

R. Alan Culpepper – Jörg Frey (eds.), *The Opening of John's Narrative (John 1:19–2:22). Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings from the Colloquium Ioanneum 2015 in Ephesus* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 385; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2017). Pp. 377. \$202. ISBN 978–3161552625

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The phrase “No man is an island” has deep roots in western spirituality, but its meaning also applies to the world of biblical scholarship. In 2013 an international group of Johannine professors founded the Colloquium Ioanneum and started publishing its research in the well-known series *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*. The meeting held in Ephesus in 2015 resulted in the publication of this volume, where scholars examined important aspects of John 1:19–2:22.

The structure of the volume includes the customary table of contents, foreword by the editors, list of abbreviations, followed by 14 articles: George L. Parsenios, “The Testimony of John’s Narrative and the Silence of the Johannine Narrator”; Christos Karakolis, “Recurring Characters in John 1:19–2:11: A Narrative-Critical and Reader-Oriented Approach”; Catrin H. Williams, “The Voice in the Wilderness and the Way of the Lord: A Scriptural Frame for John’s Witness to Jesus”; Marianne Meye Thompson, “Baptism with Water and with Holy Spirit: Purification in the Gospel of John”; Ruben Zimmermann, “Jesus – the Lamb of God (John 1:29 and 1:36): Metaphorical Christology in the Fourth Gospel”; Udo Schnelle, “Der ungenannte Jünger in Johannes 1:40”; William Loader, “John 1:51 and Johannine Christology”; Jan G. van der Watt, “Angels in John 1:51”; Jörg Frey, “Das prototypische Zeichen (Joh 2:1-11). Eine Kommentar-Studie”; Craig R. Koester, “The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11): Reading the Text in the Cultural Context of Ephesus”; Adele Reinhartz, “A Rebellious Son? Jesus and His Mother in John 2:4”; Michael Theobald, “Raum- und Zeitkonstruktion im Johannesevangelium. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur expositionellen Funktion der Erzählung von der Tempelreinigung Joh 2:13-22”; Jean Zumstein, „Johannes 2:13-22 im Plot und in der Theologie des vierten Evangeliums”; R. Alan Culpepper, „Temple Violation: Reading John 2:13-22 at the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus.”

The volume ends with the list of contributors, bibliography, and the indexes of ancient sources and authors.

In the first article of the book entitled “The Testimony of John’s Narrative and the Silence of the Johannine Narrator,” George Parsenios (Associate Professor of New Testament in the Department of Biblical Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ, USA) confronts the problem of the gradually disappearing narrator in three exemplary fragments of the Fourth Gospel (1:19-22; 3:31-36; 14:30-31). The biblical narrator begins these passages with a lengthy introduction to a dialog and then slowly departs the scene leaving the reader with the direct experience of the conversation between characters. Trying to discover the Evangelist’s intent behind this technique, *Parsenios* shows a similar practice in ancient Greek literature: Thucydides’ *History* and Plato’s *Dialogues*. The ancient texts (Plato’s *Theaetetus* and *Symposium*) explain the purpose of changing the mode from narrative (*diegetic*) into a more dramatic one (*mimetic*). The author argues that this purpose is the same for Plato as it is for John. They both want to render their conversations more memorable to later readers, who are made to feel as though they are present among the listeners in the past. Although such a conclusion is certainly valid one cannot help but wonder whether that was the only purpose of the Evangelist. The analysis of John 1:19-22 shows that not only the words of the narrator grow shorter, but also of all other characters. John the Baptist, for example, starts with a lengthy “I am not the Messiah,” followed by “I am not,” only to end with a simple “No.” Perhaps this observation can justify our suspicion that the author of the Fourth Gospel leads us to a more theological end.

The next article written by Christos Karakolis (Associate Professor of New Testament at the Department of Theology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece), entitled “Recurring Characters in John 1:19–2:11: A Narrative-Critical and Reader-Oriented Approach,” takes its rightful place as part of abundant literature on character studies in the Fourth Gospel. The author focuses on recurring characters, which are introduced in 1:19–2:11 and developed later in the narrative. Their common trait of responding to Jesus fully corresponds to the main theme and goal of the Gospel – the growing faith of its readers. To this end, the Evangelist employs paradigmatic characters, who serve as diverse models of faith. Karakolis distinguishes four categories of such characters present in the selected passage: (1) the knowing, (2) the opposing, (3) the believing, and (4) the fluctuating. The first category includes Jesus’ Mother and John the Baptist, who are gifted with the supernatural knowledge of Jesus, which does not change during the narrative. They represent an ideal relationship with Jesus and function as an inspiration for the readers. The second category contains only the chief priests. They are consistently shown in opposition to Jesus and serve as a warn-

ing, a model to avoid. The third category is the most numerous. It encompasses individual disciples (the Unnamed/Beloved Disciple, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael), who represent diverse ways of growing in relationship with Jesus. Their faith is present, but not yet fully developed. This trait allows them to serve as models applicable to most Gospel readers. The last category is the most intriguing one since it includes characters with unstable, fluctuating attitudes toward Jesus. These group-characters, namely the Pharisees and the “Jews,” show a full spectrum of responses from denial to faith, and as such pose a challenging question: “What is their role as a model in the narrative?” The author concludes that they correspond to a certain category of early Jewish readers of the Gospel with remarkably similar difficulties in accepting Jesus as the Messiah. For them, the open status of the Jews and Pharisees is at the same time a challenge and a source – of hope, that their road to true faith is certainly not closed. The presented article provides a valuable point of view on recurring characters in the Fourth Gospel and serves as an important addition to the rich literature on this topic.

The next contributor, Ruben Zimmermann, Professor of New Testament at the Johannes Gutenberg-University of Mainz, Germany, authored the article “Jesus – the Lamb of God (John 1:29 and 1:36): Metaphorical Christology in the Fourth Gospel.” Based on the title “Lamb of God” the author shows how John the Evangelist conveys Christology to his readers by creating meaning through metaphors. After pointing out difficulties with unambiguous interpretation of the Jesus-Lamb-Metaphor in 1:29 and 36, Zimmermann tries to answer the question: “Which lamb is indicated in the title?” The four possibilities are: (1) the silent lamb in the face of its slaughterer in Isa 53:7; (2) the lamb of the daily Tamid sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple; (3) the Passover lamb; and (4) the lamb of the Aqedah (Gen 22) – on the way to the place of sacrifice, when Isaac asks his father where they will find the lamb for the offering. The author does not select a single explanation, but instead shows, how the ambiguity of the metaphor is purposefully used by the Evangelist to incite in his readers the process of generating meaning. This technique is called “metaphorical Christology” and has profound implications: (1) reminds readers of traditional images from the Old Testament, but at the same time invites creation of new meaning; (2) allows for “imprecise” theological interpretations in contrast to exact dogmatic formulations; (3) incites readers to creatively follow the offerings of the text to formulate their own confession that Jesus is Christ; (4) incorporates, through the use of visual metaphors, the subjective world of emotions and personal memories to help readers transfer experiences from everyday life into religious and theological language. It may be concluded that the author challenges us to occasionally pause our exegetical search for precision to fully enter and appreciate the wonderful world of Johannine ambiguities.

It seems that Zimmermann's challenge was accepted by Jan G. van der Watt, Professor in New Testament at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, who analyzed one of the notoriously ambiguous verses in the Fourth Gospel. In his article "Angels in John 1:51" he meticulously showed the immense variety of interpretations and lack of consensus among scholars followed by his own explanation of 1:51. The first part of the paper provides a critical overview of the rich literature on the topic. Its main conclusion is that the biblical scholars too often over-interpret 1:51 due to its alleged allusion to Gen 28:12. The basis for this intertextual link is an almost verbatim quote, which includes the following similarities: (1) the open heaven, (2) the angels ascending and descending (in that order), and (3) the reference to the Son of Man. According to Van der Watt, the essential difficulty in reading John 1:51 in reference to Gen 28:12 is putting too much weight on this alleged textual link. The author shows three examples of how exegetes overemphasize the wrong element of the allusion such as (1) the function of the angels, (2) the ladder in John 1:51, which does not exist in the text, and (3) the revelation, where angels play a vital role. The resulting interpretations are often arbitrary in nature, diverse, or inconsistent with Johannine theology. As a remedy, Van der Watt proposes a reading that downplays the alleged link to Gen 28:12 in favor of a more narrative approach. In his proposition, the "limited information" given by the Evangelist in 1:51 is a rhetorical technique to create narratological suspense. The reader is faced with important questions about the meaning of open heaven, the function of angels, and the identity of the Son of Man. Instead of looking for answers in the reference to Gen 28:12, the author proposes that the reader should look at the broader context of the Fourth Gospel and the New Testament: (1) the "open heaven" is a symbol-like expression that points to divine communication or presence (Matt 3:16; Luke 3:21-22; Acts 7:55-56; *etc.*); (2) the "angels" reappear inside Jesus' grave in John 20:12-13, where they are expected to mark divine presence, but in an unexpected twist they are no longer needed as the resurrected Jesus ascended into heaven; (3) the enigmatic "Son of Man" as the incarnational figure underscores the importance of the search for his identity, which will be gradually revealed throughout the Gospel. Although Van der Watt's interpretation solves the problems associated with the allusion to Gen 28:12 by downplaying its role, it is difficult to reject this obvious intertextual link. It seems that we are still missing an important piece of the puzzle that will allow us to properly interpret John 1:51 in relation to Gen 28:12. Perhaps this missing piece can be found in *Targum Neofiti I*, available to the Polish reader in the new series headed by Professor Mirosław Stanisław Wróbel. This Aramaic translation and commentary of the Old Testament arguably from the first century A.D. provides more links to the Fourth Gospel such as the terms: "come

and see” (John 1:39.46 – Tg. Neof. Gen 28:12), “glory” (John 2:11 – Tg. Neof. Gen 28:12.16), “seeing, observing” (John 1:50.51 – Tg. Neof. Gen 28:12), and may help unravel the mystery of the order of the angels first ascending and then descending on the Son of Man.

The last article was written by the editor of the current volume, R. Alan Culpepper, Emeritus Professor of New Testament of James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA, USA. The paper has the title “Temple Violation: Reading John 2:13-22 at the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus.” It is an original undertaking to answer the question of how the first-century Ephesian might have understood the event at the temple described in John 2:13-22. The greater part of the paper describes a detailed background: (1) review of the identity of Artemis, the protector-goddess of Ephesus; (2) history of the temple of Artemis closely interconnected with the history of Ephesus; (3) description of the Hellenistic temple of Artemis and its ties to the basilica of St. John erected by Justinian (527–565); (4) administration of the temple with its priestly organization and office of virgins dedicated to its service; (5) the elaborate cult of Artemis with spectacular processions and the penalty of death for the profanation of sacred objects; (6) the intricacies of the privilege of asylum granted to those, who sought refuge in the temple; and (7) banking practices developing under the umbrella of stability and security provided by the institution of the temple. This thorough review allows the author to identify points of contact between the realities of the pagan Artemis temple and the temple in Jerusalem considering the possibility that John in fact composed his Gospel in Ephesus. The general results let the reader appreciate the following points: (1) Ephesians would see Jesus’ action in the temple as a scandalous violation of its sanctity and undermining the authority of the God of Israel, who should have protected his own temple; (2) commercial activity in the temple would be considered normal and necessary for serving pilgrims; (3) pagans in Ephesus would not distinguish between merchants and money-changers (necessary for temple tax reasons) and would object to Jesus’ attack on the much needed banking activity; (4) Jesus would be treated as an eccentric zealot trying to subvert worship practices; (5) Ephesians would probably understand the phrase “my Father’s house” as a designation of the temple community belonging to God; (6) the birth of Artemis was a key event for Ephesians in bonding with their goddess, while the bond between Jesus and his followers was cemented in his death and resurrection, although the birth motif is present in the narration following the temple scene during the conversation with Nicodemus. The most crucial element, however, is Jesus’ challenge to the entire Artemis cult, when he pointed toward himself as the new temple, a new place for accessing God. This single message, according to Culpepper, signals a rise of a new cult of only one God in the pagan world, that eventually will topple

the Artemis temple and use its precious marble stones as building material for the future basilica of St. John.

This review of selected articles provides just a glance at the intricacies of the latest Johannine scholarship offered by professors from the Colloquium Ioanneum. Despite its focus on a small section of the biblical text, the breadth of perspectives, methodologies, and well-presented problems leaves the reader eager not only to learn more but to actively engage in the discussion. I am earnestly looking forward to the next volume of this series.