

JESUS, JUDAS, AND PETER: CHARACTER BY CONTRAST IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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This article explores the narrative relationship between three key figures in the Gospel of John: Jesus, Judas, and Peter. As these characters interact, patterns of contrast gradually emerge.

A literary "character" is the sum of "external signs" presented by a text that "correspond to and reveal an otherwise hidden inner nature."¹ Literary characters are therefore complexes of personal traits that correspond to the readers' experience of individuals in the "real world." Booth's influential book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, discusses two means by which narratives reveal character: "telling" and "showing."² "Telling" occurs when the narrator makes direct evaluative statements or gives information not normally available in the readers' experience. "Showing" occurs when the narrator offers selective information about the actions of the characters and allows readers to draw conclusions from them. By combining "telling" and "showing" the author enables readers to develop "both intrinsic and contextual knowledge" of the characters.³

The kind of "telling" a narrator can offer is related to the narrator's perspective on the story. The narrator of the Gospel of John is "omniscient," which is important in relation to his

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¹ J. Hillis Miller, *Ariadne's Thread, Story Lines* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 31-32. This is Miller's description of the "typical" concept of "character" in literary criticism, in contrast to his own poststructuralist outlook.

² Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 3-9.

³ W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), 32.

knowledge of the inner life of the characters portrayed in John.⁴ Modern "historical" narratives generally note the internal processes of characters only as these may be deduced from their actions, giving an aura of greater "objectivity." An author may, however, grant the narrator access to the minds of the characters, allowing direct exposition of their thoughts and motives. The Gospel of John exercises the latter option, frequently stopping the action to specify the nature or significance of events in "asides," direct statements to the audience.⁵ This invites the audience to evaluate the characters' actions based on the internal thought processes that provoked them.

The narrator reinforces direct "telling" statements by "showing" the readers how the characters respond to each other and to various situations. Booth and Harvey provide a matrix for analyzing the actions of characters by "contrast." Booth describes the effect of "distance." "In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader. Each of these can range, in relation to each of the others, from identification to complete opposition, on any axis of value."⁶ Readers may learn about characters by observing the kind and degree of distance between them. Harvey suggests a paradigm for defining such distance. Three broad character types that interact in narrative are "background characters," "protagonists," and "ficelles." Background characters are anonymous voices, present only to perform some necessary plot function and generally typifying the social environment. In John, this category includes "the crowd" and "the Jews." The protagonist is consistently elevated above this group as an individual who interacts with others.⁷ Jesus is the protagonist in the Gospel of John, as seen in His interactions with other characters of varying depth. The audience tends to empathize with the protagonist Jesus and to distance itself from those who are distant from Jesus.

⁴ The "narrator" is here distinguished from John, the Fourth Evangelist, in that "narrator" is a literary feature of the text itself which the author, John, utilized in telling the story. R. Alan Culpepper's basic definition is convenient: the narrator is "the voice that tells the story and speaks to the reader" (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 16).

⁵ John utilized 193 telling asides to perform several narrative functions. Functions that involve characterization include character labels, reasons for or significance of discourse, and reasons for or significance of actions (Tom Thatcher, "A New Look at Asides in the Fourth Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 [October—December 1994]: 433—39).

⁶ Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 155. "Other" characters here means "other than the narrator" in cases where the narrator is fully dramatized.

⁷ Harvey, *Character and the Novel*, 56-57.

Peter and Judas are "ficelles." Ficelles serve as personal contact points between the protagonist and the anonymous background world. This contact is achieved in various ways. A ficelle may, for example, typify conventional wisdom or morality, highlighting the protagonist's insight or moral or spiritual being. The protagonist's uniqueness is thus typified through the commonness of the ficelles, who are "members of the ordinary, bread-and-butter life in which the otherwise remote experience [of the protagonist] . . . is set."⁸ The narrator of the Fourth Gospel filters Jesus' luminous brilliance through the responses of characters near Him. At the same time the way in which they refract Jesus' light reveals their own nature. Jesus, Judas, and Peter are thus mutually defined as they encounter one another.

TELLING

JESUS

The narrator in John used "telling" asides in a number of ways to characterize Jesus' thinking. Primary among these is a group of "telling" asides that indicate that Jesus did not follow a human agenda. A pattern is established at 2:23-25, as many in Jerusalem, marveling over Jesus' powerful signs, "believed [ἐπίστυσαν] on His name." But the narrator, revealing Jesus' mind, stated that Jesus "did not entrust [οὐκ ἐπίστευεν] Himself to them"; in fact Jesus had no desire for anyone to testify about Him because "He knew what was in a person." After Jesus fed the five thousand, the crowd, "seeing the sign," acclaimed Him the "coming prophet" (6:14-15). This prompted Jesus to withdraw to the wilderness because, according to the narrator, He knew they sought to make Him king, a human agenda He specifically avoided.

This refusal to follow a human agenda is perhaps most explicit in those asides where the narrator "tells" about Jesus' personal human interests. After Martha and Mary had urged Jesus to save their brother Lazarus (11:3), the narrator suddenly revealed that Jesus "loved" (ἠγάπα) them (11:5). But the odd transition from verse 5 to verse 6 implies a connection between Jesus' love and His delay in coming to Lazarus.⁹ Although Jesus had a deep personal interest in going to Lazarus, He repressed this concern so that God the Father might be glorified. After Martha, Mary, and "the Jews" appeared before Him in confusion and tears, the narrator stated that Jesus was "moved in spirit and

⁸ Ibid., 63-68.

⁹ Raymond Brown notes that "as vss. 5 and 6 now stand, they offer a paradox" (*The Gospel according to John* (i-xii), Anchor Bible [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966], 423).

disturbed" (ἐνβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν, v. 33), so much so that He wept (v. 35). The narrator reiterated this sentiment as Jesus arrived at Lazarus' tomb amidst the Jews' exclamations that He could have saved His friend (v. 38).

Jesus controlled interactions with other people because He knew both their thoughts and His own plans at every point. Jesus asked Philip where they would find food for the massive crowd (6:5). Before recording Philip's response, the narrator quickly intruded to tell the audience that Jesus was not seeking Philip's advice but was "testing him," as He already knew what He would do (v. 6). Jesus' control of situations was sometimes said to be linked to the fact that He knows hearts. So after the miraculous feeding, Jesus withdrew, knowing they would want to make Him king (v. 15); the narrative, however, indicated no such intention, saying only that the people connected Jesus with "the Prophet." After Jesus' "Bread from heaven" speech in the Capernaum synagogue, many people grumbled because Jesus' words were hard to understand (v. 60). This provoked Jesus to expose the disbelief of some (vv. 61-64a), which prompted the narrator to explain immediately that Jesus knew from the very beginning who did not believe and who it was that would betray Him (v. 64b). The "traitor" motif that develops around Judas resonates with a number of asides which tell that Jesus was aware of and had control over what Judas would do. After Jesus said, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" (6:70), the narrator told that Jesus referred specifically to Judas, the direct object of ἔλεγεν (v. 71). At the footwashing, Jesus refused Peter's request for a bath by informing him that he was clean, but not all were. The narrator then stated that Jesus said this because He knew "the one betraying Him" (13:11), by now an epithet for Judas Iscariot. More positively, Jesus also knew that Peter would be fully restored and would "glorify God" by his death (21:19).

An important aspect of Jesus' resistance to human agendas and His control of other characters concerns His "hour," which the narrator associated with His death. Jesus knew His "hour." After Jesus had claimed that He is from God and knows God, "the Jews" sought to seize Him but could not do so because, as the narrator told, "His hour had not yet arrived" (7:30). This explanation recurs at 8:20b, where the Pharisees could not silence Jesus' offensive claims. John 13:1 is significant in this light, as the narrator told that Jesus knew His hour had finally come, and that He had loved His own even until the very end. Here Jesus' "hour" is explicitly the hour "that He should be lifted up," again in accord with the divine agenda.

Because Jesus had a divinely appointed time to die, and be-

cause He has complete control over everything, He had complete control over His manner of death as well. After Jesus mentioned that He would be "lifted up" and would "draw all people" to Himself, the narrator stated that "He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die" (12:33). The Gethsemane scene as recorded in John is actually a voluntary surrender, as Jesus faced the mob "knowing all the things that were coming upon Him" (18:4). He displayed power, knocking the posse to the ground, to fulfill the promise of 6:39 (cf. 17:12) that none of those entrusted to Him would be lost (18:9). When the Jews insisted that Pilate try Jesus because they could not execute Him, the narrator postured their complaint in terms of Jesus' control (18:32): the Romans must kill Him because He had stated that He would be "lifted up" on a cross. Jesus' power over death made the events of His execution almost mechanical. The soldiers who cast lots over His garments had little choice in the matter because they did this, as the narrator explained, "so that Scripture would be fulfilled" (19:24). Sometime later, Jesus, knowing that "all things had already been accomplished," fulfilled one more prophecy by saying, "I thirst" (19:28). That the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs but pierced Him with a spear is explained in 19:36–37 as further prophetic fulfillment: they could not do the former and must do the latter. The readers are thus given the impression that Jesus had a list of "things to do" before He died.

Jesus' sovereignty may be explained by the narrator's insistence that He is divine and knows Himself to be so. In the controversy over the healing at Bethesda, Jesus remarked that "My Father always works and I work" (5:17), which provoked "the Jews" to seek to kill Him. The narrator explained their fury by stating that Jesus had violated the Sabbath and had "made Himself equal to God" (5:18).¹⁰ Before the footwashing the narrator told that Jesus knew God had put all things under His power, and that He was "from God and was returning to God" (13:3). Jesus knew who He was and what He would do.

JUDAS AND PETER

The narrator of the Gospel of John provided many telling asides about Judas, all of which characterize the paradox of the disciple who from the beginning was a traitor. After Jesus' "Bread from heaven" speech, He enigmatically revealed that a devil was in His entourage (6:70), and the narrator intervened to explain that

¹⁰ In one sense the narrator's remark here functions to explain the motive of "the Jews." At the same time, however, the causal ὅτι in 5:18 is not conditioned ("because they supposed," etc.), and the aside introduces the Sonship/equality topos in the speech of Jesus that follows (5:19-47).

this was Judas (v. 71), the first reference to him in the Fourth Gospel. In Lazarus' house Judas objected to the anointing of Jesus' feet (12:4-6), and the narrator noted three things about Judas: Judas was the group treasurer, a trusted position; Judas had betrayed this trust by embezzling funds; and Judas actually did not care about the poor. In both references, however, Judas is also described as a disciple, in fact one of "the Twelve." Before Jesus' footwashing, the narrator told that the devil had already put it into Judas' heart to betray Jesus (13:2), and later, in connection with the sopped bread, that Satan entered Judas (13:27).

Unlike Judas, Peter's mind appeared closed to the narrator, as his inner thoughts and motives were almost never revealed. The references to the "disciples" in 13:22, 28-29 apparently include Peter, who acted as their spokesman and shared their ignorance of Judas' intention. In 20:9 the narrator told that Peter and the "beloved disciple" did not understand the empty tomb, although the latter "believed." Other than this, however, the audience is left to evaluate Peter's actions without the narrator's aid.

"SHOWING"

Three passages in the Gospel of John include Jesus, Judas, and Peter together: 6:59-71; 13:20-36; 18:1-11. Four scenes portray interaction between Jesus and Peter without Judas (1:42; 13:4-19; 18:12-27; 21), and one scene (12:1-8) describes an encounter between Jesus and Judas without Peter. The contrasts between these characters in these scenes may be analyzed in three dimensions. The first is space, which includes all aspects of "staging." The second is direct discourse, as identity is often revealed by the way characters communicate with each other. The third dimension is "control," the amount of authority a character exercises in a given context. "Control" is a less obvious category, but since the narrator consistently told that Jesus was notable for His control over every situation, this becomes an important factor in His interactions with other individuals.

JOHN 1:42

Peter is introduced during his first encounter with Jesus, when Andrew brought Peter, his brother, to Jesus. Simon said nothing, but Jesus made two statements, each with the emphatic $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}$: "you are [$\sigma\acute{\upsilon}$ εἶ] Simon"; and "you shall be called [$\sigma\acute{\upsilon}$ κληθήσῃ] Cephas." By changing Simon's name, Jesus specified their relationship. Ancient cultures generally associated naming with power over the one named. Even in the Old Testament "the giving of a new name has a direct relation to the role the [one] so desig-

nated will play."¹¹ Simon's new name was therefore "not so much a merely predictive utterance as what Jesus will make of him."¹² Whether Simon would live up to the title is not intimated. It is clear from the beginning, however, that Jesus desired priority in their relationship.

JOHN 6:59-71

This passage includes two attempts to "control" Jesus via discourse. After Jesus' words about the Bread of life, the narrator stated that a number of "disciples" in the audience were scandalized and sought to minimize Jesus by implying that no one could understand such "difficult" teaching (v. 60). Jesus, however, was not surprised by their grumblings, and He exposed their unbelief. Rather than repenting, the chastised disciples "turned back" (ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω, v. 66) on Him. This reflects their defiant inability to accept Him and His teaching. While they could not control Jesus, they would not be controlled by Him either.

Since the crowd lacked faith, Jesus turned to challenge the Twelve: "You do not want to go away also, do you?" (v. 67). Jesus knew their thoughts, so no response was necessary. Peter, however, supposed a certain pathos in Jesus' question. So he tried to comfort Jesus by assuring Him that he and the others would remain with Him because they realized He is "the Holy One of God" (v. 69). But Jesus emphatically rejected Peter's confession on two counts (v. 70). First, the Twelve must not suppose they had "chosen" to follow Jesus; He had chosen them. Second, Peter was unaware that a "devil" lurked in their midst. Having control over the rejection and acceptance of His message, Jesus did not patronize Peter's encouraging perspective.

Peter's confession, though genuine, was imperceptive. He was unable to please His Master because he did not understand the control structure of the relationship. Judas, on the other hand, is first presented in the Gospel of John in 6:71 as the epitome of the general rejection that had just occurred. Not only the synagogue "disciples," but even one of the chosen Twelve would turn away from Jesus' proclamation. Ironically, Judas would live up to the epithet Jesus had given him.

JOHN 12:1-8

When Jesus was in Lazarus' home for a banquet, Lazarus and apparently also Judas reclined at the table. The hostess, Mary, po-

¹¹ Ibid., 80; see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), 33.

¹² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 156.

sitioned herself on the floor near Jesus and began to anoint His feet with a fragrant perfume. Mary's posture, emphasizing her humility and devotion, is a touchstone for the contrasting responses she provoked.

Judas challenged Mary but directed his criticism to Jesus by asking why the Master allowed such excess. Judas sought to control both Jesus and Mary by forcing the Savior to rebuke her. As already noted, the narrator exposed Judas' hypocrisy to the audience. Jesus, however, refrained from exposing Judas to the guests at the banquet; instead, He clarified His authority over both Judas and Mary (v. 7). After His curt imperative to Judas, "Leave her alone!" (ἄφες αὐτήν), He indicated that Mary's excess was justified because she had saved the ointment for the special occasion of Jesus' burial anointing. Since Mary was apparently unaware of Jesus' impending death, the statement shows Jesus' authority to reinterpret her devotion. Mary's faith, if imperceptive, was certainly genuine, whereas Judas was imperceptive and hypocritical. Both individuals helped "prepare" for Jesus' burial, and He understood their respective roles much better than they did.

JOHN 13:4-19

The spatial aspects of the footwashing are carefully noted and intensified by a shift from the present to the past tense in 13:12. As the scene opened, Jesus was reclining at the table with His disciples. He then rose, put on a towel, moved to a basin, drew water, positioned Himself below each disciple in turn to wash his feet, and then returned to his original position of honor at the table. Brown suggests that this is the only reference in ancient literature to the footwashing of a "client" by a "patron."¹³ Peter's reaction to this unusual sequence of events prompted a dialogue that emphasized Peter's ignorance and Jesus' understanding of the approaching "hour" (13:1).

Peter's first two comments (13:6, 8) were intended to prohibit Jesus. **Κύριε σὺ μου** combines a vocative with **σὺ** in the emphatic position, creating urgency: The Master was not to wash Peter's feet; rather, Peter must wash Jesus. Although Peter's response revealed a genuine concern for Jesus' honor, it also exposed his resistance to Jesus' control and threatened to ruin Jesus' illustration. Since Peter did not know what would happen to Jesus (13:7), he could not accept this symbolic precursor. He then unwittingly verified Jesus' response, "you do not understand now," by commanding, "Never [οὐ μὴ . . . εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] shall you wash my

¹³ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John (xiii-xxi)*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 564-65; and Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 462-63.

feet" (v. 8). Remarkably Jesus' submissive posture did not diminish His control of the disciple who sat above Him, and Peter's obstinacy was met with a threat (v. 8). "No part with Me" builds on a Jewish eschatological inheritance motif.¹⁴ The footwashing carried a deeper promise of kingdom blessing, which Jesus has power to withhold. Peter, however, believed such blessing was under his own authority, as indicated by his third response (v. 9). If washing secures eschatological blessing, Peter demanded the fullest blessing possible. But whereas he could not stop Jesus from washing his feet, neither could he compel Him to wash his hands and head. The Lord assured the disciple that, despite his misguided attempt at usurpation, he was "clean" (v. 10); one of them, however, would reject his inheritance. Having returned to His seat, Jesus explained the washing in reference to His authority over them as Teacher and Master (ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ ὁ κύριος) (vv. 13-14). Jesus retained full control in both positions—that of the servant and that of the master—thereby defining the connection between service and authority.

JOHN 13:24-38

This sequence involves two significant exchanges, one between Jesus and Judas and one between Jesus and Peter. Opening with an "amen" saying (13:20), Jesus then predicted that one of those at the table would betray Him. The disciples were stunned, as the offender was not obvious to them (v. 22). Peter sought to interrogate Jesus through John, but apparently Peter could not hear the answer. After answering John, however, Jesus spoke to Judas loudly enough for all to hear: "What you do, do [ποίησον] quickly" (v. 27). "By having Judas depart from the Supper only after Jesus has told him to leave, John stresses Jesus' control over his [own] destiny,"¹⁵ and over Judas' destiny as well. Jesus commanded Judas to betray Him, demonstrating His control at this crisis point. Having eaten Jesus' bread, Judas departed into the "night" (v. 30). His treachery, however, would not endanger Jesus; quite the contrary, it would lead to Jesus' "glorification" (13:31-32). Having dispatched Judas, Jesus turned to the disciples to give them necessary information before He went away. This began with the "new command" that His followers are to be remarkable in their love for one another (v. 34). But ironically, Peter, unlike Judas, was not willing to receive a command from Jesus (v. 36). As in the footwashing, Jesus contrasted Peter's "now" with "later." The verbs shift from the plural in verse 33 to Peter alone

¹⁴ Brown, *The Gospel according to John (xiii-xxi)*, 565-66.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 578.

in verse 36. Peter would, indeed, eventually follow Jesus in a very specific way. But again Jesus' first answer was not enough, and Peter called this temporal distinction into question: Why not now? (v. 37). Indeed, Judas could fulfill his role "now," but Peter required further preparation. Jesus first attempted to assert authority over Peter in light of the task: the disciple was not yet able to go where Jesus was going, whether willing to die or not (v. 36). When Peter insisted, Jesus leveled His claim by exposing Peter's ignorance (v. 38). Not only did Peter misunderstand what Jesus and Judas would do; he did not realize that he himself would do the very opposite of what he boasted!

"Control" in this pericope is associated with knowledge. Jesus knew what He would do, what Judas would do, and what Peter would do. Judas knew what he would do, although he did not know its significance. Peter, by contrast, knew nothing of the future, neither what Jesus and Judas would do nor what he himself would do. So he could not respond properly. Judas would become the unwitting catalyst of Jesus' glorification, while Peter resisted the very plan that would end in his Master's exaltation. Thus in a sense Peter's good intentions were worse than Judas' treachery.

JOHN 18:1-11

Jesus' arrest, as recorded in John, engaged all three characters in a complex spatial matrix. Jesus and the disciples moved across the Kidron Valley and entered a garden, which may have been in a walled enclosure. As a defined space in which Jesus met with His disciples, the garden indicates intimacy. The narrator told that Judas knew this place because he had frequently been there with Jesus (18:2). Now, however, Judas was outside, approaching the area in the darkness with torches and lamps. He had come to meet Jesus at the garden, but no longer as a disciple.

In the Synoptic Gospels, the garden is seen as a place of grief and distress (Matt. 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-39; Luke 22:41-44). But in John's account Jesus confidently left the enclosure to confront His attackers, suggesting conviction and control. Jesus, not Judas, initiated the dialogue, interrogating the posse as to whom they sought (18:4; cf. Mark 14:43-46). The mob, not Judas, responded to His question (John 18:5a). At the height of the drama, the narrator stopped for a stage direction, telling that "Judas the betrayer stood with them" (v. 5b). Judas stood blatantly opposite Jesus with those who were knocked to the ground by Jesus' identification, "I am He" (ἐγώ εἰμι, v. 6). Jesus would allow Judas to fulfill his intention, but only on His terms. These are defined after the second ἐγώ εἰμι, indicating Jesus' desire and ability to protect His disciples even when He must not protect Himself (v.

8). Having secured their release, Jesus was ready to turn Himself over. But Peter, ready neither to be released nor to see Jesus arrested, interpreted the show of force as a call to arms. The Synoptics mention his attack (Matt. 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:49-50), but only John named Peter and Malchus. Remarkably the soldiers did not move to punish Peter, but Jesus did, as Peter was again spoiling the plan. Jesus did not need Peter's "help." The rhetorical question that closes the scene ("Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?" John 18:11) stresses His willingness to die.

Judas made his final appearance in the darkness at Jesus' feet. He had confronted Jesus with diabolical intentions, but thereby ironically presented Him with the Father's cup. Peter also confronted Jesus, but his attempt to "rescue" Him threatened to ruin His mission. Neither Judas nor Peter could control Jesus with the sword, because Jesus had accepted the Father's task.

JOHN 18:12—27

This scene combines space and dialogue to contrast Peter's and Jesus' control. Jesus was bound and taken to the home of Annas, and He apparently remained bound throughout the episode (18:12, 24). Peter, by contrast, moved freely. He followed the mob and was not arrested as he moved about Annas's courtyard. His presence at the fire, however, suggests he was in the wrong place; the courtyard was cold (v. 18) and dark, and Peter stood among the associates of the high priest as Jesus was taken within. Peter's separation from Jesus and fellowship with the enemy situated him to fulfill Jesus' prediction.

Both Jesus and Peter were interrogated about discipleship. Annas questioned Jesus "about His disciples, and about His teaching" (v. 19). But since Jesus had determined the status of His followers at the arrest, He did not respond, moving instead to the doctrinal question. Rather than apologizing for His teachings, Jesus returned a command: "Ask those who heard Me" (v. 21). Jesus had spoken openly, which was the opposite of their present tactic (v. 20). He would not be controlled, even by a high priest. This response offended a nearby official, who attempted to silence Jesus by striking Him (v. 22). Jesus' response revealed His authority over the entire proceeding. Arrested, bound, in the dwelling of the leader of the Jews, now physically abused, Jesus turned to the offender with a command, "Bear witness [*μαρτύρησον*, singular imperative] if I spoke wrongly," and a counter interrogation, "But if rightly, why do you strike Me?" (v. 24). Annas, frustrated by Jesus' authoritative presence, sent Him to his son-in-law.

Jesus had ordered Annas to question "those who heard," and

such an interrogation was going on in the courtyard. Immediately before and after Jesus' trial, Peter was asked if he had a relationship with "this man" (vv. 17, 25). Both questions open with μή, expecting the answer no. The first was asked by a slave girl who guarded the gate, the second by a group of servants who were curious about the trial inside and the identity of the stranger at their fire. Though neither question was explicitly hostile, Peter fell under the control of the enemy. The form of his denial parallels the "I am" sayings in the Gospel of John. When asked if he was a disciple of Jesus, Peter twice responded οὐκ εἰμί (vv. 17, 25), denying not what Jesus is but what he himself was. The third question, a repercussion of his act against Malchus, prompted the denial that he was with Jesus in the garden, the place of fellowship (vv. 26–27). Peter's tears and grief recorded in the Synoptics (Matt. 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:62) are absent from the Fourth Gospel, eclipsed by the cockcrow, which underlined Peter's denial. Jesus denied nothing, while Peter denied everything.

JOHN 21

Peter's spatial positions in 21:1–14 reflect shifting control. On land he initiated action among the disciples by suggesting a fishing expedition. His leadership of the group, however, produced little result after considerable effort (v. 3). Suddenly a stranger appeared and ordered them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. Obeying, the disciples were successful. Hearing that it was Jesus, Peter threw himself into the sea in a fit of exuberance. On shore, Jesus commanded the disciples to bring fish; Peter returned to the boat; and back on shore he ate the meal Jesus ordered, afraid to ask who He was (v. 12). But Peter's malleability in this episode set the stage for the next scene, as the narration in verses 15–22 finishes the encounter on the shore between Jesus and Peter that began in verse 7. Carson suggests that the sudden shift of focus to the weighted boat (v. 8) is an "indication of eyewitness testimony."¹⁶ Beyond this, it serves to defer confrontation between Jesus and Peter until the following critical dialogue.

In sharp contrast to the clear staging marks in 21:1–14, the spatial structure of verses 15–22 is unusually difficult. Jesus and Peter were apparently still beside the sea, but were now alone, it seems, at some distance from the other disciples. They seem to have been walking, and at one point Peter turned and observed that John was following them out of earshot (v. 20). This dearth of stage direction dramatizes the exchange.

Jesus initiated dialogue with a question (v. 15). His reference

¹⁶ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 671.

to Peter as "Simon son of John" returns to their initial encounter recorded in 1:42. The old designation indicates a need to redefine their relationship, which is first explored in terms of degree: "Do you love [ἀγαπᾶς] Me more than these?" "These" is certainly masculine, possibly referring to the other disciples ("do you love Me more than they love Me?"). But Peter did not want to answer in these terms; in fact he could not. Rather, he appealed to Jesus' knowledge: "You Yourself know that I love [φίλω] You" (v. 15). Peter, who once had boasted above the others that he would lay down his life, now appealed to what Jesus knew in spite of what Peter had done. Jesus reiterated without reference to the others, as Peter preferred, but still used the disciple's old name: "Simon son of John, do you love [ἀγαπᾶς] Me?" (v. 16). The form of Peter's answer did not change even though Jesus had adjusted the question. Having allowed Peter to omit the words "more than these," Jesus permitted him to select an appropriate verb. While it may be wrong to press the distinction between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in this context, the variation in terms is part of a gradual transformation of Jesus' questions into Peter's answer:

Jesus: Simon of John, ἀγαπᾶς με more than these?

Peter: Lord, You know that φιλω σε.

Jesus: Simon of John, ἀγαπᾶς με?

Peter: Lord, You know that φιλω σε.

Jesus: Simon of John, φιλεῖς με?

While the meanings may be synonymous, Jesus appropriated Peter's word for "love." Now that Peter was willing to define himself in reference to Jesus' complete knowledge of him, he could contribute to the terms of the relationship. Peter's final answer was his first step toward restoration. In verse 17 the narrator opened Peter's mind for the first time, revealing that Jesus had "grieved" him. Grief motivated his complete submission. Jesus knew that Peter loved Him because, as Peter said, "You Yourself know all things." Jesus knows, and Peter loves.

Peter's confession, "I am not this man's disciple," climaxed his resistance of Jesus' control. Now, having confessed who Jesus is and what he himself was, he was ready to receive a commission. While Jesus' three commands exchanged imperative verbs and accusative objects, the final "My" in verses 15–17 is constant. Peter would take Jesus' place as shepherd of the Master's flock. This calling would end in the ultimate act of submission (vv. 18–19). The final command, "Follow Me" (v. 19), extended Jesus' control beyond the end of the story. The cost of discipleship would be high for Simon, but in its consummation he would show himself a true "Peter," able at last to "glorify God" (v. 19).

True to his old self, however, Peter attempted to move Jesus from this painful subject. Despite the vagueness of Jesus' prophecy (v. 18), Peter soon realized the implications of His words (v. 21). Knowing that he would "follow" his Master in death, he wondered about the fate of the beloved disciple. But Jesus rebuked this attempt (v. 22). Peter's fate would correspond to his role as shepherd, and John's fate would, presumably, be appropriate to his mission as well. Jesus' final command urged Peter to fulfill his task in reference only to himself, even to the point of death: "You follow Me" (v. 22).

PATTERNS

In the Gospel of John, Judas is the consummate hypocrite. By consistently telling the motives behind the apparently genuine actions of Judas, the narrator revealed a gross hypocrisy and indifference to Jesus and the needs of others. Although a relationship with Jesus had offered Judas some financial benefit, he would ultimately become the epitome of those who reject the truth. Ironically, however, his schemes could not harm Jesus. In fact Jesus knew and controlled everything Judas did and He used Judas as a tool for His own "glorification." Hypocrisy is dangerous only to the hypocrite, not to the plan of God.

Unlike Judas, the audience knows almost nothing of Peter's inner life, and all judgments must be made on the basis of his actions. Because observation is the normal means of determining the motives of individuals, this silence makes Peter a bit more "real" to the audience than Judas. Before Jesus' death, Peter was the pinnacle of ignorance: he did not suspect Judas, he did not understand Jesus, and he misjudged his own abilities. So in contrast to Judas, every expression of Peter's genuine devotion threatened to foil Jesus' plan. But despite his ignorance, he remained "clean" through sincere devotion, which overcame even his rejection of the Master. After Jesus' death, Peter's repentance led to a new commission and calling. Restored, he could then truly "glorify God."

Jesus, like Judas, acted according to the Father's divine plan; unlike Judas and Peter, He fully understood what the plan involved. Knowing the outcome of all things, He was able to fulfill the Father's will, often against His own. The most notable feature about Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, however, is the control He displayed over all persons and situations. Neither the treachery or stubbornness of His own disciples, nor the ridicule or machinations of "the Jews," could hinder him from moving toward His "hour" on the cross.

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