

WHEN IS JOHN TALKING ABOUT SACRAMENTS?\*

by

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The Melbourne Scripture Seminar of 1981 was devoted to the theme: "The Sacraments: Celebrating and Creating Life". I had been invited to contribute in the area of Johannine scholarship, and the advertisement for the Seminar stated: "Johannine literature is perhaps regarded as the most explicitly Sacramental of the New Testament collection". This is true. If one were to accept all the suggestions of all the scholars who have written on this issue in a positive sense, then one would finish with the following explicit Sacramental teaching in the Fourth Gospel:<sup>1</sup>

MATRIMONY:

The marriage feast at Cana

EXTREME UNCTION:

The anointing at Bethany

PENANCE:

Lazarus

John 20:23 : "Whose sins you shall forgive etc."

John 13:10 : "He who has bathed does not need to wash, *except for his feet*".<sup>2</sup>

BAPTISM:

- Baptism of Jesus
- The marriage feast at Cana
- The cleansing of the Temple
- The conversation with Nicodemus
- The conversation with the Samaritan woman
- The healing at Bethesda
- The walking on the water
- Source of living waters (7:38)
- Healing of the man born blind
- The Good Shepherd
- The raising of Lazarus
- The foot washing
- The miraculous draught of fishes (ch. 21)

EUCCHARIST:

- The marriage feast at Cana
- The cleansing of the Temple
- 4:31-34: "My food is to do the will of my Father"

- Chapter 6
- The foot washing
- The vine and the branches
- The meal of bread and fish (ch. 21)

### BAPTISM AND EUCHARIST:

- Blood and water from the pierced side of Jesus
- Water and blood as witnesses (I John 5:8).

While this list is clearly "maximal", gathering *all* the suggestions of *all* the scholars, it, nevertheless, probably comes as somewhat of a surprise that certain events are seen as explicit teaching on the Sacraments:

- e.g.:
- how can the anointing of the feet of Jesus be an explicit reference to the Sacrament of Extreme Unction?
  - how can the cleansing of the Temple, where there is absolutely no reference to any of the Baptismal symbols or rituals (esp. water), be an explicit reference to the Sacrament of Baptism?

My series of questions could go further, but the point which I would like to make at this stage is that the scholars who have made these various claims do not fall into clearly defined confessional groups, i.e.: the defence of numerous explicit references to Sacraments is not the sole preserve of conservative Catholics, and the rejection of any Sacramental teaching in the Fourth Gospel is not only found in schools of radical Protestant scholarship. I have no intention of discussing the many complications of the history of this long, and unsolved, debate, described as follows by Raymond Brown: "Perhaps on no other point of Johannine thought is there such division among scholars."<sup>3</sup> Anyone interested in a fuller discussion should consult the surveys done by Raymond Brown, in his *New Testament Essays*,<sup>4</sup> in his commentary on the Fourth Gospel,<sup>5</sup> and the useful booklet of Herbert Klos.<sup>6</sup> Scholars from all schools take up a variety of positions on the issue. A careful reading of this scholarship shows that, as always in approaching New Testament texts, what ultimately determines the answer to the question: "When is John talking about Sacraments?", is what criteria and method each scholar is using as he approaches the text.

I will limit myself to a few contrasting positions in this debate, before setting out on my own discussion. However,

there are still a few introductory remarks which have to be made.

1. "When is John talking". We are not quite accurate in asking about a single character called John, nor are we justified to refer to his "talking".

*The question of the so-called "author"*. Again, there is little time nor need for me to go into the whole discussion of John. It is well and widely covered in the many fine introductions to this Gospel, including the introductions of the great contemporary commentators now all available in English: C.K. Barrett, B. Lindars, R. Schnackenburg and R.E. Brown.<sup>7</sup> I have also discussed this question, briefly in *The Word Became Flesh*.<sup>8</sup> The evidence of the Gospel itself, assuming that the link made between the author of the Gospel and the Beloved Disciple in the secondary 21:20-24 is correct, points to a tradition about Jesus, and a deepening and developing understanding of him, which took place in a Christian community, somewhere in Asia Minor (probably Ephesus) over a long period of time, through many trials and tribulations, caused by both external and internal difficulties. However, I remain firmly convinced that this community was gathered around an all-important figure who had a close contact with the historical Jesus, and most probably an ex-disciple of the Baptist. If this was the case, we cannot ask about "John talking". We must look deeper into the life and experience of faith of a particular Christian community. The Gospel of John, like all the other Gospels, is not some single person "talking" to us, but a living community of first century Christians communicating, through their own particular Spirit-filled journey, their journey of faith which is, especially in the Fourth Gospel, a christological and an ecclesiological journey.<sup>9</sup>

2. "About Sacraments?" Here we have what is, I would imagine, our greatest difficulty. Although our various ecclesial and theological traditions have wide-reaching differences in their understanding of "Sacrament", we could all gather around a general definition which argued that Sacraments are intimately associated with "life", and the communication of the divine life, a participation already "in the triumphant eschatological salvation promised by God through Christ

as his Word, and wrought by God through Christ as the incarnate Son and mediator".<sup>10</sup> Obviously, this notion is never found explicitly spelt out in the New Testament, as a Sacramental theology took centuries to evolve and is, of course, still unfolding in our pilgrim Church. The very word "Sacrament" comes to us from the Pauline word *μυστήριον*, picked up by the second century Fathers in their attempts to forge a theology of the Sacraments,<sup>11</sup> and translated into the Latin version of the New Testament as "Sacramentum".<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult for us to see the New Testament, and especially the highly symbolic language of the Fourth Gospel, unburdened of all our rich tradition of Sign and Symbol, so closely associated with our Sacramental life in the Church. One of my criteria, as you will later see, will look more closely at this difficulty. Yet we must be aware, from the outset, that for the Fourth Gospel, in one way all Jesus' activity and preaching, especially the whole notion of glory and glorification, so important to this Gospel (see, for example, 7:39; 8:54; 11:4; 12:23,28; 13:31-32; 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; 17:1,4,5,10), is the communication of a life-giving power, as Sandra Schneiders has been insisting of late.<sup>13</sup> In this wider sense, a search for criteria is not needed: "Ultimately, the Sacramental principle in the Fourth Gospel is Jesus, manifesting himself in the Church, who experiences and bears witness in and by her own history to her divine filiation in the Spirit".<sup>14</sup> I hope to again glance at this issue at the end of my paper, but, as Sandra Schneiders fully appreciates,<sup>15</sup> this argument in no way annuls the validity of our quest: are there moments in the story of the life of Jesus, as it is told by the Fourth Evangelist when there is a clear indication of the practice and the theology of their Sacramental life, apart from their seeming conviction that their very existence as the continuing presence of Jesus' sonship in history made the community as such in some way Sacramental?<sup>16</sup>

As I have already indicated, there would be many scholars who would reply positively to that question. The departure point for a widespread understanding of Sacramental references in John is that the early Church clearly had Sacramental practices. The Synoptic tradition and Paul all carry words of institution and, even though they can be boiled down to two basic traditions, they show that already they have

had a considerable history in the liturgical life of their communities before they were eventually inserted into their present positions in the New Testament literature. The Pauline tradition (I Cor. 11:24. See also Luke 22:19) carries a command which may have come from liturgical practices: "Do this in remembrance of me"; yet in other ways this tradition preserves the original setting of a meal. While there is no command to repeat the action, the setting within a meal has been lost in the Eucharistic practice behind the Marcan tradition (Mk. 14:22-25; Matt. 26:26-29).<sup>17</sup> The practice of baptism in the pre-Johannine Churches is clearly indicated by the solemn closing words of the Matthean Jesus:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).<sup>18</sup>

If pre-Johannine Christianity shows that *at least* Eucharist and Baptism were central in early Christian worship, then it seems logical that the author of the Fourth Gospel would show that these Sacraments had their basis in the words and works of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> To affirm this much, it appears to me, is correct. Here I am in general agreement with those scholars who see many references to the Sacraments in John, and especially Oscar Cullmann, but to then see hidden references to the Sacramental revelation of the *μυστήριον* of God at every turn as the *key* to an understanding of the Gospel is, in my opinion, to carry his basic point too far.<sup>20</sup> To cite Raymond Brown once again, who comments of Cullmann's position:

"In fact, . . . he often seems to fall back on the principle that since a passage could have been understood sacramentally, it was intended sacramentally".<sup>21</sup>

This position, and the various scholars who follow it (Corell, Vawter, Niewalda, Bouyer, Stanley)<sup>22</sup> has, as I have mentioned, a solidly based point of departure: the positive indications of pre-Johannine literature that a form of sacramental life was very much a part of early Christian worship.<sup>23</sup> We should notice, however, that the only *firmly established evidence* which we have for this Sacramental life regards Baptism and Eucharist.

Of course, the pro-Sacramentalists have not had it all their own way. The most serious opposition has come from one

of the most outstanding New Testament scholars of our century: Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann's central argument is that the Fourth Gospel was originally written as an anti-Sacramental document, and he can immediately point to the complete absence of words of Institution, and any command to baptise in this Gospel. He has a wide following from fellow German scholars (Schweizer, Köster and Lohse) and also, in recent years, from a growing group of North American scholars, although, in general, they would not side with Bultmann in his claim that John is anti-Sacramental. For Bultmann, it would be foreign to John's whole theological vision to present a human, cultic place where one could have some sort of union with Christ; he is only interested in a personal union with Jesus through a commitment based purely on a loss of self (and thus the gaining of authenticity) which comes about in a radical commitment of faith.<sup>24</sup>

Even Bultmann, however, would admit that there are three places in the Gospel where the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are explicitly mentioned:

- in 3:5: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God".
- in 6:51c-58: Where there are clearly Eucharistic references in almost every verse. To mention a few:
  - v. 51c: "The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh".
  - v. 53 : "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you".
  - v. 54 : "He who eats (τρώγει)<sup>25</sup> my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life".
- in 19:34: The blood and water flowing out from the pierced side of the crucified Christ, especially in the light of I John 5:8:
  - "There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree".

According to Bultmann none of these belong to the original Gospel, as the Evangelist originally compiled it. They have all been added by what Bultmann calls an "Ecclesiastical Redactor".<sup>26</sup> In simple terms, he argues that these clearly Sacramental passages have been added to an anti-Sacramental Gospel at a later stage, in order to make it conform with the life and practice of the "greater Church". We must be careful not to simply laugh off these suggestions. There are a great number of internal difficulties and tensions within this Gospel which need explaining. In John 6 there appears to be a contradiction in the positive use of the word "flesh" in vv. 51,52,53,54,55 and 56 and the negative use of the word in v. 63: "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is of no avail". Bultmann's suggestions may not be the correct solution to a difficult problem, but they do take us back to a point which we made earlier: this Gospel was not written overnight; it had a long history within the life and faith experience of a concrete Christian Community. I am quite prepared to admit that the Sacramental passages of 3:5; 6:51c-58 and 19:34 came into the Johannine message later, but I see no need to omit them from an authentic Johannine Gospel, as we shall see. Again Raymond Brown has summarised my position well when he wrote:

"The recognition that some of the explicit Sacramental references belong to the final redaction does not mean any acceptance of the theory that the original Gospel was non-Sacramental or anti-Sacramental. It is a question of seeing different degrees of sacramentality in the work of the evangelist and that of the final redactor".<sup>27</sup>

The two opposing positions which I have just outlined show quite different methods of approach, and quite different criteria. From Cullmann we must learn that the Gospel as a whole is the life story of Jesus, and that there is often a subtle use of that life-story *from the past* to root community practice *of the present* in his life. From Bultmann, however, we must also learn that the Gospel may well reflect a long and troubled series of internal and external conflicts, producing a Gospel of extraordinary christological and ecclesiological complexity.

I would like, now, to steer a middle course, offering four criteria for the discovery of Sacramental teaching in the Fourth Gospel. The first two of these criteria are well established and widely used. They are somewhat "external",

i.e.: they are an attempt to provide some reliable "rule of thumb" by which the exegete may work. In many ways these are rather "negative" criteria, and I suppose there is a danger that some important material will escape them. However, I believe that this is a sounder way to start an investigation, as once we establish a firmly based "minimum", then perhaps other material will come to light because of its close contacts with that minimum.

The first criterion must be a rigorous search for elements in the text itself which indicate that the author is referring to some form of Sacramental ritual and symbol. For example, in John 3:5 there is the explicit reference to a "rebirth", the use of the word "water" and the idea of "entering the Kingdom of God". The same cannot be said, for example of the curing of the paralytic at the pool at Bethesda in John 5:1-8. In fact, the restoration of the man (a positive element in itself) is not effected through water, but independently of it - simply at the word of Jesus: "Rise, take up your pallet and walk" (v. 8). The sequel to the miracle shows no further understanding or life of faith in the cured man; in fact, he appears to be extraordinarily obtuse. All of this *internal* evidence makes any baptismal understanding of John 5 most unlikely.<sup>28</sup> This becomes particularly clear when one looks to the curing of the man born blind in John 9, a story in many ways parallel to the cure in ch. 5. Here the miracle is effected by contact with water, at the pool of Siloam, which the Evangelist then further explains as meaning "the sent one" (v. 7). The cure is followed by a gradual movement to theological sight and light, as the series of interrogations of the man lead him through a journey of confessions of faith:<sup>29</sup>

- To his friends he says: "The man called Jesus" worked a miracle (v. 11).
- To the Pharisees he says: "He is a prophet" (v. 17).
- Under further interrogation from the Pharisees he retorts: "If this man were not *from* God" (v. 33).
- Finally, when Jesus himself meets him we find him arriving at the fulness of sight. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, *sir*, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him and it is he who speaks to you". He said, "*Lord*", I believe"; and he worshipped him" (vv. 35-38).<sup>30</sup>

The same sort of explicit internal evidence can be found in the texts which we have already mentioned several times: The Eucharistic section in John 6 and the blood and water flowing from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus, and there may be several others (the footwashing of 13:1-20; Jesus as the source of living waters in 7:38) which have this internal evidence of an original Sacramental meaning.<sup>31</sup>

This leads us to our second criterion, which must be used in close association with the first: the use of certain passages in the liturgical practice, the literature and the art of the early post-New Testament Church. The most significant use of this criterion has been from a Protestant scholar, Paul Niewalda, who argued that, given the internal difficulties and the never-ending disputes among scholars, then we must accept that when Johannine symbolism is used by the early Church for its Sacramental life and reflection, then we have every right to push that meaning back into the intention of the Evangelist himself.<sup>32</sup> Care must be taken here. While this is a valid criterion the argument must run in the other direction. If we find that a passage has the internal qualities of a Sacramental message, and then we find that the early Church has clearly used it in this way, then we have certainly firmed the possible suggestions of the text itself. Great service has been done in this investigation by the remarkable commentary of Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, especially in his investigation of the early Church's use of John 9 and 13.<sup>33</sup> This is an area where a great deal more research is needed. It appears to me that it will be of great assistance for a deeper understanding of Johannine Sacramentalism, if used in close connection with the hints and indications which come to us from our close study of the text itself.

The two criteria or "rules of thumb" which I have just mentioned are really an answer to the question: why does John say these things? A careful study of the use of the language used and the context within which it is used leads us to some firm conclusions about the sacramental or non-sacramental nature of certain Johannine passages. When we can trace these same passages into the sacramental life and liturgy of the early Church, then we have a further indication that we are dealing with sacramental material. However, it is not enough to look to the words and context, asking: why does John say these things? We must go a step further and ask, "Why does John say these things *this way*?" Some of the Johannine sacramental material seems to be written in a very special way. What has caused this?

One of the reasons given for the exclusion of the clearly Sacramental passages of 3:5; 6:51c-58 and 19:34 is that the passages are powerfully anti-docetic. In simple terms, this means that the Gospel as a whole tends to stress the spiritual character of the faith commitment, and the later redactors have added passages which insist upon the tangible, physical nature of the flesh and blood of Jesus, and the concrete reality of the ecclesial community. This can be sensed in all three passages, as they do sound somewhat polemic.

- 3:5 : *Unless* one is born again of water and the spirit he *cannot* enter the kingdom of God.
- 6:53: *Unless* you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have *no life* in you.
- 9:34: is followed by a powerful insistence from the Evangelist:  
 "He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth".

However, since the studies of Bultmann, in fact in the last five years, there has been an enormous growth of interest in the christological experience and growth of this community. We can no longer speak of a basic Gospel, into which anti-docetic elements have been inserted. All of these elements, lying side by side in this Gospel, reflect a long history, and there are now many fascinating studies of that history which cannot delay us here.<sup>34</sup> However, as an example (and there are points where I would disagree<sup>35</sup>) I would like to summarise for you the contribution of a scholar whose name has appeared frequently in these pages: Raymond Brown.

He has recently published a book which makes full use of both the Gospel and the Epistles to rediscover "the Community of the Beloved Disciple".<sup>36</sup> As is the case with most of R.E. Brown's work, this is a fascinating book to read, but careful scholarship and a close contact with contemporary literature is found on every page. The book reads so well, in fact, that one could be tempted to think that scholarship, after a series of hypotheses, had at last found the answer: Brown would be unhappy if we were to fall to this temptation. He argues that four stages of development can be traced: before the Gospel, when the Gospel was written, when the Letters were written and finally, after the Letters. Through these four stages he rediscovers the following experiences of the community of the Beloved Disciple:

1. The original group, beginning within the circle of ex-disciples of John the Baptist, shows a typically early Christian "low" christology. Important at this stage is the figure of the Beloved disciple, an ex-disciple of the Baptist, a follower of Jesus from the start, but *not* one of the Twelve. As I mentioned earlier, this is a change from an earlier position.<sup>37</sup> This outstanding historical personality, the father of the community serves as a link between the historical Jesus and the Johannine community.
2. After the admission of Samaritan and other "anti-Temple" groups, a conflict with "the Jews" is begun. This leads eventually to the development of a "higher" christology, especially in the use of *Ego Eimi* in an absolute sense and the idea of pre-existence.
3. As the Gospel is written, the community takes a final stance against those whom they would regard as non-believers: "the world", the Jews, the adherents of John the Baptist. Also included in the community's list of "non-believers" were some groups who, in other circles, would be regarded as believers: crypto-Christians, i.e.: Jews who believed but remained in the synagogue, Jewish Christian communities which would not confess the "high" Johannine christology, and what could be termed "the greater Church", the Christians who followed the less charismatic line of James and the Jerusalem party.

The community, having taken its stance to those "outside" their ranks, now began to experience serious internal struggles. These divisions grew entirely out of two possible but variant interpretations of the Johannine Gospel. A careful study of the Letters shows that there are two groups involved, and both seem to be using the Gospel - but in different ways. In the areas of christology, ethics, eschatology and pneumatology, the Epistles show a historicising, more conservative approach than the Gospel, moving generally in the direction of "the greater Church", while the "opponents" are clearly accused of de-historicising, eliminating all the obligations which ethics, eschatology and a true life in the Spirit must produce. They were moving in the direction of what was later known as docetic gnosticism.

4. The final moment in the history of the community is its separation and dissolution. The group behind the Epistles merges with the greater Church, as can be seen from Ignatius of Antioch (c.110): Johannine christology has been accepted, but a Paraclete dominated ecclesiology and ethics has been lost. The "opponents" take the Gospel and their interpretation of it into gnosticism, as can be seen from the later use of the Fourth Gospel by the gnostic sects.

Stated so bluntly, the skill of Brown's analysis or, as he himself describes it, his "detective work" is lost. However, I hope to have presented some sort of accurate synthesis of the main lines of his argument, as an indication of how contemporary Johannine scholarship has become extremely sensitive to the lives, loves and experiences of the Community itself in an attempt to understand that Community's Gospel.

While discussing Brown's recent contribution I mentioned a group called "Crypto-Christians", and described them as Jews who believed, but remained in the Synagogue. Jewish Christians who would not take the step "across the street" into the Johannine community. Here, it appears to me, we are in touch with the reason for the polemical nature of those famous Sacramental passages. Again, I would like to dwell for a few moments on the situation in the life of the Johannine Church which created such a situation.

Along with many contemporary scholars, I see John's consistent conflict with "the Jews" as the clearest indication of "when" the Gospel was written, and one of the main reasons "why" it was written.<sup>38</sup> Faced with the perseverance of a sect in its midst which confessed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the synagogue at Jamnia, which became the legal and intellectual centre of Rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, called upon all faithful Jews to condemn publicly the followers of Jesus. To do this, they inserted a "benediction" (called the *birkat ha-minim*, i.e.: "the blessing of the heretics") into one of their important synagogue prayers, the "Eighteen Benedictions" (the *shemoneh 'esreh*). It is impossible to be certain about the exact form of this "blessing", but it ran something like this: "For apostates may there be no hope, and may the Nazarenes and the heretics suddenly perish".<sup>39</sup> Everyone attending the synagogue had to pray this prayer loudly, and thus it became a sort of shibboleth. Anyone who failed to call it out could be identified as a follower of Jesus, the Christ, and was to be turned out of the synagogue. It is

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difficult to determine the exact date of this decision taken at Jamnia, but the Eighteen Benedictions, their order and the *birkat ha-minim* are associated with Rabbi Gamaliel II; thus some time after 85 seems to be most likely. It is also difficult to determine just how rapidly this practice was implemented by the synagogues of the diaspora. Nevertheless, it was the point of no return for the Christians: they had to declare themselves, and thus lose all contact with Judaism. This is no simple banning from the synagogue, but a complete expulsion from the heritage of Israel.

It is often argued that John 9 reflects the drama of the Jewish-Christian Church subsequent to the decision of the synagogue at Jamnia.<sup>40</sup> The parents of the man born blind refused to answer the questions of the Jewish authorities about how their son was given his sight "because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to the Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue" (9:22). As we will see, it is important to notice that the term for the rather innocuous English "to be put out of the synagogue" is ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται. This term is found *only* in John (see also 12:42 and 16:2). When the man himself encounters the Jews, he claims: "If this man were not from God he could do nothing" (9:33), and he is "cast out" (v. 34: ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω). Once a link is made between this event reported in John 9 and the decisive break between Judaism and Christianity caused by the *birkat ha-minim*, then other passages in the Gospel take on a new sense:

12:42: Many even of the authorities believed in him but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue (ἀποσυνάγωγος γένωνται).

16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues (ἀποσυνάγωγους ποιήσουσιν ὑμᾶς); indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

In both of these passages the term ἀποσυνάγωγος, found only in the Fourth Gospel, again appears. Barnabas Lindars has described the situation well when he claims that John "speaks of discipleship in terms of the conditions with which his readers were familiar".<sup>41</sup>

I have no time nor space to develop this argument here, but it appears to me that a third criterion for Sacramental material in the Johannine Gospel will be, precisely, its polemic tone. The Johannine community wants to make it quite

clear that to believe in Jesus meant more than a belief that he was the Messiah, but that the members of the Synagogue who had that belief had to cross the road from their Synagogue, and publicly insert themselves into a new community, and the public gesture would have been, above all, the public reception of Baptism as an "entry" into the community and the public participation in the Eucharistic celebrations of that community. John W. Miller, in an unpublished Princeton doctoral dissertation has put it well:

"The observance of baptism and eucharist suggest a worshipping community sharing in a cultic life. In view of John's understanding of the unity of the Church as a visible unity and his criticism of secret disciples, it is likely that the sacraments were important as a means by which believers identified themselves with the visible community of the Church".<sup>42</sup>

In this way, what one generation of scholars has taken as anti-docetic because of its polemic tone is really not "anti" anything. It is an aggressive affirmation of the communitarian nature of the Church, and the crucial role which baptism and eucharist played in that community.<sup>43</sup>

We come now to our final suggestion, and all I can hope to do is to outline another theme that could assume major proportions in any further discussion. Once again I would like to fix my attention firmly upon the situation of the Johannine community. Through all of the complexities of this Gospel, one can trace a very important central christological and ecclesiological message which is remarkably consistent. A God who is love (I John 4:8,16) loves the world so much that he sent his only Son (3:16-17). This Son, Jesus Christ, has a task (ἔργον) to bring to its completion (see especially 4:34 and 17:4, along with the many passages in the Gospel which use words coming from τέλος). That task is to make God known, so that men can come to eternal life (17:2-3). He performs this task in many ways, through his discourses (λόγος and ῥήματα), through his "signs" (σημεῖα), and consummately through the supreme act of love, when he is "lifted up" on the Cross (see 3:13-14; 8:28; 12:32; 13:1; 15:13; 19:30). Jesus not only "speaks" and "gives signs" of his oneness with a Father who is love (see 10:30), but he actually loves in a consummate fashion.<sup>44</sup> Because this is the case, Jesus is the unique revealer of God (see especially 1:18; 3:13; 6:46; 8:38), and thus the Fourth Evangelist demands that the believers "look upon" Jesus to see the revelation of the Father. This is

promised in the programmatic 1:51:

"You *will see* heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"

and repeated like an antiphon through the whole Gospel (see 1:18; 4:45; 5:37; 6:2,36; 8:38,57; 9:37; 11:40; 14:7,9; 15:24; 16:16,17; 19:22,35), climaxing in the final words of the scene at the Cross:

"They shall *look on* him whom they have pierced" (19:37).<sup>45</sup>

This is all very well, but for the Johannine community, as the first century drew to a close, Jesus was no longer present! It is quite clear that the "absence" of the physical revelation of the glory of God in the person of Jesus posed a problem for the community. It is handled in various ways, through the teaching on the Paraclete (14:16-17,25,26; 15:26; 16:7-11,13-15)<sup>46</sup> and Jesus' assurance of his continued presence and care throughout the last discourse (especially 13:31-14:31) and in his final prayer (especially 17:9-19).

This theme was noticed and discussed in a fine article by C. Charlier almost thirty years ago. I would like to paraphrase the title of his article as my final criterion for the presence of Sacramental material in the Fourth Gospel: "The presence of the absent one".<sup>47</sup> It is here that the suggestions of Oscar Cullmann again become important. He too had noticed that a central issue in this Gospel was to indicate that what was happening in the community's cult was a special sort of "remembering" (see 12:16; 14:26; 16:12).<sup>48</sup> While recognising the value of this contribution, I would like to pursue it down a slightly different path. As one reads through the discourse of John 6:25-51b one hears again and again the theme spelt out most clearly in 6:40:

"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life:

and again in 6:46-48:

"Not that anyone has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life".

One can understandably sense the reaction of the Johannine community faced with this teaching: "But where is he, that we may see him, and thus come to know the Father and possess eternal life?" The answer is given in 6:51c-58: in the broken bread and the spilt wine of their Eucharistic celebrations. The Eucharist, for the Johannine community, was the presence of the absent one.<sup>49</sup>

The same technique is being used in 19:34. The whole of the passion account has culminated with the exaltation of Jesus as King upon his Cross (19:17-21). There he has founded his Church (19:25-27) and brought to perfection the task which his Father had given him (19:28-30). That is the Johannine understanding of a past event, but how is it to become part of the experience of the Church now? The answer is found in 19:34: as the blood and water, the life-giving Sacraments of Eucharist and Baptism, are described as flowing down upon the nascent Church from the King, lifted up upon his throne.<sup>50</sup> Again it is in the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist that the Johannine Church can find the presence of the absent one.

My reflections have already been lengthy, but yet they remain simply a sketch of what could and should be said. I have limited most of my testing of these last two criteria to the universally accepted Sacramental passages of 3:5; 6:51c-58 and 19:34. It is better to start with established material, to test the criteria there, and then move into areas which are not quite so clear<sup>51</sup> ... but that will be a task to be faced on some other occasion.

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## NOTES

- \* I have retained this title, despite its difficulties, from the original setting of this paper, given at the Melbourne Scripture Seminar, Newman College, University of Melbourne, 24th - 31st August, 1981.
1. For this list, see R.E. Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary", in *New Testament Essays* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1967) pp. 75-76. The article runs from pp. 51-76. Another fine study of this question, and an excellent survey of scholarship, can be found in H. Klos, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium. Vorkommen und Bedeutung von Taufe, Eucharistie und Busse im vierten Evangelium*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 46 (Stuttgart, Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970).
  2. The words *εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας* are textually doubtful, and may have been added by a copyist to solve the problem of sinfulness after Baptism. For a full discussion, with full bibliographical details, see F.J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man*, Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose 14 (Rome, LAS, 1978<sup>2</sup>) pp. 192-193.
  3. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, The Anchor Bible 29 (New York, Doubleday, 1966) p. cxi.
  4. R.E. Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary", pp. 51-56.
  5. R.E. Brown, *John*, pp. cxi - cxiv
  6. H. Klos, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium*.
  7. See C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John. An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London, SPCK, 1978<sup>2</sup>) pp. 100-134; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, New Century Bible (London, Oliphants, 1972) pp. 28-34; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (London, Burns and Oates, 1968) Vol. 1, pp. 75-104. It should be noticed that Schnackenburg, who hesitatingly opts for John, the Son of Zebedee, in the first volume of his great commentary, has since shifted to a position akin to the one adopted in this paper. See especially, R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium. Kommentar zu Kap. 13-21*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament IV/3 (Freiburg, Herder, 1975) pp. 449-464. A more summary treatment may be found in English in R. Schnackenburg, "On the Origin of the Fourth

- Gospel", in *Jesus and Man's Hope* (Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1970) pp. 233-246. R.E. Brown, *John*, pp. lxxxvii - xcvi. Like Schnackenburg, Brown has recently moved away from the identification of the Beloved Disciple with the Son of Zebedee (the position adopted in his commentary) to a position closer to the one espoused here. See R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1979) pp. 31-34.
8. F.J. Moloney, *The Word Became Flesh*, Theology Today 14 (Cork/Dublin, Mercier Press, 1979) pp. 15-19.
  9. See, on this, the valuable recent contributions of R.E. Brown, "'And the Lord Said'? Biblical Reflections on Scripture as the Word of God", *Theological Studies* 42 (1981) 3-19; Idem, "The Meaning of the Bible", *Theology Digest* 28 (1980) 305-320.
  10. B. Neunheuser, Art. "Sacraments" in *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology* (London, Burns and Oates, 1970) (Vol. 5, p. 378. The article runs from pp. 378-387.
  11. For full details, see G.W.H. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961) pp. 891-893, especially under section F, where reference is made to Cyril, Theodotus, Clement of Alexandria, Dionysius and Serapion from the early centuries using the term *μυστήριον* in the sense of "Sacramentum, as revelation of divine activity".
  12. The word "Sacramentum" originally meant an oath, especially a soldier's oath of allegiance. This can still be traced in early Christian literature. See, for example, Tertullian, *Ad Martyres*, 3. See, on this, Art. "Sacrament" in F.L. Cross - E.A. Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974<sup>2</sup>) pp. 1218-1219.
  13. See S.M. Schneiders, "History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel", in M. de Jonge (ed.), *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, rédaction, théologie*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium XLIV (Gembloux, Duculot, 1977) pp. 371-376; Eadem, "Symbolism and the sacramental principle in the Fourth Gospel", in P.-R. Tragan (ed.), *Segni e Sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni*, Studia Anselmiana 66, Sacramentum 3 (Rome, Editrice Anselmiana, 1977) pp. 221-235; Eadem, "The Foot Washing (John 13:1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics", *The Catholic*

*Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981) 76-92.

14. S.M. Schneiders, "Symbolism and the sacramental principle in the Fourth Gospel", p. 235.
15. See especially, S.M. Schneiders, "The Foot Washing (John 13:1-20)", pp. 81-82.
16. Most recently X. Léon-Dufour has argued for a deeper appreciation of both levels of understanding for a proper evaluation of the Fourth Gospel. He interprets the cleansing and the sign of the Temple, the dialogue with Nicodemus and John 6 at the level of Jesus in a non-Sacramental way, and then shows that the risen Lord present in the Spirit in his community, makes that *same text* Sacramental. See X. Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading of the Fourth Gospel", *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980-81) 439-456. See especially p. 455; "The historical events call forth the mystery which sheds light upon it, but the mystery itself would peter out in pure imagination if it did not ceaselessly find its nourishment in the rich soil of time past".
17. For an extremely lucid presentation of this case, see J. Jeremias, "The Words of Institution", in P. McGoldrick (ed.), *Understanding the Eucharist. Papers of the Maynooth Union Summer School 1968* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1969) pp. 18-28. Still of classic dimensions is the same author's *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London, SCM Press, 1966).
18. There is universal agreement among contemporary scholars that Matt. 28:16-20 is central to an understanding of the Matthean vision of his Church and its mission. See, for example, W. Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel. Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums*, *Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* 10 (München, Kösel, 1964<sup>3</sup>) pp. 21-51; J.P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel. A Redactional Study of Mt. 5, 17-48*, *Analecta Biblica* 71 (Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1976) pp. 25-40.
19. See, on this, X. Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading of the Fourth Gospel". See above, note 16.
20. O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 10 (London, SCM Press, 1953). For his theological and exegetical argument for the second element of his position, which does make some very valid points (see

especially pp. 47-50), to which we shall eventually return, see pp. 38-59. His whole argument swivels around the important conclusion on p.56: "The implicit assumption of this Gospel is that the historical events, as here presented, contain in themselves, besides what is immediately perceptible, references to further facts of salvation with which these once-for-all key events are bound up".

21. R.E. Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary", p. 55.
22. See the directions of notes 4 and 5 above for further discussion and details.
23. See O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, pp. 7-36 for his analysis of what he calls the "basic characteristics" of that worship. Again he is somewhat optimistic, and many scholars would argue against some of his firm historical conclusions, as they seem to be based upon fairly fragile evidence. For a better assessment, see F. Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1973).
24. See R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London, SCM Press, 1955) Vol. 2, pp. 70-92.
25. There is a perfectly common verb available to speak of the human process of eating: **ἐσθίειν**. The verb **τρῶγειν** is normally used in contexts where some sort of stress is given to the physical "munching" or "crunching" of food. See, on this, C. Spicq, "**ΤΡΩΓΕΙΝ** est-il synonyme de **ΦΑΓΕΙΝ** et de **ΕΣΘΙΕΙΝ** dans le Nouveau Testament?", *New Testament Studies* 26 (1979-80) 414-419.
26. See R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, pp. 3-14; Idem, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oxford, Blackwells, 1971) pp. 138-140; 300; 324-325; 325-328; 677-678.
27. And, I would add, the Spirit-filled journey of a community behind all the stages of development! R.E. Brown, *John*, p. cxii. It is here that I would differ from the suggestions of Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading". Ignoring all the recent work done on the Johannine community and its journey of faith, he insists, for example, that 3:5 and 6:53-58 would make perfect sense to a Jewish audience as they stand, and that there are no indications in the text itself (e.g. introduction of

"water" into 3:5) to show a growing Sacramental awareness within the Johannine community. See pp. 449-451; 452-454. I would still argue, for example - not of clumsy insertion - but of a growing awareness, reflected in a growing text. On this, see the recent commentary of E. Haenchen, *Das Johannesevangelium. Ein Kommentar* (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1980) pp. 218; 226-227.

28. For a detailed study of John 5, with full bibliographical detail, see F.J. Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 68-86.
29. Again, for further detail, see F.J. Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 142-159.
30. The movement from *κύριος* to *Κύριος* in v. 38 indicates a decisive step into a public confession of faith.
31. See, on this, the method advocated by R. Schnackenburg, "Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium", in J. Coppens et alii (eds.), *Sacra Pagina. Miscellanea Biblica Congressus Biblicus Internationalis Catholicus de Re Biblica* (Gembloux, Duculot, 1959) Vol. 2, pp. 235-254. He suggests that we first study the clearly Sacramental passages, and establish from them possible internal contacts with the more obscure texts.
32. P. Niewalda, *Sakramentssymbolik im Johannesevangelium. Eine exegetischhistorische Studie* (Limburg, Lahn-Verlag, 1958).
33. E.C. Hoskyns - F.N. Davey (ed.), *The Fourth Gospel* (London, Faber and Faber, 1947<sup>2</sup>) pp. 363-365; 443-446.
34. For a survey and evaluation of this recent direction in Johannine studies, see F.J. Moloney, "Revisiting John", *Scripture Bulletin* 11 (1980) 9-15.
35. See *ibid.*, pp. 11-13.
36. Although he had already made a series of significant contributions to this discussion in scholarly journals, his argument is best found in R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. See above, note 7.
37. See above, and especially note 7.
38. The following argument, briefly presented here, has been accepted, for example, by C.K. Barrett, *St. John*, pp. 127-128; R.E. Brown, *John*, pp. lxxiv - lxxv;

E.C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, pp. 360-362;  
 R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium. Kommentar zu Kap. 5-12*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament IV/2 (Freiburg, Herder, 1971) pp. 316-317; B. Lindars, *John*, p. 147; S. Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Das Neue Testament Deutsch 4 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1972) pp. 144-145. It has been recently refused by J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London, SCM Press, 1976) pp. 292-298. See, on this discussion, F.J. Moloney, "The Fourth Gospel's Presentation of Jesus as 'the Christ' and J.A.T. Robinson's 'Redating'", *The Downside Review* 95 (1977) 239-253.

39. The original wording of this "blessing" cannot be exactly determined, as it has understandably come down to us in various corrupted forms. For the recensions (Palestinian and Babylonian), see H. Strack - P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München, C.H. Beck, 1922-61) Vol. 4, pp. 211-214. On the whole question of the expulsion from the Synagogue, see pp. 293-333. For the history of these Benedictions and the conflict which the insertion of the Benediction against the heretics (*Birkat ha-minim*) caused, see G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958) Vol. 1, pp. 289-296. For his reconstruction of the twelfth Benediction, which I have followed, see p. 292, note 8.
40. See, for example, J.L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1979<sup>2</sup>) pp. 24-62; R.E. Brown, *John*, p. 380; R. Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium II*, pp. 316-317; B. Lindars, *John*, p. 347.
41. B. Lindars, *John*, p. 347.
42. J.W. Miller, *The Concept of the Church in the Gospel according to John* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1976) p. 103. See also p. 98. Miller's suggestion, which I have developed here, needs more attention in this discussion.
43. Most recently exactly the *opposite* suggestion has been made by K. Matsunaga, "Is John's Gospel Anti-Sacramental?", *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980-81) 516-524. Matsunaga also bases his contribution on the recent suggestions of R.E. Brown and J.L. Martyn. He argues that the Fourth Evangelist has eliminated certain synoptic passages (baptism of Jesus and the words of institution) in a

spiritualising process. He did this so that the "drop-outs" from the Johannine community would see that, above all, they should have been primarily committed to the high Christology developed within the community, and the subsequent "Word" of Jesus. It is a question of first things first, but not of anti-Sacramentalism.

44. This is clearly involved in John's continual use of verbs and nouns which go back to the expression **τέλος**. Especially significant are 13:1 (**εἰς τέλος**) and 19:30 (**πετέλεσται**). See, for a full development of this theme, F.J. Moloney, *Disciples and Prophets. A Biblical Model for the Religious Life* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980) pp. 32-45. As mentioned earlier, Sandra Schneiders has been insisting that we look more closely at this feature of the Gospel. See especially her article, "Symbolism and the sacramental principle in the Fourth Gospel", pp. 221-235. See above, note 13, for further details.
45. Again this is made clear by the continual significant use of the verb **ὁράω**. See, on this, C. Traets, *Voir Jésus et le Père en Lui selon l'Évangile de Saint Jean*, *Analecta Gregoriana* 159 (Rome, Gregorian University Press, 1967) and F.J. Moloney, *Son of Man*, p. 155. Full bibliographical indications are given in note 77 of that page.
46. See, on this, the fine work of F. Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort. Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Johannesevangeliums*, *Frankfurter Theologische Studien* 16 (Frankfurt, Josef Knecht, 1974). Recently John Painter has taken up the suggestions of Brown and Martyn to show a developing understanding of the Paraclete, evidenced in the development of the farewell discourse's use of the concept. See J. Painter, "Glimpses of the Johannine Community in the Farewell Discourses", *Australian Biblical Review* 28 (1980) 21-38. He has developed his argument even further in his most recent article, "The Farewell Discourses and the History of Johannine Christianity", *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980-81) 525-543.
47. C. Charlier, "La présence dans l'absence (Jn 13,31-14,31)", *Bible et Vie Chrétienne* 2 (1953) 61-75). It is interesting to note that the same title has been taken up in a very recent study by S. Migliasso, *La presenza dell'Assente. Saggio di analisi letterario - strutturale e di sintisi teologica di Gv. 13,31-14,31* (Rome, Pontificia Università

Gregoriana, 1979).

48. See O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, pp. 47-50.
49. See, on this, F.J. Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 87-107, Idem, "John 6 and the Celebration of the Eucharist", *The Downside Review* 93 (1975) 243-251.
50. See E. Malatesta, "Blood and water from the pierced side of Christ", in *Segni e Sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni*, pp. 164-181. This is a well-documented study, with a fine appendix on the Patristic use of John 19:34 (see our second criterion) on pp. 179-181.
51. A method advocated some years ago by R. Schnackenburg, "Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium", pp. 235-254. See above, note 31.