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Volume 34, Number 1, 1978

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/705648ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/705648ar>

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Publisher(s)

Faculté de philosophie, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (print)

1703-8804 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Collins, R. F. (1978). The Search for Jesus. Reflections on the Fourth Gospel. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 34(1), 27–48.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/705648ar>

THE SEARCH FOR JESUS

REFLECTIONS ON THE

FOURTH GOSPEL

Raymond F. COLLINS

Within the vast body of literature published in an attempt to elucidate the meaning of the Gospels for the benefit of men of faith, attention is sometimes drawn to the programmatic nature of the words first spoken by Jesus during his public ministry. After the descent of the Spirit at the time of his baptism, the Markan Jesus solemnly proclaims: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). This Jesuianic announcement of the eschatological event prepares the reader of this oldest gospel for the subsequent proclamation, in word and in deed, of the coming of the Kingdom of God—surely one of the most important themes of Mark.

Mark's programmatic dictum is taken over and somewhat adapted¹ by Matthew who incorporates the saying of his Markan source in Mt 4:17. Matthew, however, first places the words "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" on the lips of John the Baptist² (Mt 3:2). This prompts the attentive reader of Matthew to consider the Baptist's eschatological pronouncement as part of Jesus' public ministry³. Within this perspective, the first public utterance of the Matthean Jesus is found in the post-baptismal dialogue when Jesus responds to the Baptist: "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"

1. Matthew has characteristically substituted his *hē basileia tōn ouranōn*, "the kingdom of heaven," for Mark's *shē basileia tou theou*, "the kingdom of God". Matthew has inverted the announcement of the coming of the kingdom and the call to repentance, adding an explanatory *gar* ("for") as he does so. Matthew has also omitted from Mt 4:17 both the call for belief in the gospel and the announcement of the fulfillment of time. The latter omission, coupled with the appearance of *plērōsai*, "fulfill" in Mt 3:15 serves to strengthen our contention that Mt 3:15 represents Matthew's version of Jesus' first public utterance.
2. The Baptist's words in Mt 3:2 are textually identical with the dominical logion of Mt 4:17. The identity of the proclamation of the Baptist and that of Jesus owes to Matthew's fulfillment notion (cf. Mt 5:17, etc.). We should also note that Matthew has effectively diminished the sharp contrast implied in the traditional John-Jesus sequence (Mk 1:14) by separating the mention of John's arrest (Mt 4:12) from Jesus' announcement of the coming of the kingdom (Mt 4:17) by means of an extended fulfillment citation (Mt 4:13-16).
3. Since the Baptist's ministry belongs to the public ministry of Jesus, the baptism of Jesus must be considered as a public event. That it is to be so considered is confirmed by Mt 3:17. Matthew's third person announcement, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" is a public announcement which replaces the private revelation of Mk 1:11, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

(Mt 3 : 15). The logion, with its use of characteristic Matthean vocabulary (*plêroô*⁴, *dikaïosunê*⁵), is clearly the work of the evangelist's hand. It announces that Matthew will present Jesus as he in whom the divine plan of salvation, all righteousness,⁶ will be fulfilled.

Unlike Matthew, Luke makes a sharp distinction between the ministry of the Baptist and that of Jesus. According to the third Synoptist, the public ministry of Jesus begins only after the ministry of the Baptist has been brought to its definitive close.⁷ Accordingly, the first public utterance⁸ of the Lukan Jesus is spoken in the synagogue of Nazareth when Jesus solemnly proclaims: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). The characteristic use of "Today"⁹ shows that we are once again dealing with a passage that comes from an evangelist's hand; the words are of Luke himself. It is true that Luke's Gospel does not particularly employ fulfillment formulae to show that Jesus has fulfilled the Scriptures. Nevertheless "Today" is an important idea in the Gospel of Luke. Today is the time of salvation; it is the day of Jesus. The latter is the bearer of the Spirit. His ministry is to the *anawim*, the poor. His miracles are written in such a way as to recall the OT record of the saving deed effected by God on behalf of his people.¹⁰ The "today" of Jesus is all-important because it is the time of the fulfillment of the expectations of God's people.

To state that the author of the Fourth Gospel imitated the Synoptists' use of the initial logion of Jesus to set a tone for his narrative is to go beyond the evidence presently available.¹¹ However, it is not unlikely that the first logion of Jesus found in John introduces a major theme of the Gospel. Two of the major twentieth century commentators on Jn, M.-J. Lagrange and Rudolf Bultmann,¹² are as one in noting that the question, "What do you seek?" (Jn 1:38) not only contains the first words of Jesus found in the Fourth Gospel but that it is also a question which is addressed to each reader of the Gospel. According to these exegetes, it is as imperative that the twentieth century reader respond to that question as it was for the unnamed disciples of Jn 1:35-39 to do so. In a similar

4. Mt 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35,44; 21:4; 23:32; 26:54,56; 27:9.

5. Mt 3:15; 5:6,10,20; 6:1,33; 21:32.

6. Cf. Albert DESCAMPS, *Les justes et la justice dans les évangiles et le christianisme primitif hormis la doctrine proprement paulinienne* (Louvain, 1950).

7. The imprisonment of John is cited in Lk 3:20, with the mention of Jesus' baptism being reserved until 3:21. Moreover, Luke interposes the genealogy of Jesus between the baptismal scenes and the temptation narrative. Cf. Hans CONZELMANN, *The Theology of Saint Luke* (London, 1960) p.21.

8. A logion of Jesus is cited in Lk 2:49. The evangelist does not, however, include the finding in the temple pericope within the account of Jesus' public ministry.

9. Lk 2:11; 3:22; 4:21; 5:26; 12:28; 13:32,33; 19:5,9; 22:34,61; 23:43.

10. By way of example one might refer to Lk 4:25-27 which explicitly recalls the miracle stories of the Elijah-Elisha cycle, and to Lk 7:11-17 with its allusion to 1 Kg 17:17-24 and 2 Kg 4:32-37.

11. The issue of John's awareness of and dependence upon the Synoptics continues to be debated. During the 1975 Louvain Biblical Colloquium both F. Neirynck and M. Sabbe argued that specific Johannine passages showed traces of literary dependence on the Synoptic account.

12. M.-J. LAGRANGE, *Évangile selon Saint Jean. Études Bibliques* (Paris, 1936) p. 45; Rudolf BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford, 1971), p. 100; cf. Clayton R. BOWEN, "The Fourth Gospel as Dramatic Material," JBL 49 (1930) 292-305, p. 300.

fashion, Adolf Schlatter attributes a certain timelessness to this inaugural Johannine question by noting that "there is no other requirement for his union with men than that they seek him and come to him."¹³ Given the significant placement of the "What do you seek?" question in Jn 1:38 and the authority of commentators such as Lagrange, Schlatter, and Bultmann, it appears legitimate to inquire as to the existence and meaning of the "search for Jesus" as a Johannine theme.

One might begin with Lindars' observation that the verb *zêteo*, "to seek," is a very common word in John.¹⁴ Indeed the verb appears some 34 times in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁵ The verb appears more frequently in John than it does in any of the Synoptics,¹⁶ but the mere frequency of occurrence in John is not such as to establish the search for Jesus as a specifically Johannine theme. What is more significant in this regard is that the verb "to seek" occurs in passages which are manifestly Johannine constructions or at least bear clear traces of Johannine redaction. Moreover, one might note with Cullmann, Wead¹⁷ and others, that John often uses terms with a double meaning. Boismard has pointed out that the Aramaic verb *be'a* means both "to seek" and "to want."¹⁸ Consequently, one might find in the Johannine use of the verb *zêteo* a reflection of a Semitic tradition and a typical Johannine play on words. It is, however, not necessary to have recourse to the theories of Burney, Torrey, et. al with respect to an Aramaic tradition lying behind our Gospel in order to propose the hypothesis that John's use of *zêteo* might represent another Johannine choice of a word with a double meaning. Both of Boismard's proposed meanings of the Aramaic verb are appropriate renderings of the Greek *zêteo*. In a word, *zêteo* belongs to the type of vocabulary easily appropriated by the author of the Fourth Gospel.

In asking whether John's use of *zêteo* represents a deliberate choice of a term with a double meaning and serves, therefore, as an indication that the evangelist would have his gospel read in the perspective of a "search for Jesus", we must also take into consideration some elements of John's literary technique. It seems appropriate to speak of two levels of the Johannine narrative. The narrative pericopes are characterized by a dramatic flair. The use of irony heightens the drama but also leads the reader to find a deeper significance in the drama. In other words it is appropriate for the reader of the Fourth Gospel to distinguish between the Johannine drama and its theological significance, between the event and the meaning. Sometimes the author of the Gospel explicitly draws his reader's attention to the theological significance of his account; at other times he does not. The Johannine note found in Jn 2:21 tells the readers that the sequence on the destruction of the temple (Jn 2:13-22) is to be understood of the death and Resurrection of

13. Adolf SCHLATTER, *Der Evangelist Johannes. Wie er spricht, denkt u. glaubt. Ein Kommentar zum 4. Evangelium* (Stuttgart, 1930), p. 53.

14. Barnabas LINDARS, *The Gospel of John. New Century Bible* (London, 1972), p. 295.

15. Jn 1:39. . . 20:15. Codez Bezae has an additional use of *zêtein* in Jn 20:13.

16. Mt: 14x; Mk: 10x; Lk: 26x.

17. Cf. Oscar CULLMANN, *Early Christian Worship*, SBT 10 (London, 1953), pp. 50-59; D. W. WEAD, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Basel, 1970), Chap. 3: The Double Meaning, pp. 30-70.

18. M.-E. BOISMARD, *Du Baptême à Cana, Lectio Divina*, 18 (Paris, 1956), p. 73.

Jesus. Without the benefit of such an explicit attestation as is found in Jn 2:21 the reader of the first few chapters of the Gospel must come to the awareness that the story of the water become wine (Jn 2: 1-12) symbolizes the fulness of the messianic gift given by Jesus. Similarly the reader must exploit his own sensitivity to Johannine style to come to the realization that the call of the first disciples in Jn 1:35-39 is a paradigmatic narrative on Christian discipleship, viewed from a Johannine perspective. Within this perspective, the verb *akolouthein*, "to follow," in v. 37 is to interpreted both as an element of Johannine dramatization, i.e. insofar as the unnamed disciples are portrayed as physically following at a distance behind Jesus as he went his way, and as an element of the Johannine message, i.e. insofar as the disciples are portrayed as being in the condition of disciples, i.e. "followers" of Jesus.

It is likewise appropriate to speak of two levels of the Johannine narrative from still another but somewhat related point of view. We must distinguish between the *Sitz-im-Leben Jesu* and the *Sitz-im-Leben Evangeliums*. The author of the Fourth Gospel is at once reflecting on the significance of the historical ministry of Jesus of Nazareth (the life situation of Jesus) and the then current situation of the Johannine church (the life situation of the author of the Gospel). In recent years, for example, two studies¹⁹ have cited the importance of considering the Fourth Gospel within the perspective of the trial of Jesus. This is not simply a matter of reflection on the trial of Jesus before Pilate and the high priests; it is just as much an observation that Jesus is an object of contention between the Johannine church and the Jewish synagogue. In a word, the reader of the Fourth Gospel must be aware that John composed his narrative as a reflection upon his Church and its needs just as much as he attempted to offer his readers an interpretation of the historical ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The realization that we must distinguish two levels of Johannine narrative with respect both to language (event—significance) and to perspective (Jesus—the Church), should make the discerning reader open to the possibility that within the Johannine texts which speak of the disciples' search for Jesus there lies a still deeper significance. It is true that the reader of the Fourth Gospel must be wary lest he read into the Johannine text more than the author intended. It is no less true that he must be sensitive to the technique of an evangelist who incorporates into his text a significance which can be discerned only by means of a reflection on the entire Gospel and the techniques which the evangelist has employed in his composition.

What Do You Seek?—The Disciples' Search for Jesus

One of the techniques used by the author of the Fourth Gospel is the question.²⁰ Some questions receive an unexpected answer;²¹ still others are

19. J. L. MARTYN, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, 1968); A. E. HARVEY, *Jesus on Trial. A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (London, 1976).

20. Cf. A. VANHOYE, "Interrogation johannique et exégèse de Cana (Jn 2.4)," *Biblica* 55 (1974) 157-167.

21. 4:12; 8:53,57; 9:2.

unanswered.²² The question, "What do you seek?", which Jesus addresses to the unnamed disciples in Jn 1:38 is, in effect, to be classed among the unanswered questions. The disciples respond to Jesus' question with another question, "Where are you staying?" To this Jesus responds, "Come and see."²³ In one sense Jesus' question is superfluous. There is no need for the Johannine Jesus who knows what is in the heart of man²⁴ to ask for information. In another sense, it is imperative that Jesus take the initiative in the drama of salvation. The first words which Jesus speaks in the Fourth Gospel are an initial invitation. It is Jesus who takes the initiative, Jesus who invites. From the very outset of the Johannine narrative it is clear that it is Jesus who chooses his disciples.²⁵ Nevertheless, the Johannine narrative does not immediately indicate the result of this initial encounter with Jesus. That is reserved for the following pericope (Jn 1:40-42) in which Andrew announces to his brother, "We have found the Messiah." (v.41). The disciples of the Baptist responded to the witness of the Baptist and the invitation of Jesus. Thus they became the disciples of Jesus himself.

Both Zimmermann and Heise²⁶ have accurately noted that the pericope in which Jesus addresses his invitational question to the as yet unnamed disciples is full of plays-on-words and terms with a double meaning. Given the evangelist's choice of expressions, it would be absurd to think that any real interest is attached to the external details as such.²⁷ Rather, the five verses (Jn 1:35-39) contain a Johannine paradigm on discipleship. The style betrays the hand of the evangelist. He makes use of a characteristic revelation formula.²⁸ He reduces the Baptist to the role of witness.²⁹ He interprets an Aramaic expression.³⁰ He makes use of symbolism. Thus the whole scenario becomes a reflection on discipleship in general. Discipleship comes as a response to witness and as a response to the invitation of Jesus. It leads to the knowledge of where Jesus lives. From the perspective of the evangelist, the dwelling place of Jesus is not some inn or other in which Jesus might pass the night. Rather the disciple learns that Jesus abides with the Father. The farewell discourses will make it clear that the place where Jesus abides is also the place where his disciples abide.³¹ Thus, the suggestion that the disciples will stay with Jesus anticipates the description of their abiding in him even as he abides in the Father.³²

27. 7:35; 8:22.

23. Jn 1:39. Cf. 1:46.

24. Jn 2:25; cf. 1:42,47; 4:17-18; 6:70; etc.

25. Cf. Jn 15:16.

26. H. ZIMMERMANN, "Meister, Wo wohnst Du? (Jo 1,38)," *Lebendiges Zeugnis* 1 (1962) 49-57, Jürgen HEISE, *Bleiben. Menein in den Johanneischen Schriften. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie*, 8 (Tübingen, 1967), p. 49.

27. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *o.c.*, p. 100.

28. M. de GOEDT, "Un schème de révélation dans le *Quatrième Évangile*," *NTS* 8 (1961-1962), 142-150.

29. Cf. R. F. COLLINS, "The Representative Figures of the Fourth Gospel—I," *Downside Review* 93 (1976) 28-46, pp. 33-34.

30. Cf. Jn 1:40, 42; 4:25 (19:14); 20:16.

31. Cf. Jn 14:2-3,25; 15:4,7,10; 17:24.

32. Cf. Edwyn C. HOSKYNs, *The Fourth Gospel* (2nd rev. ed., London: 1947), p. 181.

In his brief and paradigmatic reflection on discipleship, John's key verbs are expressions with a double meaning. Following, seeking, seeing, and dwelling are expressions which must be understood on the level of Johannine drama. No less must they be understood on the level of Johannine theology (reflection). At the level of event, to follow after Jesus is to walk at some distance behind him. At the level of Johannine meaning, to follow after Jesus is to be his disciple. At the level of event, to see Jesus is to observe him with one's eyes. At the level of meaning, to see Jesus is to perceive who he is. At the level of event, the question about his dwelling is an inquiry as to where Jesus would pass the night.³³ At the level of meaning, it is a question as to where he abides. At the level of event, Jesus' first words indicate no more than "what do you want?" At the level of Johannine meaning, his words initiate the history-long drama of man's search for Jesus. By the use of these double-meaning expressions the evangelist has transformed a story about an initial encounter into a significant theological reflection on discipleship. That reflection can be briefly summarized by stating that the disciple is one who responds to Jesus' invitation to seek him out by perceiving who he is and coming to know where he truly abides. The disciple who responds faithfully to Jesus' invitation will also abide with Jesus and the Father.

That the Johannine narrative is to be understood in this sense is further underscored by the indication of time with which the pericope closes. The words "for it was about the tenth hour" (v.39) were most likely inserted into the narrative by the Evangelist himself.³⁴ It is well known that John makes significant use of temporal expressions. The "hour"³⁵ of Jesus and the poignant comment that "it was night" (Jn 13:30) are but two cases in point. John's notation that "it was about the tenth hour"³⁶ can indeed be understood on the level of event. In which case, the encounter between Jesus and the disciples is described as having occurred at about four o'clock in the afternoon. On the level of Johannine significance, however, the tenth hour must be seen as the hour of fulfillment.³⁷

Further confirmation of the notion that Jn 1: 35-39 offers a schema for a theology of discipleship is to be found in the variant reading of Jesus' initial logion provided by the Codex Koridethi and a few other ancient manuscripts.³⁸ This ninth century text, a principal witness to the so-called Caesarean type of NT manuscript, offers "Whom do you seek?" (*tina zêteite*) as the Johannine Jesus'

33. Cf. J. HEISE, *o.c.*, p. 49.

34. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *o.c.*, p. 100.

35. Cf. R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, I-XII No. 29 in coll. *Ancher Bible* (Garden City, 1968), pp. 517-518.

36. The RSV strengthens the importance attached to Jn 1:39's temporal indication by providing it with an introductory "for." No corresponding particle is found in the Greek text.

37. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *o.c.*, p. 100, esp. nn. 9,10; Siegfried SCHULTZ, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, NTD 4, (Göttingen, 1972), p. 41; F. WULF, "Meister, wo wohnst du?" (Joh 1,38), *Geist und Leben* 3 (1958), 241-244, p. 244.

38. Some editors (e.g. Kurt Aland) believe that the variant reading at Jn 1:38 is a corruption of the text under the influence of Jn 18:4. It may well be, however, that an "intelligent scribe" consciously altered the text in view of a theology of discipleship. Cf. R. E. BROWN, *o.c.*, p. 74, n. 38.

first public utterance. These words anticipate the question addressed by Jesus to the soldiers and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees (Jn 18: 4,7). They foreshadow the question which the Magdalene directs to the risen Jesus in Jn 20:15.³⁹ Does not, then, the variant provide some indication of a theme whose presence provides a clue for a basic understanding of the Fourth Gospel?

Before pursuing our quest for such a theme by means of a brief examination of other Johannine passages in which *zêteo* appears, we ought to return to a further consideration of Jn 1:35-39 considered on the level of a Johannine dramatization of an event. That Jesus should be addressed as Rabbi by the unnamed disciples and that this title should be translated as "Teacher" are not unusual. As a title for Jesus, "Rabbi" occurs frequently⁴⁰ in the Fourth Gospel, and John manifests a definite tendency to translate Semitisms. The use of the title "Rabbi" implies that the disciples looked upon Jesus as a teacher and interpreter of the Law. It is not unlikely that the disciples sought out Jesus precisely because he was one who could interpret the Scriptures.⁴¹ What they found was the Messiah himself, i.e. the one of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote (Jn 1:45). Andrew's "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1:41) must, in fact, be seen in connection with v.38. The verb "find" (*heurêkamea*) of v.41 stands in contrast to the verb "seek" (*zêteite*) of v.38. The verbs "to seek" and "to find" are traditionally paired in biblical, extrabiblical, and even in contemporary literature. Moreover, the Johannine use of a Semitic title translated into Greek for the benefit of his readers in v.41 (Messiah, which means Christ) corresponds to the use of Rabbi with its Greek translation in v.38.⁴² In a word, v.41 corresponds to v.38; v.38 calls for v.41. On the level of Johannine dramatization, the disciples' seeking for one who can interpret the Law results in their finding the Messiah of whom the Law speaks.

The use of the paired expression, seek and find, provides a futhur clue to the deeper theological significance of the passage. In extra-biblical literature where *zêteo* is used with a religious reference, the term generally indicates man's philoso-

39. Without adopting the variant reading, both Raymond Brown and André Feuillet see a parallel between Jn 1:38 and Jn 20:15. Feuillet further notes that the question, "What do you seek?," occurs four times in John: twice as a question addressed to those who are looking for their Savior (Jn 1:38; 20:15), once as a question from the Savior who is seeking after souls (Jn 4:27), and once (in fact a single question, uttered twice) as a question addressed by Jesus to those who has come out to arrest him (Jn 18:4,7). Cf. R.E. Brown, *o.c.*, p. 74, n. 38; André FEUILLET, *Le mystère de l'Amour divin dans la théologie johannique, Etudes bibliques*, (Paris, 1972), p. 126.

40. Jn 1:39,50; 3:2,26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2.; 11:8 (Cf. 20:16 *rabbouni*).

41. A number of commentators see in the evangelist's use of "Rabbi" in 1:39 more than a merely conventional designation of Jesus. Loisy, for example, notes that the question, "Where are you staying?," ought to be understood in the light of the rabbinic custom to teach sitting down rather than walking about. Schnackenburg indicates that the disciples' question probably indicates a desire to hear Jesus expound the Scriptures. Cf. Alfred LOISY, *Le Quatrième Évangile* (Paris, 1903), p. 243; Rudolf SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John, I. Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament* (New York, 1968), p. 308; cf. Siegfried SCHULTZ, *o.c.*, p. 41.

42. In the N.T., the Semitic "Messiah" is found only in Jn 1:38 and 4:25. "Rabbi" occurs in the Synoptics, but it is found more frequently in Jn (9x) than in either Mt (4x) or Mk (4x). The Semitic title is not used by Lk.

phical and religious quest. Indeed *zêteo* is a technical term for philosophical investigation.⁴³ In his unique fashion, Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, uses *zêteo* to link the mind's philosophical inquiry with the heart's seeking after God.⁴⁴ The link is another example of Philo's tendency to wed philosophical concerns with his own Biblical tradition. In fact the Greek text of the Old Testament (LXX) uses *zêteo* of man's search for God to such an extent that to "seek God" (*zêtein theon*) or to seek the Lord (*zêtein kurion*) becomes almost a technical term, to denote man's voluntary turning to God.⁴⁵

We find such a use of "to seek God" or "to seek the Lord", along with its correlative "to find the Lord" (*heuriskein kurion*), or "to find God", (*heuriskein theon*) in the writings of the prophets. The prophets call to man in order that he should seek after his God, that he should turn to Him with all his being. Typical are the words of Jeremiah, "For thus says the Lord.... You seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, says the Lord." (Jer 29:10, 13-14a). The Deutero-Isaiah's call to conversion is phrased in the same terms: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Is 65:6-7) According to the understanding of the prophets, the search for the Lord is of vital importance. It is matter of life or death. The one who seeks the Lord and finds him receives the gift of life itself. Thus Amos of Tekoa proclaimed the Lord's message: "For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek me and live.... seek the Lord and live...." (Am 5:4-6). To seek the Lord is all-important. It is a matter of life and death.

Of course, not all Israelites heeded the prophets' call. The situation of those who did not seek the Lord is poignantly described by a post-exilic disciple of Isaiah: "I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, 'Here am I; here am I,' to a nation that did not call on my name" (Is 66: 1). Yahweh desires nothing more than to be sought and found by his people. Often Yahweh's desire is not realized because of man's own lack of conversion. Yahweh is not found because man is ill-disposed and will not seek after his Lord. The prophets described this situation by noting that Yahweh hid his face from his people. Those who are not normally disposed to find the Lord cannot find him because he is hidden from their eyes. Thus the Trito-Isaiah: "There is no one that calls upon thy name, that bestirs himself to take hold of thee; for thou has hid thy face (*apestrephas to prosôpon sou*) from us, and has delivered us into the hand of our iniquities" (Is 64: 7). By means of this anthropomorphic language, the divine initiative in man's seeking and finding is maintained—even in those cases in which man refuses to seek after his Lord!

43. Cf. Heinrich GREEVEN, "zêteo, zêtêsis, ekzêteo, epizêteo," TDNT 2, 892-896, p. 893. Greeven notes that the NT contains at least one text (1 Cor 1:22) in which the technical philosophical sense clearly appears.

44. *Abr.*, 87.

45. Georg BERTRAM, TDNT 2, 893, n. 5

The seeking and finding of the Lord which is an integral part of both the prophets' message and the prophetic writings⁴⁶ has been taken over by the biblical Psalms⁴⁷ and the Wisdom literature. Already the opening words of the book of Wisdom enunciate the theme: "Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth, think of the Lord with uprightness, and seek him with sincerity of heart (*en apolteti kardias zêtêsate auton*); because he is found by those who do not put him to the test (*hoti heurisketai tois mê peirazousin auton*)", (Wis 1:1-2a). In the Sapiential literature, however, it appears that divine Wisdom rather than the Lord himself is the object of man's search.⁴⁸ Thus the anonymous sage writes: "I loved her (=Wisdom) and sought (*exzêtêsa*) her from my youth... I went about seeking (*ezêtêsa*) how to get her for myself" (Wis 8:2,18).

As the prophets proclaimed the search for the Lord to be a matter of life-and-death, so the wise men announced that the search for personified Wisdom was a cause of vital import: "Happy is the man who finds wisdom,... Long life is in her right hand" (Prov 3:13,16)... "For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord" (Prov 8:35). Similarly, the sages were aware that man may well refuse to heed the call of Wisdom. In the recalcitrance of his unconverted state, man will be unable to find divine Wisdom. The first chapter of Proverbs reflects on this unfortunate situation: "Because I have called and you refused to listen.... I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you.... Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me" (Prov 1:24-28).

The French exegetes Boismard, Feuillet and Osty⁴⁹ particularly point to Wis 6:12-16 as a Sapiential passage which succinctly articulates the theme of seeking and finding Wisdom personified. Boismard notes that this passage treats but one motif: Wisdom will be found by those who seek after her; to them she will manifest herself.⁵⁰ His comment appears to be quite accurate especially in view of the fact that it is not much more than a paraphrase of the first lines of the pericope: "Wisdom.... is found by those who seek her. She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her...." (Wis 6:12-13). The Dominican exegete also suggests that Jn 1:35-42 is modelled after Wis 6:12-16. Capitalizing on a variant reading *prôî*, "in the morning"⁵¹ in place of the generally accepted *prôton* reading in v.41, Boismard is able to find a point of contact between the Johannine narrative and Wis 6:14, "He who rises early (*ho orthrisas*)....". Greater plausibility is afforded to his suggestion on the grounds that both passages use the verbs "seek" (*zêtein*) and "find" (*heuriskein*). Both Wisdom and Jesus take the initiative in seeking those who would

46. Am 5: 1-6; 8:11-12; Hos 2:9; 5:6,15; 7:10; Is 51:1; 65:1; Jn 10:21; 29:13-14; Lam 3:25; Zeph 1:6; 2:3; Mal 3:1; Dan 3:41; Zach 8:22.

47. e.g. Ps 9:11; 24:6; 40:17; 69:33; 70:5; 83:17; 105:3-4; Cf. A. FEUILLET, *o.c.*, p. 120.

48. Cf. A. FEUILLET, *o.c.*, pp. 126-127.

49. Cf. M. E. BOISMARD, *o.c.*, p. 78-80; A. FEUILLET, *o.c.*, pp. 126-127; E. OSTY, *La Sainte Bible VI* (Paris, 1943), p. 488.

50. M. E. BOISMARD, *o.c.*, p. 79.

51. The variant reading *proi* is suggested by the use of *mane* in two or three Old Latin manuscripts. It is also attested by the Sinaitic Syriac text.

come to them (Wis 6:13,16; Jn 1:38,43). Boismard concludes his comparative analysis by noting that "It is difficult to attribute this series of similarities to chance. For the evangelist, Jesus is Wisdom who invites men to seek her out; she will let herself be found by those who seek her, she will manifest herself to them."⁵²

Boismard's conclusion would indeed be stronger than the evidence adduced were it not for the fact that the language of Jn 1:35-39(42) resonates the language of the Wisdom literature and the additional, and salient fact, that the Fourth Gospel clearly contains the motif of Jesus as Divine Wisdom. Since studies on the use of Wisdom motifs in the Fourth Gospel abound,⁵³ we can easily omit an extensive examination of John's use of Wisdom from the present article. Let it simply be said that two recent and widely respected commentaries on the Fourth Gospel coming from the hands of Catholic scholars⁵⁴ indicate that Jewish Wisdom literature provides meaningful links with the Fourth Gospel. F.M. Braun has devoted a significant chapter of his work on the Fourth Gospel to its Wisdom Christology.⁵⁵ C.H. Dodd has artfully sketched the points of contact between John's prologue and the Wisdom literature.⁵⁶ A further variety of contemporary scholars have demonstrated that the Johannine notion of life,⁵⁷ the great discourses of the Fourth Gospel,⁵⁸ the multiplication of loaves pericope with its accompanying bread of life discourse⁵⁹ and the pregnant "I am" logia⁶⁰ are to be interpreted—at least in part—against the background of Israel's Wisdom tradition. There can be no doubt that the Fourth Evangelist has made use of Wisdom motifs. More specifically, there can be no doubt that John presents Jesus as the Divine Wisdom, Incarnate.

Given the author's predilection for a presentation of Jesus as Divine Wisdom and the fact that Jn 1:35-39 is a prototypical reflection on discipleship, it is not unlikely that it was the author's intention to present discipleship as the search for incarnate Divine Wisdom. In this regard it would prove worthwhile to recall that the unnamed, but typical disciples of Jn 1:38, addressed Jesus as Rabbi. Rather than merely assume that this form of address represents a Johannine attempt to show that the disciples did not fully understand the "Lamb of God" title proclaimed by John the Witness, Schnackenburg indicates that "Rabbi"⁶¹ was the usual way for a

52. M. E. BOISMARD, *o.c.*, p. 80.

53. Brief overviews are offered by Henry R. Moeller and Basil de Pinto, among others. Cf. Henry R. MOELLER, "Wisdom Motifs and John's Gospel," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 6 (1963), 93-98; Basil DE PINTO, "Word and Wisdom in St. John," *Scripture* 19 (1967), 19-27, 107-122.

54. Cf. R. E. BROWN, *o.c.*, pp. CXXII-CXXV, etc.; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *o.c.*, p. 523, etc.

55. F. M. BRAUN, *Jean le théologien*, 2. *Les grandes traditions d'Israël et l'accord des écritures selon le quatrième évangile*. Paris: 1964, pp. 49-152.

56. C. H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge, 1963, pp. 274-275.

57. Cf. Ignace DE LA POTTERIE, "'Je suis la Voie, la Vérité et la Vie' (Jn 14,6)," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 88 (1966) 917-926; John PAINTER, *John: Witness & Theologian*, London, 1975, p. 49.

58. Cf. Robert KYSAR, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel. An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship*, Minneapolis, 1975, pp. 122-127.

59. André FEUILLET, *Johannine Studies*, New York, 1965, pp. 58-87.

60. Cf. R. E. BROWN, *o.c.*, pp. 537-538; I. DE LA POTTERIE, *art. cit.* pp. 917-926.

61. B. SCHNACKENBURG, *o.c.*, p. 308.

disciple to address his master. He further notes that the disciples' question probably indicates a desire to hear Jesus expound the Scriptures.

In this light the "What do you seek?" question takes on a new shade of meaning. In the Septuagint *zêtein* renders not only the Hebrew verb *'aleb*, but also the verb *darash*.⁶² Since the 1948 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has become commonplace for Johannine scholars to affirm the many affinities of thought and vocabulary that exist between the Scrolls and the Fourth Gospel.⁶³ In the Scrolls *darash ha Torah* has become almost a technical term for the study and explication of the Scriptures.⁶⁴ The Qumran sectarians are those who "search" (*darash*) the Scriptures. From this perspective, one might paraphrase the Johannine Jesus' first words as "What Scriptures are you searching out?" Then, as so often in the Fourth Gospel, the movement of thought would be from the Scriptures to the person of Jesus who is in union with the Father.⁶⁵ At this juncture a commentator might be inclined to note that neither in our pericope nor in the remainder of the body of the Gospel is Jesus called "the Word". That designation appears only in the Prologue (Jn 1:1, 14). There, the commentators generally agree, the *Logos* vocable is applied to Jesus in such a way as to encompass both Sapiential speculation on Divine Wisdom and rabbinic speculation on the Torah as the word of God. The tradition embodied in Jn 1:35-39 is not as explicit as that of the Prologue; it nevertheless points in the same direction.

The realization that the search for Jesus is the search for Divine Wisdom incarnate and the search for the full meaning of the Scriptures sheds a bit of light, which ought not to be over-emphasized, on the use of *zêtein* in Jn 6:24,26. Commentators do not agree among themselves as to the division of the sixth chapter of John's Gospel into intelligible units. Some⁶⁶ opt for vv. 22-24 as the unit which links the Bread-of-Life discourse to the multiplication of loaves—walking on water narrative. Others⁶⁷ include vv.22-25 in the transition pericope, while still others⁶⁸ believe that vv.22-26 comprise the pericope. There is, however, agreement that the transition pericope is somewhat confusing, as indeed the number of textual variants indicate. This confusion may be due to the complicated history of the pericope⁶⁹ or to the author's confusing style.⁷⁰

In any event the present redaction of the transition pericope is typically Johannine. The pericope is not found in the Synoptics. Verse 26 hearkens back to v.

62. Cf. Lev 10:16; Dt 22:2; 1 Sm 28:7; 2 Sm 11:3; etc.

63. Among other studies, the reader might refer to James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *John and Qumran*, London, 1972.

64. IQS 6:6; 4QF1 1:11; CD 6:7; 7:118; Cf. IQS 5:11, 6:7; 8:24; IQH 2:15,32; 4QpNah 2,7; CD 1:18.

65. In presenting his movement of thought, the evangelist frequently makes use of the "Son of Man" title. Cf. J. Louis MARTYN, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 122-125.

66. e.g. R. E. BROWN, pp. 257-259.

67. e.g. B. LINDARS, pp. 248-249.

68. e.g. R. BULTMANN, p. 216.

69. Cf. M. E. BOISMARD, "Problèmes de Critique Textuelle concernant le quatrième évangile," *Revue Biblique* 60 (1953) 347-371, pp. 359-371; R. E. BROWN, *o.c.*, p. 258.

70. Cf. B. LINDARS, *o.c.*, p. 248.

24. The resumption of a previously cited theme is a typically Johannine technique.⁷¹ The repeated theme of vv. 24,26 is part of a pericope whose obvious purpose is to introduce the Bread of Life discourse. In the discourse Jesus reveals that he is the bread of life by means of the *Egô eimi* ("I am") formula of self-revelation (Jn 6:35). The bread of life is the revelation which he has come to give; that revelation is his very self. The Bread-of-Life discourse is redolant with Wisdom motifs. Might it not well be that the search for Jesus with which John intrudes the Bread-of-Life discourse is, in fact, the motif of the search for Divine Wisdom—Divine Wisdom incarnate who manifests Himself to those who would but seek?

Ultimately the search for Divine Wisdom is a search in which the initiative belongs to Wisdom itself. The notion of a divine initiative is present in the programmatic utterance spoken by Jesus himself according to Jn 1:38. It may also be present in a little noticed passage in the account of Jesus' encounter with the samaritan woman. The Samaritan is an example of discipleship.⁷² She represents the Christian messenger who brings others to the faith. She herself has come to faith in response to Jesus' invitation (Jn 4:7). In effect, Jesus seeks her out. That he should seek out a woman is cause for wonderment among the disciples. They recognize that Jesus has sought her out⁷³ and so do not dare to ask "What do you seek? (*ti zêteis*)"⁷⁴ (Jn 4:27). On the level of event, the level of Johannine drama, the question might indicate that Jesus was looking for food. The parallel question, "Why are you talking with her?" indicates that we must go beyond a merely banal interpretation of *ti zêteis* if we are to grasp its full import. The second question of the disciples, "Why are you talking with her?" makes use of the verb *lalein*, "to speak," the same verb used to introduce the *ego eimi* formula in v. 26. The second question of v. 27 thus indicates full well that Jesus' search results in his speaking to her whom he has found. As Divine Wisdom, he reveals himself to those whom he seeks out.

The search undertaken by Divine Wisdom is ultimately the search of God himself. From the perspective of the Fourth Gospel, the search of Jesus is the embodiment of the Father's search for men. The evangelist reminds his readers of this by speaking of the Father's search even before he refers explicitly to Jesus' search: "such the Father seeks (*zêtei*) to worship him" (Jn 4:23). The search of Divine Wisdom incarnate is the embodiment of the Father's search.⁷⁵ In the initiative of

71. Cf. Jn 1:29,36; 3:3,5; etc.

72. Cf. R. F. COLLINS, *art. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

73. Jn 4:34 implies that the "What do you seek?" of v.27 is addressed to Jesus. J. H. Bernard interprets the question as one addressed to the woman. His view is consistent with that of some ancient witnesses. Brown, however, correctly notes that these few witnesses are dependant upon Tatian who, as an Encratite, eschewed the idea that Jesus took the initiative in talking to a woman. Cf. J. H. BERNARD, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, ICC, ed. by A. H. McNeile, I (Edinburgh, 1928), p. 152; R. E. BROWN, *o.c.*, p. 173.

74. The RSV translates *ti zêteis* as "What do you wish?" Barnabas Lindars opts for a paraphrase of the Greek words. He writes: "Their unspoken questions should perhaps be translated: 'What are you asking? or what are you talking with her about?'" Cf. B. LINDARS, *o.c.*, p. 193. Both Lindars' paraphrase and the RSV translation weaken the meaning of the disciples' first question.

75. Cf. Jn 6:44,65.

Jesus, the initiative of the Father is expressed. In effect, the faithful disciple is one who responds in faith to the embodied invitation of the Father.

To Seek and Not to Find—The Search Which is “Too Late”

Another Fourth Gospel passage in which Wisdom motifs occur and in which we also find the Johannine motif of the search for Jesus is Jn 7:32-36. Here we find the twice repeated “you will seek me and you will not find me (*zêtêsete me kai ouch heurêsete*)” (Jn 7:34,36). Once again we might begin our considerations with a brief indication of the specifically Johannine character of the passage. From the standpoint of Johannine technique, we immediately note the reference to a preceding verse, the use of dialogue, and the use of interrogation with an ambivalent response. The pericope also makes use of characteristic words drawn from the Johannine vocabulary. Among the characteristic Johannine terms are “a little longer” (v.33)⁷⁶ as an expression to indicate Jesus’ expectation of the Passion, “he who sent me” (v.33)⁷⁷ as a designation of the Father, and “the Jews” (v.35) as a stylized expression to represent those who remain in their disbelief.⁷⁸ Perhaps we should add the verb “to seek” which is not only a Johannine expression but may well be used in Jn 7 as an example of Johannine irony.⁷⁹

Unlike the pericope which we previously considered, Jn 7:32-36 admits of but minor textual variants. Two minor Greek manuscripts and the Vulgate read a present tense in place of v.34’s generally accepted future *zêtêsete*. Some important texts, including many of the major uncials do not include the complement *me* after *ouch heurêsete* (you will not find). Hence some editors omit the reading,⁸⁰ whereas others, on the basis of its insertion in the Codex Vaticanus and the third century *Bodmer papyrus* (*P*⁷⁵) include the pronoun. The United Bible Societies’ edition is among the latter, but the editors note that the reading is of “dubious textual validity.” These minor textual variants have but little bearing on the sense exegesis of the pericope. The manuscript evidence as well as the internal coherence of the text require a future reading of *zêtêsete*, you will seek. If *heurêsete* is an elliptical expression, then *me* (“me”) must be understood as its direct object. In brief, then, notwithstanding the issues raised by textual criticism, the RSV’s “You will seek me, and you will not find me,” correctly renders the sense of the Greek text.

More significant for an understanding of Jesus’ dialogue with the Jews relative to his impending departure than a study of the transmission of the text is an examination of parallel material. The apodictic saying of Jn 7:34,36 “You will

76. Cf. Jn 8:21; 12:35; 13:3:33; 36; 14:4-5; 12, 19,28; 16:5, 16-19,28.

77. Cf. Jn 3:17,34; 5:36,38; 6:29,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21 (with *apostelein*); Jn 4:34; 5:23,24,30,37; 6:38,39,44; 7:16,18,28,33; 8:16,18,26,29; 9:4; 12:44,45,49; 13:16,20; 14:24,26; 16:5; 20:21 (with *pempein*).

78. There is abundant literature on the meaning of *hoi Ioudaioi* in the Fourth Gospel. Among those who attribute this representative function to “the Jews” are R. E. Brown and Jeffrey G. Sobosan. Cf. R. E. BROWN, *o.c.*, pp. lxx-lxxiii; Jeffrey G. SOBOSAN, “The Trial of Jesus,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 10 (1973), 70-93, p. 86.

79. Cf. B. LINDARS, *o.c.*, p. 295.

80. e.g. Kurt ALAND.

seek me and you will not find me" is also found in the third-century Gospel of Thomas and the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus,⁸¹ manuscripts which respectively preserve the logion in Coptic and in Greek. We read in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas that "Jesus said: Many times you have desired to hear these words which I speak to you, and you have no other from whom to hear them. The days will come (when) you will seek me (and) you will not find me."⁸² This Gnostic logion proclaims that Jesus is the unique revealer. According to Gnostic thought, it is necessary to hear his words in order to attain to Gnosis, the source of life. A similar notion is expressed in the first two logia of the Gospel of Thomas which underscore the importance of the search for knowledge by means of the correlative seek-find expression: "And he said: who finds the explanation of these words will not taste death. Jesus said: He who seeks must not stop seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be bewildered, he will marvel, and will be king over the All."⁸³

In his presentation of the significant parallels for the Johannine Jesus' "You will seek me and you will not find me," Barnabas Lindars⁸⁴ suggests that John may be playing on the well known promise of Jesus "Seek and you will find," found in the Synoptics' Q source and preserved both by Mt 7:7 and Lk 11:9. The logion is, in fact, the central expression of a three-phase saying on prayer, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." The image of knocking on a door and having it opened is associated by the rabbis with the study of the Law and its interpretation, as well as with prayer for God's mercy.⁸⁵ Similarly the expression "seek and you will find" admits not only of a banal, every-day meaning, but also a religious meaning. As a religious expression it referred to the study of the Torah, as well as to the search for God in prayer.⁸⁵ In a word, the Q logion on prayer of which Jn 7:34,36 is a parallel, made use of traditional language which was used of the study of the Torah, the searching of the Scriptures.

The rabbinic background of Q's "Seek and you will find" is not without its significance for an understanding of Jn 7:34,36. Adolph Schlatter has noted that the introductory lemma of our saying in v.36, viz., "What does he mean by saying," is a typically Rabbinic expression.⁹⁷ The Jews of v.35 look upon Jesus as

81. GT 38; Pap Oxy. 654. Cf. Kurt ALAND, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (6th ed., Stuttgart, 1969); pp. 95, 522.

82. A slightly different form of the first saying was attributed by Irenaeus to the second-century Marcionians. The Gnostic saying may be based on Lk 17:22. Cf. Robert M. GRANT—D. N. FREEDMAN, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus According to the Gospel of Thomas* (London, 1969), p. 145. If GT 38 is dependent on Lk, then the Gnostic texts' substitution of "hearing the words of Jesus" for the evangelical "seeing the Son of Man" accentuates the Gnostic estimation of Jesus as the Revealer whose words are the bearer of Wisdom.

83. GT 1-2.

84. B. LINDARS, *o.c.*, p. 296.

85. Cf. H. L. STRACK—P. BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. I. (Munich, 1955), pp. 458-459; Eduard SCHWEIZER, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta, 1975), p. 173.

86. Cf. H. L. STRACK—P. BILLERBECK, *o.c.*, p. 458.

87. Cf. Adolf SCHLATTER, *o.c.*, p. 199.

a rabbi since they suggest that he might go to teach among the Greeks.⁸⁸ The rabbinic language of Jn 7:32-36 recalls the rabbinic language of the pericope with which we began our analysis of the Johannine "search for Jesus theme," notably Jn 1:35-39. Here, as there, we find the use of the question as a Johannine literary technique. It would appear that the two questions of the Jews in v.35 admit of a double answer.⁸⁹ On the level of Johannine drama, the answer is an obvious "no." Jesus does not intend to go into the Dispersion to teach there. Nor does he go there in fact. On another level, however, the Jews' question is answered with an ironic "yes". When we link Jn 7:32-36 to the only other Johannine passage in which the Greeks appear, viz., Jn 12:20, we find that the encounter with the Greeks takes place at the hour of Jesus' departure. Jesus does not go to the Greeks as such—even on the level of Johannine drama, it is they who come to him—rather he goes to the Father.⁹⁰ When he has returned to the Father, then he will attain the Greeks.⁹¹ Thus, as in the case of Jn 1:35-39 it is to the significance of Jesus' being with the Father that Jn 7:32-36 points. The search for Jesus is for him who is in contact with the Father.

That Jesus will not be able to be found by those who search for him (vv.34,36) recalls the traditional theme of unconverted man's fruitless search for God found in the prophetic writings as well as the Sapiential theme of Divine Wisdom which is not found by those who seek with an unrepentant heart. A significant detail of the Johannine logion, "You will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come" (vv.34,36) prompts us to further interpret the saying in the light of its biblical background. One would expect Jesus to have said "Where I go, you cannot come;" instead the words of the Johannine Jesus are "Where I am, you cannot come." The evangelist's use of *eimi*, "I am," rather than *hupago*, "I go" (cf. v.33), is another example of his use of the divine *ego eimi*. Those who remain in their disbelief, "the Jews," cannot be with him who alone can speak the divine word "I am."

Thus, on the level of Johannine significance, something of symbolic quality⁹³ characterizes our narrative. Those who seek Jesus but remain in their disbelief are unable to find him. The manifestation of Jesus in his self-revelation can be a tragedy. There is the possibility that it is too late.⁹⁴ For the moment we can leave aside the search which will be rewarded with success. Our pericope speaks of the search which ends in frustration. For those who do not accept the salvation

88. Somewhat implausibly, Theodore Zahn has even suggested that the Jews thought that Jesus was alluding (v.33) to a well-known teacher in the Diaspora, and that Jesus was saying that it was this teacher who had sent him. Cf. Theodore ZAHN, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Leipzig, 1912, p. 391.

89. Cf. A. VANHOYE, *art. cit.*, pp. 157-158.

90. Jn 13:1; 16:28.

91. Jn 12:32.

92. Cf. Jn 8:21,22; 14:33.

93. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *o.c.*, p. 308.

94. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *o.c.*, p. 308; S. SCHULZ, *o.c.*, p. 120. A. WIKENHAUSER, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Regensburger Neues Testament, 4. (3rd. ed.: Regensburg, 1961), p. 160.

offered through the word of Jesus, there is a "too late." There is an *einmaligkeit*, a "once only" quality, characteristic of the offer of salvation. That once only quality is rooted in the eschatological sending of the Son of God. If man does not seize salvation when it is offered to him, he finds that he comes "too late." Bultmann expresses the evangelist's thought so accurately when he writes that "In this 'too late' the judgement is present."⁹⁵

The divine offer of salvation is contingent upon man's acceptance of the self-revelation of Jesus upon the cross. It is to the cross that the "a little longer" (*eti chronon mikron*) of v.33 points.⁹⁶ The time of the cross is the hour of Jesus' glorification; it is the hour of the Father's glorification. It is then that Jesus is fully manifest as he who bears the divine name *ego eimi*. It is then that he is with the Father. For those who refuse to accept in faith this ultimate manifestation of the Word of God, there is a too late. Too late they will seek the salvation which he came to bring. Therein lies the tragedy of judgement; therein lies the judgemental character of the coming of the Son.

Jesus' crucial statement "you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come," is the subject of a Johannine reflection in Jn 8:21-29. In the clearest of terms, Jesus explains that once he goes away, there will be no other possibility of salvation. The entire passage is characterized by an urgency appropriate to the decisiveness of Jesus' presence. Jesus challenges his hearers to a decision before it is too late. The pericope begins with an editorial "again."⁹⁷ The passage is once again redolant with traces of Johannine technique and Johannine vocabulary. The reader will note the use of the question with an ambivalent answer (v.22: "Will he kill himself?"), the use of terms with a double meaning, and the presence of misunderstanding as a literary device (v.25, explicited in the comment of v.27). A detailed analysis of the pericope's vocabulary is not necessary. "The Jews" (v.22), the "world" (vv.23,26), "believe" (vv.24,30), "I am" (vv.24,28), "lift up" (v.28), "The Son of Man" (v.28), "he who sent me" (v.26,29), strike the reader almost immediately as typical Johannisms. The dualistic world view and the sharp contrast between Jesus and the Jews give added Johannine flavor to the drama. We cannot escape the conclusion that again we are dealing with a passage which is clearly of Johannine construction.

In this Johannine reflection, Jesus again takes the initiative by uttering a definitive, "I go away and you will seek me and die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." (v.21). The logion differs from that to which it hearkens back (i.e. Jn 7:34,36)⁹⁸ in two significant respects. "Die in your sin" replaces "and you will not find me"; "where I am going" replaces "where I am". The first change expresses the poignancy of the situation. The expression itself is a legal one (Dt 24:16) which generally occurs in a context of personal and national salvation.⁹⁹

95. R. BULTMANN, *o.c.*, p. 308.

96. Cf. Jn 12:35; 13:32; 14:19; 16:16-19.

97. Jn 8:21, Cf. Jn 8:12.

98. Cf. B. LINDARS, *o.c.*, p. 319.

99. Cf. Ez 3:19; 18:24,26.

John's use of familiar biblical terminology reminds his readers that the search for Jesus is a matter of life and death. Those who fail to find him will lose their only hope for salvation. As Jesus is the giver of life (Jn 8:12) those who fail to find him are deprived of the gift of life itself.

The replacement of "where I am" by "where I go" renders Jesus' enigmatic statement in a most natural manner within the context of the Johannine drama. It avoids the elipticism of Jn 7:34-36. It points immediately to the significance of Jesus' departure. It provides an occasion for the evangelist to dwell at length on the *ego eimi* ("I am he") expression, the formula of Jesus' self-revelation as a divine being. It is necessary to believe that Jesus truly bears the divine name, "I am," in order to avoid death. The Jews fail to comprehend that Jesus bears this name. Thinking that there must be a predicate, the Jews ask who he is. Jesus has no alternative but to reaffirm that he bears the divine name, that he is one with the Father. When, as the Son of Man, Jesus is lifted up in crucifixion-exaltation, it will be clear to those who believe that he is the bearer of the divine name.¹⁰⁰ Then it will be clear that the Father has not left Jesus unto himself. Then it will be clear that Jesus has the power to draw all men to himself. Then, however, it will be too late for those who do not believe. In order that man live and not die in his sin, he must even now believe that Jesus is the one who is. The situation is urgent. Belief in Jesus as the bearer of the divine name is the great challenge; the alternative is a tragic "too late!"

*To Seek and Not to Find—The Disciples'
Search for One Who is Absent*

A further Johannine comment on the strangely judgemental "You will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come" is to be found in Jn 13:33. In the first of his farewell discourses, the evangelist makes a deliberate cross-reference to the teaching of 7:33-36 and 8:21-29. Jesus says to his disciples "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'" (Jn 13:33). An impression of contemporary pastoral concern pervades the narrative.¹⁰¹ Jesus must speak to the situation of the disciples who will be burdened by his absence. The hour of his passion is near, "yet a little while I am with you." Jesus has proclaimed that the Son of Man is glorified; but he must correct the impression that the moment of glorification has arrived for his disciples. The departure of Jesus marks a point of transition in their lives. They will no longer be with him. They cannot go where he was gone. They must live in a new relationship with him. In that interim inaugurated by his going to the Father, their mutual love is the modality of his presence with them.¹⁰² In the interim, they will seek but they

100. Lindars correctly notes that "In this verse the various threads of the argument are drawn together. . . The Passion will confirm what Jesus has already said about his identity, that I am he." Cf. B. LINDARS, *o.c.*, p. 322.

101. Cf. B. LINDARS, *o.c.*, p. 463.

102. H. ZIMMERMANN, "Struktur und Aussageabsicht der johanneischen Abschiedsreden (Jo 13-17)," *Bibel und Leben* 8 (1967), 271-290.

cannot go with him. It is not said that they will seek, and will not find. That judgement is reserved for the Jews who disbelieve. For those who believe, Jesus' words "Where I am going you cannot come" bespeak an "until" not a "too late."

The new situation of the disciples in the time inaugurated by the hour of Jesus' crucifixion-glorification is again the subject of Johannine reflection in Jn 20:11-18.¹⁰³ The pericope, as I have noted in an earlier article, articulates but poorly with Jn 20:1-2; yet these two passages offer the Johannine version of the Mary Magdalene tradition.¹⁰⁴ Undoubtedly the author is making use of material coming from different sources. Yet he has clearly imposed his hand upon the traditional material¹⁰⁵ which he is using as a vehicle for his own theological interpretation. The Johannine techniques of dialogue, misunderstanding (vv.14,15), and the interpretation of Hebrew words (v.16) serve to mold the narrative into its Johannine form. Expressions such as the vocative use of "Woman" (v.13,15), the use of "to take away" (*airein*, vv.13,15) to describe the removal of Jesus' body, the pronomial use of *ekeinos* (they, she; vv.13,15,16), and the "not yet" (*oupô*) of v.17 are typical of the evangelist's language. Indeed were the variant readings of v.13 offered by the Codex Bezae, the Sinaitic Syriac version and a few Greek miniscules to be accepted, we would have still another example of typical Johannine style and vocabulary present in the narrative. According to this variant, Jesus twice (v.15 and v.13) addressed the Magdalene with the words "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?". The second question recalls the words which the Johannine Jesus first addressed to his disciples: "What do you seek?" (Jn 1:35), its repetition recalls the technique used in Jn 18:4,7.

Virtually all of the commentators on the Magdalene sequence note both the typically Johannine reworking of tradition and the unique description of a resurrection appearance which results from this redactional activity. Pierre Benoit classifies the appearance to Magdalene as a recognition appearance.¹⁰⁶ It belongs to that group of resurrection stories in which Jesus is not recognized by reason of his new condition. What distinguishes Jn 20:11-18 from other narratives of the same genre is the enigmatic logion of v.17, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." With these words Jesus interprets for Mary the meaning of his own resurrection. Jesus' resurrection, unlike that of Lazarus, does not mean that he has returned to his former mode of life; rather it means that he must ascend to his Father. It is not necessary to suppose that the appearance of the Risen Jesus to the Magdalene took place

103. Cf. André FEUILLET, "La Recherche du Christ dans la nouvelle alliance d'après la Christophanie de Jo. 20, 11-18. Comparaison avec Cant. 3, 1-4 et l'épisode des Pèlerins d'Emmaüs," in *L'Homme devant Dieu* (de Lubac Festschrift), Coll. *Théologie* 56 (Lyons, 1963), 93-112.

104. Cf. R. F. COLLINS, *art. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

105. J. T. FORESTELL, *The Word of the Cross. Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, *Analecta Biblica*, 57. Rome, 1974, p. 97, n. 162.

106. P. BENOIT, « Marie-Madeleine et les disciples au tombeau selon Joh 20, 1-18, » in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche. Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*. Ed. by Walter Eltester (Berlin, 1960), 141-152, p. 150.

before the ascension and the appearance of Jesus to the disciples (Jn 20-21) took place only after the ascension. To make such a distinction would be to impose the Lukan temporal sequence, Death-Resurrection-Ascension-Sending of the Spirit, upon the Johannine account. John articulates in successive narratives the meaning of the glorification of Jesus which his tradition considers to be but a single event. In addition to its apologetic function,¹⁰⁷ John's account to the appearance to Mary has an interpretative function. Apologetically, the Johannine narrative shows that the disciples could not have stolen the body of Jesus since it is a disciple who asks the question about the presence of the body; interpretatively, the narrative shows that Jesus' resurrection means that Jesus has returned to the Father. In this narrative, Mary Magdalene has a representative role to play. Thinking Jesus to be her teacher come back to life, she typifies the believer whose resurrection faith is inadequate. Jesus himself must take the initiative in bringing her to an understanding of what the Resurrection means. The Resurrection means that Jesus goes to the Father; he must go there where the Father dwells.

Mary is the one who searches faithfully even after the Resurrection. As such she represents every faithful believer. She searches; Jesus manifests himself to her. He does not utter the divine name; rather he says that he must be with the Father. His words are directed not so much to Mary Magdalene, a woman of history, as to the entire Church which must live in the great interim between the Resurrection and the Parousia. It is the Church which seeks after Jesus; it is the Church which must deal with his absence. The church as faithful searcher must come to know that Jesus has gone to the Father. It is with the Father that he dwells. In his absence, the Church has faith, love, and the Spirit. It has the faith to understand who Jesus is and where he dwells. It has brotherly love which is Jesus' own love. It has the testimony of Jesus' Spirit who is with it forever (Jn 14:16). Moved by this faith, living this love, and strengthened by the Spirit, the Church must search—UNTIL. Such is the life of both the Church and the disciple in the great interim.

To Seek To Kill—The Ironic Search

The question which the Risen Jesus addresses to the Magdalene and through her to the Church recalls the question which Jesus puts to Judas and those who had come out from the chief priests and the Pharisees to arrest him. Of these Jesus dramatically inquired, "Whom do you seek?" (Jn 18:4,7). We will not dwell on the specifically Johannine character of Jesus' arrest in Jn 18:1-11 except to note the solemnity of the twice-repeated question, whose second use is introduced by an editorial "again" in v.7. A reflection on the function served by the account of Jesus' arrest in the Fourth Gospel allows us to identify it as both a climax to a search for Jesus and as the introduction to the great self-manifestation of Jesus.

The reader of John's Gospel must bear in mind that most of the occurrences of the verb *zêtein* are concentrated in the first part of the Gospel. Only seven times is the verb used in the so-called Book of Glory (Jn 13-21), and three of these seven

107. Cf. R. F. COLLINS, *art. cit.*, p. 123.

uses of *zêtein* occur in the narrative of Jesus' arrest.¹⁰⁸ Apart from the passage which we have already considered, it appears that John uses the verb "to seek" in a series of passages which culminate in the arrest which leads to his death. The Jews, those representatives of unbelief, sought to kill him (*zêtein apokteinai*). The thought, as first expressed in Jn 5:18, is repeated in Jn 7:1,19,20,25; 8:37,40.¹⁰⁹ As variants on the theme, we read that the Jews sought to stone him (*zêtein lithasai*)¹¹⁰ and that they sought to arrest him (*zêtein piasai*).¹¹¹ Ironically those who do not believe in Jesus—the Jews—seek to kill him, while those who believe in him—the disciples—seek to be where Jesus dwells. The search of the disbeliever reaches its climax in Jn 18:1-11 when the Jews, making use of the powers of this world appear to have achieved a successful outcome in their search. They have sought, and apparently found, Jesus of Nazareth.

John's dramatic description of Jesus' arrest serves not only as the climax to the search for Jesus conducted by the Jews, it is also a dramatic introduction to the tightly structured Johannine Passion narrative.¹¹² The commentators note that it is the evangelist himself who has fashioned the scenario of Jesus' arrest.¹¹³ John's narrative, like that of Mk 14:32-52, is located after the last meal and the final conversations of Jesus with his disciples. Like Mark's account of Jesus' arrest, the Johannine narrative serves as a dramatic introduction to the entire Passion narrative. The Johannine account, unlike that of the Synoptics, however, omits the description of Jesus' poignant prayer (Mk 14:32-42). John's account, however, introduces new features into the scenario: Roman soldiers who also come out to arrest Jesus, and a description of Jesus' solemn conversation with Judas (Jn 18:4-8).

The presence of the Romans serves to heighten John's dramatization of a scenario in which two worlds stand in conflict—that of the Father, of whom the person of Jesus is the supreme revelation, and that of Satan, represented by the figure of Judas. In similar fashion, the omission of the prayerful struggle and the introduction of the conversation with Judas are apposite to John's understanding of the meaning of Jesus' Passion and death. In the passion-death, Jesus is the glorified one (Jn 13:31). He can have no doubt and anxiety about his fate (Jn 18:4). He knows what will befall him. Even though Judas is the betrayer (Jn 18:5), it is Jesus who lays down his life. It is Jesus who is in command of the situation. It is Jesus who acts. Indeed, it is Jesus who takes the initiative by posing the question "Whom do you

108. Jn 18:4,7,8; Cf. 13:33; 16:19; 19:12; 20:15

109. A few brief reflections on the theme and its relationship to Lk are offered by René Laurentin in *Jésus au Temple, Mystère de Pâque et Foi de Marie en Luc 2*, 48-50. *Études Bibliques* (Paris, 1960), p. 132.

110. Jn 11:8; Cf. 10:31.

111. Jn 10:39; Cf. Jn 7:30.

112. Cf. A. JANSSENS DE VAREBEKE, "La structure des scènes du récit de la passion en Joh., xviii-xix," *ETL* 38 (1962) 504-522.

113. For example, Raymond Brown writes, "If John does draw on older independent tradition, the material from that tradition has been reworked in the interests of Johannine theology. . . . In our judgment, in order to do justice to all the complexities of the Johannine account, one must allow for both a reliable independent tradition and a highly theological elaboration." R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* xiii-xxi. No. 29a in coll. Anchor Bible (Garden City, 1970), p. 817.

seek?" (v.4). That the glorified Jesus is in control of the situation explains the superfluity of the mention of a kiss by Judas and its consequent omission from the Johannine narrative as well as the typically Johannine reworking of the tradition of the flight of Jesus' disciples. In the Synoptic account¹¹⁴ the disciples forsake their Master and flee; in the Johannine narrative it is Jesus who gives the order that they should be let go. Jesus takes the initiative in being left alone. Yet he is not alone; the Father is with him (Jn 16:32).

It is useful to read the Johannine account of Jesus' arrest as a commentary on the entire Passion narrative. From the very outset of his narrative, the evangelist has provided his readers with a scene which expresses the meaning of the Passion. For John the Passion is nothing other than the revelation, the glorification and exaltation of him who bears the divine name. As always, it is Jesus who takes the initiative in his self-revelation. It is he who poses and repeats the question, "Whom do you seek?" (vv.4,7). While, from John's dualistic perspective, a hostile band replies "Jesus of Nazareth," the glorified Jesus provides the answer to his own question. "I am he"—*Ego eimi*. Used absolutely, as here, this is the expression of the divine self-revelation.¹¹⁵ Confronted by the one who bears the divine name and is alone qualified to utter an "I am he" in the language of man, the band "drew back and fell to the ground." Awe is man's only response to the revelation of the Son of God. They sought a man; they found the Son of Man revealed as the glorified one. Their awe yielded to their obedience and subjection. They had but to yield to his command to let the disciples go. Ironically the powers of darkness found him for whom they were searching.

Conclusion

With these brief comments upon the theophany of Jn 18:1-11, our reflections on the search for Jesus may be brought to a close. Given the subtleness of the evangelist's thought and the intricacy of his technique, it is difficult to isolate one Johannine theme from another. A study which purports to treat of but one theme in the Fourth Gospel necessarily touches upon other significant elements in the evangelist's thought. Likewise it must necessarily take a position relative to the way in which the evangelist composed his Gospel. We began our study with the conviction that the "search for Jesus" is a touchstone of the evangelist's thought. We were convinced that the first words of the Johannine Jesus provide a key to an understanding of the entire Gospel. Subsequent analysis revealed that the verb "to seek", *zêtein*, is not used haphazardly in the Fourth Gospel. Rather it occurs in passages which are distinctively Johannine, in passages where typical vocabulary and technique function as so many indications of the evangelist's hand. In reading these passages we must be attentive to that meaning which is indigenous to John's description of a once-only event in the life of the historical Jesus of Nazareth as well as to that "symbolic" meaning which John attaches to passages which he has so

114. Cf. Mk 14:50 and par.

115. Cf. S. BARTINA, "Yo soy Yahweh." Nota exegética a Io 18, 4-8," *Estudios Bíblicos* 32 (1958) 403-426.

constructed or reworked as to elucidate the theological significance of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Johannine Jesus is, above all, the one who reveals himself to his disciples. To those who believe, he reveals himself as the one who bears the divine name. He alone can utter the awe-inspiring *Ego eimi*, "I am he." Jesus takes the initiative in his self-revelation. It is he who asks the question, "Whom do you seek?" Ultimately it is he who provides the answer in his own self-revelation.

The disciple is one who seeks. His search leads him to understand that Jesus says "I am he" because he dwells with the Father. The disciples, those who search faithfully, are likewise called to abide with the Father. There is, nevertheless, the great interim which comes between Jesus' death-exaltation and his return. His disciples know that the Passion of Jesus' is the moment of his return to the Father. In the interim which it inaugurates, they must continue to search.

As John develops "the search for Jesus", he makes use of language which recalls that of the prophets who speak of the search for the Lord, of the sages who speak of the search for Wisdom, and of the rabbis, and the *Essenes* who speak of searching the Scriptures. For John, this multifaceted search coalesces in the search for Jesus who is the revelation of the Father, Wisdom incarnate, and the fulfillment of the Scriptures. The search leads to the foot of the Cross, for Jesus' death is the supreme act of his self-revelation. This act of self-revelation is the *krisis*. It is the judgement. Those who have searched with open hearts come to know that Jesus has returned to the Father there to prepare a dwelling place for his disciples. In contrast to the believing disciples stand the "Jews." They will be confounded by the drama in which the death of Jesus of Nazareth unfolds as the revelation of him who bears the divine name. They have sought in frustration. They have sought and have not found. Confounded by their disbelief, they are confronted by the inevitable. But it is "too late."

The authentic search for Jesus is the search for the divine revealer initiated by Jesus himself. To seek in faith is to find him who is absent so that man might live. This is the search unto which John's Jesus ironically challenges man when he confronts him, with the question which is a matter of life-and-death, "What do you seek?" Only the believer knows that the "search for Jesus" is life's most authentic quest.