in second rather than in the fourth place and that the sequence of the names of Matthew and Thomas (the seventh and eighth names) has been inverted. Matthew has also omitted the enigmatic Boanerges as an epithet for the sons of Zebedee and has qualified Matthew<sup>25</sup> as "the tax collector".

The call to discipleship of a tax collector named Levi is narrated in Mark 2, 13-17 and Luke 5, 27-32. A similar story, obviously based on Mark, appears in Matt 9, 9-13, but here the tax collector appears as a man named Matthew. Since it is quite unlikely that a Semite would have had two Semitic names, it is probable that the evangelist changed the name of Levi to that of Matthew in Matt 9, 9.<sup>26</sup> The change of name was influenced by the

21. The word *apostolos* occurs twenty-eight times in Acts. This is the highest concentration of the term in the entire New Testament.

22. Thus, the fifth-century Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis, as well as Origen.

23. Thus, the Codex Koridethi, the minuscules of the Lake family, and the majority of the medieval Greek manuscripts.

24. Thus, some Old Latin manuscripts.

25. The traditional patronym for the gospel.

26. See Rudolf Pesch, "Levi-Matthäus (Mc 2, 14/Mt 9, 9; 10, 3): Ein Beitrag zur Lösung eines alten Problems," *ZNW* 59 (1968) 40-56.

evangelist's theory of discipleship. He identifies the disciples of Jesus with the twelve. The tax collector was obviously called to discipleship.<sup>27</sup> His name ought, therefore, to appear on the list of the twelve. Yet it did not appear on Mark's list of the twelve. So the evangelist, known to tradition as Matthew, substituted the name of the relatively obscure Matthew<sup>28</sup> for the traditional name of Levi in the story of the call of the tax collector. He completed his editorial work by identifying Matthew as a tax collector on the roster of the twelve, the only one of the twelve to be identified by a reference to a profession.

### The Names in Luke

As Matthew did, so Luke lists Andrew in second place among the twelve, but otherwise his sequence of the first nine names (Luke 6, 14-15) is similar to that found in Mark. Luke has, however, deleted the name of Thaddaeus from the tenth position. Thaddaeus' place on the list is taken by Simon, whom Luke identifies as a Zealot rather than as a Cananaean (Luke 6, 15). A Judas, the son of James, who appears neither on the Matthaean nor on the Markan list, occupies the eleventh position on Luke's list of "the twelve." All three Synoptic authors, of course, place the name of Judas at the end of their lists of the twelve.

In Acts 1, 13, Luke offers another list of the names of the group, understandably without the name of Judas. Although the names are the same as those which appear in Luke 6, 14-16, their order is quite different. Peter and John appear at the head of the list, a position which reflects their leadership role in the Jerusalem church. Subsequently, the names of James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew occur in a sequence which is reproduced at no other place in the New Testament. The three final names on the list, James, Simon, and Judas appear in the same order as they do in Luke 6, 15-16.

### The Mission

By and large,<sup>29</sup> both Matthew and Luke have omitted Mark's mission statement from their respective introductions to the list of the twelve. However, Matthew, apparently making use of a Q tradition,<sup>30</sup> has placed a

27. Cf. "follow me" (*akolouthei moi*) in Matt 9, 9; Mark 2, 14; Luke 5, 27.

28. No particular function is attributed to Matthew in the canonical NT.

29. Matt 10, 1 makes reference to the twelve's power to exorcise, but does not highlight the twelve's companionship with Jesus, nor their mission to preach. Luke 6, 13 does not specifically cite any aspect of the triple mission which Mark assigns to the twelve.

30. Cf. John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopses, Critical Notes and Concordance*. Foundations & Facets (Polebridge; Sonoma, CA 1987) 72.



mission statement after the listing of the twelve. That mission discourse focuses on preaching (Matt 10, 7), but contains, nonetheless, an incidental reference to exorcisms. Luke has a mission statement parallel to Matt 10, 5-14 in 9, 1-6, where it is clearly addressed to “the twelve” (Luke 9, 1).

Each of these later evangelists, writing from perspectives that are different from that of Mark, have, moreover, yet another vision of the ultimate mission of the twelve. This perspective appears in the Matthean scene of the great commissioning (Matt 28, 16-20) and the first two chapters of Luke’s Acts of the Apostles. The great commission and the promise of the empowering Spirit (Acts 1, 8) articulate the major mission of the twelve according to the views of the later Synoptists. Luke-Acts particularly insists upon the role of the twelve in the origins of the church.

### The Fourth Gospel

In contrast with the many references to the value in the three gospels of the synoptic tradition, there are only four explicit references to the twelve in the fourth gospel – and one in the rest of the Johannine corpus. Three of these references are in one small pericope, namely, John 6, 66-71. The fourth mention of the twelve is in John 20, 24.

### Names

The fourth gospel provides no list of the names of the twelve. Its most complete listing of the names of the disciples of Jesus is found in the epilogue to the gospel, where seven individuals are cited, namely, Simon Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others, whose names are not identified (John 21, 2). The gathering of Jesus’ disciples into a group of seven reflects the evangelist’s predilection for the number seven and may well be another instance of the way in which the author of the epilogue imitates the style of the gospel itself.<sup>31</sup>

Nathanael’s name does not appear in the synoptic gospels. According to the tradition of the fourth gospel, however, Nathanael is clearly a disciple of Jesus. Indeed, in many respects Nathanael serves as a paradigm of discipleship (John 1, 45-51).<sup>32</sup> Christian tradition has often identified Nathanael with Bartholomew,<sup>33</sup> most likely under the influence of the Matthean theory on the twelve, but there is no historical evidence to

31. See my “Proverbial Sayings in St. John’s Gospel”, *Melita Theologica* 37 (1986) 45.

32. See my “Representative Figures in the Fourth Gospel”, *DR* 94 (1976) 34-36, and *John and His Witness*. Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament (Glazier; Wilmington, DE 1989).

33. See my “Nathanael”, in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, forthcoming.

suggest that the fourth gospel's Nathanael and the Bartholomew of the synoptic tradition are one and the same individual. In any event, the fourth evangelist does not identify Nathanael as one of the twelve.<sup>34</sup>

The fourth gospel does, however, specifically identify Judas as one of the twelve (John 6, 71).<sup>35</sup> His name, obviously, is omitted from the group of seven to whom the risen Jesus revealed himself (John 21, 2). In its explicit identification of Judas as "one of the twelve," the fourth gospel concurs with the Synoptic tradition. Unlike Matthew and Luke who focus upon the twelve as a paradigmatic complement and who specifically treat of the death of Judas (Matt 27, 3-10; Acts 1, 18-19), the fourth gospel does not mention the death of Judas.<sup>36</sup> His name occurs for the last time in the fourth gospel at John 18, 5.

The fourth gospel also identifies Thomas as "one of the twelve" (*heis ek tôn dōdeka*; John 20, 24), the designation attributed only to Judas in the Synoptic gospels. The fourth evangelist also makes mention of some, but not all, of the other individuals whose names<sup>37</sup> appear on the Synoptic lists of the twelve. These are Simon Peter,<sup>38</sup> Andrew,<sup>39</sup> and Philip.<sup>40</sup> These three names,<sup>41</sup> of course, appear on all three Synoptic lists of the twelve.<sup>42</sup> Since these are the only names mentioned, recourse to the fourth gospel does not provide any solution for the identification problems that arise from the comparison of the Synoptics' lists of the names of the twelve with one another.

34. Raymond Brown, nonetheless, opines that, since there was no standard list of "the twelve" in first century Christianity (see above), "Nathanael may have been counted in the never-given list of the Twelve accepted in Johannine tradition." See R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (Paulist; New York 1979) 81, n. 149.

35. Cf. John 12, 4.

36. Cf. John 17, 12.

37. The aforementioned reference to the sons of Zebedee occurs in John 21, 2, but the names of the brothers are not given. This reference to the sons of Zebedee is hapax in the fourth gospel. Elsewhere, the fourth gospel does not mention the name of either James or John.

38. John 1, 40. 42. 44; 6, 8. 68; 13, 6. 8. 9. 24. 36. 37; 18, 10. 11. 15. 16 (2x). 17. 18. 25. 26. 27; 20, 2. 3. 4. 6. Cf. John 21, 2. 3. 7 (2x). 11. 15. 17. 20. 21.

39. John 1, 40. 44; 6, 8; 12, 22. Andrew is not cited in the epilogue's group of seven (John 21, 2).

40. John 1, 43. 44. 45. 46. 48; 6, 5. 7; 12, 21. 22; 14, 8. 9. Since Philip is likewise not mentioned in 21, 2, it is reasonable to assume that the author of the epilogue had Andrew and Philip in mind when he wrote about "two others of his disciples."

41. Gunther has suggested that the Judas (not Iscariot) of John 14, 22 is a brother of the Lord and one of the twelve (cf. Luke 4, 16). See John J. Gunther, "The Relation of the Beloved Disciple to the Twelve", *TZ* 37 (1981) 129-148. In my judgment the suggestion is without merit.

42. Four, if the list of Acts 1, 13 is to be included.

**John 6, 67-71**

The fourth evangelist's views on the twelve are summed up in a small pericope, which has been structured into a single unit of material by a kind of *inclusio*: John 6, 67-71. *Dòdeka*, "twelve", is the only term that appears in both verses 67 and 71, but a verb of saying appears in each verse, and, in each case, the subject is Jesus (expressed in v. 67, implied in v. 71). The entire unit, which has no direct parallel in the Synoptic gospels, is stamped with elements of Johannine style. Among its Johannine features are the use of dialogue, Jesus' initiative in the dialogue, the use of interrogation,<sup>43</sup> the name of Simon Peter, the name of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, and the expressions "eternal life", "believe", and "know".

The Johannine character of this unit, coupled with the absence of a parallel narrative in the Synoptic gospels, leads to the ready conclusion that John 6, 67-71 is a Johannine construction. The theme of the pericope is the twelve (*dòdeka*), the framing term and a vocable which also appears in v. 70. That three of the four Johannine uses of this term appear in this single pericope makes it all the more clear that it is in John 6, 67-71 that the evangelist has chosen to formally treat the tradition about the twelve.

The fourth evangelist is familiar with the existence of the twelve. He speaks of them collectively and mentions the fact that they have been chosen (v. 70).<sup>44</sup> He does not, however, explain the circumstances of their call<sup>45</sup> nor does he explain how they came to be assembled as a group of twelve. As a matter of fact, although the fourth evangelist narrates the call of some of those cited in the Synoptics as belonging to the group of twelve,<sup>46</sup> he does not tell about the call of either of the two individuals who is specifically identified as "one of the twelve."

The setting which the evangelist has provided for his reflection on the twelve in John 6, 67-71 is the crisis which developed among Jesus' would-be disciples because of the teaching on the bread of life. As the evangelist portrays the scene, the defection of some disciples prompts Jesus to ask the twelve about their own intentions. Apparently the twelve represent a special group among Jewish Christians.<sup>47</sup>

43. This, and the following characteristics, are among the fifteen characteristics of Johannine style which Boismard and Lamouille have identified in the five verses of the pericope. See M. – E. Boismard – A. Lamouille, *Synopse des quatre évangiles en français*, 3: *L'évangile de Jean* (Cerf; Paris 1977) 520.

44. Cf. John 13, 18; 15, 16. 19.

45. Cf. Brown, *Community*, 187, n. 331.

46. That is, Andrew in John 1, 35-41, Simon Peter in John 1, 41-42, and Philip in John 1, 43-46.

47. See Brown, *Community*, 74, 82.

Although Jesus' question is addressed to the twelve as a group,<sup>48</sup> it is Simon Peter who responds. In a manner similar to that in which Peter functions as a spokesperson for the twelve in the Synoptic tradition,<sup>49</sup> Simon Peter functions as a spokesperson for the twelve in the fourth gospel. In fact, Simon Peter represents<sup>50</sup> the twelve insofar as he serves as their spokesperson.<sup>51</sup>

As Peter made a confession of faith in response to a query addressed by Jesus in Mark 8, 29 (= Matt 16, 15-16, Luke 9, 20), the Simon Peter of the fourth gospel responds with a confession of faith to a question coming from Jesus. Simon Peter's confession of faith (John 6, 68-69) is, however, formulated in characteristically Johannine terms. Rather than confess Jesus to be the Messiah, as did the Peter of Mark 8, 29, the Andrew of John 1, 41, and the Martha of John 11, 27, Simon Peter confesses Jesus to be the sole revealer. This point of view expresses the faith conviction of the evangelist and his faith community.<sup>52</sup> Both the function of Jesus as Revealer and his uniqueness in that regard are convictions that are repeatedly promoted throughout the gospel.<sup>53</sup> Thus Simon Peter, as the spokesperson for the twelve, is presented as one whose confession of faith is at one with that of the Johannine community itself.

Simon Peter's confession is then epitomized in the affirmation that Jesus is the Holy One of God (*ho hagios tou theou*). In some ways the Petrine confession anticipates Jesus' description of himself as "the one whom the Father consecrated" (*hon ho patèr hègiasen*) and sent into the world" (John 10, 36). To underscore the importance of this unique titular confession, the evangelist uses a formal lemma, "we have believed", with its emphatic "we" (*hèmeis*) and a verb in the perfect tense (*pepisteukamen*) which indicates that the confession formulated in the past continues to have validity for the present. A verbal hendiadys, "we have believed and have come to know" (*pepisteukamen kai egnòkamen*)<sup>54</sup> further highlights the Petrine confession of faith.

As the only titular confession of faith placed on the lips of Simon Peter in the fourth gospel, the affirmation that Jesus is the Holy One of God

48. Note the use of the second person plural, and the use of an emphatic *humeis*, "you", in the Greek text.

49. Cf. Mark 8, 29 and parallels.

50. See Collins, "Representative Figures", 126-129.

51. Cf. John 13, 22-24; comp. John 21, 10-11.

52. Note the presence of the Johannine "we" in vv. 68 and 69. The "we" of these verses are among the thirteen instances in the fourth gospel where a first person plural is used to express the point of view of the Johannine community with the affirmation being attributed to some character in the story. See Godfrey C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema*. (SBLDS, 63; Scholars; Chico CA 1983) 31.

53. See John 3, 13-14, etc.

54. See John 17, 8; 1 John 4, 16.

represents the Johannine version of Peter's traditional confession of faith.<sup>55</sup> Elsewhere in the canonical gospels, however, the confession that Jesus is the Holy One of God is found only as the baited utterance of the unclean spirit who had taken possession of the man in the synagogue of Capernaum (Mark 1, 24; Luke 4, 34).<sup>56</sup>

Simon Peter's confession does not earn the response of Jesus' self-revelation.<sup>57</sup> Rather Jesus' responds by speaking about his betrayal.<sup>58</sup> The response indicates that the faith of those for whom Peter serves as spokesperson is not all that it ought to be. From the standpoint of the fourth gospel, the corporate faith of the twelve is somehow inadequate.<sup>59</sup>

The words of Jesus in John 6, 70-71 focus on the less than adequate faith of the twelve. It is true that it is only Judas who is identified as a betrayer. That is in keeping with the Synoptic tradition and corresponds to the historicity of the events of Jesus' life. Nonetheless, one of the literary characteristics of the fourth gospel is its introduction of individual characters in the gospel story. On the narrative level, these individuals serve the needs of Johannine dramatization. Beyond that, however, the various characters also serve a representative function.

In John 6, 70-71, Judas somehow represents the twelve. He is clearly identified as "one of you" (*ex humòn heis*) and as "one of the twelve" (*heis ek tòn dōdeka*). Judas has even assumed Peter's satanic function: Jesus

55. Maynard opines that the title is "obviously Messianic," while Schnackenburg notes its connection in the history of tradition with Peter's confession of Jesus' messiahship. See Arthur H. Maynard, "The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel", *NTS* 30 (1984) 534; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2. (Seabury; New York 1980) 76.

56. Cf. Luke 1, 35.

57. Compare John 1, 49-51.

58. A comparison with the Synoptic scene at Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16, 13-23; Mark 8, 27-33; Luke 9, 18-22), to which John 6, 67-71 is a parallel [see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John, I-XII*. (AB, 29: Doubleday; Garden City, NY 1966) 301-302; A. H. Maynard, "The Role of Peter", 533-534] proves enlightening at this point. In the Johannine narrative, Simon Peter does not specifically confess Jesus to be the Messiah. Moreover, Jesus' rejoinder does not introduce a new christological title into the dialogue. Jesus' response focuses on his "passion", not, however, in the passive voice as it is in the Synoptics. Rather, the "passion" is clearly identified as the result of a betrayal and one of the twelve is said to be responsible for the betrayal. In the Synoptics, Peter, as the spokesperson for the twelve, fails to understand that Jesus' messiahship involves the passion; in the fourth gospel, one of the twelve is humanly responsible for the passion.

59. Nicholson characterizes Peter's confession as a "halting and inadequate statement of belief". See Nicholson, *Death as Departure*, 42. Brown, however, suggests that the disciples who drew back from Jesus (John 6, 66) represent the Jewish Christian churches of inadequate faith, while in vv. 68-69 "we are hearing.... the voice of Christians of a more adequate faith for whom Peter and the Twelve are appropriate symbols." See Brown, *Community*, 82. I would contend that although the faith of the twelve, represented by Simon Peter, is clearly more adequate than that of the defectors, it is not presented as a fully adequate faith according to the standards of the evangelist and his community.

calls him a devil.<sup>60</sup> While the affirmation that Judas is “one of you” has been placed by the evangelist on the lips of Jesus, the affirmation that Judas is “one of the twelve” is a reflective comment on the part of the evangelist himself.<sup>61</sup> The presence of this patent Johannine note serves as a clear indication that the evangelist is pondering the significance of “the twelve” in vv. 67-71. Clearly, the betrayal of Judas indicates that the corporate faith of the twelve is to be found wanting.

### John 20, 24

The third representative of the twelve is Thomas, identified in John 20, 24 as “one of the twelve.” In accordance with the dramatic techniques of Johannine composition, Thomas represents<sup>62</sup> the doubt entertained by the disciples with regard to Jesus’ resurrection.<sup>63</sup> Alone he is made to bear the burden of their corporate disbelief. The demands of Johannine dramatization, however, set Thomas over and against the “other disciples.”<sup>64</sup>

Confronted by the risen Lord, Thomas comes to full belief in the Risen One. “My Lord and my God” appears upon his lips as a full confession of faith. This may well be the confession of faith with the highest level of christology in the entire fourth gospel. In this respect, Thomas is fully a believer. Nonetheless, and despite the relative fullness of his faith, Thomas the believer pales in comparison with those who have not seen and yet believe (John 20, 28). It is for them, rather than for Thomas, that the Lord reserves the pronouncement of beatitude.

### Conclusion

Although a thorough study of “The Twelve” in the fourth gospel, let alone in the entire NT, would require far more textual analysis than the limited scope of the present essay allows, the portrayal of the understanding of the twelve which has been sketched with such broad strokes readily lends itself to the conclusion that the understanding of the twelve entertained in

60. Cf. Matt 16, 23; Mark 8, 33. In the Synoptic tradition there is some interchangeability between “the devil” (*ho diabolos*) and “Satan” (*ho Satanas*). Cf. Mark 1, 13 (“Satan”) in comparison with its parallels, Matt 4, 1 and Luke 4, 1 (“the devil”) and Matt 4, 1. 5. 8 (“the devil”) in comparison with Matt 4, 10 (“Satan”, cf. Matt 16, 23).

61. See Gilbert van Belle, *Les parenthèses dans l'évangile de Jean: Aperçu historique et classification. Texte grec de Jean*. (Studiorum Novi Testamenti Auxilia, 11: University Press; Louvain 1985) 78. Van Belle draws attention to the number of modern commentators who identify v. 71 as a redactional notation by the evangelist.

62. See my “Representative Figures”, 124-126.

63. Cf. Matt 28, 17; Luke 24, 36-43; comp. Mark 16, 11. 14.

64. See John 20, 25. 26.

the fourth gospel is quite different from that developed in the Synoptic gospels.

The fourth gospel shares with the first, that is, Mark, a tradition that has been handed down. Both evangelists write about the twelve as an element of the Jesus tradition with which they have to deal. Both writers refuse to speculate on the significance of the number itself. Both evangelists share a common tradition as to the names of some individuals who belong to the twelve and that (Simon) Peter served as spokesperson for the group.

Subsequently their ways of handling this traditional topic differ. While Mark develops the role of the twelve with regard to their mission, a role greatly expanded by Matthew and Luke, especially by the latter who emphasizes the role of the twelve in the origins of the church, the fourth gospel fails to attribute such a paramount significance to the group. While recognizing that the twelve were disciples,<sup>65</sup> the author fails to make of this group the paradigm of discipleship and does not attribute the title of apostle<sup>66</sup> to the group or to any of its members.

From the standpoint of the fourth gospel, the twelve represent a faithful group of Jewish-Christian disciples. Although they recognized Jesus as the revealer, and shared this faith conviction with the evangelist and his community, their faith in Jesus is shown to be somehow deficient in comparison with that of the evangelist's own faith community. Judas and Thomas graphically represent the inadequacy of the twelve before the death and resurrection of Jesus. The spokesperson for the twelve is Simon Peter, a truly round and ambiguous figure in the fourth gospel. His faith is authentic – indeed, he represents the authenticity of their faith – yet even his faith is not on a par with that of the Beloved Disciple, the real hero in faith of the fourth gospel.

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65. Cf. John 6, 66-67, "After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also (*kai humeis*) wish to go away?'" ; John 20, 24-25, "Now Thomas, one of the twelve was not with them (i.e., the disciples, cf. v. 19) when Jesus came. So the other disciples (*hoi alloi nathetai*) told him,...."

66. *Apostolos* is hapax in the fourth gospel, namely, at John 13, 36. Nonetheless, the harmonized reading of the gospels which has characterized ecclesiastical tradition through the centuries tends to describe those who heard the (Johannine) farewell discourse as apostles. This harmonized reading has entered into the church's liturgical tradition. See, for example, the order of Mass in the Roman Catholic Roman rite: "Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your *apostles*: I leave you peace, my peace I give you" (my emphasis; cf. John 14, 27).