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The Spirit in the Gospel according to John, 1 John, and 2 John

“Rivers of Living Water”

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Abstract

This study seeks to trace the role and significance of pneumatology within the Gospel according to John and 1–2 John using a narrative, literary approach that has emerged with an amazing amount of consistency among a variety of biblical scholars who have sought to discern an approach to the interpretation of Scripture worthy of the Pentecostal tradition. This exploration draws heavily from and builds upon my previous studies on this theme within the broader Johannine literature.

Keywords

John – 1 John – 2 John – Holy Spirit – pneumatology

Though it is often claimed that when it comes to the subject of pneumatology Pentecostals work with a canon within the canon consisting of Luke-Acts, this judgment does not quite fit the evidence of the tradition's written record. As a recent examination of the reception of John 4 and 7 in early pentecostal periodical literature has shown, Pentecostals have drawn often, and extensively, from the Johannine literature in the construction of its pneumatology.¹ While a certain pride of place is given to Luke-Acts owing to the explicit passages that

1 Cf. Matthew A. Paugh, “Receiving the Living Water: John 4 and John 7 in Early Pentecostal Literature,” in D.D. Isgrigg, M.W. Mittelstadt, and R. Wadholm, Jr., eds., *Receiving Scripture in the Pentecostal Tradition: A Reception History* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2020), 194–224.

describe the Spirit baptism of various individuals within the narrative, it may not be insignificant to note that there are actually more words of Jesus about the Spirit contained in the Fourth Gospel (FG) than in the other three canonical gospels combined. As the reception of the Johannine literature within early Pentecostalism continues to be tracked, the scope of its significance will likely be seen to be even more extensive than currently appears.

This study seeks to trace the role and significance of pneumatology within the Gospel according to John and 1–2John using a narrative, literary approach that has emerged with an amazing amount of consistency among a variety of biblical scholars who have sought to discern an approach to the interpretation of Scripture worthy of the Pentecostal tradition. This exploration draws heavily from and builds upon my previous studies on this theme within the broader Johannine literature.²

1 The Spirit in the Gospel According to John

As most students of the Gospel according to John are aware, the FG falls rather naturally into two major parts, the Book of Signs (1:19–12:50) and the Book of Glory (13:1–20: 31), enveloped by a Prologue (1:1–18) and an Epilogue (21:1–25). A survey of the gospel reveals that explicit references to the Spirit are almost equally divided between the two major books, with no explicit references in either the Prologue or Epilogue, though some interpreters see an implicit reference in the Prologue's occurrences of "grace" in 1:14 and 16 (twice).

2 John 1:32–33

The first explicit reference to the Spirit occurs in the testimony of John (1:19–34) in the context of his prophetic words identifying Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29) and as the one who was before him,

2 Cf. J.C. Thomas, "The Spirit in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Explorations," in J.C. Thomas, *The Spirit of the New Testament* (Blandford Forum: Deo, 2005), 157–174; "The Johannine Epistles," in K. Warrington and T. Burke, eds., *A Biblical Theology of the Spirit* (London: SPCK, 2014), 250–256; "Revelation," in K. Warrington and T. Burke, eds., *A Biblical Theology of the Spirit* (London: SPCK, 2014), 257–266; "The Spirit in the Book of Revelation: A Narrative Hearing," in Riku P. Tuppurainen, ed., *Reading St Luke's Text and Theology: Pentecostal Voices—Essays in Honour of Roger Stronstad on his 75th Birthday* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 254–264; and "The Spirit in the Book of Revelation," in Craig R. Koester, ed., *Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 241–255.

of whom he had spoken earlier (1:15, 27). The meaning of John's baptism is connected to the manifestation of Jesus to Israel (1:31). The reader encounters the following words in vv. 32–33:

And John testified saying, "I beheld the Spirit coming down as a dove out of heaven and he was remaining upon him." Even I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize in water, that one said to me, "The one upon whom you see the Spirit coming down and remaining on him, this is the one who will baptize in the Holy Spirit."

Significantly, John's words are enveloped by explicit reference to his testimony (1:19, 34).³ While it is rightly observed that the FG nowhere describes the baptism of Jesus by John, the implied connection between the purpose of John's baptism and John's understanding of the significance of the Spirit's descending and remaining upon Jesus may well indicate that the words of John in v. 32 are somehow connected to his ministry of water baptism. The Spirit is described as coming down and remaining upon Jesus, perhaps causing the reader to wonder why the Logos Incarnate, whose role in the creation of all things has been recounted (1:3) and who has been described as God (1:1), even the only begotten God (1:18), would have need of the Spirit coming and residing upon him continually, as the imperfect tense of the verb (ἔμεινεν) implies. The narrative here reveals that despite the dominant Logos Christology with which the FG begins, a Spirit Christology stands alongside it, creating for the reader a dialectic between the Spirit coming and remaining upon Jesus, on the one hand, and Jesus's activity as the one who will baptize in the Holy Spirit, on the other hand (1:33).⁴ Significantly, in the FG, unlike the Synoptics, it is only after the Spirit has come down out of heaven and remained upon Jesus that he is identified as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus is not only the one upon whom the Spirit descends, but he is also the one who will baptize with this very Spirit.

3 John 3

The next occurrence of Spirit language in the FG is found in Jesus's well-known encounter with Nicodemus.

3 J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 113.

4 Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective*, JSNTSup 253 (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 89–90;

3.1 Verse 3

When Jesus enters into the dialogue, he does not respond to Nicodemus's initial words of praise. Rather, demonstrating that he knows what is in "man" (τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ—John 2:25), Jesus speaks past the praise to the real issue facing Nicodemus, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless anyone is born again (ἄνωθεν), it is not possible to see the kingdom of God." The phrase "unless one is born from above" could not help but remind the reader of the Prologue's words that "those who believe in his name are given authority to become children of God" for they are born of God.⁵ On the surface of it, the words speak of being "born again." But with this term (ἄνωθεν), the reader are introduced to a phenomenon that will occur at numerous places as the FG unfolds, where Jesus will employ a word that has a double meaning, which his dialogue partners misunderstand, taking the meaning of the word at its most literal level, while Jesus speaks at another level. Here, the Greek word (ἄνωθεν) is taken to mean "again." But what the reader understands is that the term also means "from above," an understanding that fits perfectly with the words of the Prologue—"unless one is born from above—born of God—one is not able to see the kingdom of God." The nearest the readers have come to the idea of the "kingdom of God" is in Nathaniel's declaration that Jesus is "the king of Israel" (1:49),⁶ perhaps suggesting some kind of connection between this king and this kingdom.

3.2 Verse 4

Nicodemus's response indicates that he misunderstands Jesus's words, taking Jesus's words to mean a second physical birth—and he is obviously right about this, but he quite misunderstands "again" (ἄνωθεν) to mean a "second" (δεύτερον) birth rather than a birth "from above."

3.3 Verse 5

Jesus continues this dialogue with the words, "Amen, amen I say to you, unless one is born of water and blood, one is not able (δύναται) to enter into the kingdom of God." The phrase "unless one is born of water and Spirit" is filled with interpretive challenges and not a little ambiguity. Owing to their narrative loca-

Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, BNTC 4 (London: Continuum, 2005), 114; and Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 47.

5 D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 651–655; Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, 150; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 180; and Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 80.

6 Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 180.

tion, where “birth from above” seems very much to be the point of Jesus’s initial statement, it would appear likely that the reader might well understand water and Spirit as having reference to things that come “from above.”⁷ In other words, it seems that “water and Spirit” would serve to clarify “from above” in ways not unlike the fashion in which the words “from above” clarify “born of God.” The Spirit has already been described as “coming down ... out of heaven” (1:32), suggesting that the place of the Spirit’s origin is “from above.”⁸ Such an understanding would seem straightforward enough. However, the reference to water is a bit more difficult to discern. While it might be reasonably thought that water, in the form of rain, for example, is to be associated with coming “from above,” water has other associations within the narrative, where it exhibits a theologically significant function (1:31; 2:1–11). But in addition to the way water and Spirit might clarify birth “from above,” such an understanding would not exhaust the meaning of water in 3:5, as water may have a secondary reference to the baptism of John, by means of which the Lamb of God is manifested to Israel. For though the reader does not yet know it, both Jesus (3:22; 4:1) and his disciples (4:2) will be described in the FG as baptizing, indicating an appreciation for this practice and its meaning. Another interpretive option is that the hearers would see in water and Spirit reference to the amniotic fluids that accompany childbirth, while Spirit is understood as having reference to birth from above and a heavenly one.⁹ Unfortunately for this interpretation, the external evidence to which appeal is often made is later than the time of Jesus—and even later than the composition of the FG. Other views are less likely to be in the minds of the reader, for example that water here refers to full-blown Christian baptism. Fourth, once again reference is made to the kingdom of God, likely bringing further clarity to their understanding of birth “from above.”

3.4 Verse 6

Jesus continues, “That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is Spirit.” Despite any ambiguity in the text, the reader would likely see here a reference to the Prologue where those who believe in his name are not “born out of blood, nor the desire of the flesh, nor the desire of a man, but are born of God” (1:13). While it is just possible that this verse continues a distinction between birth by water and birth by the Spirit, the contrast between the births spoken of in v. 6 point back to Nicodemus’s misunderstanding of Jesus’s words as having reference to a second physical birth. Birth “from above” is birth

7 On this question cf. Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 80.

8 Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, 150.

9 Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John*, 120–121.

by the Spirit and that born of the Spirit is Spirit. Thus, the reader's understanding of what it means to be born of God has increased exponentially.

3.5 *Verse 7*

Jesus continues the dialogue with the words, "Do not be amazed that I said to you, it is necessary for you to be born from above." Such words suggest that Nicodemus is a bit lost by this point, perhaps even exasperated. Jesus's admonition for Nicodemus not to be amazed reveals a certain inability on Nicodemus's part to understand the significance of Jesus's words about birth from above, and though the reader does not yet know it, in the FG the word "amazed" (*θαυμάσῃς*) will become a term that expresses this inability on the part of others to understand and, consequently, their inability to respond by believing Jesus and his claims (4:17; 5:20, 28; 7:15, 21).

3.6 *Verse 8*

If Nicodemus is amazed to the point of incomprehension, it doesn't get easier for him to understand as Jesus delves deeper still with regard to the work of the Spirit. "The Spirit blows where he desires and you hear his voice, but you do not know from whence he comes and where he goes; so it is with each one who has been born of the Spirit." Such language moves in and out of double meaning, for while the subject of the verse appears to be the Spirit, in the Greek language the word for "wind" (*πνεῦμα*) is the same as the word for "Spirit." Jesus begins with a description of the fact that the wind blows where it desires to blow and the human being, though not necessarily seeing where the wind blows, can hear its sound—literally its "voice" (*φωνήν*). But no one is able to control in which direction the wind blows, where it comes from and when it goes. The mysterious nature of the wind's (*πνεῦμα*) movements is completely beyond the control and comprehension of humankind. At best, one can see its effects and hear its sound. It is this image that Jesus likens to the one who is born of the Spirit. The activity of the Spirit comes from another world. One cannot control or domesticate it any more than one can domesticate the wind. So, it would seem that the one born of the Spirit can feel and hear the power and voice of the Spirit.

3.7 *Verse 9*

Such an analogy leaves Nicodemus completely exasperated, evidenced in his answer, "How are these things able (*δύναται*) to be?" Nicodemus's earlier statement with regard to no one being able to perform the signs that Jesus does unless God is with him gives way to his lack of understanding of how one can be born of God and, now, the way in which the Spirit of God works. Thus, despite

Jesus's admonition to the contrary, Nicodemus is amazed, even bewildered, by all that he has heard. And with these words Nicodemus seems to disappear from the stage—for a while.

3.8 *Verse 10*

Nicodemus's exasperation and lack of understanding are met by a stern rebuke from Jesus: "You are the teacher of Israel and these things you do not know?" The emphatic personal pronoun "you" (σὺ) appears here, making clear Jesus's rebuke. It is also apparent that Jesus expects the teacher of Israel to know the things about which Jesus has spoken, a knowledge that seems tied to the emerging meaning of Israel in the FG. From outside the land of Israel proper John comes baptizing in water that the Lamb of God might be manifested to "Israel." Nathaniel, identified by Jesus as a "true, or authentic Israelite," offers testimony to Jesus that he is "the king of Israel." Nicodemus as "the teacher of Israel" should know at least as much as the "true Israelite," who—without the extended dialogue that Nicodemus enjoys with Jesus—goes so far as to declare Jesus to be the Son of God. Such a contrast makes Nicodemus's lack of understanding all the more significant.

3.9 *Verse 11*

Jesus continues with the words, "Amen, amen I say to you, that which we know we are speaking and that which we have seen we are testifying, and our testimony you do not receive." The fact that Jesus uses this solemn authoritative formula, "Amen, amen I say to you," to address Nicodemus for a third time underscores the importance of this dialogue. For what has been revealed in this dialogue conveys more about what being "born of God" means than had been revealed to this point; it underscores the importance of being born "from above," and the way in which the Spirit works in those who are so born of the Spirit.

3.10 *Verse 12*

Jesus sharpens the point further in v. 12: "If the earthly things I said to you and you do not believe, how if I speak to you the heavenly things will you believe?" Despite the fact that Jesus has at least ostensibly spoken of some heavenly things—being born "from above," for example—here he characterizes the things about which he has spoken with Nicodemus as "earthly things." Such language suggests that, all evidence to the contrary, he has not yet begun to speak of "heavenly things"! Here, Nicodemus's lack of belief is so pronounced that instead of a promise of hearing of "heavenly things," he is rebuked for not being able to understand "earthly things."

4 John 4

The next passage in which the Spirit figures prominently is in the story of the Samaritan woman.

4.1 Verse 10

Jesus's response to the woman's push-back to his request for a drink is reminiscent of his words to Nicodemus¹⁰ in that they bypass her words of surprise and speak to her spiritual need. Just as Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus to be a teacher, the Samaritan woman mistakes him to be simply a weary traveler. "Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who is the one who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him and he would give to you living water.'" Once again attention is given to what is and is not known, when Jesus says, "if you knew," implying that the woman does not know who Jesus is at this point. While the phrase "gift of God"¹¹ might theoretically mean any number of things, for the reader it is clear that Jesus is the unrivaled gift of God, who loved the world so much that he gave his unique Son, who would take away the sin of the world. Jesus's words suggest that this Samaritan woman is part of the world for whom Jesus was given. By now it is becoming clear that the phrase "Give me a drink" is of specific spiritual significance and is an invitation to that of which Jesus speaks. If she asks him for such a drink, he would give her what could literally be translated "running water" (ῥδωρ ζδν).¹² Given their experience with the term "again/from above" in the Nicodemus dialogue, the reader may well suspect that with this term, too, there may be more depth than its surface meaning.

4.2 Verse 11

Just as Jesus's words were misunderstood in the temple and by Nicodemus, so the woman misunderstands him: "She says to him, 'Sir (κδρε), you have no bucket and the well is deep; therefore, from where do you have the running water?'" The woman clearly understands Jesus as referring to the "running water" into which the well has tapped, understanding "running water" as the water of a stream or river rather than the flat-tasting water from a cistern. For a second time a form of the word "bucket" (δντλημα) appears in this passage; earlier (v. 7) the Greek verb translated "to draw" (δντλησαι) comes from the same

10 Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 240.

11 A phrase that appears only here in the four canonical gospels.

12 As the phrase appears to mean in the Didache 7.1, 2, where the reader is instructed to be baptized in "running water" rather than in a pool of water.

root word. The term both underscores the literal nature of the woman's understanding of Jesus's words and prepares the reader for the deeper significance that will be attached to this term later in the narrative.

4.3 *Verse 12*

She continues in v. 12, "You are not greater than our father Jacob are you, who gave to us the well and he drank of it and his sons [drank of it] and his livestock [drank of it]?" With these words the readers are introduced to Johannine irony, where the speaker intends his or her words in one way, but ironically speaks the truth through them. In this somewhat sarcastic question, she is actually stating the truth, as the reader knows that Jesus is indeed greater than "our father Jacob"; in point of fact he is much greater.¹³

4.4 *Verses 13–14*

"Jesus answered and said to her, 'Each one who drinks of this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water which I will give to him, will never, ever thirst forever, but the water which I give will be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life.'" Jesus contrasts the water of which he speaks with the water in the well. His words in v. 13 appear to make a rather mundane point, the one who drinks of this well water will have to drink again. The verb tenses found in this verse underscore the ongoing nature of such drinking, with "each one who drinks" (πᾶς ὁ πίνων) occurring in the present tense—indicating habitual drinking—with the verb translated "will be thirsty" (διψήσει) occurring in the future tense—indicating the need for continual drinking.

Jesus's words in v. 14 about the water that he will give contrast in almost every way with what has been said about the water from the well. First, the reader would likely notice the appearance of the emphatic first-person personal pronoun "I" (ἐγώ), which would at the least be taken as a point of contrast between the water Jacob gave, mentioned by the woman, and the water that Jesus will give—a partial response to her ironic question, "you are not greater than our father Jacob are you?" Second, they would also likely be struck by the fact that whoever drinks of the water Jesus will give will never, ever thirst again. Such a statement would push the reader to contemplate the fact that this water is as different from the well water as birth from above is different from natural birth. Third, in the phrase "will never, ever thirst again forever," the reader are introduced to a formula that will reappear in the FG with some degree of regularity. The grammatical construction consists of the following combination

13 Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, 174.

in the Greek text: the double negative (οὐ μὴ), a future active or aorist subjunctive verb (here the future, διψήσει), and the phrase “into the age” (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). This construction is the strongest form of negation in the Greek language, and with one notable exception (13:8), this construction will be used in the FG with reference to Jesus’s offer of eternal life (8:51, 52; 10:28; 11:26). Fourth, the water that Jesus promises will not simply slake their thirst forever, it will be “a well of water springing up into eternal life.” Rather than having to come to a well for this water, the well will be located within the one who drinks of it. If Jacob’s well taps into an underground stream of “running water,” the one who drinks of the water Jesus gives will have in him- or herself a well that taps into this “living water,” the other meaning of the phrase translated “running water” (ῥῶμα ζῶν), which the reader by this point may have figured out. Fifth, though the water is not technically described as “living water” here, its chief characteristic—“leaping up” (ἀλλομένου)—makes this point clear, as this term is normally used to describe “the quick movements of living beings, like jumping,” with this apparently being the only instance in antiquity of it describing the actions of water.¹⁴ Sixth, again eternal life language appears. Such an appearance would not take the reader by surprise, for this phrase has previously occurred three times in the narrative, where the reader has learned that it designates “life of the coming age,” “unending life,” “life that comes from one who is himself Life,” “divinely endowed life,” “life from another world.” It is ultimately equated with being born from above, with the lifting up of the Son of Man (3:14–15), and with believing in the Son (3:16, 36). Here, it comes from drinking the “living water” that Jesus gives.

4.5 Verse 15

“The woman says to him, ‘Sir, give to me this water in order that I might not thirst nor come here to draw.’” In contrast to Nicodemus, who never asks to be born from above, the woman does indeed ask Jesus to give her this water, a request he had encouraged earlier in the dialogue (v. 10). But she has not yet left her literal understanding that the purpose clause, “in order that” (ἵνα), makes clear, as she understands that if he gives her this water, she will not thirst any longer and will not have to come back to Jacob’s well to provide for her daily physical needs. Once again, a term from the “bucket” word family appears here in the verb translated “draw” (ἀντλεῖν).

14 R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII*, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 171.

4.6 Verse 22

Jesus continues the dialogue with words that have often been misunderstood. “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, because salvation is of the Jews.” The reader would likely notice the occurrence of the emphatic personal pronouns, “you” (ὁμεῖς) and “we” (ἡμεῖς), which serve to distinguish between the Samaritans and the Jews, language that appears to pick up on the woman’s own use of “our fathers” and “you” in v. 20. Second, following on the heels of Jesus’s somewhat inclusive words in v. 21 about “you will worship,” his words, “you worship what you do not know” might initially strike the reader as being overly harsh. But these words are not some expression of ethnic or even theological rivalry; rather, they seem based on the fact that the Samaritans have cut themselves off from a large portion of redemptive history by holding only to the Torah. Although they are indeed looking for “the prophet,” which is in accordance with the teaching of the Torah, they have cut themselves off from the revelation about the Messiah found in the prophets and the writings, especially the Psalms.¹⁵ If the Samaritan woman desires to drink of the “living water” that Jesus offers, she must modify her view of redemptive history and the sacred texts, for salvation is of the Jews. As it turns out, through the Jews God has prepared for and made his fullest revelation in the incarnation of his unique Son. Third, the reader might well be struck by the statement, “salvation is of the Jews.” Though this is the first appearance of the word “salvation” (σωτηρία) in the FG, the reader would be well aware that the unique Son was sent “in order that the world might be saved (σωθῆ) through him” (3:17). Thus, the offer of salvation is not the exclusive domain of any particular group, but rather has the whole world in its purview.

4.7 Verse 23

“But an hour comes and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth; for the Father seeks such ones as these to worship him.” Here, the contrast, “but” (ἀλλὰ), isn’t drawn between current Samaritan and Jewish worship practices, as the reader might expect. Rather, the contrast is between places of worship—Mt Gerizim and Jerusalem, on the one hand, and true worship, on the other hand. Earlier Jesus had informed the woman that an hour comes when neither of these sites will be the place in which “you” worship (v. 21). In this verse Jesus reveals that the hour has already arrived—“and now is”—recalling the way in which eschatological realities are already

15 Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary 1* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), 610–611.

in play in the FG (3:18–21). Attention turns from the proper place of worship to “true worshippers.” The emphasis observed in the repetition, “true worshippers will worship,” underscores the activity of worship itself. The focus of authentic worshippers’ worship is the Father (cf. v. 21). It takes place “in Spirit and in Truth.” While this statement might be taken as a hendiadys being translated “the Spirit of Truth,” here the readers learn that the Spirit is not only the means by which one is “born from above,” but the Spirit also makes true worship possible. True worship of the Father is possible only for those who are children of God, those “born from above” by means of the Spirit. It would hardly be surprising to the reader that true worshippers worship the Father “in Truth.” The reader is likely to see a reference to Jesus with this mention of Truth, for he is full of grace and Truth (1:14), out of whose fullness we all have received one grace after another (1:16). It naturally follows that “the one who does the truth comes to the Light” (3:21). If this is the reader’s suspicions, they will be confirmed as the FG unfolds, for Jesus will say of himself, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (14:6). Neither would it be going too far to suggest that in this sense the reader would be encountering the idea that true worship is trinitarian in nature, involving Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹⁶ The import of Jesus’s words is that he is essential for true worship, perhaps causing the reader to wonder if “the temple of his body” mentioned in 2:21 does not suggest that his body is a vehicle for true worshippers.

4.8 Verse 24

“God is Spirit, and it is necessary for those who worship him to worship in Spirit and in Truth.” From the beginning of the FG the reader has known of the unique relationship that exists between the Father and Jesus. Now the reader learns of the special identity that is shared by God and the Spirit when Jesus says, “God is Spirit.” Such a statement reveals that not only is the Spirit essential for true worship, owing to the Spirit’s role in the believer’s birth from above, but that the Spirit is also essential to true worship, owing to the Spirit’s shared identity with God.

4.9 Verse 25

Unlike Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman does not disappear from the stage;¹⁷ rather, she utters an incredible statement: “I know that messiah comes, the

16 I am indebted to my late colleague R. Hollis Gause for first bringing this interpretive possibility to my attention. Cf. also the comments of Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, 177–178.

17 Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John*, 138.

one called the Christ; when that one comes, he will proclaim to us everything.” Although it does not appear that the Samaritans held to a belief in the Messiah,¹⁸ the Samaritan woman makes this claim employing “knowledge” language, “I know” (οἶδα). In contrast to Jesus’s words about the Samaritans worshipping what they do not know, her knowledge and belief are almost startling. At the least, it shows her continual drawing near to Jesus and growing belief in him. Her statement about what the Messiah will do dovetails nicely with the Samaritan belief about the prophet like Moses, the Taheb: “when he comes, he will tell us everything.”¹⁹

4.10 Verse 26

The dialogue culminates in the words of Jesus, “I Am, the one who speaks with you.” This is the first of many occasions when Jesus will use the words “I Am” (ἐγώ εἰμι) as a means of self-identification. Here, the reader would likely be struck by the way in which this formula so parallels Yahweh’s self-identification in the words he speaks to Moses to tell Israel, “I Am has sent you” (Exod 3:14). For the reader, this identification dovetails nicely with all that they know about Jesus, who was with God, who is God, who is the only begotten God, who is the creator of the world, and who speaks on the basis of his own authority.

4.11 Verses 28–30

The effect of this dialogue on the Samaritan woman is described in the next verses: “Therefore, the woman left her water pot and departed into the city and says to the men, ‘Come see a man who said to me everything I ever did, is this not the Christ?’ They went out of the city and were coming to him.” In v. 28, the leaving of the pot (ὑδρίαν) seems to be a sign that the woman has believed in Jesus and drunk from the “living water,”²⁰ while her testimony ultimately leads to the belief of the Samaritans and their confession of Jesus as “the savior of the world.”²¹ Jesus’s acknowledgement of the validity of their belief is indicated by his remaining with them two more days (vv. 39–42).

18 The evidence from Justin Martyr (*Apology* 1 53,6) notwithstanding.

19 Cf. Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 255–257, and Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 106.

20 Cf. J. Thomaskutty, “Johannine Women as Paradigms in the Indian Context,” *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 27 (2019), 87.

21 Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John*, 138.

5 John 6:63

The next reference to the Spirit in the FG is found in 6:63 just after the bread of life discourse. Here the reader learns of the very tight interplay that exists between eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus, on the one hand, and the work of the Spirit, on the other. Just as drinking of the living water brings eternal life, so eating his flesh and drinking his blood is tied to eternal life. Jesus's statement that his words are Spirit and life is consistent with the fact that from the beginning of the FG, Jesus (the Word) is closely identified with life (1:3–4), and in 14:6 he will make this identification explicit. Neither is it surprising that the one upon whom the Spirit descends and remains (1:32), the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:33), and the one who has been given the Spirit without measure (3:34) should speak words that bring life.²² This statement reinforces the close relationship that exists between the Spirit and the Truth suggested earlier in 4:23.

6 John 7:37–39

Another clear reference to the Holy Spirit found in the Book of Signs (John 1–12) occurs in 7:39, a text filled with interpretive challenges. The narrative context of the verse is the last great day of the feast (of Tabernacles). Jesus stands and cries out inviting all who are thirsty to come and drink. But at this point a host of questions arises, each of which has some bearing upon the meaning of the text.²³

The words of v. 39 are most germane for this study.

“He said this concerning the Spirit which those who believed in him were about to receive. For the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

What do the words “the Spirit was not yet” (οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα) mean in this verse? Clearly, they cannot be taken in an overly literal way to mean that the Spirit was not yet in existence.²⁴ Nor does the reader understand them to mean that the Spirit can only work apart from Jesus—after his glorification—

22 F. Porsch (*Pneuma und Wort: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Johannesevangeliums* [Frankfurt: J. Knecht, 1974], 210–212) argues that Jesus conveys the Spirit through his words.

23 On these questions cf. Thomas, “The Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” 163–165.

24 However, cf. the attempt to take the phrase literally by H. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 77–87.

for the FG has gone to great lengths to indicate that the Spirit is extraordinarily active in Jesus and his ministry.²⁵ Nor does it appear that the reader would be inclined to take this statement to mean that the Spirit was not yet active in the lives of those who already believe in Jesus. As has been made clear, those who believe in Jesus are given authority to become children of God (1:12), a birth that takes place only by means of the Spirit (3:5); those who drink of the living water that Jesus gives will have “a well of water leaping up into eternal life” (4:14); and those who so experience the Spirit are true worshipers who worship the Father in Spirit and Truth (4:23–24). The unequivocal belief of the Samaritans and the disciples in Jesus strongly suggests that the Spirit is already active to some extent in their lives, a reality that will be reaffirmed later (14:17).

Failing to appreciate this narrative context of 7:39 can result in a one-dimensional understanding of the Spirit’s activity in John, an interpretation that the narrative itself tends to subvert. What, then, does the phrase “the Spirit was not yet” mean? If Jesus is the source of the rivers of living water, this imagery fits rather well with the imagery found in Jesus’s dialogue with the Samaritan woman. There the reader learns that those who drink of the living water will have in themselves “a well of water leaping up to eternal life.” As such, it is clear that a well is not a source of water but rather a channel by which one gains access to a source of water. Just as Jacob’s well tapped into a stream or river of subterranean running water, so the one who drinks of the living water that Jesus provides has within him/herself a well that taps into the living water that has its origin in Jesus. It comes as little surprise, then, when the reader learns in 7:38–39 that rivers of living water come from Jesus. Thus, this passage is in continuity with that which has come before it in the narrative.

There is also some degree of discontinuity with what precedes, for the reader would not expect from the imagery of “a well of water leaping up into eternal life” to find “rivers of living water” as the source, but rather a river of living water. Therefore, the imagery found in 7:38–39 is pregnant with meaning. While the “rivers of living water” certainly includes the idea of salvation (and in abundance: cf. 3:34), it suggests that there is more in store for those who believe in him than they have previously understood, as a dimension of the Spirit’s work will only be experienced after Jesus’s glorification. With this, the reader detects a rather subtle shift in emphasis on the Spirit’s work in the FG. The tension created by the statement in v. 39 that “the Spirit was not yet,” despite the Spirit’s activity earlier in the narrative, prepares the reader for the extensive teaching

25 Despite his acknowledgement of this fact, D. Holwerda (*Holy Spirit and Eschatology in the Gospel of John* [Kampen: Kok, 1959], 1–2) still regards the Holy Spirit as “primarily a post-ascension figure in the Gospel of John.”

about the future role of the Paraclete that awaits in John 14–16 and may remind them that Jesus is the one who will baptize in the Holy Spirit (1:33).

7 John 14:15–31

The story of the Spirit in the FG continues in the Farewell Materials.²⁶ In fact, the bulk of the FG’s teaching about the Spirit is found in chapters 14–16. The first Paraclete passage appears in 14:15–31,²⁷ where the work of the Paraclete is linked both to Jesus’s departure and the keeping of his words. Several aspects of the Spirit’s nature and identity are revealed in this section.

First, the Paraclete comes from the Father as a result of Jesus’s own request. Jesus, who had earlier encouraged the disciples to ask the Father for anything in his name (14:13–14), states in v. 16 that “Even I (καὶ γὼ) will ask ...,” a statement that serves to encourage the disciples to ask. It might at first glance be surprising that the one who is anointed by the Spirit, who has been given the Spirit without measure, and who will baptize with the Spirit would have to ask that the Father send the Paraclete. However, it should be remembered that in the FG Jesus does nothing on his own, but only those things which the Father desires that he do.

Second, the Paraclete is called “another Paraclete” in v. 16, implying that Jesus himself functions as a Paraclete,²⁸ pointing to the intimate relationship of Jesus and the Paraclete, while also serving to underscore the fact that the Spirit is to function in a way analogous to Jesus in the lives of the disciples. While Jesus is soon to depart, the Paraclete will be with them forever.

Third, it comes as no surprise that the Paraclete is called the Spirit of Truth, for earlier in the FG Jesus is said to be “full of Truth” (1:14) and identifies himself as “the Truth” in 14:6. This title and/or name underscores the intimate connection between Jesus and the Spirit, indicates the trustworthiness of the Spirit, and reminds the reader of the relationship between Spirit and Truth found in 4:23.

26 While the Greek term πνεῦμα occurs in John 11:33 and 13:21, in both texts reference is being made to Jesus’s (human) spirit. With both uses one is not far from a description of the inward emotions of Jesus.

27 The origin of the term παράκλητος has been much debated. For an intriguing proposal regarding the word’s etymology cf. G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 293.

28 Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 783; Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John*, 191; and Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 312–313.

Fourth, like Jesus (cf. 1:10–11), the Paraclete is not received by the world, for he is not seen or known by it (v. 17). In contrast, the believers know the Spirit for he remains among them and *is* in them (v. 17).²⁹ This statement at once affirms the basic continuity between the Spirit's work with the disciples to this point in the narrative while pointing to the discontinuity of his future work. Not only has the Paraclete been present among the disciples through the ministry of the Spirit-anointed Jesus, but he is also in those (mainly the disciples, but others as well) who, believing in his name, have become children of God through birth by the Spirit, who have drunk of the living water, and have *in* them "a well of living water leaping up into eternal life."³⁰

Fifth, in v. 26 the Spirit is called the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, and is identified as coming from the Father. The Spirit will do two things. 1) He will teach the disciples all things. The reader of the FG knows that one of Jesus's primary roles is that of teacher (1:38; 3:2; 6:59; 7:14, 28, 35; 8:20; 11:28; 13:13, 14; cf. also 18:20; 20:16). Thus, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, the one who is sent by the Father, will do precisely what Jesus has done—teach, a function necessitated by Jesus's departure. 2) The Paraclete will remind the disciples of the things that Jesus said to them. Although the disciples believe throughout the FG, they do not always fully understand what Jesus has done or said. The first time the reader learns this is after Jesus has cleansed the temple (2:22). This also occurs in 12:16 and is implied in 13:7. In 14:26 Jesus promises that the Paraclete will play an active role in the disciples' memory and understanding. It is significant that both in 2:22 and 12:16 the disciples remember after the resurrection/glorification of Jesus. It is the Paraclete who is responsible for the disciples remembering the things that Jesus said and did.

29 Following the textual tradition that supports the present-tense verb ἐστίν rather than the future tense ἔσται. The manuscript support for ἐστίν [p⁶⁶* B D* W] is slightly better than that for ἔσται [p^{66c} p^{75vid} a A D^b L], given the combination of B and D* with the original reading of p⁶⁶, and in this context ἐστίν would not only be the more difficult reading, but also the reading that best explains the origin of the other reading, since a scribe would be more likely to change the present to the future to conform to the future context of the promise of the coming Paraclete.

30 For an interpretation that builds on the future tense ἔσται and sees the presence of the Spirit among the disciples as confined to the ministry of Jesus, cf. I. de la Potterie, "Parole et esprit dans S. Jean," in M. de Jonge, ed., *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, Rédaction, Théologie* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987), 192–193.

8 John 15:26

In Jesus's words about the world's hatred of him and the disciples, the Paraclete is mentioned again. While the Paraclete comes from the Father, Jesus himself has a role in his sending. Identified again as the Spirit of Truth, it is now revealed that the Paraclete will be active in his witness to Jesus. Although the text does not explicitly state that the Spirit will inspire the witness of the disciples, 15:27–16:4a strongly suggests that the disciples will not experience the persecution of a hating world passively but will offer witness to Jesus that is anointed by the Spirit.³¹

9 John 16:4 B-15

The next Paraclete passage (16:4b-15), reveals for the first time that Jesus must depart in order for the Paraclete to come (v. 7). This unexpected revelation coincides with the fact that the Paraclete will in many ways be to the disciples what Jesus has been. While the promise of the Paraclete in the first passage focused primarily upon his work within the circle of believers, this passage focuses primarily upon his role in relation to the world, a theme introduced in 15:26.

The FG consistently presents the story of Jesus as a trial, with terms like testimony, interrogation, belief, and judgment appearing frequently.³² Continuing this motif, v. 8 reveals that the Paraclete will serve as a legal representative. However, instead of being an “advocate,” he will serve as a prosecuting attorney, convicting the world on three counts: sin, righteousness, and judgment. In the FG, Jesus's Jewish opponents confront him about the matter of sin, even accusing him of being a sinner (cf. esp. 9:24). The Paraclete will convict the world of sin because they did not believe in Jesus. Not only will the world be proven wrong about its accusations, it will also discover that its refusal to believe Jesus is itself sin (16:9)!

Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) in 16:10 is connected to the validity of Jesus's claims that he is going to the Father: “And concerning righteousness because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer.” The reader has been prepared for this idea as early as 5:30, where Jesus, in speaking of his authority, says, “I am not able to do anything of myself; just as I hear I judge, and my judgment is righteous (δικαία), because I do not seek my will but the will of the

31 For this idea cf. Holwerda, *Holy Spirit and Eschatology in the Gospel of John*, 51–52.

32 Cf. A.T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000).

one who sent me.” This language, no doubt, includes the vindication of Jesus’s frequent claims that he is going to the one who sent him and the Jews will be able to see him no longer (7:33; 8:14, 21; 13:3, 33; 14:4, 28; 16:5).

The world will also be convicted of judgment because the ruler of this world stands judged already, a judgment already signaled in 12:31, where in connection with the lifting up of the Son of Man the time has come for the world’s judgment and its leader to be driven out.³³

This section then returns to the idea of the Paraclete’s work among the disciples. Owing to the sorrow in the disciples’ hearts, Jesus is unable to tell them all that he desires. Thus, much of the additional teaching they need must be conveyed by the Paraclete, who may be trusted, for he is again identified as the Spirit of Truth (v. 13). Specifically, the Paraclete will guide into all truth. While such teaching will not be at variance with what Jesus has earlier taught, it does not appear that Jesus anticipates this additional teaching by the Paraclete to be identical to what precedes it. The Paraclete’s teaching will also glorify Jesus, underscoring the essential unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

10 John 19:30

Another reference to Spirit (πνεῦμα) occurs in a text devoted to the death of Jesus. Immediately following Jesus’s final words on the cross (“It is completed!”), bowing his head “he gave [up] the Spirit” (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα). At one level, the reader would likely take these words as describing Jesus’s expiration, an idea that goes back to 10:17–18 where Jesus speaks of laying down his life voluntarily. However, this phrase (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα) apparently is never used in antiquity in a strict sense for “to die.”³⁴ Given that παραδίωμι rather properly means “to hand over, give, or deliver,”³⁵ it is possible to take the phrase as having reference to the bestowal of the Spirit by Jesus at the moment of his exaltation/glorification on the cross. Attempts to see here, in the light of 19:26–27, a bestowal of the Spirit that constitutes the foundation of the community of believers appear to go beyond the evidence of the text.³⁶ Based on the distinc-

33 Michaels, *The Gospel according to John*, 833–835, and Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 338.

34 P. Létourneau, “Le double don de l’Esprit et la Christologie du quatrième évangile,” *Science et Esprit* 44 (1992): 283. Cf also Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort*, 328.

35 W. Bauer, W. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 619.

36 For this position cf. esp. M.-A. Chevallier, *Souffle de Dieu: Le Saint-Esprit dans le Nouveau*

tive formula used to describe Jesus's death, the connections between water and Spirit in 7:37–39 and (apparently) in 19:34, as well as the numerous promises of the coming of the Paraclete, it may very well be that this phrase points to the future bestowal of the Spirit in a proleptic way.³⁷

11 John 20:22

The FG's pneumatological story concludes in 20:22,³⁸ the meaning of which has been widely debated. The broader context (20:19–23) describes an encounter between the risen Jesus and his disciples, who are behind locked doors on account of the “fear of the Jews.” Mention of the “fear of the Jews” might suggest that the disciples are in danger of not remaining in Jesus and his word (cf. 8:31). After speaking “peace” to the disciples, Jesus shows them his side and hands, prompting great rejoicing, before again speaking peace to them. Jesus then commissions the disciples to be sent, just as the Father had send him. At this point, “he breathed” (on them?) and says to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον) and authorizes them to forgive and retain sins.

How would the reader understand the phrase “Receive the Holy Spirit”? If the aorist imperative (λάβετε) is taken to signify an “immediate and forthright reception of the Holy Spirit,”³⁹ the phrase “Receive the Holy Spirit” might be interpreted in one of several ways. On this interpretation, the phrase could be taken as having reference to (1) the disciples' regeneration or birth by the Spirit,⁴⁰ (2) the equipping of the disciples for ministry, especially with regard

Testament, 11 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990), 409–564; J.P. Heil, *Blood and Water: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus in John 18–21*, CBQMS 27 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 1995), 102–109; and Létourneau, “Le double don de l'Esprit et la Christologie du quatrième évangile,” 281–306.

37 For this general idea cf. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI*, AB 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 951, and G.M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 134–135. *Contra* Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort*, 332–339.

38 Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary I*, 461, notes that 1.33 along with 20.22 frames the FG.

39 So F.L. Arrington, “The Indwelling, Baptism, and Infilling with the Holy Spirit: A Differentiation of Terms,” *Pneuma* 3 (1981): 5.

40 H.M. Ervin, *Spirit Baptism: A Biblical Investigation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 14–21, and B. Aker, “‘Breathed’: A Study on the Biblical Distinction Between Regeneration and Spirit-Baptism,” *Paraclete* 17 (Summer 1983): 13–16. This suggestion is also made by J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 180, which appears to be followed by H.D. Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism: A Pentecostal Alternative* (Lanham,

to the forgiving of sins,⁴¹ (3) a special measure of the Spirit given to the disciples before Pentecost owing to their unique situation in salvation history,⁴² (4) a gift of the Spirit that enables them to have Easter faith,⁴³ (5) a gift of the Spirit that later assumes the functions of the Paraclete,⁴⁴ or (6) the Johannine Pentecost.⁴⁵

However, most of these views fail to convince owing to textual indicators in the narrative that are at odds with taking λάβετε to demand an immediate and forthright reception of the Spirit. Significantly, earlier in the FG Jesus reveals that the Paraclete cannot come unless he departs. It is only after Jesus's departure that he will send the Paraclete (16:7), which may suggest that Jesus's glorification of which the FG speaks in 7:37–39 includes more than his exaltation on the cross, as John 17:5 seems to indicate.⁴⁶ Thus, there are indications in the narrative that the Paraclete will not come until Jesus's departure.

Despite the fact that Jesus commands the disciples to "Receive the Holy Spirit," their later conduct and behavior do not reveal any perceptible change. Instead of bearing Paraclete-inspired witness to Jesus, something implicitly anticipated in 15:26–16:4, the disciples are still hiding behind locked doors (20:26) after they had earlier received the command to receive the Spirit, indicating that their "fear of the Jews" had not diminished. Thus, despite Jesus's commissioning of the disciples to be sent as he was sent by the Father and to forgive sins (20:21–23), the disciples remain inactive in this regard. Furthermore, there are no other anticipated activities of the Paraclete described after and as a result of Jesus's command in 20:22.⁴⁷

MD: University Press of America, 1983), 110. Cf. also a modified version of this view in M. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 97–102.

41 H. Windisch, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel*, trans. J.W. Cox (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 33–34. Cf. also Chevallier, *Souffle de Dieu*, 430–438; Létourneau, "Le double don de l'Esprit et la Christologie du quatrième évangile," 281–306; and apparently B. Aker, "Gospel of John," S.M. Burgess and G.B. McGee, eds., *Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 510. Holwerda (*Holy Spirit and Eschatology in the Gospel of John*, 24) views 20:22 as describing the ordination of the apostles for their future ministry.

42 S.M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 130–133.

43 de la Potterie, "Parole et esprit dans S. Jean," 196–201.

44 Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort*, 375–376.

45 Cf. among others Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1038–1039; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 173–182; Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 123–131; and R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, III, trans. D. Smith and G.A. Kon (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 324–325.

46 On this cf. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 95.

47 Cf. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 96–97.

The way in which 20:22 resembles 7:39 and 14:17 should also be noted. In contrast to the texts that speak of drinking from the living water (Spirit) or being born of the Spirit, these texts use receiving terminology to describe this Spirit experience. The fact that “receiving” vocabulary is reserved for a post-resurrection experience of the Spirit suggests that the reader would discern a difference in the work of the Spirit here described and the Spirit’s work described earlier in the narrative. Thus, it appears that the FG makes room for distinct works of the Spirit.

If the narrative of the FG itself subverts an interpretation of 20:22 that calls for an immediate and forthright reception of the Spirit, what does the phrase “Receive the Holy Spirit” mean? Given the fact that the Paraclete will come only after Jesus’s departure, that there are no expected signs of the Paraclete’s activity after the command to receive the Spirit in 20:22, and that the FG not only allows for but also appears to expect distinct works of the Spirit, it appears that Jesus’s action of breathing and utterance of the phrase “Receive the Holy Spirit” should be taken as a parabolic and/or proleptic action that points beyond itself to a reception of the Spirit that is not described in the narrative.⁴⁸ Such a reading coincides with Jesus’s anticipated work as Spirit Baptizer (1:33), the coming of the Paraclete after Jesus’s departure (16:7), and the anticipated activities of the disciples after the Paraclete arrives (14–16; 20:21–23).⁴⁹ From the standpoint of the narrative, such an understanding of John 20:22 is less problematic than views that see an immediate and forthright reception of the Spirit in this verse.⁵⁰

As can be seen, the FG touches on a number of different aspects of the Spirit’s role, function, and identity/person. First, it describes an intimate and somewhat unexpectedly complex relationship between Jesus and the Spirit. Although he is the Word Incarnate, Jesus is anointed by the Spirit and only then is identified as the Holy Spirit Baptizer (1:32–33), indicating that he will be one through whom the Spirit comes. He has been given the Spirit with-

48 An interpretive position that goes back at least as far as Theodore of Mopsuestia. Cf. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 297; D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1981), 534; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 651–655; D. Petts, *The Holy Spirit: An Introduction* (Mattersey: Mattersey Hall, 1998), 47–48; and apparently R.H. Gause, *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1980), 66.

49 In this, the FG is not unlike the Synoptics, which also leave the promise that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit unfulfilled within their respective narratives.

50 However, cf. Turner (*The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 97–102), who understands the Spirit’s work in John 20:22 as an eschatological new creation, which later will include the work attributed by Jesus to the Paraclete.

out measure (3:34). Jesus's words are Spirit and Life (6:63). From his side flow rivers of living water (7:37–39). The Spirit comes to the disciples from the Father at Jesus's request (14:16), and Jesus plays a role in sending the Spirit from the Father (15:26). The Spirit is identified as another Paraclete, implying that his activity continues that of Jesus (14:16). The intimacy of their relationship is indicated in part by the fact that the Paraclete is called the "Spirit of Truth" (14:17; 15:26). It is the Spirit who will teach the disciples and remind them of all the things Jesus said and did (14:26). Though the Paraclete is active throughout Jesus's ministry, Jesus must depart for the Paraclete to come (16:6). Jesus is able to offer the Spirit to the disciples at various points in the FG both in actuality and proleptically. Second, the Spirit's relationship with believers is robust. The Spirit makes possible birth from above (3:1–16), is synonymous with the living waters that Jesus gives (4:1–30), enables true worship (4:23–24), and the FG also envisions other distinct works of the Spirit (7:37–39)—including inspired witness (15:27)—many of which appear to be left unfulfilled by narrative's end. Third, in addition to the Father's role in the giving of the Spirit (14:26; 15:26), the nature of the relationship between God and the Spirit is revealed in part by the fact that in the FG God is identified as Spirit (4:24), an identification pregnant with meaning as to God's essential nature. Fourth, the Spirit's relationship to the world is threefold in the FG: 1) Though the world is unable to receive the Spirit (14:17), 2) the Spirit offers its witness to Jesus (15:26)—and apparently inspires the disciples' faithful witness to the world (15:27), and 3) proves the world wrong concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment regarding its assessment of Jesus (16:8–11) as revealed in the broader narrative of the FG.

12 The Spirit in 1 John and 2 John

The pneumatology of 1 and 2 John is influenced by that found in the FG or reacts in some way to a misinterpretation of the FG's teaching on the Spirit. There are, however, significant differences between the Spirit vocabulary of the FG and that found in 1 and 2 John, with certain key terms used to describe the Spirit's work in the FG (such as Paraclete) missing from the discussion of the Spirit in 1 and 2 John.

The first hint as to the pneumatology of 1 and 2 John may come from 2 John 9, perhaps the second of these documents to have been written (immediately) after 3 John,⁵¹ in the words, "Each one who goes beyond and does not remain in

51 Cf. J.C. Thomas, "The Order of the Composition of the Johannine Epistles," *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995): 68–75.

the teaching of Christ does not have God.” These words suggest that the opponents that John and his churches faced were not content to stay within the teaching of Jesus, as revealed in the testimony of the FG, but were claiming to go beyond this teaching to other truths made known by the Paraclete, who is said to lead and guide into all truth (John 16:12–15). If the opponents were indeed appealing to the activity of the Paraclete as the basis of their teaching, it might explain why the term “Paraclete” is completely absent from 1–3John as a designation for the Spirit.

Several allusions and explicit references to the Spirit occur in 1John.⁵² The first appears in a section devoted to the false teaching of the antichrists and the true knowledge of the Johannine believers. In contrast to the antichrists, the Johannine believers are defined by the fact that they have an “anointing” from the Holy One (2:20). The Greek term translated “anointing” (χρίσμα) occurs only three times in the whole of the NT with all of its appearances in this section of 1John. The term appears to be part of a play on words, for its stem lies behind the word “Christ” (Χριστός) as well as “antichrist” (ἀντίχριστος). Given that the word “Christ” literally means “anointed one” and that reference is made to the Spirit’s descent upon Jesus in John 1:32–33, it would seem likely that reference to the believer’s “anointing” in 1John 2:20 is closely associated with the activity of the Holy Spirit, as a comparison of the function of the “anointing” in 1John and the function of the Paraclete in the FG bears out. Both are spoken of as being received by (John 14:17; 1John 2:27), abiding in (John 14:17; 1John 2:27), and teaching all things to (John 14:26, 1John 2:20, 27) the believers.⁵³ As followers of “the anointed one,” the believers are reminded that they themselves have an “anointing.” The purpose of this anointing is related to knowledge. If the words “and you know all things” is the original reading (some manuscripts read “and you all know”), they are perhaps a response to claims the antichrists may have been making about possessing a unique, superior knowledge. Emphasis is here placed upon the believers’ “complete” knowledge, resulting from the anointing they have from the Holy One, making additional teaching (from the antichrists) unnecessary. Thus, the “anointing” functions just as Jesus says the Paraclete will function, “That One will teach you all things (πάντα)” (John 14:26).

This thought is followed up in 1John 2:27, where, in contrast to those who seek to deceive you (the “antichrists” and “liars” are now called “those who deceive”), the Johannine believers are told that they have “received” (ἐλάβετε) the “anointing.” Such language not only suggests that a specific reception is in

52 For more extensive treatments of these texts cf. J.C. Thomas, *1John, 2John, 3John* (PCS: London: T & T Clark, 2004).

53 Cf. esp. R.E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB 30 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 345–346.

mind, but also reminds the reader of the command Jesus gave to his disciples to “receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).⁵⁴ The appearance of the term “received” would likely remind the reader of their own Spirit baptism. While v. 20 states that the reader “has” an anointing, in v. 27 the reader is told that the anointing “remains” in them. Here, two of the dominant themes found in vv. 20 and 24 are combined, underscoring the close connection that exists between the “anointing” and “that which you have heard from the beginning.” The more general statement of v. 20 gives way to a more detailed discussion of the teaching role of the anointing in v. 27. Not only do the believers know all things as a result of the anointing, but they also do not need anyone to teach them. This bold statement both continues the polemic against the antichrists and deceivers and continues to underscore that the role of the Spirit as teacher within the Johannine community is unrivalled.⁵⁵

The Spirit is mentioned explicitly for the first time in 1John 3:24. He is here identified as the means by which the believer can know that God remains in him or her. The primary evidence of the Spirit’s activity to this point concerns the anointing that the believers have received: an anointing that knows all things (2:20) and teaches the believer all things, so much so that the believer has no need of human teachers (2:27). Such teaching would no doubt be made manifest in a variety of concrete ways, including the spoken testimony of various members of the community, the confirmation of one’s status by means of one’s walk witnessed by the brothers and sisters, Spirit-inspired confession, and prophetically spoken words. Thus, this aspect of the Spirit’s activity is assuring believers that he abides in them.

In 1John 4:1–6, the Spirit receives explicit and extensive treatment. Bounded on either side by references to the Spirit and spirits, this passage is devoted to testing the spirits to determine their origin and distinguishing between “the Spirit of Truth” and “the Spirit of Deception.” The warning with which this passage begins comes in the form of a command meaning something like “do not keep believing every spirit.”

These words make clear that appeals to (inspiration by) the Spirit are being made both by those in the community and those who have left it. Not only

54 On this interpretation cf. J.C. Thomas, “The Spirit in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Explorations,” 157–174.

55 The title “teacher” is reserved positively for Jesus (1:38, 49; 3:2; 4:31; 6:25, 59; 7:14, 28, 35; 8:20; 9:2; 11:8, 28; 13:13–14; 18:20; 20:16; 2 John 9), the Father (8:28), and the Paraclete (14:26), but is used negatively for Nicodemus (3:10), Balaam (Rev 2:14), the Nicolaitans (2:15), and Jezebel (2:20; 24). The only exceptions to this trend are John the Baptist, who is once called Rabbi (John 3:26), and the man born blind (9:34), who is asked with derision by the Pharisees if he, being born wholly in sin, would teach them.

would Johannine believers understand the Spirit as operative in their lives, but it also appears that the deceivers, too, have appealed to the Spirit as the basis of their own teaching and interpretive positions.

The reader of 1John is instructed to “test the spirits if they are of God.” Such testing is to involve all the believers—note the second-person plural “you,” which testifies to the egalitarian nature of the community. It is also to be an ongoing activity in the community, an idea conveyed by the present-tense verb translated “test.”⁵⁶ The goal of such testing is to determine whether or not a given “spirit” finds its origin in God or some other source. The language, “false prophets,” reveals that the testing of the spirits refers to individuals who function in a “prophetic” capacity.⁵⁷ Thus, testing the spirits is testing the S/spirit that inspires the words and actions of a given individual who claims Spirit inspiration as the basis of his or her activity.

The specific criterion of testing the spirits involves one’s confession. Positively, “each spirit who confesses Jesus Christ in the flesh having come is of God.” This confession is not simply a doctrinal confession, but is the confession of a person, his salvific work, and the ongoing significance of his incarnational life. The Spirit of God generates this confession in the believer as a result of and growing out of one’s experiential relationship to Jesus in the various dimensions of his person. Thus, the Spirit not only inspires one’s speech and actions, but the Spirit also validates them. It should not be a surprise that the Spirit-inspired utterances, which claim their origin in (the Spirit of) God, must speak the truth about Jesus. This confession appears to be shorthand for a whole matrix of beliefs about and experiences with Jesus, including: that fellowship with the Father includes fellowship with the Son (1:3); that cleansing from sin is accomplished through Jesus’s blood (1:7); that the righteous Jesus acts as an Advocate for the believer (2:1) based on his atoning sacrifice (2:2); that Jesus is a model for the believer’s walk (2:6); that forgiveness of sin comes through his name (2:12); that Jesus remains in the believer (2:14); that this righteous one will be manifest at his appearing (2:28–29); that his mode of existence and purity are the model for the believer (3:2–3); that Jesus came to take away sin and is himself without sin (3:5–6); that he came to destroy the works of the devil (3:7); that he laid aside his life on behalf of the believers; and that all these things

56 This approach contrasts with the emerging practice reflected in the epistles of Ignatius to place most responsibility for distinguishing between true and false teaching in the hands of the bishop.

57 The need for discernment with regard to the Spirit’s activity is evidenced more widely in the writings of Paul (1 Cor 12:1–3; 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20–21); the *Didache* (11:1; 12:1); Hermas (*Mandate* 11:7); and 1 Clement (42:4.)

were accomplished because he came in the flesh. These are not simply doctrinal points to be affirmed but are experiences in which the believers become participants in various ways. Conversely, whereas the “prophetic” figures in v. 2 “confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh,” the “prophetic” figures in v. 3 “do not confess” Jesus. If confession of Jesus entails belief in all he is and all he accomplishes, lack of such confession is synonymous with unbelief and denial of him and the significance of his life (cf. esp. 1John 2:22–23). If the Spirit-inspired confession of “Jesus Christ having come in the flesh” reveals that this “spirit” finds its origin in God, so any “spirit”-inspired utterance that does not confess Jesus reveals that its origin is not from God or his Spirit. Just as the confession “Jesus Christ coming in the flesh” is a kind of shorthand, so not confessing Jesus may be a kind of shorthand that stands for utterances, beliefs, and practices that advocate and embrace a false Christology. It would appear that the situation envisioned in 1John 4:1–3 is one where “S/spirit”-inspired individuals, speaking prophetically to the community, espoused teachings and practices at variance with the teachings and practices of the Johannine community as revealed in the FG. Their teaching appears to claim fellowship with the Father without the Son, to have no place for Jesus’s role in the forgiveness of sins, to ignore his role as a model of behavior for their lives, and to deny his messianic status. The origin of such deception and false teaching is literally “that of the antichrist.”

Standing in diametric opposition to “the Spirit of Truth” is “the spirit of deception,” a title that occurs only here in the NT. Just as “the deceiver” is synonymous with “the antichrist” in 2John 7, so “that of the antichrist” is synonymous with “the spirit of deception” in 1John 4:6, making it very clear that “the spirit of deception” is responsible for the many “deceivers” who have gone out into the world to “deceive” as many as possible. However, the community has nothing to fear, for it knows the difference between “the Spirit of Truth” (God) and “the spirit of deception” (the evil one) and is capable of testing the “spirits,” for they have received the Spirit (3:24).

The final explicit references to the Spirit in 1John come in 5:6, 8, a passage devoted to the identity and function of witnesses to Jesus. The first of the two witnesses is the cleansing and atoning blood of Jesus, for which the opponents appear to have no place in their theology. The second witness is the water, which appears to include a reference to water baptism and is informed by the many soteriological associations water comes to have in the FG, the preponderance of which makes clear the close relationship between water and the Spirit. These witnesses together point to Jesus as the one who came through the water (of baptism and the Spirit) and through the blood of his passion, John 19:34 offering a supreme Johannine summary of their grounding and meaning.

In 1John 5:6c, the Spirit is identified as the one who certifies, by his witness, that Jesus Christ came through the water and the blood, bringing to mind the teaching of Jesus found in John 15:26. The witness of the Spirit may be trusted because the Spirit is Truth. Since Jesus is himself identified as “the Truth,” the authentic nature of the Spirit’s witness should be all the more apparent. The present-tense verb in 5:6 indicates that the witness of the Spirit is an ongoing reality in the community. As in 4:2, the Spirit’s activity as witness may well include prophetic speech.

In 1John 5:7–8 the Spirit is identified as one of three witnesses, alongside the water and the blood. The change in gender from the masculine, “those who bear witness” (v. 6c), to the neuters, “the Spirit and the water and the blood” (v. 8) may point to the fact that certain events of Jesus’s life and death serve as witnesses that have enduring effects (John 19:34). In addition to foot washing—a sign of continual cleansing from sin, it would appear that other signs were also practiced by the community, including water baptism and the Eucharist. Therefore, v. 8 likely refers to Jesus’s life, filled with salvific significance, his continuing presence among the community members by means of the Spirit whom he sent, and by means of the signs of water and blood that continue among them. The statement in v. 8 “and these three are one” suggests that these witnesses stand or fall together and cannot be separated, converging on the same truth: Jesus Christ, the one who came through the water and the blood, is the Son of God, the atoning sacrifice for sins, the Savior of the world.

Thus, there appear to be four primary dimensions of the Spirit’s role in 1–2John, all of which are related, to a certain extent, to knowledge or knowing. These include: an anointing by which believers can know all things; the means by which believers have assurance of their mutual indwelling in and with God; the ability to distinguish between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of deception; and the way in which the Spirit continues to serve as a witness to Jesus.