

# RECONCILIATION AND HOPE

*New Testament Essays on  
Atonement and Eschatology*

*presented to*

*L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*

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WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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First American edition, July 1974, published by arrangement with  
The Paternoster Press, Exeter, England

### **Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Main entry under title:

Reconciliation and hope.

CONTENTS: Hubbard, D. A. Leon Lamb Morris: an appreciation.—Williams, D. Select bibliography of L. L. Morris (p. 15- )—Reconciliation: Gerhards-son, B. Sacrificial service and atonement in the Gospel of Matthew. [etc.]

1. Bible. N. T.—Addresses, essays, lectures.  
2. Morris, Leon. 3. Morris, Leon—Bibliography.  
I. Banks, Robert J., ed. II. Morris, Leon.

BS2395.R4            234            74-5370  
ISBN 0-8028-3349-3

Printed in Great Britain

## CHAPTER II

# ESCHATOLOGICAL FAITH IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN PAINTER

### I INTRODUCTION

NOWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN HISTORY and interpretation, or history and faith, such an *obvious* problem as it is in the Gospel of John. John stands apart from the Synoptic Gospels with regard to chronology, content and style. None of the Gospels records bare history, but, in John, theological *reflexion* has progressed beyond the limits that we find in the Synoptics so that sources can no longer be detected with any certainty. The Gospel is a stylistic unity. Narrative and discourse passages are written in the same style and bear the impress of one mind. The language and style of the discourses differ greatly from the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics. Certain words and phrases, frequently used in the Synoptics, rarely occur in John. "The kingdom of God", so important in the Synoptics, is to be found only in Jn. 3:3, 5. But there is a close theological relation because the seed of all the important Johannine themes can be found in the Synoptics, for example, Jesus as the new temple, the new birth, eternal life, the mission of Jesus, the glorification of Jesus and the faith of discipleship.

John develops the theme of believing, emphasizing the experience of salvation and the nature of the person of Christ. In doing this he becomes, with Paul, one of the leading theologians of the New Testament. Paul wrote of the permanent significance of the person and work of Christ, showing little *evidence* of interest in the historical Jesus. By writing a Gospel John shows that the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are one, and gives a detailed treatment of the eschatological nature of faith in relation to the historical revelation in Jesus.

### II THE VOCABULARY OF FAITH

John asserts that faith is the proper response to the revelation in Jesus. His understanding of the revelation has determined his understanding of

faith. Statistical comparisons show the importance of believing in the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

*πιστεύειν* is used in every chapter except 15, 18 and 21. In chapter 15 *μένειν* is used to express the abiding of faith in the allegory of the Vine. *πιστεύειν* is used only once in the passion narrative (19:35), because this is the record of the rejection of Jesus. But it is used six times in chapter 20, plus *ἄπιστος* and *πιστός* in 20:27, drawing attention to the centrality of the resurrection for faith.

There is a concentration on believing in chapters 1-12 where Jesus confronts the world with the challenge to believe. In chapters 13-17 the confrontation is past and the nature of authentic faith is developed by the use of other words, such as *μένειν*, *τηρεῖν*, *γινώσκειν* and *εἰδέναι*. While *εἰδέναι* is used more frequently than *γινώσκειν* in narrative passages, both words seem to cover the same semantic area except that *εἰδέναι* is never used in the formula of mutual knowledge, nor of the Father's knowledge.<sup>2</sup> John's more frequent use of *εἰδέναι* than *γινώσκειν* stands with the use of Paul, the Synoptics and the New Testament in general. The use of these two verbs as equivalents points away from Gnosticism to the use in the LXX.

John uses neither *πίστις* nor *γνώσις*. The absence of *γνώσις* is not surprising. It is used only twice in the Synoptics<sup>3</sup> and 29 times in the New Testament, of which 23 occur in the Pauline Corpus. *γινώσκειν* is used 221 times in the New Testament. The preference for the verb can hardly be regarded as an anti-Gnostic device. The books which reflect contact or conflict with Gnosticism are the ones in which *γνώσις* is to be found, especially 1 and 2 Corinthians. If John was anti-Gnostic at this point we

<sup>1</sup> The following table gives a list of some of the words important in John, comparing the number of uses with other books in the New Testament. The different usage in discourse and narrative passages should also be noted as indicating the difference between the ideal and the actual. (For this see p. 41, n. 1.)

	John 1-12	John 13-17	John 18-21	John Total	Pauline Corpus	Synoptic Gospels	First John	N.T. Total
<i>πιστεύειν</i>	76	15	7	98	54	30	9	239
<i>πίστις</i>	0	0	0	0	142	24	1	244
<i>γινώσκειν</i>	33	21	2	56	49	61	25	221
<i>γνώσις</i>	0	0	0	0	23	2	0	29
<i>εἰδέναι</i>	54	15	16	85	102	72	15	230
<i>ἀγαπᾶν</i>	7	25	5	37	33	26	27	142
<i>ἀγάπη</i>	1	6	0	7	76	2	18	118
<i>φιλεῖν</i>	4	3	6	13	2	8	0	25
<i>μαρτυρία</i>	12	0	2	14	2	4	6	37
<i>μαρτυρεῖν</i>	26	3	4	33	8	2	6	76

<sup>2</sup> But as the formula is used only in 10:14-15, and the Father is the subject of the verb "to know" on only one occasion (10:15), this is hardly significant. That *γινώσκειν* is always used where the future realization of knowledge is in view is only of grammatical importance (7:17; 8:28, 32; 10:38; 13:7, 35; 14:20, 31; 17:3, 23).

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:77; 11:52.

would have expected *γνώσις* to have been used, but with an anti-Gnostic meaning.

The absence of *πίστις* is more difficult to explain in the light of its frequent use in Paul and the New Testament as a whole. The fact that *πίστις* is used only twice in the Corpus Hermeticum has been noted as evidence that Gnostic association had not prejudiced its use.<sup>1</sup> Had there been Gnostic associations that John was countering we would have expected him to have used the word in a redefined sense.

There is a clear preference for *πίστις* in the Pauline Corpus and there is a concentration of use in contexts dealing with the conflict between faith and works as the way of salvation.<sup>2</sup> It is also used 16 times in a similar conflict in James. John was not concerned with this conflict.<sup>3</sup> In the Pastoral epistles *πίστις* is used 33 times, often to express the content of faith. While John does not disregard the content of faith, other elements are also prominent. He chose *πιστεύειν* because it suited his understanding of the proper response to the revelation, which is the primary theme of the Gospel and hence the concentration on *πιστεύειν*.

### III THE *ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ* FORMULAE<sup>4</sup>

1. The verb followed by the dative of the person or object believed is used eighteen times, and expresses the most important aspects of belief on the basis of witness.<sup>5</sup> John wrote to emphasize the possibility of belief on the basis of witness (20:31).<sup>6</sup> There is a multiple witness which has a single point of focus, Jesus. Jesus' self-testimony and the witness of the Father to Jesus in his works stand apart from the rest (5:31-39; 8:13-18). The witness of the works may provide a transition (10:38; 14:11), but ultimately the scandal of Jesus' self-testimony cannot be avoided.<sup>7</sup> All but

<sup>1</sup> W. F. Howard, *Christianity According to St. John* (London, 1943), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> In Romans 39 times, 26 in chapters 1-5; in Galatians 22 times, 14 in chapter 3.

<sup>3</sup> 6:28 f. does not deal with this subject.

<sup>4</sup> In 2:24 Jesus is the subject, but the verb is used in a sense different from the rest of the Gospel. Neither Jesus nor the Father is said to believe, nor does John use the verb in the Old Testament sense of the faithfulness of God. In 9:18 the verb is followed by . . . *περι . . . ὅτι*. The Jews refused to believe that the man in question had been blind. By discarding the miracle one possible way of coming to believe in Jesus was rejected. The construction used in 9:18 is not a straightforward *πιστεύειν ὅτι* construction, which is used in John to express the content of Christian faith.

<sup>5</sup> These include Jesus: 4:21; 5:38, 46; 6:30; 8:31, 45, 46; 10:37, 38; 14:11; Jesus' words: 2:22; 4:50; 5:47; Jesus' works: 10:38 (14:11); Him who sent Jesus: 5:24; the Scripture: 2:22; 5:46, 47; 12:38.

<sup>6</sup> There is a tenfold witness to Jesus in the Gospel. 1. The Baptist: 1:7, 8, 15, 32, 34; 3:26; 5:33; 2. The woman of Samaria: 4:38; 3. Jesus: 5:31; 8:18; 18:37; 4. Jesus' works: 5:36; 10:25; 5. The Father: 5:37; 8:18; 6. The Scriptures: 5:39 f; 7. The crowd: 12:17; 8. The Paraclete: 15:26; 9. The apostles: 15:27; 10. The beloved disciple: 19:35; 21:24. Only those instances where the terminology of witness has been used are listed.

<sup>7</sup> In 4:21 and 14:11 Jesus' appeal to believe him is followed by a clause indicating that to believe Jesus' self-testimony is to believe certain things about him, i.e., his place in salvation history (4:21), and his relation to the Father (14:11).

one use of this construction fall in chapters 1-12 where there is also a concentration of the use of the vocabulary of witness. After the resurrection the testimony of the eyewitnesses takes on a new significance. Because of this John uses the individual cases in chapters 1-12 as illustrations of the effectiveness of witness and in chapters 13-17 the basis of all future belief on the apostolic testimony is outlined (15:26-27; 17:20 f.).

2. There are two instances of the verb followed by  $\epsilon\nu$  (3:15; 20:31). In 3:15 the construction is in synonymous parallelism with the verb followed by  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  in 3:16. The order of the words indicates that the meaning is "to believe in". There was a tendency in the New Testament period for  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  and  $\epsilon\nu$  to overlap in meaning as in 3:15 f.<sup>1</sup> 20:31 is less clear because of the word order. But as believing in Jesus' name is elsewhere spoken of (1:12; 2:23; 3:18, using  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ), and there is no reference to having life in Jesus' name, it should be taken as "believing in . . .". This is borne out by the parallelism between believing followed by  $\delta\tau\iota$  . . . and believing followed by  $\epsilon\nu$  . . . Further, 1 Jn. 5:13, which is modelled on John 20:31, refers to those who believe in ( $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ) the name of the Son of God.

3. There are 36 instances where the verb is followed by  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ <sup>2</sup> out of 47 uses in the New Testament. Of these 3 occur in 1 John, 3 in Acts and no other book has more than 1 use of this construction, which is peculiar to the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> This construction indicates belief in Jesus, except in 12:44 and 14:1 which refer to believing in the Father who sent Jesus. It is usually used with a personal object, but 6:29-30; 8:30-31; and 1 Jn. 5:10 are probable exceptions and Jn. 5:24, where the verb, followed by the dative case, has a personal object, and has much the same meaning as the verb followed by  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ , for example in 14:1. Thus while there is a personal element in this faith other constructions can also express this.<sup>4</sup>

4. The verb is used absolutely 28 times,<sup>5</sup> but the contexts supply the objects of all but 16.<sup>6</sup> While 1:50 is a formal example of the absolute use, the context shows that only superficial faith in Jesus in current Messianic terms is involved. Such faith is challenged to reassess Jesus (1:51). The absolute use, like the verb followed by  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  (2:23 f.) or by the dative case (8:31), can be used to express superficial faith. But the truly absolute use,

<sup>1</sup> See Moule, *Idiom*, pp. 69, 75, 80 f. This construction was used in the LXX and there is one clear instance of its use in Mk. 1:15.

<sup>2</sup> 1:12; 2:11, 23; 3:16, 18<sup>(2)</sup>, 36; 4:39; 6:29, 35, 40; 7:5, 31, 38, 39, 48; 8:30; 9:35, 36; 10:42; 11:25, 26, 45, 48; 12:11, 36, 37, 42, 44<sup>(2)</sup>, 46; 14:1<sup>(2)</sup>, 12; 16:9; 17:20.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclus. 38:31 is not a parallel.

<sup>4</sup> Contrary to C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 183 and L. L. Morris, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids, 1971), p. 336. Morris is also wrong in suggesting that this construction indicates a sense of mystical abiding.

<sup>5</sup> 1:7, 50; 3:12<sup>(2)</sup>, 18; 4:41, 42, 48, 53; 5:44; 6:36, 47, 64<sup>(2)</sup>; 9:38; 10:25, 26; 11:15, 40; 12:39; 14:11, 29; 16:31; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29<sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> 1:7; 4:48, 53; 5:44; 6:36, 47, 64<sup>(2)</sup>; 11:15, 40; 14:29; 19:35; and probably also 20:8, 25, 29<sup>(2)</sup>, referring to belief in the risen Lord which is at the heart of the meaning of "believe" used absolutely.

both uses with *ἐν* and many uses with *εἰς* or followed by the dative case, indicate authentic faith. These uses tend to fall in the discourses.

5. There are twelve instances where the verb, followed by a *ὄτι* clause, indicates the significance of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The use of this construction often occurs with verbs of knowing, with *εἰδέναι* (16:30) and with *γινώσκειν* (6:69; 10:38; 17:8, 21; cf. 17:23). This construction is used to express the *perception* of authentic faith. The Gospel paradoxically shows that confessions of faith made in these terms by individuals (6:69; 11:27; 16:30), were not authentic at the time of making (6:70 f.; 13:36 f.; 11:39; 16:31 f.).

6. Twenty five uses of *πιστεύειν* fall in narrative passages, where rejection and partial faith in Jesus are stated.<sup>2</sup> Expressions of faith are brought into question by their contexts. All of the constructions are used to express both partial and authentic faith and the verb followed by *εἰς* is used more frequently than any other construction to describe partial faith.

7. Four instances describe activities which have the purpose of provoking belief (1:7; 17:21; 19:35; 20:31). Authentic faith was not a reality during Jesus' ministry, but the Gospel was written for a new situation when such faith had become possible.<sup>3</sup> Descriptions of those who came to partial faith during Jesus' ministry have become examples of the possibility of coming to authentic faith. Thus there is no difference in terminology in the narrative descriptions of partial faith and the descriptions of authentic faith that Jesus uses in his discourses.

#### IV SYMBOLIC PARALLELS OF BELIEVING

The idea of believing is also indicated by a number of symbolic parallels. The symbols do not have exactly the same meaning as *πιστεύειν* but focus on an aspect of what is a complex response to the revelation in Jesus. Most of the references occur in discourse passages and deal with an aspect of authentic faith, but in a few instances they occur in narrative passages and there are indications of the limitations involved. In other instances the narrative context indicates that the aspect in view is restricted to those who knew Jesus during the days of his ministry. The distinction between those who believed having seen Jesus and those who believed without having seen is also indicated using *πιστεύειν* (17:20; 20:29).

<sup>1</sup> That Jesus is the Christ the Son of God: 6:69; 11:27; 20:31; that "I am": 8:24; 13:19; that the Father sent Jesus: 11:42; 17:8, 21; that the Father is in Jesus and Jesus in the Father: 10:38; 14:10; that Jesus has come from God: 16:27, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Both 2:24 and 9:18 fall in narrative passages, as do two uses of the verb followed by the dative case, eleven uses followed by *εἰς*, seven absolute uses, and three uses followed by *ὄτι*.

<sup>3</sup> Debate about the tense of the verb to believe in 20:31 is not relevant because John was concerned that faith should be authentic, perceive the true nature of Jesus and thus lead on to real decision and obedience.

From the symbols certain aspects of what it means to believe may be outlined. Believing involves: 1. Perception, recognition, understanding; 2. Decision; 3. Dependence and obedience.<sup>1</sup> Some of the terms overlap from one group to another so that "to hear" and "to worship" can involve all three categories and "to follow" can involve obedience as well as decision.

In the category of perception, seeing and remembering are restricted to the situation of Jesus' ministry. Only those who had actually seen him with their eyes could see him in this way i.e., remember with new understanding what their eyes had seen.<sup>2</sup>

## V DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The object of the verbs of believing is Jesus except where belief in God is expressed and then it is God as the one who has sent Jesus, as revealed in Jesus. Thus one is called to believe (in) Jesus, his words, his works, and certain facts about him concerning his relation to the Father. But these are not ultimate distinctions. For this reason John has designated Jesus as the Logos. Because his words are self-testimony, to believe him is to believe in him. He is the content of his own message.

### <sup>1</sup> 1. *Believing as perception, recognition, understanding.*

This aspect is emphasized when the verb is used with *ὄτι* and with verbs of knowing, as well as with the following symbolic descriptions.

	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Discourse</i>
To see <sup>1</sup>	1:14	1:39, 46, 51; 6:40, 62; 11:40; 12:40; 14:7, 17.
To hear	4:42; 10:20	5:24, 25, 45; 8:43, 47 <sup>(2)</sup> ; 10:3, 8, 16, 27.
To remember	2:17, 22; 12:16	14:26.
2. <i>Believing as decision.</i>		
To come	1:39, 46	3:20, 21; 6:35, 37, 45, 65; 7:37; 14:6.
To receive or reject		1:5, 11, 12; 3:11, 32, 33; 5:43; 12:48 <sup>(2)</sup> ; 13:20; 14:17; 17:8.
To love or hate	(21:15, 16, 17)	3:19, 20; 8:42; 12:25, 43; 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 28; 16:27.
To confess or deny	9:22; 12:42; 18:25, 26	13:38.
To follow	(1:37, 38, 40) 6:2	1:43; 8:12; 10:4, 5, 27; 12:26.
3. <i>Believing as dependence and obedience.</i>		
To drink		4:13, 14 (6:35); 7:37.
To eat		(6:35); 6:51, 52.
To be a disciple	9:27	8:31; 13:35; 15:8.
To learn or be taught		6:45.
To keep		8:51(52); 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 28.
To abide		6:56; 8:31 (12:46); 15:4, 5, 6, 9, 10.
To serve		12:26.
To worship	9:38	4:23, 24.

(Note 1. Bultmann is right in saying that the various verbs of seeing are used without any difference of meaning being intended (see *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen, 1962), p. 45 n. 1). The difference of use is grammatical in that the different forms are used to supply different tenses.)

<sup>2</sup> Contrary to the views of most commentators. Both Bultmann and Dodd take this

Neither Jesus nor the Father is the subject of the verb to believe. Every other major and most other minor characters deny or affirm faith in the course of the Gospel. The disciples, as individuals (1:50; 6:69; 20:8, 29) or as a group (2:11, 22; 16:27, 30; 17:18), are described as the believers more frequently than any one else. But there are indications that, in the context of Jesus' ministry, they did not really believe (2:22), and Jesus even questioned whether they believed at all (16:31).

After the disciples "the many" are most frequently described as believers. This belief is normally in response to signs (2:23; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 11:45; 12:11) and is brought into question (2:23 ff.). In 8:30 "the many" are identified with the Jews of 8:31, who, more frequently than any others, are those of whom it is said that they do not believe (5:38, 47; 8:45-46; 9:18; 10:25, 26; 12:37).

## VI THE JOHANNINE SITUATION

John brings out the stark contrast between believing in and rejecting Jesus, making decision a prominent element in what he understands as believing. Judaism forms the background to the Gospel, Judaism fragmented by sects, the sect of the Way being the one which most threatened its life and faith. Pressure was brought to bear on all heretics and especially upon Jewish Christians. About A.D. 85 *birkath ha-minim* was published, providing a basis for excommunicating heretics from the Synagogue, with a clause designed to exclude Jewish Christians. In the New Testament, only in John is the technical word for excommunication, *ἄποσυνάγωγος*, used (9:22 (34); 12:42; 16:2). Excommunication lasted as long as the error of confessing faith in Jesus persisted. This sanction was designed to discourage converts to Christianity. According to 12:42, it achieved its aim reasonably well. The problem of the ostracism of Jewish Christians is apparent from the time of Paul but the basis for excommunication did not become fixed until later.

The threat of excommunication encouraged those who believed in Jesus to remain within the fold of Judaism as secret believers. Nicodemus is treated as a typical example (3:1 ff.; 7:50 ff.; 19:38 ff.). He is the typical *man* who believed on the basis of *signs* (2:23-25; 3:1-2).<sup>1</sup> He is the typical *ruler* who would not openly confess his faith for fear of excommunication (12:42). Even "the twelve" become secret believers because of fear of the

<sup>1</sup> Note the use of "man" and "signs" in both passages.

sight to be the vision of faith, open to all believers, though they differ on points of detail. But Dodd refuses to interpret Jn. 19:35 in this way saying that the evangelist was not the sort of person who could affirm the veracity of his evidence while offering only a suggestive symbol (cf. his *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 135). This comment is equally applicable to 1:14 (and 1 Jn. 1:1 ff.). Further, the Gospel clearly distinguishes seeing and believing (20:29).

Jews (20:19). The threat was also used to make timid believers recant. In John 9 the man who had been blind overcame intimidation and was ultimately excommunicated, becoming an example of the true believer in the Jewish situation.

The Gospel demonstrates that the revelation in Jesus justifies the cost of facing persecution. The revelation is the fulfilment and abolition of Judaism. The Prologue asserts that the revelation in the incarnate Word supersedes the Law of Moses. The Old Testament, like the Baptist, is rightly understood only in terms of its witness to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The Jews' religion was surpassed by the new way (2:1-11).<sup>2</sup> The old Temple was made obsolete by the risen Christ as the new Temple for the meeting of God and man (2:13-22). The identification of Judaism with the citizens of the Kingdom of God is denied. Those who believe in Jesus enter the Kingdom (3:1-15). The true worshippers are those who receive the Spirit through believing in Jesus (4:23-24).

Believing is a response to the eschatological event. The coming of the Word made flesh in history brought about the judgement of the world, portrayed in terms of light coming into the darkness (3:19-21). The light was not conquered by the darkness, it overcame the darkness (1:5; 16:33). The judgement of the light causes division.<sup>3</sup> Those who believe, who come to the light, are divided off from those who reject Jesus.

## VII THE JUDGEMENT AND UNBELIEF

Unbelief is the rejection of Jesus and his place in salvation history. Jesus came offering life and freedom. The Jews claimed that they had life and that they had never been in bondage (5:39 f.; 8:33). Because they *misunderstood* what Jesus offered they could not see the new possibility his coming had brought about. He came with knowledge of the unseen God. But the Jews claimed that they knew God and rejected the possibility of knowing him in Jesus. Their knowledge was based on the Scriptures (5:39, 45), which they used in proof-text fashion to avoid facing the claim of Jesus' works and words. They ruled out the possibility that Jesus had a place in salvation history on various grounds. There is a need to distinguish the intellectual arguments used to justify the rejection of Jesus from the moral and spiritual causes of unbelief.

*The intellectual arguments* form two groups. Firstly, there was the tendency to reject the reality of Jesus' miracles (7:4; 9:18). When the

<sup>1</sup> 1:7, 8, 15, 32, 34; 3:26; 5:33, 39, 46 f.; 8:56, 58; 12:41.

<sup>2</sup> The contrast is between poor and good wine. The best was kept until last. Compare Mk. 2:22.

<sup>3</sup> John uses *σχίσμα* in 7:43; 9:16; 10:19 to indicate the divisive effect of Jesus' words and works. But this theme is more pervasive than the word. See 3:19-21, 36; 7:31, 40-44, 45-52; 8:30 ff.; 9:16, 39-41; 10:19-20, 31-42; 11:45; 12:37-43.

miracles could not be denied their significance was misconstrued. Secondly there are arguments from Scripture which were used to deny Jesus any place in salvation history. 1. His origin (family) was known but the origin of the Messiah was to be unknown (7:27; 6:42). 2. His place of origin was wrong, Galilee not Bethlehem as foretold (7:41 f., 52). 3. His origin was not known whereas it was known that Moses came from God (9:29).<sup>1</sup> (There are inconsistencies in these arguments because they are rationalizations for the rejection which occurred for other reasons. The real problem was that Jesus did not fit into the religious pattern of life which they claimed had come from God.) 4. He broke the Sabbath law (5:10 ff.; 9:13 ff.). But the Old Testament gave precedents for the performance of certain works on the Sabbath (7:21 ff.). Jesus also argued that he only did what God was doing. God's creative works continued on the Sabbath (5:17 f.), a point acknowledged in the Rabbinic literature and Philo. In this way Jesus challenged the Jews to see God's ultimate revelation and act in him. His claim was rejected because it went beyond the bounds of the Old Testament and it was assumed that if a man claimed to be God he was a blasphemer. In the face of the scandal caused by his self-testimony Jesus appealed to the witness of the Father in his works (5:36; 10:31-39). If his words could not be accepted his works should show that he had some place in salvation history (9:16). Those who rejected both Jesus' words and works did so because their standard of judgement was perverted.

Our attention is turned to the *moral cause* of unbelief, which can be described as false or perverted love. Love is directed to the wrong object, indicating that man chooses wrongly. The element of choice is prominent when love and hate are used together or when it is indicated that love is directed wrongly. Both characteristics appear in 3:19-21. The first false love is love of the darkness. The darkness is the world apart from God, which rejects God's approach in the revelation of the light. The light is rejected because men prefer the world apart from God. They prefer their own evil actions to the change that accepting the judgement of the light would bring.<sup>2</sup> The second false love is love for the glory of man rather than the glory of God (5:41-44; 7:18; 8:50; 12:43); the choice of self-advancement and self-exaltation, of false greatness, greatness apart from God and opposed to God. The third false love is love for one's own life (12:25), love for self as opposed to love for God or anyone else. The fact that this love leads to death indicates that it is opposed to faith which leads to life.<sup>3</sup> These three loves involve the claim to already

<sup>1</sup> Johannine irony lies behind each of these arguments. The Jews did not know his father; he did come from Bethlehem; he had come from God.

<sup>2</sup> Love of the darkness may also be described as love of the world, 1 Jn. 2:15 f.

<sup>3</sup> Eternal life is the gift of God to those who believe (3:15 ff.). Life is no more to be equated with knowledge than it is with faith, contrary to Bultmann *op. cit.*, on 17:3. The meaning is that those who know God in Jesus receive eternal life as a consequence just as believers are given eternal life.

possess life, which made the Jews hostile to anyone who threatened their possession or called it into question. Jesus opposed and condemned this self-assurance because it prevented men from acknowledging his works and hearing his words: "... because you say 'We see', your guilt remains" (9:41). The Jews closed themselves against the revelation, willing self-preservation rather than knowledge of the origin of Jesus' doctrine. Those who seek to do God's will, who seek to honour God and honour from God, will know the origin of Jesus' doctrine (7:17).

The rejection of Jesus resulted from a moral failure. False standards produced false judgements. John suggests that the false moral standards have a *spiritual cause*. They have arisen because men are children of the devil (8:43 ff.); are not Jesus' sheep (10:26 f.); are not of the truth (18:37). It is not that some men are saved by nature, for all men, including "the twelve", were once in the darkness, in the world (15:19; 17:6, 9 f., 24). It is only through believing that one leaves the darkness and becomes a son of light (8:12; 12:35-36).

Are those who believe given to Jesus by the Father in such a way that they automatically believe (cf. 6:37-65 esp. 37, 44, 45, 65)? Are those who do not believe prevented from doing so by God (12:37-41)? On the contrary, 6:39 is balanced by 6:40 indicating that the Father gives Jesus those who believe in him, and 6:44 does not indicate *how* the Father *draws* men. 12:32 indicates that all men are *drawn* by the uplifted Son of Man.<sup>1</sup> The power of darkness prevents men from believing. Some men believed as a result of the coming of the light of the world, breaking the power of darkness.<sup>2</sup> Jesus gave the same reason for unbelief when he told the Jews who had refused his offer of freedom that they did so on the basis of the false standards which they had derived from listening to their father, the devil (8:38-44). They had false standards of truth, freedom, life, and God. Because of this they rejected the truth of the knowledge of God in Jesus and the freedom from sin, eternal life, which he came to bring. They rejected his words and his works. Had they given heed to his works their standards would have been changed. The transparently good nature of his works would have led to the conclusion that he had come from God (9:16). However, the majority of people failed to draw this conclusion.

The Jews did not believe because they failed to see the glory revealed in Jesus (12:40-41), primarily in his signs (12:37). 12:37 does not say that they *saw* the signs. Seeing signs is always related to believing. Though the Jewish authorities tended to be sceptical (9:18), they could acknowledge that Jesus performed signs i.e. miracles<sup>3</sup> (11:47), as did the crowd which

<sup>1</sup> The same verb is used in both verses and in Jer. 38(31):3 LXX where it is the love of God that *draws* men. The universal scope of the love of God is asserted in Jn. 3:16; 12:32.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Matt. 12:28 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus never speaks of *signs*. He appeals to the witness of his *works* which indicate his authority because they are the works of the Father which he performs. In the situation of

failed to see the sign (6:26) and demanded one immediately after the feeding miracle (6:30). The repeated demand for a sign indicates the failure to see Jesus' miracles as signs of his authority (2:18; 4:48; 6:30). The Jews did not believe because they did not take Jesus' signs into account in their assessment of him (9:16). They denied his claims, the meaning of his miracles and the witness of those who believed in him. But those who believed insisted on taking the signs into account (9:16, 25, 30 ff.; 10:19-21). The failure to see the glory manifest in the signs, which witnessed to Jesus' authority, prevented faith.

In 12:37 ff. John has modified the text of Isa. 6:10 so that *the one who has blinded the Jews is distinguished from the one who would heal them*. The change from third person singular, for the agent of blinding, to the first person singular, for the agent of healing, is of the utmost importance as is the introduction of *τυφλοῦν* into this quotation. While a number of interpretations of 12:40 are possible,<sup>1</sup> only one fits the context, explains why the Jews did not see the glory of Jesus' signs and believe, and is consistent with the theology of the Gospel. "He", the prince of this world (12:31), has blinded the Jews so that Jesus may not heal them. This interpretation has the support of Origen<sup>2</sup> and a remarkable parallel in 2 Cor. 4:4:

"... the god of this world has *blinded* the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them".

Paul was dealing with the problem of unbelief. The fault did not lie in the gospel or the preaching of it, but with Satan, who had made people insensitive so that they would not believe. Further, in 1 Jn. 2:11 the darkness is said to have *blinded* the eyes of those who walk in darkness. In Jn. 12:40; 2 Cor. 4:4; and 1 Jn. 2:11 we have the only three uses of *τυφλοῦν* in the New Testament. In none of these is it said that God is the agent of blinding and in 2 Cor. 4:4 and 1 Jn. 2:11 it is clear that he is not.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Other interpretations are ruled out for the following reasons: (1) "He" cannot refer to the prophet, whose words are quoted. (2) "He", God, has blinded the Jews so that the prophet may not heal them. But the prophet's failure does not explain the failure of the signs. (3) "He", God, has blinded the Jews so that Jesus may not heal them. Such opposition between the Father and Son is irreconcilable with Johannine thought (3:35; 5:19-20 *et al.*). (4) "They", the signs (the neuter plural would take a singular verb), have blinded the Jews so that Jesus may not heal them. One could compare the hardening effect of the parables according to Mark 4:12. But this interpretation fails to answer the question raised in the text in 12:38. "To whom...?" indicates that not all saw the signs performed by the arm of the Lord and 12:40 explains why they did not.

<sup>2</sup> Origen: Fragment XCII.

<sup>3</sup> The same point of view appears without the word in Lk. 8:12; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Jn. 5:19.

Jesus' ministry signs are simply miracles as viewed by the crowds, as the formula "signs and wonders" of 4:48 indicates. But from the perspective of the resurrection and the coming of the Paraclete, signs operate as the works which bear witness to Jesus' leading men to authentic faith (20:31). Thus, while the signs produced misunderstanding during Jesus' ministry, they now provoke authentic faith. There is an ambivalence of meaning in the way signs are used in the Gospel because of this.

This dualistic interpretation is reinforced by the evidence of the Qumran Texts.<sup>1</sup> The general affinity of the Gospel with the Qumran Texts makes this parallel the more significant, especially as the affinity is nowhere more pronounced than with regard to the Johannine "dualism". In John, the prince of this world is the power of darkness (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Having mentioned him (12:31), attention is drawn to the blinding effect of walking in the darkness (12:35 ff.).<sup>2</sup> Jesus, the light (8:12), was present for a short time. He exhorted his hearers to believe in the light that the darkness may not overwhelm them (*καταλάβῃ*). Jesus had not been overcome (*οὐ κατέλαβεν*) by the darkness (1:5). He had conquered the world (16:33). Those who refused to believe had been overcome by the darkness. The only way to overcome the darkness was to believe in the light. The power of darkness still had its sway (12:39), but there were some exceptions (12:42).

John, like Paul and the Qumran Sect, acknowledged God's rule over the whole creation, but the power of darkness is not overlooked. The coming of the Word made flesh made belief possible (3:19-21). During the ministry of Jesus the signs had a limited effect, producing a limited faith (2:23 ff.), even among the leaders (12:42 f.). When Jesus was lifted up the power of evil was broken (12:31 f.) and faith on a universal scale became possible. The possibility is linked with Jesus' glorification (2:22; 12:16) and the coming of the Paraclete (14:26; 16:7). In the eschatological moment all men are called to believe (4:22 ff.; 5:25). Those who refuse definitively choose the darkness and are finally and irrevocably in the darkness (3:19 ff.; 9:39 ff.). Those who believe leave the world of darkness for the light.

## VIII REVELATION AND RESPONSE

John speaks of varying responses of faith, based on: 1. signs (2:23 f. *et al.*); 2. the witness of Jesus' works (10:37 f.; 14:10 f.); 3. Jesus' word (5:31; 8:18); 4. the apostolic witness (15:26 f.; 17:20 ff.).

### 1. *Superficial faith*

Faith expressed in the context of Jesus' ministry can only be understood as a partial faith. It expresses the attraction of people to Jesus as a miracle worker, teacher, prophet, or Messiah. The form of the statement in 2:23 reveals two characteristics of popular superficial faith.

<sup>1</sup> 1 QM XIII:1-IV:9; 1 QS III:13-IV:26, especially 1 QS III:20, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Note 1 Jn. 2:11 and the relation of Jn. 12:27 to the Gethsemane prayer in which Luke (22:53) records Jesus' words, "but this is your hour and the power of darkness. . ."

i. πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν or variations using πολὺς or πάντες are used.<sup>1</sup> The aorist tense is normally used,<sup>2</sup> drawing attention to the specific situation which attracted the crowds. Nothing is indicated about the quality or duration of faith by the tense of the verb. But the contexts show that this faith had yet to face the scandal of Jesus' claims about himself. In many cases it proved transitory. But there were those who went on to believe authentically.

ii. This faith arose out of seeing Jesus' signs.<sup>3</sup> While this was a real turning to Jesus, John indicates that it was inadequate (2:24), because these believers wanted to find the fulfilment of their own purpose in Jesus (6:15; 12:13 ff.).

Misunderstanding is also a mark of superficial faith. Those who are said to have believed are shown to have misunderstood Jesus' role and significance. This is an historical problem in that misunderstanding arose from the Jewish categories. Jesus was thought of as a prophet, miracle worker, or as the Messiah, understood as a political figure. Such faith had to meet the scandal of Jesus' self-testimony. The way John has used this understanding indicates the significance of a proper assessment of the person and work of Christ for authentic faith.

The misunderstanding motif has been recognized as a pedagogical technique used by John.<sup>4</sup> But it is not merely a literary device. It has the same function as the Messianic Secret in Mark, and expresses an appreciation of the historical situation of Jesus' ministry. The problem is not merely that the Jews did not know that Jesus was the Messiah, nor that they understood the Messianic role in terms of a conquering king rather than in terms of service and suffering. John emphasizes that Jesus is the one in whom God is present and active in his love for the world. Thus, the misunderstanding motif is historically based, dramatically developed and has a pedagogical purpose in the structure of the Gospel which was written to remove inadequate attitudes to Jesus which would not be able to stand the test of Jewish persecution. The Gospel was written to bring about authentic faith which perceives Jesus' unique place in salvation history as the incarnate Word (20:31). Misunderstanding is confronted by Jesus' self-testimony which scandalizes the crowds and produces murmurings.<sup>5</sup> The murmurings indicate the dissatisfaction of the believers with

<sup>1</sup> 2:23; 4:39, 41; (6:2) 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 11:45, 48; 12:11, 42.

<sup>2</sup> In 6:2 and 12:11 the use of the imperfect tense anticipates rejection and in 11:48 the future tense is used in a prediction.

<sup>3</sup> 2:23 ff.; 3:2; 6:2, 14 ff.; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41-42; 11:45, 47 f.; 12:18-19, 37, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Bultmann *op. cit.*, p. 127, n. 1 etc. claims that this device was taken over from hellenistic revelation literature. He lists as examples of misunderstanding 2:20; 3:3 f.; 4:10 ff., 32 f.; 6:32 ff.; 7:34 ff.; 14:4 f., 7 ff., 22 ff.; 16:17 f. A number of other examples could be added, 1:49 ff.; 8:31 ff., 38 ff.; 11:11 ff., 23 ff.; 13:8 ff.; *et al.*

<sup>5</sup> γογγύζειν is used in 6:41, 43, 61; 7:38, half of the uses of this verb in the New Testament. It is used twice in 1 Cor. 10:10 to refer to the murmuring of the Israelites against Moses and Aaron, but ultimately against God, as in Ex. 16:2; Num. 14:2, 36; 17:6-15 LXX.

the one who has not measured up to their expectations. Jesus indicated that he did not intend to fulfil these expectations and brought about a direct confrontation of his way with theirs (6:26 ff.). This led to *division* (see earlier, p. 43, n. 3), the rejection of faith by some of those who had originally believed (6:64-66) and the affirmation of faith by "the twelve" through Peter (6:68 ff.; cf. Mk. 9:27 ff.).

## 2. Authentic faith

There are a number of statements which suggest the realization of authentic faith during Jesus' ministry (1:14, 49 f.; 2:11; 4:42, 53; 6:68-69; 9:35-38; 11:27; 16:29-30). But the fact that superficial faith cannot be distinguished from authentic faith by the formula used suggests that the contexts of these passages should be examined.

1:14 is part of the prologue and does not fit into the historical context of Jesus' ministry. It is a *reminiscence*, placed at the beginning of the Gospel to make the true nature of faith clear from the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

The confession of 1:49, which is shown to be inadequate by 1:51, was based on Jesus' miraculously acquired knowledge. The wording of the confession is capable of being understood at two levels: in terms of the Messiah of Jewish expectation or in terms of the unique, incarnate, Son of God of Johannine understanding.<sup>2</sup> Jesus responded that the faith of Nathanael would ultimately be based on the assessment of him as the exalted Son of Man, worshipped by men and angels (1:51).<sup>3</sup> The certainty, "you shall see . . .", should be compared with the hypothetical, "What if you see . . ." (6:62). The certainty of the one and the uncertainty of the other distinguishes the faith of Nathanael from the superficial faith of the multitudes. What distinguishes them at this stage is not so much greater perception, but the reality of Nathanael's decision to follow and his willingness to obey Jesus.

The confessions of 4:42, 53 and 9:35-38 are not modified by their contexts. Perhaps 4:42 looks forward to the fulfilment in the later Samaritan mission. In 4:53 the form of the statement should be compared with

<sup>1</sup> In 1:14 John asserts that the glory was *visible* to the eyewitnesses; that God was the *origin* of the glory; that the *nature* of the glory is the loving faithfulness of God seen in its fulfilment in Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Understood in terms of Johannine irony the words "Rabbi, you are the Son of God. . ." express awareness of the incarnation, that the unique Son of God is to be known in a man, a mere Rabbi.

<sup>3</sup> "You will see the heavens opened", and the Son of Man will be revealed as the central figure with the angels converging on him. Compare Acts 7:56. The scene is set in heaven as in Rev. 4:1. The use of *ἀνεῳγῶρα* draws attention to the baptismal stories (Matt. 3:16 f.). But while the placing of 1:51 may suggest a relation with the baptism, the event spoken of is future, the lifting up of the Son of Man in his heavenly enthronement by the cross, receiving not only the worship of men (9:36-38), but also of angels (cf. Heb. 1:6 and Mk. 13:26; 14:62). His kingship does not await the future coming of the Son of Man but is revealed by his being lifted up to heaven by the cross.

Acts 11:14 and 16:14-15, 31, foreshadowing the Gentile mission. The man who had been blind becomes the example of the true believer in the Jewish situation who openly confessing his faith disregards the threat of excommunication.

The confession of Martha in 11:27 can also be understood at two levels. The words "who comes into the world" are Johannine and suggest the perception of authentic faith. But 11:39 indicates that this perception is lacking and that her understanding is as it was in 11:24, not having taken account of Jesus' self-testimony in 11:25 f.

Peter's confession in 6:68 f., and the disciples' confession in 16:29-30 are both couched in the terminology of authentic faith. But the prediction of the disciple's defection brings this into question (6:70-71; 13:2, 38; 16:31-32).

From the narrative confessions it is clear that authentic faith was not a reality during Jesus' ministry. These expressions foreshadow the development of the fullness of faith and are an assessment in retrospect which recognizes an integrity lacking in the superficial faith of the multitudes. Faulty perception led to the defection of the disciples, but the integrity of their faith led to reinstatement. The reason for stating faith in authentic terms in the context of Jesus' ministry is pedagogical. It is not an attempt to distort the historical perspective. There are many indications that this faith only came later and John develops, almost systematically, the reasons why it could only come later. The pedagogical purpose is based on the fact that the words and works of Jesus could not provoke authentic faith in the context of his ministry, but the reminiscence of them in the apostolic witness could. The difference between the situation of the ministry of Jesus and that of the apostolic witness is threefold and authentic faith presupposes:

1. The uplifting or glorification of the Son of Man (3:14 ff.; 12:23, 31 f.; 13:31, 32; (17:1)). The true glory of God in his love for the world was manifest in this event. Thus it was crucial for the coming of authentic faith. This event also brought about the effective judgement of the world by which Jesus overcame the blinding work of the power of darkness, making authentic faith possible.<sup>1</sup>

2. The coming of the Paraclete. This event is associated with the glorification of Jesus and the judgement of the world (7:37 ff.; 16:7 ff.).<sup>2</sup> The judgement began with the coming of Jesus, reached a critical stage at

<sup>1</sup> No account is taken at this point of the sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death in such passages as 1:29; 6:51; 13; 17:19 etc. While the sacrificial element is clear in general terms there is no consensus of opinion on the precise meaning.

<sup>2</sup> 7:37 ff. deals with Jesus' offer of the Spirit. The appeal to Scripture is to be understood Christologically as is usual in John. This is confirmed by the clear statement concerning Jesus as the giver of the Spirit in 7:39. The same is true of 4:10 where the gift becomes the inexhaustible source of life in the believer (cf. 4:14). Jesus is the giver of the Spirit, the believer is the one who receives.

his glorification and continues to be made effective by the Paraclete whose coming Jesus' glorification made possible.<sup>1</sup>

3. The resurrection of Jesus. Thus great stress is laid on belief in the risen Lord (20:8, 18, 20, 25, 27-29). The resurrection is understood as an aspect of the glorification of Jesus. Through this event the disciples became aware of the true significance of Jesus and *remembered* crucial events in the life of Jesus so that they understood them in the perspective of salvation history, in relation to the Old Testament (2:22; 12:16). This *remembrance* is linked to the activity of the Paraclete (14:26).<sup>2</sup> While the events that were remembered were unchanged, the memory was modified by a new perspective, the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Paraclete (cf. Rom. 1:4).

Because the Gospel was written for this new situation the narratives frequently have two levels of meaning. One has its roots in the situation of Jesus' ministry and the other takes account of the new situation. The distinction between the eyewitness believers and those who believe on the basis of their testimony (cf. 15:26-27; 17:20 ff.; 20:29) is important because the Gospel is written eyewitness testimony. Thus there is a concentration on the terminology of witness and a complete absence of gospel and preaching terminology commonly found in the Synoptics, Acts and Paul. Because the Gospel is written testimony for this new situation there is no distinction in terms between the professions of faith and the descriptions of authentic faith in Jesus' discourses. The record of his words and works, which were largely ineffective during his ministry, is offered as that which can provoke authentic faith (20:30 f.).

## IX CONCLUSION

Believing is an eschatological phenomenon because it is a response to the eschatological event. It involves a *perception* that was possible only after the glorification of Jesus. It is a gift of the eschatological age, made possible by the coming of Jesus, but made actual by the coming of the Paraclete.

The *decision* involved in believing is set against the background of Jewish persecution. The necessity of this decision is only clear when it is recognized that the eschatological revelation surpassed all previous revelations. It is the decision to follow Jesus no matter what the cost. The reality of the decision is worked out in *obedience* to Jesus' word, in the willingness to confess him openly no matter what the cost, and in loving service

<sup>1</sup> While John emphasizes the eschatological fulfilment in Jesus' ministry (4:21, 23; 5:25) and glorification (12:23; 13:1, 31-32; 17:1), the complete fulfilment of the judgement on the last day remains in the future (5:28 f.; 6:39, 44, 54; 11:24).

<sup>2</sup> The accumulation of the terminology of remembrance is significant.

after the pattern of Jesus' own love (13:35). Both of these aspects of obedience are to be understood as the eschatological gifts of the Spirit to believers.

Faith is the eschatological gift to those who respond with integrity to the revelation in Jesus, whose coming potentially broke the grip of the power of darkness over men. To those who take advantage of the opportunity created by his coming, the Paraclete brings the gift of authentic faith.

All men are the creation of the Word. Response to the Word is a possibility given in creation. The problem concerns the origin of the rejection of the Word by men. John explains this in terms of the power of darkness, the prince of this world, who has perverted and blinded man. The coming of the incarnate Word in judgement broke the grip of the power of darkness so that men could leave the darkness for the light which had confronted them in Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Those who came to him were given the Paraclete, through whom authentic *perception*, *decision*, and *obedience* became actual in the world. This is a phenomenon of the eschatological age of salvation.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to distinguish the power of the revelation event and the witness to or proclamation of it from the activity of the Spirit in the lives of the believers, those who have accepted the revelation. John asserts the power of the revelation just as Paul asserts the power of the proclamation (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:4-5).