

## ***New Wine in Old Wineskins: Bursting Traditional Interpretations in John's Gospel (Part Two)***

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*This article, begun in the preceding issue of BBR, offers disparate exegetical notes on passages in the Fourth Gospel. The present Part Two argues (1) that in John 9:4b the night when no one can work refers to the darkness of eternal damnation; (2) that in John 11:26a those who live, believe in Jesus, and will never die are the believers who have not died prior to the second coming; and (3) that in John 19:30 τετέλεσται should be translated "they are finished" with probable reference to Jesus' signs, works, and words.*

*Key Words: night, darkness, day, light, work, world, damnation, resurrection, live/live, die/death, second coming, finished, all things, signs, works, words*

To replace inadequate if not erroneous traditional interpretations, the following exegetical notes propose nontraditional interpretations of three passages in John's Gospel.

### THE NIGHT OF ETERNAL DAMNATION (JOHN 9:4B)

In John's story of the man born blind, Jesus says, "We must work the works of the one who sent me as long as it is day" (John 9:4a; compare Ps 104:23: "People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening" [NRSV]). Most commentators regard the following statement, "Night is coming, when no one can work" (9:4b), as a piece of proverbial wisdom that applies to everyone, Jesus and the disciples included, with respect to their individual lifetimes: "Your life is a workday; so do now what you need to do, because your death will bring for you a nighttime of no possible work."<sup>1</sup>

1. Typical examples of this interpretation: John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John* (trans. William Pringle; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949 repr.), 1:367–69; M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Jean* (5th ed.; Paris: Gabalda, 1936), 259–60; C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 186; Hermann Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (NTD 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 151–52; Otto Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis: Ein metaphorisches Paradigma in den johanneischen*

But then Jesus' next statement, "Whenever I am in the world, I am [the] light of the world" (9:5), becomes problematic, because it correlates day-time with Jesus' presence in the world, seemingly exclusive of the disciples' longer-lasting lifetimes. Consequently, the statement that night is coming when no one can work no longer looks like proverbial wisdom that alludes to everyone's departure in death. Rather, it looks like a denial that anyone, including the disciples, can work once *Jesus* is no longer in the world as its light. This impression gets support from 12:35–36, where he says, "Yet a *little* time (ἔτι μικρὸν χρόνον) the light is among you. Walk while you have the light lest the darkness overtake you. . . . While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light." What then of Jesus' telling the disciples in 14:12, "Amen, amen I say to you, the one believing in me—even that one will do the works that I am doing; and he/she will do greater [works] than these, because I am going to the Father" (compare the disciples' not helping Jesus give sight to the man born blind though the "we" in 9:4a included them as working the works of God—later, apparently<sup>2</sup>)? Not only does a believer do greater works than those of Jesus *after* Jesus goes to the Father. The believer does them *because* Jesus goes to the Father. And because "no one" (which includes the believer) can work during the night, how can it have come with Jesus' departure?<sup>3</sup>

John Calvin's comments on our passage illustrate the inconcinnities in the foregoing, regnant interpretation. On the one hand, he denies that "his [Jesus'] death [which 'will resemble the setting of the sun'] extinguishes or obscures his light." On the other hand, he immediately affirms that Jesus' death "withdraws the view of it [the light] from the world."<sup>4</sup> But what is a withdrawal of its view except an obscuration, if not extinguishing, of the light? On the one hand, Calvin affirms that "Christ, by his coming, diffused a new and unwonted splendour [of 'day-light']." On the other hand, he also affirms that "after the death of Christ, the power of God shone

*Schriften* (Herders Biblische Studien 5; Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 229–31; Jörg Frey, *Die eschatologische Verkündigung in den johanneischen Texten* (vol. 3 of *Die johanneischen Eschatologie*; WUNT 117; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 227–29. Günter Klein treats day and night as concurrent existential conditions ("Das wahre Licht scheint schon": Beobachtungen zur Zeit- und Geschichtserfahrung einer urchristlichen Schule," *ZTK* 68 [1971]: 272–75). For criticism of Klein's treatment, see Jörg Frey, *Ihre Probleme im Spiegel der Forschung seit Reimarus* (vol. 1 of *Die johanneischen Eschatologie*; WUNT 96; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 186–98.

2. The *v.l.* ἐμε, "I," is generally rejected as easier and having less weighty external support than ἡμᾶς, "we." Peter W. Ensor argues that, in accordance with the use of the first-person plural for the first-person singular in Galilean Aramaic, ἡμᾶς refers to Jesus alone (*Jesus and His "Works": The Johannine Sayings in Historical Perspective* [WUNT 2/85; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996], 113–14). But the Fourth Evangelist can hardly have expected his audience to have understood the Greek in that way. Though Ensor discusses 9:3b–4 at length (pp. 108–29) and mentions in passing the seeming contradiction in 14:12, he makes no attempt to resolve it.

3. Despite extensive discussions of this passage, Martin Asiedu-Pepurah does not discuss this problem (*Johannine Sabbath Conflicts as Juridical Controversy* [WUNT 2/132; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], see especially 123–24).

4. Calvin, *John*, 1:368–69.

more illustriously.<sup>5</sup> But how can unwontedly splendid light be outshone by a light whose view has been withdrawn from the world? Thus Otto Schwankl writes of a tension between John 9:4 and 9:5.<sup>6</sup> In truth, “tension” looks like a euphemism for “contradiction” under the regnant interpretation.

Some commentators address this problem. Barnabas Lindars is one of them: “The work that he [Jesus] has to do is something that he must do himself, and no one can do it for him [a half truth, because the “we” in “we must work the works of God” tends against Lindars’s point]. It is not the kind of continuation of his ministry which the disciples, and the Church after them, will perform after his exaltation.”<sup>7</sup> Robert Kysar says that “day means life span, but may here denote the time span of the evangelistic work of the church.”<sup>8</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels regards “day” in 9:4 as Jesus’ earthly ministry, but because of the disciples’ working later on he denies that the church age constitutes a time of darkness in which no one can work.<sup>9</sup> And for the same reason Herman N. Ridderbos writes that “in the coming of the Spirit and the working of his word ‘the light of the world’ received another form than that of the Son of man.”<sup>10</sup> So far so good, but further questions need to be asked and answered: When then does the night come when no one can work? If the day includes the church age as well as Jesus’ earthly ministry, what time does night represent?

The disciples’ duplicating and surpassing Jesus’ works after he returned to the Father in heaven demands that he be again in the world as its light despite that return. With this deduction agrees his statement that he and the Father “will come” to the believer “and make an abode with him/her” (14:23; compare Jesus’ abiding “in” the believer according to 15:4 and believers’ walking “in the light” and the statement that “the darkness is passing away and the true light is now [ἡδὴ] shining” in 1 John 1:7 and 2:8, respectively).<sup>11</sup> Jesus’ use of “whenever” (ὅταν, 9:5), where we might have expected “while” (ὥς, as twice in 12:35, 36: “while you have the light”), may hint at different temporal stages of Jesus’ being in the world as its light.<sup>12</sup>

5. Ibid.

6. Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis*, 233–34.

7. Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972), 343.

8. Robert Kysar, *John* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 149.

9. J. Ramsey Michaels, *John* (NIBCNT; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 160–61.

10. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 335. See also Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium* (2 vols.; Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 4/1–2; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000–2001), 1:356.

11. Against Francis J. Moloney, “The Function of John 13–17 within Johannine Narrative,” in *Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel* (vol. 2 of “What Is John?”; ed. Fernando F. Segovia; SBLSymS 4; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 64 n. 60.

12. Cf. Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954 repr.), 2:33; against C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 357. Delbert Burkett thinks that “whenever” implies “repeated visits of God (the Son) to earth as recounted in the

We might almost say different segments of daytime, the morning of Jesus' earthly ministry and the afternoon of his shining in the world through the present witness of believers in whom through the Spirit he abides (see the Father's sending the Holy Spirit "in [Jesus'] name," 14:26) and in which believers he abides *as the light* (see 11:10, quoted below).

When then does the night come, and how long does it last? We might think of the period from Jesus' death to his resurrection.<sup>13</sup> But this period is so very short that it does not suit the expansive statement that night is coming when no one can work. (Jews would not work on the Sabbath between Good Friday and Easter Sunday anyway.) And John's nonmention of the darkness that according to the other Gospels shrouded Golgotha immediately before Jesus' death suggests that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus illuminated the world from his cross, and according to 20:17 ("I have not yet ascended to the Father") Jesus remained in the world at least till Easter Sunday morning.

Gustav Stählin interprets the night when no one can work as the time of messianic woes.<sup>14</sup> But evangelistic labor and success will characterize the time of those woes (see Matt 24:14 and, especially because of the many parallels between the Apocalypse and the Gospel of John, Rev 7:9–17; 14:6, 13). We need a better interpretation.

John 11:9–10 offers a clue to such an interpretation: "Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of day? If anyone walks around during the day, he/she does not stumble, because he/she sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks around during the night, he/she does stumble, because the light is not in him/her.'" Jesus compares sunlight with himself as the light of eternal salvation (see 8:12, "the light of life," and 1:4: "in him was life and the life was the light of human beings; also Ps 27:1: "Yahweh is my light and my salvation"). By contrast, then, stumbling in the darkness of night represents falling into eternal damnation, inaugurated by "the resurrection of judgment" as opposed to "the resurrection of life" (John 5:29; compare 3:36).

Stumbling has associations of unbelief, apostasy, and resultant judgment in Rom 9:32–33; 14:13, 20; 1 Cor 8:9; 1 Pet 2:8. Darkness has associations of damnation in Matt 8:12, 22:13, 25:30 (all in reference to being "cast into outer darkness"); 2 Pet 2:17; Jude 13 ("the gloom of darkness for-

Old Testament" (*The Son of Man in the Gospel of John* [JSNTSup 56; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991], 86, 164–67).

13. Sandra M. Schneiders identifies the night as "the dark hour of the passion" ("John 20:11–18: The Encounter of the Easter Jesus with Mary Magdalene—A Transformative Feminist Reading," in *Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel* [vol. 1 of "What Is John?"; ed. Fernando F. Segovia; SBLSymS 3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996], 157–58). Compare Thomas Knöppler's interpretation of the night out into which Judas Iscariot goes (13:30) as the night that puts a stop to Jesus' working, though Knöppler also infers a new day from the disciples' later working (14:12; *Die theologia crucis des Johannesevangelium* [WMANT 69; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994], 178–79). See also Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis*, 233–34.

14. Gustav Stählin, "Zum Problem der johanneischen Eschatologie," *ZNW* 33 (1934): 240.

ever").<sup>15</sup> Night has associations of damnation in Luke 12:20, 1 Thess 5:1–11. Notably, when Judas Iscariot went out from the presence of Jesus, the light of the world, “it was night” (John 13:30). Theologically speaking, why? Because night represents the “perdition” of “the son of perdition,” Judas (John 17:12). And “there is no night” in the new Jerusalem because believers, who *are* the new Jerusalem, will have escaped the damnation of “the second death” (see Rev 20:14–15; 21:9, 25; 22:5).<sup>16</sup> In the yet-to-come night of that damnation, no one can work the works of God—that is, the works of salvation symbolized by Jesus’ giving sight to the man born blind—because everyone’s eternal fate will have been sealed (compare Rev 22:11). “The last day” will have ended (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). Jesus will have “come” for a final time (John 21:23). Then the saints “will rest from their labors, for their works follow along with them” (Rev 14:13). The dark night of damnation for unbelievers will have released believers from the salvific labor of doing the works of Jesus and greater works than his. And for them, the believers, the light of the new Jerusalem will not be Jesus as the light of the *world*, the sun; for “the city has no need . . . of the light of the sun” (Rev 22:5; see also 21:23). “For the glory of God enlightened it, and its lamp was the Lamb” (Rev 21:23). “The Lord God will shine as light upon them” (Rev 22:5; compare Isa 60:19–20).

#### FOR SOME, NO NEED OF BODILY RESURRECTION (JOHN 11:26A)

In the dialogue between Jesus and Martha before he raises her brother, Lazarus, from the dead, “Jesus says to her, ‘Your brother will rise.’ Martha says to him, ‘I know that he will rise in the resurrection in the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The person believing in me will live even if he/she should die. And everyone living and believing in me will never die’” (John 11:23–26). The Greek verb behind “rise,” ἀνίστημι, means “stand up,” as the Greek noun behind “resurrection” (ἀνάστασις) means “a standing up.” In his statements, then, Jesus means that corpses lying supine in their tombs, like sleepers, will awake and stand up alive.<sup>17</sup> To beat a dead horse, resurrection does not have to do with the immortality of souls; it has to do with physical bodies. Therefore it is wrong to understand v. 25c as meaning that the believer who dies physically will

15. Compare Isa 8:22, 45:7, 60:2. In extracanonical literature, see 1 *En.* 10:4–6; 41:8; 62:4; 63:6–7; 88:1; 103:7; 108:4–7, 14; 2 *En.* 10:1–5; 4 *Ezra* 7:125; *Sib. Or.* 2:29–92, 300–303; *T. Job* 43:6; *Wis* 17:2, 17, 21; 18:4.

16. For believers as the new Jerusalem, see my *Old Is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations* (WUNT 178: Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 399–411.

17. Compare Acts 9:40–41: “Peter . . . turning toward the corpse (τὸ σῶμα) said, ‘Tabitha, stand up (ἀνάστηθι).’ And she opened her eyes and, seeing Peter, sat up (ἀνεκάθισεν). And giving her a hand he made her stand up (ἀνέστησεν). And calling the saints and the widows, he presented her alive (ζῶσαν).”

continue to have the eternal life he or she already possesses.<sup>18</sup> An understanding of this sort leaves Jesus' claim to be the resurrection (v. 25b) standing out in the cold—without a referential followup. To the contrary, just as ἐζήσαν occurs twice in Rev 20:4–5 for future resurrection, so ζήσεται in John 11:25c refers to future resurrection.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life, then, in that he embodies resurrection and life, so that he will raise himself from physical death to a physical life that will last forever (John 2:19–21, 10:17–18; see his tidying his graveclothes upon raising himself in 20:5–7 and showing the scars of crucifixion on his risen body in 20:20, 25, 27). And because he has the power to do so, he is the source of physical resurrection to eternal life for everyone who dies believing in him (5:21, 25–29; 6:39–40).<sup>19</sup>

A problem crops up, however. In 11:25 Jesus implies the believer may die, but in 11:26 he says the believer will never die. Here is one of the two usual solutions to the problem: whereas 11:25 means that by virtue of physical resurrection the believer will live eternally even though he or she had suffered *physical* death, 11:26 means that by virtue of having *eternal* life the believer will never suffer *eternal* death.<sup>20</sup>

We can agree that the believer will never suffer eternal death, because in 8:51 Jesus said that the person who keeps his word “will never see death” and because in 6:47–51 he shifted from physical death to not dying because of eternal life. But there is something awkward in the foregoing understanding of 11:26. We would expect Jesus to have said, “and everyone believing in me and living will never die,” or similarly to 3:16, “and everyone believing in me will never die but have eternal life,” so that as

18. Against John Henry Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 2:388; Brendan Byrne, *Lazarus: A Contemporary Reading of John 11:1–46* (Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 51–52, to take but two examples. According to Byrne, “Perhaps we should translate [11:25c], ‘... even if he dies, he will still be alive [with eternal life].’”

19. John 5:29 distinguishes between “a resurrection of life” and “a resurrection of judgment.”

20. Jacob Kremer goes so far as to add the phrase “in Ewigkeit” to Jesus' statement that everyone living and believing in him will never die (*Lazarus: Die Geschichte einer Auferstehung: Text, Wirkungsgeschichte und Botschaft von John 11,1–46* [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985], 68–69). See also Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (2 vols.; ZBK; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2001), 1:346; Bernard, *John*, 2:389; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1942), 801–2; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 364; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 191; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I–XII)* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 425 (though Brown prefers to speak of living “spiritually” rather than “eternally”). It is difficult to know why Brown thinks the governing of “living” and “believing” by one definite article favors this view. And his argument that ζῶω relates to ζωή, John's standard term for eternal life as opposed to physical life, runs into several roadblocks: (1) the present context of Lazarus's physical death and impending physical resurrection; (2) physical resurrection at the last day in this same context; (3) John's use of the verb ζῶω for physical living in 4:50, 51, 53; 5:25; 6:51a; 14:19; and (4) the probable inclusion of physical resurrection in eternal life for deceased believers (6:51b, 57, 58; 14:19).

elsewhere throughout John eternal life *follows* as a result of believing in Jesus. Why the reverse order here?<sup>21</sup>

Some commentators have answered the question correctly by interpreting “everyone living” as a reference not to everyone who has eternal life but to everyone who is living *physically*, in contrast to the believer in 11:25 who dies physically (see 4:50, 51, 53; 5:25; 6:51a; 14:19, cited earlier, for other Johannine uses of ζῶω for physical living). Thus 11:26 means that the believer who lives physically will suffer eternal death no more than deceased believers will suffer it.<sup>22</sup> This understanding makes sense of Jesus’ putting living before believing.

But if in contrast to physical dying in 11:25 we have a reference to physical living in 11:26, we would expect in the further part of 11:26 a reference to never dying *physically*. A paraphrase of 11:25–26 could therefore read as follows: “The person who believes in me—even though he or she dies physically—will come back to physical life by virtue of resurrection. And everyone who is living physically and believes in me will never die physically.”

What believers could Jesus be referring to who will never die physically? Martha has just mentioned “the resurrection *in the last day*” (11:24). Some people will not need resurrection because they will not have died by then. They will still be living. And if these people who are still living believe in Jesus, they will escape physical death as well as eternal death. This answer to the question not only makes sense of Jesus’ placement of living before believing. It also accords with 21:23, where Jesus says to Peter about the beloved disciple, “If I want him to remain till I come [that is, to stay alive till I come], what is that to you?” So those who will never die are those who live right up to the second coming, the last day, the day of resurrection, as Paul writes in 1 Thess 4:16–17: “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with an archangel’s voice and God’s trumpet; and first the dead in Christ [previously described as ‘the ones who have fallen asleep’] will rise [ἀναστήσονται, ‘will stand up,’ as in John 11:23–25]. Then we who are living [οἱ ζῶντες; compare ὁ ζῶν in John 11:26], who are remaining, will be snatched up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”<sup>23</sup>

21. Andrew T. Lincoln explains that “‘everyone who lives’ picks up immediately on the preceding ‘will live’ and for this reason comes before the mention of believing” (*The Gospel according to St John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005), 324). But in view of the reference to believing in 11:25c, the picking up of living in 11:26 (with the sense of eternal life, as in 11:25c) would make the followup of believing otiose.

22. So, for example, Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: With an Historical and Critical Introduction* (trans. Timothy Dwight; 2 vols.; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 2:180; Lagrange, *Jean*, 302; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (ed. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches; trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 403; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 2:331; Ridderbos, *John*, 396; Byrne, *Lazarus*, 51–52.

23. Beasley-Murray disputes a treatment of ὁ ζῶν in 11:26 as referring to a person who is physically alive (*John*, 191). He asks, “But what other kind of person believes besides one

*"THEY ARE FINISHED," NOT "IT IS FINISHED"*  
(JOHN 19:30)

Most often, English translations of τετέλεσται in John 19:30 offer "it is finished," though occasionally we read "it is accomplished," "it is achieved," "it is consummated," or the like (compare the Latin Vulgate's *Consummatum est*, which Alf Corell made into the title of his book on Johannine theology<sup>24</sup>). Commentators follow suit. Binding these translations together is a treatment of the third-person verbal ending -ται as singular in meaning ("it") as well as in form.

As often noted, however, τετέλεσται in v. 30 echoes τετέλεσται in v. 28: μετὰ τοῦτο εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἤδη πάντα τετέλεσται . . . , "After this, Jesus, knowing that all are now finished . . ." There, the subject of τετέλεσται takes the plural number (πάντα); and as neuter in gender the plural subject takes a singular verb in accordance with normal Greek usage. Hence, a correct translation runs as above, "all *are* now finished," not "everything *is* now finished" (despite the frequency of this latter translation, which for "everything" would require the neuter singular πᾶν instead of πάντα<sup>25</sup>). Insofar as the second τετέλεσται echoes the first one, then, we should translate the second, "they are finished," not "it is finished." In this translation "they" harks back to πάντα, "all."

Confirming this translation is the postpositive οὖν toward the beginning of v. 30: "therefore, when he had received the wine vinegar Jesus said, τετέλεσται." The illative (οὖν) indicates that Jesus said τετέλεσται (v. 30) because he knew that "all are now finished" (v. 28). Consequently, not only in respect to the literary context, in which the sheer proximity of occurrences favors a shared meaning, but also in respect to the narrational referent, according to which Jesus' statement arose out of his knowledge, the second τετέλεσται needs the translation, "they are finished," in reference to the "all" that he knew were finished.<sup>26</sup>

Support for the foregoing argument comes from the Fourth Evangelist's nearly exceptionless adherence to the Greek practice of putting sin-

who lives?" The obvious answer is "no other kind." Yet this fact helps make the point that "everyone living" is awkward and otiose, especially in its mention before "believing," unless it refers to believers still living at the last day as distinguished from deceased believers.

24. Alf Corell, *Consummatum Est: Eschatology and Church in the Gospel of St. John* (London: SPCK, 1958).

25. Compare the statement of A. Plummer that "the identity between τετέλεσται here [in v. 28] and in v. 30 must be preserved in translation; **are now finished**" (*The Gospel according to St John* [CGTSC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905], 331 [bolding original]). Might the mistranslation "everything is now finished" come by way of retroinfluence from v. 30, "it is finished"?

26. As an "omniscient narrator," the Fourth Evangelist knows *what* Jesus knows as well as *that* Jesus knows it. The echoing of v. 28 in v. 30 makes very unlikely the suggestion that in v. 30 τετέλεσται conveys a double meaning: (1) "My life is finished" and (2) "My work is finished" (against O. Cullmann, "Der joh. Gebrauch doppeldeutiger Ausdrücke als Schlüssel zum Verständnis d. vierten Ev.," *TZ* 4 [1948]: 370; J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* [HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968], 410).

gular verbs with neuter plural subjects. Apart from v. 30 and variant readings, he does so 31 times.<sup>27</sup> If accepted, variant readings would add 3 more.<sup>28</sup> Though an unexpressed but implied neuter plural subject takes a plural verb 7 times in John,<sup>29</sup> only once does a neuter plural subject that is expressed in its own clause take a plural verb—and there probably because the immediately surrounding context contains those 7 instances of plural verbs with unexpressed but implied neuter plural subjects.<sup>30</sup> Grammatically as well as contextually, then, we have good reason to treat the third person singular ending of τετέλεσται in v. 30 as harking back to the neuter plural πάντα in v. 28.

In what then do the “all” of v. 28 consist? Are we to satisfy ourselves with a generalizing “all things”? Probably not. In 5:19–20 πάντα refers to the “works” (ἔργα) that Jesus does in imitation of his Father: “Amen, amen I tell you, the Son is not able to do on his own even one thing unless he sees the Father doing it. For the things which that one [‘the Father’] is doing—these things also the Son is doing likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things (πάντα) that he himself is doing, and greater works (ἔργα) than these he will show him, that you may marvel” (compare 7:21: “I have done one work [ἔργον, as narrated and discussed in ch. 5], and you all marvel”). Similar is 4:45: “Therefore, when he [Jesus] went into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, because they had seen all things (πάντα), as many as they were (ὅσα), that he had done in Jerusalem during the festival.” And what were the things he had done there and then? “Signs,” according to 2:23: “And when he was in Jerusalem during the Passover, [that is,] during the festival, many people believed in his name because of seeing the signs (σημεῖα) that he was doing.” Furthermore, the reference in 4:45 to all the many things that Jesus had done is immediately followed by an account of his doing another sign, the second one in Cana of Galilee (4:46–54, especially 54: “And again Jesus did this second sign after coming out of Judea into Galilee [specifically ‘Cana’ according to v. 46]”; compare 2:11: “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee”). As is well known, John regularly uses “signs” and “works” more or less as synonyms for Jesus’ deeds. These two nouns share the neuter gender in Greek and therefore fit the neuter gender of πάντα in 19:28.<sup>31</sup>

The nouns occur occasionally in the singular for what God and Jesus do—5 times in the case of ἔργον,<sup>32</sup> 4 or 5 times in the case of σημεῖον<sup>33</sup>—

27. John 1:3, 28; 3:9, 19, 20, 21 (2×), 23; 5:36; 6:23, 63; 7:8; 9:3; 10:3, 4, 12, 16, 21, 22, 25, 41; 12:16; 15:7; 16:15; 17:10; 19:28, 31, 36; 20:30; 21:25 (2×).

28. John 6:13, 10:27, 17:7.

29. John 10:4, 5 (3×), 14, 16 (2×). One of the instances in 10:16 suffers some serious text critical doubt.

30. John 10:8.

31. Only Jesus performs signs, however, whereas his disciples as well as he perform works.

32. John 4:34; 7:21; 10:32c, 33; 17:4.

33. John 2:18; 4:54; 6:14(?), 30; 12:18.

but predominantly in the plural—13 times in the case of ἔργα,<sup>34</sup> 10 or 11 times in the case of σημεῖα<sup>35</sup>—and with emphasis on their large number in 10:32b (“I have shown you *many* good works from the Father”); 2:11 (“This *beginning* of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee”); 7:31 (“When the Christ comes, he will not do *more* signs than the ones this one has done, will he?”); 11:47 (“this man is doing *many* signs”; contrast 10:41: “John [the Baptist] did not do even one sign”); 20:30 (“Jesus did *many other* signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book”). Jesus’ saying, “The Father has given me the works [N.B. the plural] that I should *complete* (τελειώσω) them” (5:36), adds to the emphasis on multiplicity. Even the singular twice carries an emphasis on Jesus’ completion of the work the Father gave him to do (4:34, 17:4, with the use of τελειόω rather than τελέω<sup>36</sup>), so that all the many works add up to a collective singular.<sup>37</sup>

A third neuter noun, used by John always in the plural, also occurs in association with the neuter plural πάντα. That is ῥήματα, “words,” as in 3:34–35 (“For he whom God has sent speaks the words [ῥήματα] of God . . . The Father loves the Son and has given all things [πάντα] into his hand”) and 17:7–8a, 10 (“Now they have come to know that all things [πάντα], as many as you have given me, are from you, because the words [ῥήματα] that you gave me I have given them . . . and all my things [πάντα] are yours, and yours, mine”). Referring indirectly to Jesus’ words are 14:26 (“But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name—that one will teach you all things [πάντα] and remind you of all things [πάντα] that I *said* to you”); 15:15 (“I *made known* to you all things [πάντα] that I *heard* from my Father”); and 16:15 (“All things [πάντα], as many as they are, that the Father has are mine. On this account I said that he [‘the Spirit of truth,’ 16:13] takes from mine and will *announce* [them, referring to the ‘many things’ Jesus has ‘to say’ to his disciples but that they cannot yet bear, that is, ‘the coming things’ and ‘all the truth’ that the Spirit ‘will hear’ and ‘will take’ from Jesus, 16:12–14]”; compare Jesus’ “knowing all things [πάντα]” according to 18:4, 21:17; “knowing that the Father had given all things [πάντα] into his hands” according to 13:3; and the Father’s having “given all things [πάντα] into his hand” according to 3:35). Notable is the frequency and closeness of the association between ῥήματα and πάντα.

34. John 5:36 (2×); 7:3; 9:3, 4; 10:25, 32b, 37, 38; 14:10, 11, 12; 15:24.

35. John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 6:2, 14 *v.l.*, 26; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:37; 20:30. I do not count 6:28, 29, because there “the work(s) of God” apparently means the work(s) that God requires rather than does. But compare Rev 3:26, 15:3.

36. For my purposes I need not discuss whether the Fourth Evangelist uses these two verbs synonymously (compare his well-known fondness for synonyms) or maintains a distinction between them, such as completing for τελειόω and ending for τελέω.

37. Compare the synonymy of “work” and “works” in John 6:28–29 and F.-M. Braun, “La Réduction du Pluriel au Singulier dans l’Évangile et la Première Lettre de Jean,” *NTS* 24 (1977–78): 40–67; *idem*, *Les Grandes Traditions d’Israël et l’accord des Écritures d’après le Quatrième Évangile* (vol. 2 of *Jean le Théologien*; EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1964), 140–41.

Nine times ῥήματα occurs for Jesus' words.<sup>38</sup> Three additional times it occurs for the words of God that Jesus speaks.<sup>39</sup> And just as these words interpret Jesus' signs and works, so also the signs and works illustrate the words.<sup>40</sup>

It is fairly common to say that according to 19:30 the "work" (singular) that the Father gave Jesus to do is finished.<sup>41</sup> But the plural, "works," seldom enters the interpretation of 19:30, "words" even less often. And despite the heavy emphasis on their large number—an emphasis that suits the plural πάντα—"signs" rarely if ever makes an entry.<sup>42</sup>

If "they are finished" means that all Jesus' signs, works, and words are finished, we can dismiss two interpretations based in part on the translation "it is finished": (1) "it" refers to "the Scripture" mentioned in 19:28,<sup>43</sup> and (2) "it" refers to Jesus' loving the disciples according to 13:1 ("he loved them to [the] end [εἰς τέλος]").<sup>44</sup> Besides, even though the Fourth Evangelist may use τελέω and τελειόω as synonyms, the use of τελειωθῆ with "the Scripture" rather than the corresponding form of τελέω combines with the exact correspondence between τετέλεσται in v. 30 and the same in v. 28 to disfavor a finishing of Scripture in v. 30. This argument holds whether we take the ἵνα-clause with the preceding ("Jesus, knowing that [ὅτι] all are now finished that [ἵνα] the Scripture might be completed . . .") or with the following ("that [ἵνα] the Scripture might be completed Jesus said, 'I thirst'").<sup>45</sup> If "it" refers to Scripture, the latter syntax contradicts the

38. John 5:47; 6:63, 68; 8:20; 10:21; 12:47, 48; 14:10; 15:7.

39. John 3:34, 8:47, 17:8.

40. See my *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 1–50 = idem, *The Old is Better*, 324–59, for a thorough discussion of the way in which Word-Christology, growing out of John's prologue, permeates the rest of the Fourth Gospel with an overwhelming emphasis on Jesus' words (ῥήματα acting as a synonym for λόγος/-οι, not to mention here a number of other Johannine locutions that strengthen the emphasis). Compare Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; 2 vols.; New York: Scribner's, 1955), 2:60; idem, *John*, 13 n. 1.

41. See, for example, Georg Richter, *Studien zum Johannesevangelium* (ed. Josef Hainz; Biblische Untersuchungen 13; Regensburg: Pustet, 1977), 85; D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 134.

42. For a partial exception, see G. Bampfylde, "John xix 28: A Case for a different translation," *NovT* 11 (1969): 250: "all the words and works of His ministry . . . have now come to their end."

43. See, for example, Daniel J. Harrington, *John's Thought and Theology: An Introduction* (GNS 33; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1990), 106.

44. See, for example, Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7–21* (ed. Robert W. Funk with the assistance of Ulrich Busse; trans. Robert W. Funk; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 194: "The love that is mentioned there [in John 13:1] was brought to its fulfillment on the cross"; also Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2:261.

45. In addition to commentaries, see discussions by Roland Bergmeier, "TETEΛΕΣΤΑΙ Joh 19:30," *ZNW* 79 (1988): 282–90; Bampfylde, "John xix 28," 247–60; W. Kraus, "Die Vollendung der Schrift nach Joh 19,28: Überlegungen zum Umgang mit der Schrift im Johannesevangelium," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; BETL 131; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 629–36. Raymond E. Brown thinks the ἵνα-clause points both backward

immediately preceding statement that all are “now” (ἤδη) finished. For all are not yet completed if the slaking of Jesus’ thirst with wine vinegar remains as unfinished business. And if 19:28 and 19:30 allude to 13:1, the allusions may mean that the love of Jesus for his own reaches its end in the finishing of his signs, works, and words rather than that his love itself is finished.

On the other hand, a good argument supports taking the clause “that (ἵνα) the Scripture might be completed” with the preceding “Jesus, knowing that (εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι) all are now finished.” Two earlier passages having exactly the same construction and much the same vocabulary can be taken in no other way: (1) “Therefore Jesus, knowing that (Ἰησοῦς . . . γνοὺς ὅτι) they were going to come and seize him that (ἵνα) they might make him king” (6:15); (2) “Jesus, knowing that (εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι) his hour had come that (ἵνα) he would transfer out of this world to the Father” (13:1; see also 13:18; 17:12; 19:18, 36 for ἵνα-clauses dependent on the preceding and referring to Scripture). Jesus’ saying “I thirst” and taking some wine vinegar would still allude to Ps 69:22b (“And for my thirst they gave me wine vinegar to drink”; compare Ps 63:2) but not by way of quotation (“I thirst” does not occur in that psalm) or by way of fulfillment (for in contrast to 5:39, 7:38, 10:35, 13:18, 17:12, here it is the Fourth Evangelist, not Jesus, who refers to Scripture; and elsewhere in John πληρωθῆ rather than τελειωθῆ expresses the fulfillment of Scripture [see 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 36]).<sup>46</sup>

Though the finishing of all Jesus’ signs, works, and words does not fulfill the Scripture, it does issue in his giving over the Spirit (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα)—to the disciples, as it turns out in 20:22: “he breathed on [them] and said to them, ‘Receive (λάβετε) the Holy Spirit.’” We should note the difference from Luke 23:46, where Jesus places his spirit into the Father’s hands (πάτερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παρετίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου) rather than giving the Spirit over to the disciples. This giving over of the Spirit is made possible by the finishing of all Jesus’ signs, works, and words.

In summary, τετέλεσται in 19:30 means “they are finished” in an echo of ἤδη πάντα τετέλεσται, “all are now finished,” in 19:28. “They” refers to “all,” and “all” (πάντα, neuter plural) likely refers to Jesus’ “signs,” “works,” and “words” (σημεῖα, ἔργα, and ῥήματα, neuter plurals). His finishing them enables him to give the Spirit over to the disciples, those who believe in him.

*Consummata sunt!*

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and forward (*The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* [2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994], 2:1072–73).

46. Brown thinks that the Fourth Evangelist has Ps 22:16 primarily in mind; Ps 69:22 and the Passover lamb, secondarily (*The Death of the Messiah*, 2:1073–74). But neither Ps 22:16 nor the motif of a Passover lamb features “thirst” or “wine vinegar,” as Ps 69:22 does.