



NEW CURRENTS THROUGH JOHN

a global perspective

edited by

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NEW CURRENTS THROUGH JOHN

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JOHN 2:12-25: A NARRATIVE READING

Armand Barus

Differing with E. P. Sanders (1985), who argues that the temple incident is a symbolic prophecy of the destruction of the temple, and Richard Bauckham (1988), who argues that it is a symbolic "attack on the financial arrangements for the sacrificial system," this essay will propose that the central message of the Johannine temple incident is the universality of the body of Christ as God's new temple in which Jews and Gentiles are united. A narrative-critical reading will be employed to produce a fresh interpretation of the temple incident. This means that the various narrative features of John 2:12-25 will be explored in order to reveal the central message of the text.

JOHN'S NARRATIVE OF THE TEMPLE INCIDENT

Narrative-critical readings explore a theme by analyzing the content of a story (characters/characterization, plot) in its textual and narrative contexts (intratextual links, setting), considering how the story is told (narrator and point of view, literary devices) by analyzing it on two levels (story and discourse) in its readers' context. The characters, which are the focus of narrative analysis, are the carriers of the narrative themes. The characters who populate the narrative world have been chosen by the implied author to convey messages to the implied reader. What is more, the selection of characters in the narrative world could be seen as a reflection of the implied author's theological conception in dealing with the implied reader's pastoral needs, since the characters are constructs of the implied author. The following analysis will consider seven intertwined dimensions of the Fourth Gospel's presentation of the temple incident: intratextual links; literary design; setting; narrator and point of view; characters and characterization; plot; literary devices. A consideration of these elements will offer clues to the major themes of the narrative.

INTRATEXTUAL LINKS

John 2:12–25 forms a cohesive, close-knit unit. The evidence to support this observation may be outlined as follows. (1) John 2:23–25 serves as a summary statement. The Fourth Gospel (FG) explicitly expresses its purpose in 20:31: “But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (unless noted, all quotes are from the NRSV). The stated purpose serves as the conclusion of the book and provides a clue for determining the contours of the narrative. The narrator summarizes the narrative, as it were, with the responses of the characters to the protagonist. Similarly, the summary at 2:23–25 indicates the ending of a smaller narrative unit. The references to “faith” in 2:11 and 2:23–25, which are voiced by the narrator, serve as a boundary, making 2:12–25 a coherent narrative unit. The strategic placement of the summary of the belief motif divides the Fourth Gospel into distinct units. Thus, the narrator signals the end of the entire narrative by references to faith, and a reference to faith appears in the concluding section of each smaller narrative unit.

(2) The phrase translated “after this” (John 2:12), which occurs also in 11:7, 11 and 19:28, should be distinguished from “after these,” which occurs at 3:22; 5:1, 14; 6:1; 7:1; 13:7; 19:38; and 21:1. The former (“after this”) indicates both chronological and narrative sequence, whereas the latter (“after these”) denotes only narrative sequence. Thus the phrase “after this” at 2:12 not only indicates a new scene but also joins this unit with the preceding one.

(3) The setting changes from Cana to Capernaum. Changed setting is accompanied by changing narrative mood, from a joyous occasion at the wedding at Cana to the conflict environment that is overshadowed by the protagonist’s death. The spatial setting of Capernaum and the temporal setting of the Passover festival indicate a new narrative section.

(4) The plot, as discussed below, underscores the coherence of the unit.

The passage forms a cohesive unit but is closely linked to the preceding narrative by common motifs (faith, witness, *sēmeia*) and characters (Jesus, the disciples, Jesus’ family, and the religious leaders). Although the chronological link between John 2:23–25 and 3:1 is not clear, the faith motif, the protagonist (Jesus), and the disciples tie both narrative units together. Thus, the belief motif coupled with the christological motif weave these three narrative units (1:19–2:11; 2:12–25; 3:1–4:54) together. Within the larger context of FG, this complex of units functions as a key to open a larger room where the ontological and functional nature of the protagonist are displayed in order to elicit faith in Jesus and to deepen and enrich the believers’ relationship with him. In and through words and deeds, the protagonist fulfills his mission to exe-

gete the nature of himself and the Father (1:18) so that people might believe in him. In 1:19-2:11, the protagonist starts his witnessing with a speech, but in 2:12-25 he begins with an action followed by a speech. Both witnessing activities (deeds and words) reveal the protagonist's nature.

LITERARY DESIGN

The protagonist's witnessing activities, through both deeds and words, receive two opposing responses from various group characters embedded in the narrative world of John 2:12-25. These responses, which differ from those in 1:35-51, are communal in nature. The communal dimension of the faith motif condensed in 1:12 is dramatized by the appearance of the various group characters embedded in the narrative world. The design of the narrative in relating the various responses that Jesus receives is as follows:

- (1) John 2:12: the response of the disciples and Jesus' family
- (2) John 2:13-22: the response of the religious leaders at the temple
- (3) John 2:23-25: the response of the people

Moving from the family circle, the narrator brings the protagonist into the center of Jewish civilization. The temple incident sets the protagonist's public ministry in a festive environment in the center of the social, political, and religious life of the Jews. The narrator artfully designs the beginning and end of the protagonist's public witnessing in the context of the Passover (John 2:13; 12:1) and the holy city of Jerusalem, creating an *inclusio* in the larger narrative. The protagonist's public witnessing activities in the temple courts produce three types of response: a silent response from his family, the sellers, and the money changers; a rejecting response from the religious leaders; and a believing response from the disciples and the crowds. The narrator basically provides both unrecorded responses and recorded responses. In the first scene (2:12), the narrator says nothing of what had happened in Capernaum or during the journey to Jerusalem, a trip that took approximately three days. In the second scene (2:13-22), two opposing responses to the protagonist's deeds and words are narrated. The narrator does not record the response from the sellers and the money changers. In the third scene (2:23-25), the festival crowd responds positively. These group responses highlight the communal aspect of the narrative texture, with its focus on 2:13-22.

SETTING

The first scene in this episode (John 2:12) is located in Capernaum in a house. In Capernaum the protagonist, his family, and his disciples stay for a few days.

No definite days are given by the narrator because he intends to focus on the protagonist's public witnessing activities in Jerusalem.

The second scene is set in Jerusalem. The narrator brings the protagonist immediately to Jerusalem without mentioning the cities or villages passed through. These places are not important, since the focus of the setting is the Passover in Jerusalem. The protagonist's public ministry is located temporally just before the Passover festival and spatially in the temple, which is considered the center of the world (Ezek 5:5; 38:12; see Wright 1996, 406–12). A detailed spatial setting is given by mentioning different parts of the temple. The protagonist is in the court of the Gentiles (*hieros*) and proclaims the *hieros* as the *oikos tou patros* ("house of the Father"; John 2:16). For Jesus, there is no distinction between *hieros* and *naos*, a term that normally refers to the inner court of the temple. This clearly indicates that no distinction is made between Jews and Gentiles in Jesus' witnessing activities. In a similar tone, the narrator uses the terms *hieros*, *oikos* ("house"), and *naos* interchangeably. The religious leaders, by contrast, do not perceive the court of the Gentiles (*hieros*) as part of the temple and instead use *naos* to refer to the sanctuary, the inner court of the temple. They do not hesitate to transform the court of the Gentiles into a market for trading, a situation that makes it more difficult for the Gentiles to pray to God.

The narrator specifically modifies the term "Passover" with the attributive phrase "of the Jews" to indicate an implied Gentile readership, who otherwise might not understand Jewish customs and traditions. The narrator of FG mentions a total of three Passovers covering a period of at least two years (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55), which together denote the macro-temporal setting of the protagonist in the narrative world. The framework of these three Passovers also creates a sense of dynamic and linear progress by indicating the beginning, middle, and end of the protagonist's public witnessing activities.

The third scene (John 2:23–25) takes place in Jerusalem during the Passover festival. The term "Passover festival" seems to refer here both to the Passover (14–15 Nissan) and to the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed (15–21 Nissan). The narrator narrates this event, which is much longer than the time encompassed by the second scene, in a single sentence. The Passover festival is one of the major religious festivals for the Jews (Deut 16:16). It is understandable, therefore, that it might have been attended by Jews from Palestine (Judeans and Galileans) and the Diaspora and by Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism. The provision for exchanging currency proves that the people gathered in Jerusalem came from different parts of the world. In 12:20 the narrator explicitly reports that Greeks, who had become proselytes, attended the Passover festival. The international character of the pilgrims is also reported by Luke (Acts 8:27) and Josephus (*War* 6.427).

Although one cannot establish the exact number (the estimate of attendance given by Josephus is not accepted by modern scholars), at least one can affirm that a large number of people participated in the Passover festival in Jerusalem. One may reasonably state that the Passover festival was an international festival. The inclusiveness of the protagonist's witnessing activities is thus highlighted by the international nature of the festival pilgrims.

The setting of the Johannine temple incident emphasizes the communal, nondiscriminatory, and international nature of the protagonist's witnessing activities. While emphasis is placed more on the communal dimension and less on the nondiscriminatory and international dimensions, the blending of these three terms stresses the theme of the universal. The setting helps to intensify the universal texture of the narrative.

NARRATOR AND POINT OF VIEW

By way of comparison, the role of the narrator is more evident in the temple incident than in the preceding narrative unit (John 1:19-51). The story is told predominantly in the third person, rather than in direct speech. As a witness-observer, the narrator is absent from the narrative action (heterodiegetic narrator). The presence of dialogical discourse is minimal in the narrative world (2:16, 18, 19, 20). The narrator even considers the dialogue between characters unimportant, since the focus of the narration is on the protagonist. The characters embedded in the narrative world interact directly with the protagonist. The reliability of the narrator is portrayed when he acts as the authoritative interpreter of Jesus by explaining his enigmatic words (2:19, 21). The narrator-as-observer interrupts the narration at a critical moment by giving an inside view of the main character. This is possible because the narrator's position in the narrative world is between the implied author and the characters, enabling him to move dynamically to either pole.

The narrator presents an anisochronous narrative in which the story duration and text duration are varied. Events in Capernaum and during the journey to Jerusalem, which take place over a few days, are compressed into a very short textual space, a technique called "ellipsis." The narrator omits the events during the journey to Jerusalem and brings the protagonist right to the heart of Jewish civilization; there, an event that occurs in a relatively short story time—the expelling of the merchants and the money changers and the response of the religious leaders—receives more textual space. In literary terms, this phenomenon is called "deceleration." By contrast, the third scene (2:23-25), which happens over a relatively long period of time, is given a very short textual space. This shift in narrative speed is called "acceleration." Taken together, these two literary phenomena indicate importance and centrality:

an event that is more important and central is given more textual space. This indicates that the focus of the narration is on the second scene (2:13–22).

The second scene's (John 2:13–22) role as the focus of the narration is intensified by the repetition of references to an event that happens only once. The expelling of the merchants and the money changers (2:16) reappears in 2:17, and 2:22 recalls the dialogue between the protagonist and the Jewish leaders. The former repetition is called "analepsis," while the latter is referred to as "prolepsis." Analepsis repetition returns to a past event, hence revealing an omniscient narrator by taking the implied readers into the disciples' inner thoughts. Prolepsis repetition takes the implied readers into a future event, providing them with information about what is yet to happen in the narrative world that could not otherwise be available. Prolepsis creates a sense of anticipation and expectation in the reading process: suspense builds as the narrator informs the reader of the protagonist's impending death. Of particular importance here is the passive verb *emnēsthēsan* ("they remembered") in 2:17 and 22. Through this verb the omniscient narrator narrates retrospectively, enhanced by the writing formula in 2:17, from a postresurrection point of view. After the protagonist's resurrection the disciples will understand his witnessing activities in deed (expelling the merchants and the money changers) and word (dialogue with the religious leaders). The verb *emnēsthēsan* also demonstrates the fusion of two horizons: events from before and after the resurrection are merged into a single cohesive narration.

CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERIZATION

Notably, all communications in the temple incident center on the protagonist. Differing from the preceding narrative unit (John 1:19–2:11), there is no interaction between one character and another. This clearly points to the centrality of the protagonist within the narrative world.

If in the preceding narrative the characters predominantly are individual (John, Andrew, an unnamed disciple, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, Jesus' mother), the characters in John 2:12–25 are communal, groups of people. There are five group characters present in this narrative who interact with the protagonist: Jesus' family; the disciples; the sellers and moneychangers; the religious leaders; and the people at the festival. Each of these group characters will be analyzed in the order of their appearance in the scene.

Jesus, the protagonist, is first mentioned in 2:12. Differing from the preceding narrative, Jesus begins his witnessing activities with action rather than speech. In the narrative, these two forms of witnessing communication (word and deed) are kept in balance. Word without work sends a weak and incomplete message, whereas deed without word creates ambiguity. Jesus' action in

the court of the Gentiles cannot be regarded as inciting a riot, since he does not attract the attention of the Roman guards, nor does he cause any permanent loss of investment to the merchants or the money changers. Jesus simply expels, using a whip, the cattle, sheep, and doves that are used in the sacrificial worship from the court of the Gentiles and scatters the coins. Both animals and coins can be easily gathered again.

Jesus' witnessing activities in the court of the Gentiles, expelling the merchants and the money changers followed by dialogue with the religious leaders, are not understood by the disciples. Only after Jesus' resurrection from the dead do the disciples understand the meaning and purpose of Jesus' deed and words.

Jesus' seemingly outrageous deed in the temple is understood as an expression of zeal. Before the resurrection, the small number of disciples who accompany Jesus to Jerusalem view his deed as total devotion to the temple or a passionate commitment to God, not as an expression of opposition to animal sacrifice or the temple. Jesus' zeal forces him courageously to restore the court of the Gentiles from a place of trade to a place of prayer by driving the sellers out and hints at the universality of his witnessing activities. Jesus' action is not an attack on the sacrificial system. What Jesus strongly objects to is the use of the court of the Gentiles as a place for trading. This trading must be done elsewhere, not in the court of the Gentiles. The protagonist is, as the setting shows, in the court of the Gentiles (*hieros*). Jesus then calls the court of the Gentiles *ton oikon tou patros mou* ("the house of my Father"; 2:16). The house of the Father includes both the Gentiles and the Jews. Jesus comes not only for the Jews but also the Gentiles. His zeal costs him his life. Without Jesus' death, the unification of Jews and Gentiles into one community could not take place. Jesus' death is expressed proleptically by the quotation from Ps 68:10 (LXX), making it the announcement of Jesus' death. The disciples interpret this text christologically after Jesus' resurrection, which causes a change from the aorist *kataphagen* ("consumed") to the future *kataphagetai* ("will consume"). This change, which creates a sense of prophecy in the narrative world, is necessary, since the narrator composes this significant event from a postresurrection point of view. The future tense in the narrative world points to Jesus' death. Jesus will die in order to build God's new temple where Jews and Gentiles perfectly meet and dwell.

Jesus' word to the religious leaders in the temple is understood by the disciples only after the resurrection. Only at that time will the disciples come to a new understanding of Jesus' witnessing activities in and through word, that the temple of God is the body of Christ (2:21). The body of Christ is the real temple where God perfectly dwells (1:14) and where God and human beings meet (1:51). The transformation from building to person demands the

“consumption” of the protagonist’s own body. Why did Jesus’ resurrection transform the disciples’ understanding of him? The explanation of Jesus’ dramatic deed through the dialogue with the Jews depicts the ontological nature of the protagonist. The active verb *egerō* in 2:19 (“I will raise it up”) indicates that the protagonist has the power of resurrection and that accordingly he himself is the source of life. Death cannot hold the giver of life. Jesus, the source of life, raises himself from the dead. His resurrection power does not depend on outside power. The implied reader who has read the Prologue is now enabled to understand more clearly the narrator’s statement in 1:4, “In him was life.” Jesus is God from whom life flows and by whom it is sustained. Moreover, the narrator speaks also of the resurrection of Jesus as the work of God by using the passive verb *ēgerthē* (“he was raised”) in 2:22. Jesus not only raises himself but also is raised by God from the dead. Thus the resurrection of Jesus is the manifestation of the power of both Jesus and God.

The resurrection event opens the spiritual eyes of the disciples to see the Old Testament with new eyes and to understand the significance of Jesus’ witnessing activities through deeds and words. Why? The resurrection reveals the protagonist’s divinity. The resurrection intimates Jesus’ witnessing activities as the image of the invisible God.

With this understanding in mind, the implied reader would not be surprised by the narrator’s statements that many people in Jerusalem believe in Jesus (2:23) and that “Jesus knows what is in human beings” (2:25). Jesus is God, hence he is the object of faith; Jesus is God, hence he has complete knowledge of human beings’ hearts. Jesus is characterized as the omniscient figure who knows comprehensively and profoundly what is inside the human heart. In Jewish literature, knowledge of the human heart is exclusive to God (*Mek. Exod* 15:32; *Gen. Rab.* 65; *Midr. Qoh.* 11:5; *1QS* 4:25; *1QH* 7:14–18; *Gen* 6:5; *1 Chr* 28:9; *Pss* 7:10; 26:2; 44:21; *Jer* 11:20; 12:3; 17:10). Jesus’ possession of divine knowledge demonstrates that he is not simply human but also divine. The implied reader who walks in the Jewish tradition and is exposed to the protagonist’s divine knowledge is coerced to embrace Jesus’ divinity wholeheartedly.

Jesus’ family first appears in the scene at John 2:12, as Jesus, his mother, and his brothers stay for a few days in Capernaum. The narrator does not tell the implied reader what happened there. In view of the fact that the mother of Jesus had seen many of the signs that Jesus performed, the implied readers naturally expect her to believe in Jesus. But the narrator remains silent on this issue. There is also no indication that Jesus’ brothers already believe in him. It is not clear whether Jesus’ brothers accompany him before and during the Passover festival and hence see and hear his action in the court of the Gentiles, his dialogue with the Jews, and the manifestation of many *sēmeia*

("signs"). When they reappear in the narrative world (7:2-10) it is stated that they do not believe in him. This suggests that the events in Jerusalem have no immediate impact on their lives. In light of 2:11, one might reasonably assume that the relationship between Jesus and his family is still undecided. Moreover, the narration about Jesus' family, which is textually short, indicates the narrator's intention to suggest that Jesus' "family" is not confined to blood relations.

The resurrection of Jesus radically transformed a second group character in the narrative, *the disciples*. Before the resurrection they did not fully understand the significance of Jesus' action and dialogue in the temple. The disciples mentioned in John 2:11-12 are obviously not the twelve. The chronological sequence "after this," as discussed above, affirms that "the disciples" mentioned at 2:11 are Andrew, the unnamed disciple, Philip, Peter, and Nathanael. They are the first people who receive and believe in him. The disciples' presence in the temple to celebrate the Passover as pious Jews is presupposed by the language of "going down" (2:12) and "going up" to Jerusalem (2:13). Despite seeing Jesus' deed in the court of the Gentiles, the disciples seem unaware of the universality of the protagonist's mission, which includes both the Jews and the Gentiles. Although they hear Jesus' words in the temple, they seem to miss the manifestation of his glory as God's presence on earth. But the resurrection event opens their eyes and ears. With the narrative being composed from a postresurrection perspective, the remembrance motif (*emnēsthēsan*) inevitably appears (2:17, 22), suggesting that the disciples in 2:17, 22 are greater than the number mentioned in 2:12. These postresurrection disciples are Johannine communities. What happens to them? Johannine communities are reminded of Jesus' witnessing activities in deeds and words. Verse 17 becomes a moment for the communities to see clearly the significance of Jesus' deeds, and verse 22 is the moment when they perceive the meaning of Jesus' words. The passive verb *emnēsthēsan* ("they were reminded") indicates that the communities are being reminded. By whom? The remembrance motif corresponds with Jesus' promise concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the disciples' lives after his ascension (7:39; 14:26). The Holy Spirit helps the communities to remember Jesus' deeds and words and enables them to theologize Christ's events meaningfully. The resurrection of Jesus opens the communities' eyes to see the Old Testament christologically and to understand more deeply Jesus' words and deeds as portraying God's presence on earth. Through these means, the Johannine communities are enabled to grasp deeply who Jesus is ontologically and functionally.

The narrator states that Johannine communities understand the body of Jesus as God's temple after the resurrection. Jesus does not replace or even

destroy the temple but rather personalizes it. The temple in Jerusalem is only a shadow of the real and perfect temple. Jesus is the real temple where God perfectly dwells (John 1:14). With this understanding, Jesus' witnessing activity through deed in the court of the Gentiles proclaims that there are no walls separating Jews and Gentiles in Jesus-as-temple. The universality of the temple, which is the body of Christ, emerges as the important point of Jesus' witnessing activities.

Although the disciples are probably present during the Passover festival when Jesus performs many signs (2:23), the narrator does not record their explicit impact on the disciples' lives. If many people respond by believing in Jesus, the disciples are silent in seeing the *sēmeia*. The response from the disciples, as mentioned above, comes only after the resurrection. The disciples, as described by the narrator in 2:22, believe in Jesus. This is the moment not of the birth of the disciples' faith but rather of a developed understanding of faith. Reading the events of the temple incident in light of 2:11 and 20:30, it can reasonably be surmised that the disciples' faith deepens as they see many signs. It is not going too far to state that the remembrance motif helps the disciples to understand Jesus' witnessing activities during the Passover festival in Jerusalem (2:23).

The animal merchants and moneychangers, the third group character in the scene, use the court of the Gentiles (*hieros*), with permission from the religious leaders, as a market for trading. Their business practices hinder the Gentiles who come to pray to God. The Gentiles are distracted from their worship by the noise of commerce, the bellowing of cattle, and the bleating of sheep. As noted above, the coins of the money changers, although scattered, can easily be gathered together again later, and Jesus expels those selling doves without releasing the doves from the cages. Thus there is no intention to bring harm to the animals or to inflict loss on the merchants and the money changers. Had the merchants and money changers viewed Jesus' action as an act of violence, then a complaint would have been immediately submitted to the Roman garrison in the Antonia fortress. Jesus simply forbids them to use the place of prayer for all nations as a market for trading. Jesus' action vividly demonstrates that the court of the Gentiles is as important as the sanctuary proper; both are part of his Father's house. The merchants and money changers, by contrast, deprive people from all nations of their place for worshipping God. Their actions imply that the Gentiles are not God's people, but Jesus affirms that worship by people of all nations is as important as the worship of the Jews. Jesus also testifies to the merchants and money changers that he has a unique and personal relationship with God by calling God his "Father" (2:16). Clear and bold as the protagonist's witness is, the animal merchants and the money changers do not give any positive marked response. They

could be labeled as people who do not believe because they do not grasp the significance of the *sēmeia*.

The immediate response to Jesus' zeal comes from *the religious leaders* (not from the Roman authorities), a group character who might fear the loss of financial income (Bauckham 1988, 72-89). They question the authority behind Jesus' action, an authority that can be proved only by performing a sign. The questioning of authority that takes the form of the demand for a sign shows that the religious leaders close their spiritual eyes to Jesus' witnessing activities in the court of the Gentiles. Although there is no clear indication of hostility expressed by the religious leaders, the fledgling conflict with the religious leaders emerges. The conflict arises not because Jesus has an antipriestly attitude or a plan to destroy the temple but rather because of their unbelief. The demand of the religious leaders for a sign is, in fact, granted immediately by Jesus in the form of a reference to his resurrection (2:19). Thus, the resurrection could be perceived as the supreme and climactic "sign" in FG. It is a sign of a consummated universal community in which Jews and Gentiles are united. These two separated ethnic groups are unified into one body of Jesus, which is the new temple. The resurrection is a "sign" in that it produces faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

But may one also think of Jesus' action in the temple precinct as itself a "sign"? It is indeed a sign, for four reasons. First, the action results in belief in Jesus (2:22). Jesus' action deepens the disciples' faith. Second, the remembrance motif (2:17, 22) has the effect of deepening faith and hence intimates that the action is a *sēmeion*. Third, John 4:48 and 6:30, among others, show that signs are capable of engendering faith. Finally, the closing statement of the narrative indicates that the "signs" included in FG are meant to elicit and edify faith in Jesus (20:30-31). The *sēmeia* are thus Jesus' witnessing activities in words and deeds that portray the image of God. This point will be discussed later.

The narrator does not detail Jesus' witnessing activities through which *many people*, the final group character mentioned in the episode, come to believe in him (2:23). Jesus' witnessing activities in Jerusalem during the Passover festival are summed up in the word *sēmeia* (plural): many people believe in Jesus as a result of seeing the signs. Although *polloi* ("many, crowds") is masculine, it seems inaccurate to view these great crowds as consisting of only men. It is important to notice that the narrator does not specify the nature of these signs or the background of the people believing in him. But as the Passover was an international festival, it might have been attended by people from different parts of the world. Therefore, it seems possible to argue that the term *polloi* involves a large number of people, international in nature.

The narrator reports in 4:45 that Galileans participated in the Passover festival in Jerusalem and saw all that Jesus had done in Jerusalem. But there is no explicit response of believing in Jesus. They simply welcome him enthusiastically. This is plausibly an indication of their perception that Jesus' prior action in the temple precinct, among other things, is a protest against the commercialization of the sacrificial system, a system that brings economic benefits to Jerusalem while becoming an oppressive financial burden on people from other regions (see Bauckham 1988, 78–79). The Galileans' warm reception when Jesus returns home is also a response of seeing and hearing Jesus' witness. They welcome Jesus but do not give him honor by believing in him. The exclusion of the Galileans from people who believe in Jesus further strengthens the international nature of the term *polloi*.

PLOT

The plot—the structuring or organizing line of the story—is forward-moving. This is the logic and the shaping force of the narrative. If the plot is the body of the narrative, the characters are the soul (Bar-Efrat 2000, 93). As Jesus bears witness, the characters react in two contrasting ways. The portrait of two diametrically opposite characters in the narrative (believers and unbelievers) clearly connects the series of events into a cohesive narrative unit. Further, the presence of both believers and unbelievers in the narrative world shows that the plot is propelled by conflict. The plot is built on the conflict of belief and unbelief. As noted above, characters who respond with unbelief include Jesus' brothers, the merchants and money changers, the religious leaders, and many people who do not believe. The disciples and other people who believe dramatize the believers. Many people start their relationship with Jesus, hence indicating the evangelistic purpose of his action, whereas the disciples deepen their relationship with Jesus, hence expressing the edificatory purpose. The characters embody the plot insofar as their response is either belief in Jesus or unbelief.

LITERARY DEVICES

In the communication process, messages are conveyed and received explicitly and implicitly. Often the implicit message is stronger than the explicit message. As far as John 2:12–25 is concerned, two types of implicit messages may be detected: symbol and misunderstanding. These literary devices appear in the focus of the narration, the second scene in the temple (2:13–22). Through these literary devices communication between the implied author and implied reader is established and sustained to persuade the

implied reader of the purpose of the implied author's writing: to elicit and edify faith in Jesus.

A "symbol" uses earthly realities to point to other realities. The implied reader seeks to put together two realities into one meaning, a meaning of which the characters in the text may not have been aware. In the Hebrew Bible the temple symbolizes the presence of God. The narrator's intrusive comment in John 2:21 unifies the symbol and what is being symbolized. The temple as the symbol of God's earthly presence is no longer restricted to a particular building but rather to the consecrated Jesus. Jesus is God's earthly presence, since the Father has consecrated him to be the living temple. The idea of the personalization of the temple is not unknown outside the Fourth Gospel. The Qumran community believed that the presence of God was no longer bound to the temple in Jerusalem but to the pure Israel represented by the Qumran community. In their view, the temple in Jerusalem had been desecrated by the religious leaders and the people (see Gärtner 1965, 16-44).

The device of misunderstanding is related to symbol in that the characters fail to perceive symbols that are then clarified by the narrator. Misunderstanding occurs in the center of the narrative (John 2:13-22) in order to heighten the implied reader's attention to the protagonist. The dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders creates total misunderstanding. In the religious leaders' perception, Jesus is demolishing the temple, whereas Jesus means the demolition of his body by the religious leaders, which he will then resurrect. The narrator is able to clarify the misunderstanding so that the implied reader will not fail to understand Jesus' words. Now the temple is the resurrected body of Jesus. The narrator magnificently guides the implied reader, who saw the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E., to the resurrected Jesus as the real temple and hence forces readers to reorient their attitude toward the temple. The new center of life and worship is not the temple but Jesus himself. Jesus-as-the-personalized-temple is now spiritually present among the believers' community. The new temple is no longer confined to a particular place or people. The new temple that is the body of Christ now becomes universal. Failure to understand Jesus' words may lead the implied reader to fall into the narrative's victimization of the religious leaders who do not believe in Jesus. The religious leaders are victimized by their own failure to understand. The implied readers, therefore, are encouraged to follow the steps of the disciples by reading the Scriptures christologically and by deepening their understanding of who Jesus is, as revealed through his deeds and words.

These two literary devices, symbol and misunderstanding, are located in the second scene (John 2:13-22), which is the focus of the narration. These devices endeavor to persuade the implied reader to identify with either the religious leaders or the disciples. The implied reader cannot but embrace the

narrator's ideological perspective, which is stated in 20:31. The implied reader is invited to join the international community of believers. The overall effect created by the narrator through these devices is the universal significance of the protagonist's death and hence the internationalizing of the believing communities.

SIGNS AND FAITH

As noted above, the group characters embedded in John's narrative of the temple incident carry the narrative themes. Two such themes will be highlighted here: faith and universal community; and the relationship between faith and signs.

FAITH AND UNIVERSAL COMMUNITY

The interaction between Jesus and various group characters in John 2:12–25 explicates the communal aspect of faith. The interaction results in evoking and deepening communal belief, both edificatory faith and evangelistic faith.

Let us turn our attention first to *edificatory faith*. The disciples are portrayed as believers in 2:11, but they do not understand Jesus' deeds in the court of the Gentiles. However, the new perspective brought about by the resurrection of Jesus opens a new understanding as the Holy Spirit reminds them of the meaning and purpose of Jesus' words and deeds. The disciples therefore realize the universal nature of Jesus' witnessing activities. The Jews and the Gentiles are united into one body of Christ. The unification of Jews and Gentiles inevitably brings Jesus to the cross. Jesus' death on the cross demolishes the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. In the body of Christ as God's new temple, there no longer exists alienated and hostile races but rather a unified and reconciled people. All ethnic groups are in the same position before God. This new understanding of the disciples is expressed, as discussed above, in the quotation from Ps 69:9 in John 2:17. Uniting the Jews and the Gentiles into one people of God "consumes" Jesus' body. This motivation, dramatized in the temple incident, costs Jesus his life. By his death on the cross, Jesus unites both ethnic groups into one perfect temple, his body. It is clear, therefore, how the disciples' faith deepens communally. The disciples communally see Jesus with new eyes. But this growth does not stop. The disciples continue to build their faith by relating the body of Jesus and the resurrection event. The narrator's intrusive comment in 2:21 affirms that the body of Jesus is the perfect dwelling place of God. It is perfect because there is no alienation between Jews and Gentiles or alienation of either ethnic group from God. In the postresurrection era, the Holy Spirit helps the uni-

versal believing community to remember the dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders, while at the same time illuminating its significance. The believing community begins to understand that from the beginning God's eternal purpose has been to unite the Jews and the Gentiles into one people.

Interpreting the dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders from the resurrection perspective, the believing community now has a new relationship with the Old Testament. The believing community is enabled to read the Scriptures christologically. Jesus is the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament, and through him alone one has the key to open up its correct meaning. The Holy Spirit further helps the disciples to understand the significance of Jesus' words. From the resurrection point of view, the believing community begins to understand Jesus' words as portraying the presence of God. The new perspective brought about by the resurrection event opens new eyes. The believing community then has no ambivalence as to how to relate to the Old Testament and Jesus' words by placing them on the same platform. The believing community's faith is further strengthened by the role of the Holy Spirit as they read the Scriptures christologically and interpret Jesus' words theologically. Thus both the Old Testament and Jesus' words deepen communal faith.

The interactions between Jesus and various characters also function to deepen *evangelistic faith*. In John 1:35-51 individuals come to faith, but in the temple incident the narrator is concerned with the birth of faith communally. People come to faith in Jesus en masse. The signs in the court of the Gentiles and the resurrection event edify the disciples' faith, but the signs performed during the Passover festival cause many people to believe in him and imply that many people also do not believe in him. It can be surmised, therefore, that the many people who believe are an international community. As weak as the evidence may seem, a narrative-critical reading suggests that it is not unreasonable that the many people who believe dramatize the universality of Jesus' body.

Many people believe in Jesus, but Jesus did not entrust himself to them. Why? The narrator gives two reasons. First, Jesus knew all people immediately and simultaneously (2:24). Second, Jesus does not need any information concerning human nature and personality, since he knows profoundly the hearts of all (2:25). These two notes affirm that people who believe in Jesus en masse are not required to each introduce themselves personally to Jesus. Also, people who believe do not necessarily physically follow him. Jesus knows them all comprehensively and simultaneously. In other words, the narrator distinguishes the people who believe in 1:19-2:11 from those who believe in 2:12-25: in the former passage, the first disciples follow Jesus as rabbi; the new believers mentioned in the latter passage do not. If relating to Jesus does

not mean following him physically wherever he goes, the question arises as to how the later believing community may develop their relationship with Jesus. Whether individually or in large numbers, the protagonist knows them all simultaneously and profoundly, a note that points to Jesus' spiritual presence among the believing community. That Jesus "did not entrust himself" to the believing community (2:24) means that Jesus does not relate physically to those who believe. Jesus needs no such kind of physical relationship, since he knows the universal believing community fully. The narrator does not refer to Jesus' physical proximity but to his spiritual relationship with believers communally. This point is explained in 6:56 and 10:14–16. Jesus' spiritual presence among the believing community further affirms that the relationship between Jesus and the believers traverses spatial and temporal barriers, hence denoting its universality.

But how do believers communally strengthen their faith without following Jesus physically? In this connection, the function of the Old Testament and Jesus' words play an important role, which explains the reason for including both in the narrative. Although Jesus did not entrust himself to the universal believing community—that is, does not relate physically to them—their faith can be deepened through exposure to the Old Testament and his words. Thus, many people en masse can relate to Jesus simultaneously, entering a community that is universal in nature. The relationship between Jesus and the universal community of believers, which is created by the death of Jesus, is sustained and strengthened by the Old Testament and his words and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

FAITH AND SIGNS

While *sêmeia* are given to the merchants, the money changers, and the religious leaders, these characters do not see their significance and, as a result, do not believe in Jesus. Only after the resurrection is the meaning of the signs understood by the disciples, resulting in a deepening relationship with Jesus. The believing community clearly sees the temple incident as pointing to the universality of believers created by Jesus' death.

People in Jerusalem during the Passover festival come to believe in Jesus. Why? Seeing the signs that the narrator narrates causes many to believe in him. But what are "signs"? Most scholars view the Johannine *sêmeia* as miracles. Many scholars conclude that the kind of belief that is grounded on a miracle is considered inadequate in FG. Schnackenburg, like others who take this view, concludes that "the belief of the crowds 'in his name' [2:23] ... is characterized as an inadequate belief attached to miracles, which Jesus deliberately rejects" (1968, 341, 358). Faith, according to Schnackenburg and

others, must be grounded on Jesus' words alone, since the miracles as a proof are widely rejected, particularly after the Enlightenment. But does *sēmeia* mean "miracles"? The *sēmeia* in John are not necessarily miraculous deeds, since they can also be a proleptic word or an action. "Signs" are witnessing activities through words and deeds that reveal who Jesus is. Although the *sēmeia* mentioned in 2:23 do not necessarily refer to 2:18, it is clear that the *sēmeia* point to Jesus' words and deeds. Thus, Jesus' deeds in the court of the Gentiles and Jesus' resurrection are viewed as "signs." Signs in the narrative point to the universality of Christ's body. Interestingly, the narrator makes a distinction between *sēmeia* and *terata* ("miracles") in 4:48. These two terms represent two different types of phenomena. Moreover, in line with 20:30-31, the *sēmeia* in FG are intended primarily to lead people to believe in Jesus. They are closely connected with the belief motif. Therefore, it would seem misleading to state that faith produced by signs is inadequate. *Sēmeia* refers to both Jesus' words and deeds, either of which can create and strengthen faith.

The crowds who believe in Jesus' name have an adequate faith, though fledgling, based on the witness of Jesus himself. This faith, like the disciples' faith, needs to be deepened, but the adequacy of such faith is revealed in the fact that 2:23 uses the same grammatical construction as 1:12, where belief in Jesus' name grants one power to become a child of God. Schnackenburg's reading of 2:23 would counter 1:12, thus suggesting that the narrator is self-contradictory and unreliable. Jesus himself says clearly, "him who comes to me I will not cast out" (6:37). Thus, it is important to assert that the narrator does not portray Jesus' rejection of people's faith. Unlike the *sēmeia* in 2:11 that strengthen the faith of the believers, at 2:23 signs become the *basis* of belief. The signs in 2:11 are not given to all people, only to the believing community. Faith founded on the observation of signs is not inferior, since the narrator portrays that *sēmeia* function to create and strengthen faith.

Thus, for believers the signs function to strengthen faith, whereas for unbelievers they evoke belief in him. The *sēmeia* are connected with the dramatic action and with Jesus' miraculous deeds and resurrection. Signs signify who Jesus is and create, in effect, a dividing point in human lives at which some people come to believe in his name (John 4:53-54) while others refuse him (e.g., 11:47). The *sēmeia* signify divine presence on earth to all ethnic groups, the universality of Jesus' witnessing activities.

CONCLUSION

A narrative reading reveals that the universality of Jesus' body as the new temple in which the Jews and the Gentiles are united is the central message of John 2:12-25. This universality is enhanced by the texture of the text and

the presence of the group characters embedded in the narrative world. The hostile wall separating two alienated ethnic groups is destroyed by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The universality of the believing community is further dramatized in 3:1–4:54 by selecting characters of different gender, social status, and ethnic background. When one believes in Jesus, one is attached to a community that is universal in nature. One's relationship with Jesus causes a believer to relate to this universal community of believers.

The above analysis of characters has also demonstrated that FG is composed both to initiate faith in Jesus (*Missionsschrift*) and to deepen the faith of the believing community (*Gemeindeschrift*). The characters embedded in the narrative world dramatize the evangelistic and edificatory aspects of faith. The narrative reading helps reveal, over and above the linguistic and historical readings, the dual purpose of FG as stated in 20:31. What does the term *evangelistic* mean? Was FG regarded simply as a religious tract? Was FG circulated freely among nonbelievers? One can only conjecture the answer. The more likely scenario is that FG was used in Christian worship where nonbelievers were present. Justin's *First Apology* describes regular Sunday worship by Christians in city or countryside (*1 Apol.* 67) and mentions Scripture reading, including "the memoirs of the apostles" (= the New Testament Gospels), as the focal point of the gatherings. The inclusiveness of the Christian gathering, which was attended by nonbelievers, is hinted at in Justin's writings (*1 Apol.* 66, 67); from an earlier era, the presence of nonbelievers at Christian gatherings is explicitly reported in 1 Cor 14:23–24. Thus, FG was likely read and used by Johannine communities where nonbelievers were present.