Metaphor, like poetry, often stymies readers who want it to “confess” its meaning in a straightforward fashion. Some readers are even willing to do violence to metaphor itself in order to gain this “confession.” However, as Collins demonstrates, examining metaphor is as much a careful endeavour of exploration (like putting a mouse in a maze) as it is a form of imaginative engagement itself. It involves the reader’s active participation (like pressing one’s ear against it or stepping inside it to feel for a light). This participation in metaphor, like the act of reading itself, does not leave the reader untouched in this process, but rather some literary theorists believe that while authors create texts and readers interpret texts, readers are re-created by the texts they read. Metaphor plays an important role

1 Collins, Sailing Alone around the Room.
2 Among those scholars who suggest this are Valentine Cunningham and Paul Ricoeur. See Cunningham, Reading after Theory; and Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor.
in this re-creation. Linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson argue that metaphorical conceptualization is a part of one’s way of viewing the world and a change in metaphors is a change in worldview.³

This concept is particularly important when one applies these ideas to biblical texts. Thus in developing a theory of metaphor for the examination of the kingship metaphor in John’s Gospel, this chapter will also touch upon a series of related questions. For example, how does one interpret the biblical metaphors present in the texts of the New Testament and in John’s Gospel specifically? How does the metaphorical depiction of the world in these biblical texts affect the worldview of their hearers/readers? How do New Testament writers like the Fourth Evangelist reflect the function of metaphor within their writings and how do the changes in these metaphors, analyzed in their wider realm of interactions with Hellenistic Judaism and the Greco-Roman world, reflect their sociocultural milieu and create sociocultural change?

As this study moves from the use of metaphor in the Hebrew Bible to its use in the New Testament, specifically in John’s Gospel, further questions arise. For example, how do shifting cultural contexts impact the use and function of metaphor? What happens when different metaphors once situated in their respective specific literary contexts in the Hebrew Bible text become transformed as they are blended within the New Testament? What rhetorical and theological impact does this blending have on the readers of these texts both ancient and modern?

As a start towards answering these questions (among others), the goal of this chapter is to introduce an interdisciplinary metaphor theory that incorporates elements of linguistic and literary theories (with a careful awareness of philosophical issues) to provide greater insight into the use of metaphor in biblical texts and, for the purposes of this study, in the Fourth Gospel specifically. This chapter will serve as the methodological groundwork for the remainder of this study. Towards this end, this chapter will discuss the history of the study of metaphor in the three areas of philosophical, linguistic, and literary analysis, provide a reason for the use of linguistic and literary elements in the metaphor theory proposed in this

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³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*. This concept was further developed in Lakoff’s subsequent collaboration with Mark Turner focusing on the conceptual power of metaphor in Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*. Since Lakoff and Johnson, this concept has informed political theory as well, especially in light of the more recent political bent of Lakoff’s own writings. An example of this is Carver and Pikalo, *Political Language and Metaphor*. 