

A Christological-Theological Study into the Exclusivism of the Salvation Concept
in John 14:6

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Acknowledgement and Dedication

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* and any approved embargo.

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Abstract

The thesis presented here is that the text of John 14:6—“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’”—cannot be read in an exclusivist manner. While this thesis may initially seem paradoxical, the argument presented here is that while the content may initially seem to be exclusivist when read in light of later historical developments, its form and original context indicate the necessity of an alternative meaning. John 14:6 is part of Jesus’ speech at the Last Supper, as presented in the Gospel of John, but this account of the Last Supper takes place at a confluence between two traditions: the Jewish practice of the Passover and the first shoots of a new tradition that would come to be identified as Christianity. The reality of such an intersection means that the text itself must be read in terms of at least these two traditions, Judaism and Christianity. To develop this argument, I undertake a careful analysis of the development of the Passover tradition (Chapter 1) and then an equally careful analysis of John 14:6 in light of the Johannine context (Chapter 2). The final chapter concerns the confluence of these two streams and the implications for understanding John 14:6. The conclusion considers the implications for multi-faith societies such as Indonesia and the potential implications for further scholarly research.

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Synopsis

This thesis argues that the text of John 14:6 arises at the intersection between the Jewish and Christian traditions, specifically in terms of the Passover Haggadah as it was appropriated and transformed in the Gospel of John. Thus, the apparently exclusivist nature of the text—“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’”—arises in a dual faith situation. This means that the text opens out to more than one faith tradition.

My work starts with a clear description of the reasons behind the in-depth investigation of John 14:6, in reaction to the claim that the text declares Christianity to be the only way to heaven. This is particularly important in a multi-religious context such as exists in Indonesia. To investigate whether or not the claim is plausible, I conduct the study using the method of exegesis. I introduce the term “context-contamination,” which refers to the practice of eisegesis, the negation of exegesis. This study contributes to both scholarly and theological fields. The finding determines whether or not readers of the text can still justify the claim mentioned above. This rather conservative method reveals how plausibly to read John 14:6.

To achieve a careful examination of the text, I engage with existing Johannine scholarship and also Hebrew and Hebrew Bible scholarship. Going deeper into the Passover and its traditions, I investigate Halakha as a preliminary understanding of the Passover Haggadah. I show that Halakha as a written source of Passover does not imitate Haggadah, particularly the Passover Haggadah. The Passover Haggadah outlines the “must” and “must not” in the tradition of the festival of Passover. The festival itself has been established since the Old Testament; however, the Haggadah emerged to somehow internalize and restructure the celebration within the Jewish tradition and culture. Scholars such as Moskowitz (2010) have found similarities between Hebrew Bible texts and the Passover Haggadah. I use the

Haggadah as a window of comparison with the texts in the Fourth Gospel, as there are gaps in Johannine scholarship in regard to my research question. It is apparent that there has not been sufficient investigation of the texts conducted by grouping the keywords and using the exegesis methodology.

To start the investigation, I carefully examine the context of the Fourth Gospel.¹ I establish John the son of Zebedee as the author of the gospel. He composed his written testimony of Jesus Christ around 100 C.E. (Common Era), a time of hardship for the Jewish people, especially for the followers of Jesus. My exegesis of the text is based on the rearrangement of the gospel by Haenchen (1980), Hoare (1944), and Howard (1943), particularly with regard to the order of the Passover meal.

The investigation then progresses to a discussion of how the festival of Passover is acknowledged by the New Testament. I investigate how the Passover meal is structured, using two main sources, Mishnah Pesachim 10 and the Haggadah, and conclude that there are fifteen steps in the order of the Passover meal (or the Passover Seder). I also acknowledge the debate around whether or not the Last Supper as mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels was a Passover meal, and establish that the meal Jesus had with his disciples, as described in the Synoptics, was indeed a Passover meal. The Synoptics provide a clear description of some of the listed steps in the order of the Passover meal, for example *kadesh*, *urchatz*, *yachatz*, *hallel*, *nirtzah*, and *maggid*, and there are also similarities between *Mah Nishtanah* (the four

¹ See Burkett (2004) for further reading.

questions) in the Haggadah and the Fourth Gospel. These similarities reveal that the meal Jesus had with his disciples, described in the Fourth Gospel, was a Passover meal.

John 14:6 falls on the Passover ritual of *maggid*. The text contains deep Christological values and views. Jesus transformed the historical aspects of the celebration of Passover into Christological ones. The text provides information, encouragement, and an invitation from Jesus to his followers, particularly his eleven disciples, to become one with him and the father; as in departing to the father.

Introduction

The topic of this thesis is “A Christological-theological study of the exclusivism of the salvation concept in John 14:6.” In this introduction, I describe the reason for finding the topic a crucial issue that needs to be resolved and the method I use to resolve the issue. I have also included a synopsis of the chapters to aid clear understanding and expectation.

Background

In many situations, the Bible remains deeply influential. It is often considered to be the source of moral values and standards (seen as the “Holy Book”). The Bible has a deep and strong influence on people’s lives, especially Christians’ lives. The Bible in this context is a book seemingly without any attachments to culture, translation, scholarship, or interpretation. It is the book Christians value the highest. However, the Bible is also recognized as the most edited document in Western civilization, or even in world literature (Kloppenborg & Newman, 1951/2012). The Bible is studied, edited, translated, and interpreted (Wegner, 1999, p. 464). Interpreting the Bible is the way Christians utilize it. When it comes to interpreting the Bible, simplicity is rare and complexity is common.

My specific interest is triggered by the emphasis many Christians put on John 14:6 as one of the sources shaping the faith. The text reads: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’.” There are many translations of this verse, but for scholarly work, I make use of the English translation of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible. This work does not observe or include any other (English) translations. I also work with the established *The Greek New Testament*, which carries on the Nestle-Aland tradition (Aland et al., 1993).

Many Christians interpret the text in an exclusivist way. They believe that Jesus Christ declares the superiority of Christianity through John 14:6. Therefore, they establish themselves as the followers of the right (as in justified) religion. Religions other than Christianity are wrong by default. Many Christians paraphrase the verse into “Jesus said that He is the only way to heaven. One cannot be saved and thus go to heaven through any religion other than Christianity.”

I regard this kind of interpretation problematic, particularly in the context of a multi-faith or multi-religious society. Indonesia is one such context and the particular instance I use in this study. There are six legal religions in Indonesia, with Christianity in a minority compared to the other four religions (Roman Catholic Christianity is separated from Protestant Christianity). The dynamics of a society with such diversity constantly changes. One of those dynamics is the conflict between religions. In this research, I take into consideration the conflicts that occur specifically between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia. I do not look at these conflicts from the perspective of Peace Studies or Religious Studies; I do not study the history of these conflicts. Instead, my focus is on the way a particular biblical text has been deployed in such conflicts. Or, rather, the initial motivation for my research—which concerns careful exegetical work on the text itself—arises from and is posed by such conflicts.

The paraphrasing of John 14:6, that Christianity is the only true religion, has created exclusivism among Christians. Christians believe they are the justified people, with the result that many of them see Christianity as the only religion that can be justified before God. Others are by definition wrong. There is no salvation to be gained from religions other than Christianity. Such a belief is crucial when it is being echoed widely and vociferously in a country such as Indonesia. Significantly, one of the main ideological, social, and cultural

features of Indonesia is the existence of God. It may be the God of Islam, or of Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity, or the Bodhisattvas of Buddhism, or even—although by significant extension—the role of Confucius in Confucianism. Thus, religion is a compelling notion for the country. The Christian belief in the justification of Christians compared with those of other religions, in particular when compared with the majority religion of Islam, is one cause of (and also a response to) conflict.

Such phenomena show how the context of the readers and interpreters significantly contributes to the interpretation of the text. As a minority, Christians in Indonesia utilize the biblical text to its maximum potential to meet their needs. On my reading of the text of John 14:6, the question arose: if the text does not say the same thing as is believed by Christians, what does the text actually say? More detailed questions are raised in later chapters; however, the primary research question is, what does the text plausibly mean?

I believe that a strong faith must come from knowledge, which makes it an examined faith. If the text of John 14:6 is used to justify their faith, I suggest a better way to make such a justification is to conduct a careful biblical exegesis of the text instead of repeating the same unexamined beliefs; in other words, to read and interpret the text in light of its current context. Other methods of reading biblical texts have the potential to cause conflict, as described previously. Therefore, my approach is not to engage in direct analysis of the conflicts mentioned above, but to focus on one of the underlying issues: the understanding of John 14:6. My approach, which I will explain in a moment, is to engage in rigorous exegesis, analyzing the text as carefully as possible to determine its original, or at least most plausible, meaning. My hope is that such an approach will assist in some way to diminish the

misunderstanding of the text in the Indonesian religious context and even in the broader context of multi-religious communities.²

Methodological Statement

I begin with what some would regard as the most challenging feature of my approach: the need to avoid “context-contamination.” By this I mean that one’s current context should not contaminate the interpretation of a biblical text. For some, this approach may seem somewhat out of fashion, especially in light of the advocacy of “contextual analysis” (see e.g., Dietrich, 2002; Nyiawung, 2013; Phillips, 2000; Zamfir, 2017). In short, I would like to return to an insistence of *exegesis* rather than *eisegesis* (Davis, 2000).³ I will have more to say on this old and valuable distinction below, but my point here is that context-contamination entails a form of eisegesis. Some may immediately object: is not my invocation of the Indonesian context a form of eisegesis or context-contamination? Does not my question in relation to John 14:6 arise from interfaith conflicts in Indonesia? Is not my search for an answer determined as well? In answering these questions, I need to distinguish three senses of the term “context.”

The first is the literary context of a biblical text, which is the wider context of a text in relation to other literature. This includes the biblical texts, as well as other relevant texts of the time of the biblical text. This sense of context is perfectly valid and indeed important in any exercise of biblical exegesis. Thus, to examine John 14:6, I have to examine the literary

² See Harris (2006) for further reading.

³ See Smit (2015) for further reading.

context of this text. This will involve investigating the whole of John 14 to ascertain the setting of time and of place, and the people involved throughout the passage. I also need to look into the wider context by investigating chapters 13 and chapter 15, since chapter 14 is a continuation of chapter 13 and a prelude to chapter 15. However, besides investigating the texts in the Fourth Gospel, I have also analyzed other books in the Bible that have connections with the events in John 14. For example, after investigating chapters 15, 14, 13, and 12, I found that the main event was the festival of Passover. Therefore, I investigated the Book of Exodus to gain an understanding of the origin of the festival. The Book of Exodus, particularly chapter 12, is a part of the literary context of John 14:6. Further, my research also entailed investigating the development of the Passover celebration in extra-biblical texts such as the Wisdom of Solomon, Jubilees, Philo, Flavius Josephus, and—most importantly—Midrash Pesachim 10. Such is the literary context of the biblical text, which is vital for exegesis.

The second meaning of context concerns the historical context of the original text. Obviously, historical context is related to literary context. Different texts arise from different historical contexts. For instance, the background to the composition of chapter 14 of John is different to that of chapter 12 of Exodus, although both chapters have the same theme—the celebration of the festival of Passover. The authors of the two books were not the same person. The books were written in different ages and generations. Thus, the background to the writing of Exodus and the Fourth Gospel are not identical. The same can be said for texts such as Midrash Pesachim 10.

The third type of context is the one I see as highly problematic, leading to context-contamination. This is the context of the interpreters and readers of the text in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political realities. When a 2020 reader reads an ancient text, there is

the potential for the reader to read the text in light of what is happening in 2020. More to the point, the risk is that the context of 2020 becomes determinative for the meaning of the text, pushing into the background or even ignoring the literary and historical contexts of the text, as described above. Let me return to the Indonesian context. Being a minority group in a somewhat hostile community, Christian Indonesians were looking for a justification to create the feeling of superiority and courage to maintain their stability within the multi-religious community in Indonesia. To strengthen their position, they have come to use John 14:6 to claim that Christianity is superior to other religions. The text is read with the understanding that salvation comes only through being a Christian; if one is not a Christian, one would not be “saved.” Regardless of whether or not the text can justify such a belief, the readers have brought the current context to the text and interpreted the text in this light.

As mentioned earlier, I realize I am challenging a whole development in biblical criticism, one which began as “reader-response” criticism⁴ and developed into what today is called “contextual interpretation.” However, I regard this development as risky, since it leads again and again to context-contamination, which has the potential to diminish the original (at least the most probable) meaning, message, and interpretation of a text. Now I return to the question that some readers may ask: considering that the main topic for research arises as a response to certain problems in Indonesia, how do I avoid the problem of context-contamination in light of this reality? The answer is actually straightforward: the question may arise from this situation, but my answer—through careful research—is not determined

⁴ “The meaning of a text is not at all fixed, but emerges, with the help of the reader, ever anew in the act of reading” (Körtner, 2016, p. 2).

by it (see further Baker, 1980; Hassenfeld, 2016). Indeed, it is precisely through my focus on rigorous, scientific exegesis that my answer may potentially have even more of an impact than if I were to claim to some form of “contextual analysis.”

In order to explain, a methodological statement is needed. I deploy an old and well-tried method of biblical interpretation, exegesis, which is the opposite of eisegesis. Eisegesis brings a particular context or assumption into the interpretation of a text such as the Bible. In other words, one’s answer is a foregone conclusion and one seeks justification for this answer in the biblical text. Eisegesis is commonly used to refer to the practice of pre-critical commentators of the Bible, who were anxious to find the doctrinal system to which they already adhered propounded in scripture and who therefore resorted to various devices, including a kind of strained exegesis, to show that the scripture (in this case, a particular text or verse) supported their position (Barton, 1990). There is no intention to bring the meaning out of the text in eisegesis. In contrast, according to Mafico (2015), exegesis is the re-examination of texts that people have long taken for granted based on church tradition. As Werner (1962) noted:

The church’s mission is to bear constant witness to the message of Christ, preaching it to all nations and to every age in its own language, and in its own patterns of thought. The risk is imposing a meaning based on today’s language, today’s patterns of thoughts, today’s “atmosphere.”

In other words, one needs to be constantly vigilant against eisegesis, or “reading into” the text. By contrast, exegesis—as the word itself suggests—is a “leading out” of meaning from the text, a drawing out of the text’s meaning. Exegesis includes investigation of the literary and historical contexts of the text, as well as careful examination of the text itself, and

eisegesis is a process whereby the interpretative context influences and interferes with the task of exegesis. Exegesis—my approach—is the antithesis of eisegesis.

I would like to elaborate on what such exegesis entails in this study. Hayes and Holladay (2007) identified seven kinds of biblical exegesis: textual criticism, historical criticism, grammatical criticism, literary criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, and redaction criticism. I would like to reduce this number to five: philological criticism (which includes grammatical, textual, and literary criticism), form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, and historical criticism. Hayes and Holladay also introduced newer methods of interpretation such as structuralism and canonical criticism, which became gradually more popular among biblical critics from the 1970s onwards, and they also discussed how computer technology could contribute to biblical work. Even in light of these newer developments, Hayes and Holladay insisted in the core need for exegesis, with which I agree.

Recent works have come with new approaches such as psychological biblical criticism (Aarde, 2015), which, in my observation, overlap some of Hayes and Holladay's attempts to produce a scientific approach to biblical hermeneutics. Similar to my intention of investigating the original meaning of biblical texts, Aarde also analyzed the transformation of communication in formats that differ from the original form of biblical texts and their interpretation. Ten years earlier, Kim (2005) established a new approach to biblical criticism, which she called spiritual interpretation. However, I would not consider taking Kim's spiritual approach, as she tried to bridge the gap between the biblical texts and today's context through spiritual interpretation. She answered the needs of today's context by using biblical texts as she believes that literary and historical criticism do not reach as high a spiritual level as the Bible. I am not against the approach itself. However, instead of making the spiritual approach the base of literary and historical criticism as Kim does, I do it the

other way round. If any spiritual value lies within the biblical texts, it should come from careful literary and historical analysis of the texts. I should also say that I am wary of “postcolonial” criticism, which has become popular in some areas of biblical interpretation (see e.g., Sugirtharajah, 2001, 2002). This wariness may seem a little strange for some since I come from a country that was once colonized by the Dutch, but I see this effort to make the “postcolonial” context determinative of biblical interpretation a version of context-contamination.

To return to the core task of exegesis. Since these approaches are well known in biblical criticism, I will not outline their details at great length. Instead, I make the following observations in light of my own emphases. First, while I affirm the importance of older historical-critical approaches, I am interested in what are called literary approaches, but only in terms of the way they contribute to exegesis (Culpeper, 1983; du Rand, 1985; Koester, 1995; Moloney, 1993/1996/1998; Stibbe, 1992, 1993; Wuellner, 1991). The important features, as indicated by Attridge (2002), concern the literary dynamics of the gospel, analyzing how the symbolic language works, and how it affects the characters, the plot, and the meaning of particular texts. Segovia (1998) called it literary-rhetorical analysis, observing that:

Its focus would be on the present text of the Gospel as both an artistic whole, with unified literary structure and development, and a rhetorical whole, with unified strategic concerns and aims. Such an approach would analyze the Gospel as a world unto itself, as it were, in terms of its narrative features and rhetorical aims—in effect, not only the what-and-how of the message but also its wherefore, that is, the concerns and goals behind the given deployment of the what-and-how. (p. 183)

Second, moving from a historical-critical approaches to a literary approaches can present some difficulties, as Hylen (2013) indicated:

Historical-critical scholarship prepared readers to view the text as a window into the historical situation of the author (and/or editors) who produced it. Because this way of viewing John is well developed and dominates many scholarly readings, shifting to a literary approach to character presents a series of hurdles. (p. 97)

To simplify all these terms of biblical criticism, historical criticism is used as the umbrella for all these approaches.⁵ For this, it is important to acknowledge the recognition of this approach in biblical interpretation development. I would like to start with Hahn and Wiker (2013), who considered that scholars need to dig deeper into what is recognized as historical criticism, which is to reformulate the political power that lies behind the biblical texts. I completely agree with this argument and approach. However, in my observation, political power is not the only aspect that creates a particular historical context. Aspects such as who the author was, what their intentions were, and the timeline of the context could also be a part of it. East (2017), who analyzed the approach well, noted the deficiencies of historical criticism in biblical interpretation, but at the same time also explained why the approach can be put to good use. East acknowledged the existence of context-contamination when he wrote, “biblical scholarship, whose governing methodology is historical criticism, supplies the ‘meaning’ of scriptural texts, and the church’s varied reading practices come along afterward, receive that ‘meaning’, and either ‘apply’ it to new contexts or derive ‘significance’ from it” (East, 2017, pp. 17–18). These investigations into the origins and

⁵ See Legaspi (2014) for further reading.

assumptions of historical criticism are necessary since they help to avoid context-contamination even in this approach. At the same time, the method has developed into a mature and sophisticated approach that is a must for any serious biblical analysis.

In my approach, a significant factor to take into account is that the New Testament is couched in the language, myths, and thought forms of the age in which it was written (Bultmann, 1971; Barrett, 1982; Brown, 1997; Cameron, 1991; Dodd, 1953; Werner, 1962). Therefore, I take a critical-theological approach to identify the initial thought-world of John 14:6, which I define as the “original” or “most plausible” meaning. This is to avoid being overly influenced by the different contexts of Christian understanding. For instance, as Venter (1992) observed, at the time of the Church “Fathers,” interpretation and its application depended on the personal circumstances and preconceived objectives of each interpreter. Thus, John 14:6 was used to elucidate controversial problems of their time.

In this light, I would like to address the concept of “intentional fallacy” in regard to my definition of the “original” or “most plausible” meaning. There have been debates around this issue for a while, starting in 1939 when C. S. Lewis proposed “the personal heresy” (Lewis & Tillyard, 1939), which was then followed by Wimsatt and Beardsley’s “The Intentional Fallacy” in 1946 (also in 1958 repeating the previous thesis; see also Hirsch, 1967). The anti-intentionalist position of Wimsatt and Beardsley distinguished between “the meaning of the work itself” and “the meaning that the author intended to express in the work.” Words and phrases in a literary work can acquire meanings they did not originally have, as those words and phrases acquire new meanings as time goes by. Indeed, a text that someone has created can have a meaning that its author was not aware of, and therefore, can have a meaning that was not intended (Dickie & Wilson, 1995). While the debate raged into the 1990s, with intentionalists on one side (Carroll, 1992; Grice, 1989; Tolhurst, 1979; Walton, 1989) and the

anti-intentionalists on the other (Dickie & Wilson, 1995; Lyas, 1992), there are two possible responses for someone—like myself—who seeks to defend a form of intentionalism.

The first is to reassert the importance of the author's intention. The author's intention remains an important part of the text's meaning, which is why I devote attention to identifying the author of the Gospel of John (see below). Therefore, I need philological criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism—encapsulated in the term historical criticism—to approach and support my intentionalist interpretation. The reader of the texts needs to know the context of the author in his time. A second and related approach is to defend a notion on the intentionality of the text. As Brett (2000) noted, the term “intention” embodies three senses that are not always distinguished: an explicit communicative intention; an implied or indirect communicative intention; and a motive (pp. 11–15). Brett went on to observe:

Initially, we may take the first two together, and distinguish a communicative intention (what an author or editor is trying to say) from a motive (why it is being said). The motives behind a communicative act may be complex, contradictory, and even unconscious, never coming to expression in language at all. This domain is the focus of psychoanalytical criticism. At the level of language, on the other hand, an author's intention may be relatively explicit in the text or it may be only implied—something which must be inferred from the often unstated circumstances of utterance. These unstated circumstances may include literary allusions and the like, but also non-linguistic features of the communicative context. (Brett, 2000, p. 12)

This is a sophisticated approach, which recognizes that the search for an ancient author's motive is fraught with difficulties. At the same time, Brett sought to defend the idea of textual intention, where one investigates the explicit and implicit features of a text to determine what it seeks to say:

The important point here is that an interpretation of communicative intention need not restrict itself to the explicit communicative features embedded in a text but may need to encompass the unspoken features of a reconstructed historical situation, or at least those features of the situation which may be relevant to an author's purpose. (Brett, 2000, pp. 12–13).

It is in this light that I seek to investigate the role of the Passover celebration in the text of the Gospel of John. This will require a careful analysis of the development of the Passover tradition, especially in first century B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) texts running from the Wisdom of Solomon to Midrash Pesachim 10, so as to determine the implicit features of a reconstructed historical situation that led to the way the Last Supper as presented in the Gospel of John.

Finally, my approach may be defined as “critical-theological.” I understand a “critical” approach as one that seeks to discern (*kritikos*) different possible meanings. Therefore, I not only read and grasp the text in a literary sense but also question any possible issues related to the text and the context of the text. This approach is enabled by the five dimensions identified earlier (philological, form, tradition, redaction, and historical criticism). A “theological” approach does not mean that the Gospel of John is presented as truth (Redman, 2013). Instead, I see it as a “questionable truth” that must be examined through careful critical analysis.

The Context of John 14:6

In this section, I address the questions of authorship and the historical context of the Gospel of John. In the past 20 years there have been no new theories on the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. The existing or recent Johannine scholars only circulate theses where the author could be John the son of Zebedee or someone else who chose to be recognized as the

beloved disciple with no name ever mentioned (Brown, 1979).⁶ After presenting a series of difficulties regarding the identification of the beloved disciple with John the son of Zebedee, Perkins (1978) admitted that “scholars today give quite a different answer to the question about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel” than they did in the past, one that, nevertheless, recognizes in the gospel “a witness to the legitimate development of apostolic faith.” In this study, I take a traditional approach and identify John the son of Zebedee as the author of the Fourth Gospel. Parker (1962) provided adequate historical information on this character. He identified John the son of Zebedee as an active missionary, who had 14 years of experience in introducing and expanding the faith in Jesus Christ. This particular character of John leads, according to Parker, to reasonably trustworthy testimonies of Jesus Christ. I suspect John the son of Zebedee does not have the same political interests that John the Baptist could potentially have. John the Baptist was a leader, as was Jesus (John 1:25, 4:1). John the Baptist’s disciples decided to follow him no longer, but to follow Jesus. That is not the case with John the son of Zebedee who was chosen by Jesus. I find it interesting that there is no record in the Fourth Gospel of how Jesus encountered John the son of Zebedee. After calling Phillip and Nathanael to be his disciples, Jesus is shown attending the wedding at Cana with his disciples, and no calling events occur afterwards. However, Luke 5:1–11 explicitly explains how the process of the calling of John went. John was called to become a disciple at the same time as his brother, James. The Zebedee brothers were called at the same time as Simon Peter. In my judgement, Luke shows in chapter 5 that the calling event was meant to be for Simon Peter, the fisherman who was amazed at the large catch of fish. James and John

⁶ See Grant (1937) and Kysar (1975) for further reading.

happened to be there and witnessed the same thing, which led to them becoming followers of Jesus. The Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, provides a different story plot in regard to the calling of Simon Peter. John writes that Simon was brought to Jesus by Andrew, his brother, who is not present in Luke's calling narrative. While the account in Luke shows that Simon Peter was not alone when Jesus arrived, Luke does not include Andrew, as we find in John's calling narrative. Another difference is that the name Peter was given by Jesus, but this is not the case in Luke.

In my observation, John the son of Zebedee is a disinterested character, who has done what he should have done if the original intention was to follow Jesus. His focus is not on himself but in Jesus. The Fourth Gospel states that its purpose is to show that Jesus is the son of God (John 20:31). Despite various interpretations of John 20:31, John stated literally why he wrote the gospel (Carson, 1987, p. 639). Instead of a mere historical character as described by the Synoptic Gospels, Sturdevant (2014) suggested that John intends to exhibit the mysteriousness of Jesus due to his heavenly origins and "to inspire people to re-evaluate their presuppositions about Jesus' identity and mission" (p. 24). Carson (1987) is open to the idea that there is an evangelistic aspect to John in writing the gospel and building the character of the Johannine Jesus.

The final writing of the gospel was completed between the earliest possible date of 75 C.E. and the latest possible date of 110 C.E. (Brown, 1992). Edwards (2015) suggested that the Fourth Gospel went through two or three stages (or editions) before reaching its final form around 90 C.E. to 110 C.E. An Egyptian papyrus fragment suggests that the Fourth Gospel was known in Egypt by 100 C.E. (O'Day, 1995). Aland and Aland (1995) argued that the front of the Rylands Library Papyrus 52 contains parts of seven lines from John 18:31–33

in Greek, and the back contains parts of seven lines from verses 37–38. These theories are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Summary of the Theories Regarding the Date of the Gospel of John

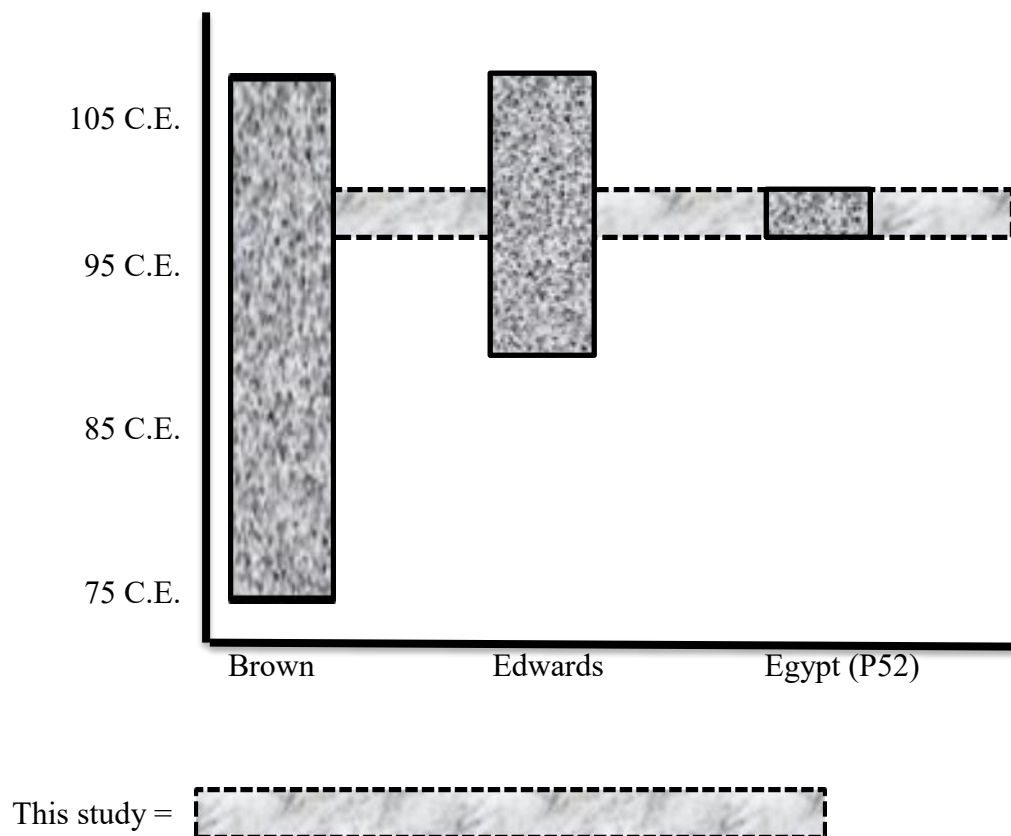


Figure 1 shows that if there were to be a consensus, it would be agreed that the Fourth Gospel was finally written around 100 C.E. This position assumes that the Fourth Gospel was written later than 70 C.E. Many consider that the Fourth Gospel was influenced by the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Mark was written in approximately 70 C.E. and the Gospel of Luke was based substantially on Mark's. Therefore, the Fourth Gospel should have been finished after 70 C.E., which makes 100 C.E. fit into this calculation. Roberts (1935), who published work on the original transcription and translation

of Papyrus P52, estimated the date to be approximately 100 C.E. (Nongbri, 2005). Thus, I begin this study based on the premise that the Fourth Gospel was composed in approximately 100 C.E. Having this starting point is significant due to its effects on interpretation. Events that occurred during 100 C.E. determine the context of the interpreted texts. Events prior to and after that year would also have significant implications for this study.

Based on the work of Armstrong (1996) and Sicker (2001), the dismantlement period of the Fourth Gospel falls during the early Roman period. The political atmosphere during the time the gospel was compiled and written was not conducive to its composition due to the many anti-imperialist struggles—inevitably violent—against Roman imperialism and colonization. The Fourth Gospel was composed and written as Jerusalem (which automatically refers to Jewish Christians) fell and rose again in the background. Ephesus, in comparison, seems to have been less affected by these wars, probably due to its location, which was more than 900 kilometers away from Jerusalem. One would therefore assume that it was a more secure place to compose or write the Fourth Gospel (although one fact to be taken into account is that Romans dominated the population in Ephesus and John would probably have had to compose the gospel in secret). Ephesus in Asia Minor or Anatolia was one of the first places where Christianity spread. Therefore, many Christians populated the area and its surroundings (Brewster, 1993).

The Fourth Gospel also has some relation to apocalyptic literature. Carey (2016) observed that in some respects we may characterize all the books in the New Testament as apocalyptic literature, since they arise in a time of crisis, conflict, and social and economic devastation. To identify the apocalyptic values within the literature, Carey (2016) suggested examining the visions, heavenly intermediaries, pseudonymity, *ex eventu* prophecy, and symbolic language, as well as its core theological concepts, among them an alternative reality

in its temporal and spatial dimensions, dualism, and determinism (Davies, 2017). For example, John 14:3 contains an apocalyptic frame. The phrase “I will come again (πάλιν ἔρχομαι)” contains an intense apocalyptic value. Jesus Christ as the life, the eternal life, is also evidently apocalyptic, or at least eschatological.⁷

By way of conclusion, as should be clear by now, many of my assumptions are quite traditional and even conservative. I take John the son of Zebedee to be the author of the Gospel of John. I seek to deploy the well-tried method of exegesis, attempting as far as possible to avoid the trap of eisegesis. To do so, I make use of careful biblical analysis, including the text’s literary and historical context, to determine the author’s and the text’s intention, even where this intention may be textually implicit, as identified by Brett (2000, pp. 11–15). I seek to deploy all of the tools developed from historical-critical analysis, a tried and true approach to biblical texts. Part of the reason—paradoxically—is that such assumptions arise from my background, but this background does not determine the analysis I undertake, nor does it determine my answers. The reason being that I approach the text from a resolutely exegetical method. However, on one important issue I differ markedly from this generally conservative position. My thesis is that John 14:6 is not an exclusivist text. This conclusion, as the following analysis seeks to show, arises from the method of biblical analysis I undertake—exegesis.

⁷ See Burrows (1930) for further reading.

Chapter 1: The Passover

Since the argument of this thesis is that John 14:6 arises at the intersection of two traditions, one older and the other one quite new, it is necessary to begin with the older tradition. This concerns the Passover. I have found it necessary to investigate the background of its biblical setting in the Book of Exodus, and the development and nature of Passover traditions through to the first century C.E., with a view to determining—as best as is possible—what practices may have been in place at that time. The shorthand for my results is “unity in diversity.” While we may speak of a Passover tradition, it is clear that there were a range of practices and significant flexibility within this tradition.

Exodus: From Story to History

Since the development of the Passover traditions is closely connected with the Exodus, this section initially provides a background survey of scholarly approaches to the Exodus. Subsequently, I will focus on the Passover itself. In regard to the Exodus, two questions need to be asked:

1. What can be said about the historicity of the Exodus accounts?
2. How did the textual material concerning the Exodus arise?

Given the amount of scholarship devoted to these questions, the answers could easily form a thesis or two on their own. My purpose is different. I will answer the question in terms of an overall survey of the main positions, with representative rather than comprehensive references.

In terms of historicity, we must recognize that the idea of “historical reliability” arose as part of the post-Enlightenment worldview. The task of history writing became one of ostensibly discovering the factual events of the past and placing them within a narrative

framework (White, 1973, 1987). In light of this development, one approach to ancient texts concerning the Exodus is to search for historically reliable information. For example, for Kitchen (2003), Fierro (1983), Miller (1998), and Yoo (2018), the Book of Exodus (and the books that follow concerning the wandering in the wilderness) presents a profoundly significant story that shaped the eventual identity of Israel as a nation. The narrative deals with dark times and victory of the nation, provides regulations for life and society, and becomes the reference point for legal and belief systems.

More recently, Hoffmeier (1999, 2005, 2014) sought to respond—from an archaeological perspective—to what he described as a skeptical view of the material, which sees it in terms of legend, saga, and myth. Hoffmeier not only argued that the main historical points made in the Book of Exodus, concerning an Israelite presence in Egypt, are reliable but also that the wilderness tradition begins once the Hebrews arrive in Sinai. Hoffmeier did not argue that every item in the text is reliable, but that the majority is reliable. He argued that there is a period of four to six centuries that separates the oldest documents recording Israel's origin to the historians who reconstructed the history of that origin. He is open for mythological contributions to the tradition and the origin of the nation alongside empirical archaeological and geographical data. In his account, Mount Sinai plays a central role in shaping the story, the people, the culture, and ultimately the nation itself.

Let us pause for a moment and ask what the implications are for the Passover tradition. If we follow these arguments for substantial (although not complete) historical reliability of the accounts of Exodus and the wilderness, then the Passover itself would also be a ritual and a celebration that arose in such a context.

A second major approach is often cast as one of skepticism concerning any reliability whatsoever from the early materials. But let us see this approach not from a negative angle

but a positive one. We may use the term “salvation history” (*Heilsgeschichte*), in which history unfolds in terms of God’s saving acts. The term itself was coined in the mid-18th century,⁸ but for our purposes the term is useful since it presents an alternative framework for understanding “history.” In this case, the type of history found in biblical books such as the Exodus highlights the role of God in history, a role that is forbidden in modern historiography (except in terms of the beliefs held by the human agents of history).

Representative examples of this approach include Walter Brueggemann, who consistently argued for a positive theological appreciation of the biblical material (Brueggemann, 2012). Important for Brueggemann and those who take a similar approach is that one may take on board all of the findings of modern biblical scholarship and use these to find a theological version of history, a salvation history (as mentioned above). Pertinent to my interest in Exodus is a recent study by Brueggemann (2014) in which he delves into the theology within the narrative itself. He focused on the role of YHWH throughout the book. The first 15 chapters of the book are grouped into the theme of “Deliverance,” of which YHWH is the key. YHWH liberates and redeems the people, with the power to override the power and sovereignty of Pharaoh and his army. Brueggemann (2014) also emphasized slavery and the Sabbath: the Sabbath seems to enter the tradition due to the context of

⁸ Notable early proponents in Germany were Johann Tobias Beck (1804–1878) and Johannes von Hofman (1810–1877). See the useful study by Becker (2004). Later proponents include the American archaeologist G. Ernest Wright (1952), as well as the festschrift dedicated to his work (Cross et al., 1976).

slavery, but YHWH enables the overcoming of slavery through the Sabbath.⁹ Thus, Brueggemann took key points from the Exodus account and saw them in a framework that—he argued—is presented in the text itself.

Two other recent examples of this “salvation history” approach provide different angles. One is by Fretheim (2014), who focused on the issue of agency in Exodus. He analyzes how YHWH, as an agent, works within narrative. He observed that God uses different kinds of agency. For example, God is presented through verbs and metaphors. Through metaphors, God can be seen as the sole controller of the different scenarios (Houtman, 1993), but also depends on the reaction of characters involved in the narratives (Brueggemann, 2014). However, Fretheim also took into account the observation of Goldingay (2013), where he saw that God can also work through ordinary human beings in terms of how they think, decide, and interpret particular messages or signs (delivered by God). In Exodus 13–15, for example, God does not directly control the actors in the narrative in the sense of being a puppeteer; instead, agents such as Moses work on God’s behalf through their own initiative. Fretheim (2014) concluded: “God always uses agents in God’s working in Israel and the larger world” (p. 606). Comparable here is the study of Römer (2018), who focused on the role of Pharaoh. Acting as though he were a divine medium, Pharaoh ends up acting on God’s behalf.

Again, let us pause to consider the implications of the “salvation history” approach in relation to the Passover traditions. In this light, the Passover becomes a major moment in the

⁹ See Jacobson (1981) for further reading.

history of salvation. It is full of theological significance, arising from but also much more than historical events. One may take on board all of the findings of modern historical scholarship of the Bible—critically assessed—and yet see the Passover as even more central. At the same time, this approach does not answer directly the question of the origins and history of the Passover traditions, to which I turn below.

Closely related to the Exodus and wilderness material is the question of the origins of Israel, as a distinct people and eventually a state. In many senses, the Exodus narrative leads to this point, so I address this question briefly here. Debate concerning this question was more intense in the 1980s and 1990s, but my focus is on how this material bears on the Exodus account. We may distinguish four distinct paradigms for the emergence of Israel:

- 1) A rapid invasion of Canaan from outside (a more traditional and conservative position, which includes older scholars such as William Foxwell Albright and recent scholars such as James Hoffmeier, mentioned above).
- 2) Slow infiltration over a longer period from outside of Canaan (the original proponents were Albrecht Alt (1959) and Martin Noth (1965)).
- 3) An abrupt internal social revolution (especially Norman Gottwald (1979/1999)).
- 4) A slow internal process, in which the peoples that became Israel were drawn from the local populations (originally proposed by Coote and Whitlam (1987)).

Many of these approaches arose from an effort to interpret the appearance of settlements in the Judaeian highlands around the turn of the first millennium B.C.E. These settlement patterns appeared during a long period (hundreds of years) without significant imperial presence across the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean. They exhibited new technologies such as iron implements, terracing, and waterproofing cisterns with lime (which was needed in areas that relied on rainfall rather than rivers). Scholars began to ask: Why did people settle here? Who were they? From where did they come? Increasingly, the consensus

is that these settlements exhibit the earliest evidence of a distinct group that came to be called “Israel.” My interest is in how these proposals relate to the Exodus material.

A useful and relatively recent survey by van Bekkum (2011) presents three of the four approaches identified above. For van Bekkum, archaeological evidence (which needs to be interpreted) and exegesis of biblical texts are “two sides of the same coin” (van Bekkum, 2011, p. 7). He deals with the more traditional conquest theory, according to which evidence of destruction at some archaeological sites (Tel Beit Mirsim, Bethel, Lachish, etc.) would indicate an invasion by a foreign force. Next is the infiltration theory, in which they are at first the twelve tribes in a confederacy and then subsequently a people identified as Israel. In this case, the peoples came from different directions, some nomadic and semi-nomadic, and united under the belief in one God, YHWH. As noted above, the main proponents of this approach—cited by van Bekkum (2011)—are Albrecht Alt (1927, 1935) and Martin Noth (1930, 1938, 1957, 1959). Third is the theory of internal revolution, in which the peoples that became Israel were originally oppressed peasants under Canaanite landlords. With the latter weakened, the peasants arose in revolt and established an independent zone in the Judean highlands.¹⁰ Van Bekkum, however, did not assess the more gradualist theory proposed by Coote and Whitlam (1987), in which the largely peasant and economically outcast peoples (Habiru) retreated over time to the highlands. For my purposes, it is ultimately not necessary to judge one way or another. As to what form of state eventually arose after this time, and

¹⁰ See Bloom (2010) for further reading.

whether it took place earlier (David and Solomon) or later, even much later, is beyond the remit of this study (see e.g., Edelman, 1992; Halpern, 1983; Lemche, 1994).

I have briefly raised the question of the origin of Israel, since it has a bearing on how one sees the narratives of Exodus and the wilderness. In light of the four models identified above, we may assess the implications as follows:

- 1) For the abrupt invasion model, the Exodus narrative becomes an important historical precursor.
- 2) The slow external infiltration model sees the Exodus narrative as containing elements of historical events, with nomadic and semi-nomadic groups arriving over time, but also much that is legendary.
- 3) The peasant revolution model (especially Gottwald (1979/1999)) also recognizes some historical elements in the Exodus narrative, particularly the Levites, who come in from outside. At the same time, this model regards most of the Exodus material as a “myth of origin” or even a “political myth.”
- 4) The slow internal model emphasizes most strongly the Exodus narrative as a type of “myth of national origin,” a position that is also shared by other scholars who would date the written materials to a much later date, as do a number of other scholars (e.g., Davies, 2006; Lemche, 1988, 1998, 2008, 2018; Thompson, 1999, 2000).

How should we assess all this material, with an eye on its relevance for the Passover tradition? We are faced with a dilemma. While much debate ensues over the nature of the Exodus and wilderness narratives, and over the origins of what is known as Israel, at the same time we have a tradition embodied in the texts. In other words, it exists in the tradition as we have it now, so the question is, how we should understand this tradition?

A final step before turning to the Passover tradition concerns the texts themselves. This section is called “From History to Text,” and thus far I have focused on historical questions. Inevitably, textual questions have arisen, in terms of the traditions and their interpretation. Again, a survey of the main positions is the most useful, with an anticipation of the

implications for the Passover. In this case, we can identify three main approaches. The first is that a significant amount of pre-exilic material can be identified, whether in terms of oral or written traditions. Obviously, this approach is usually held in common with those who argue that the account of Exodus, the wilderness wanderings, and the external invasion of Canaan are reasonably reliable historical events. A relatively recent collection of contributions arguing for pre-exilic traditions may be found in the collection edited by John Day (2004). Even within this position, it is worth noting that the reference point is the Babylonian exile (traditionally dated from 597/587 to 538 B.C.E.), although the scholars in question seek evidence of written material *before* the exile. By contrast, the majority position is that the exile itself was the impetus to writing down the material, due to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the exile at least of the scribal subclass. An alternative identity was needed; texts were written, collated, and edited, and gradually there emerged “the people of the book.” A question remains as to how much of the material appeared earlier, whether it was primarily oral or written (and so edited later), or whether most of the texts were composed during the exilic period. By the time the accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah emerge, there seems to be—according to biblical material—a clearer sense of what constitutes the Torah at least. A third position has been with us for at least a century and a half: that the materials of the Old Testament, including Exodus through to Joshua, were written much later, perhaps even during the time of the Hasmoneans in the second to first centuries B.C.E. On this third approach, apart from the references to Lemche (1988, 1998, 2008, 2018), Thompson (1999, 2000), and Davies (2006) above, one may also usefully consult Grabbe (2001) and another work by Davies (1998).

It is not necessary to decide one way or the other, although my preference is to go with the majority position in which the Babylonian exile and the subsequent period was the major

impetus for beginning the long process of putting the traditions of the Old Testament in written form. The question is how these three approaches influence the Passover tradition. Obviously, according to the first, the tradition is ancient, perhaps dating back to the time of the Exodus itself (understood as a historical event). If we follow the emphasis on the Babylonian exile, the Passover tradition would have received a distinct impetus to be written down and codified. There may have been older oral traditions (see below) and indeed ritual practices, but with the first writing of this material, the Passover tradition would gain a whole new status and be subject to interpretation and commentary. Finally, if one follows the hypothesis of a late dating for Old Testament materials, then the Passover too would be a constructed narrative of a late date. It would have appeared not so long, perhaps 200 to 300 years, before the accounts of the Gospels and the Last Supper. With these background observations in mind, I turn to the question of the Passover traditions.

Unity in Diversity: The Passover Tradition(s)

The minimal requirement in my concern with the Passover tradition(s) is to determine a reasonably reliable framework for understanding the text in John 14. To arrive at this point, we need to examine the different sources for Passover. As will become clear, “there is no scholarly consensus concerning the history and development of Passover, and that a good deal of work needs to be done on the subject” (Bray, 2006, p. 222).

Biblical Sources

The biblical text that has drawn the most attention from scholarship is Exodus 12, where the narrative presents the first Passover as being instituted at the moment before departure from Egypt in the context of the last plague (death of the Egyptian firstborn).

Before I consider this material in more detail, a word on etymology. *Pesah* comes from the verb *pasah*, meaning “pass over” or “skip by” (Hamilton, 2011; Holladay, 1988). It is cognate with the Egyptian verb *pesach*, meaning “spreading the wings over and protecting,” and also with the Akkadian *pasahu*, meaning “to appease, assuage” a deity in ritual. It is worth noting that the semantic field *pesah* includes the sense of “to limp, hobble,” which may indicate a cultic dance (Hamilton, 2011). Coogan (2011) offers an additional meaning of *pesah*, which is “protection”: the Hebrews were commanded to slaughter lambs as a sacrifice for God’s protection.¹¹ This is reflected through the order of the Passover supper (Seder—see more below), which takes place at the beginning of the festival of Passover and in which there is no sacrificial cult involved (Bokser, 1986).

Exodus

The textual source of the Passover clearly comes from the Priestly source (the P source). Its concern with ritual, ordering, and institution is seen as a tell-tale mark of this source (Niditch, 2003). The core feature of the ritual in Exodus 12 is the sacrifice of a lamb, although here we already find a rather elaborate week-long ritual. In light of the earlier survey of approaches to dating the written materials of the Old Testament, the question arises as to when the P source may have arisen. The whole idea of such a source is of course a hypothesis, based on comparable approaches to ancient traditions in the 19th century (compare, for example, the work of the Grimm brothers in Germany in relation to ancient German mythology). Our access to the P source comes from it being part of the written texts

¹¹ See Lauterbach (1906) for further reading.

we now find in the Torah. Scholarly consensus tends to see the P source as later than the others in the Pentateuch (Jahwist and Elohist), acting as much as a possible source as a form of editing the other material into a relatively coherent narrative (see especially the comprehensive survey by van Seters, 2015, pp. 160–189). Since my purpose is ultimately to determine a viable framework for approaching John 14, even a later provenance for the P source and thus of the Passover material does not make a huge difference—apart from scholarly concerns to ensure thoroughness.

In regard to Exodus 12:1–28, there is a reasonable amount of detail such as when to start the celebration, what to prepare for the celebration, what should and should not be done during the celebration. The celebration commences on the 15th of Aviv, or Nisan in the Hebrew calendar, the first month of the year as ordered by YHWH in Exodus 12:2. The Book of Exodus describes it as a celebration lasting seven days. The celebration starts when all Israelites get one lamb for each family five days prior to the celebration. The lamb is to be slaughtered in the late afternoon one day before, i.e. the 14th of the month, by men who were circumcised and clean. The lamb is the main focus of the celebration. It is acknowledged as the sacrificial lamb or *korban pesach* in Hebrew (Bokser, 1992). Exodus even provides details as to the proper way to consume the lamb, where small households can join their closest neighbor to share the lamb proportionally. The lamb is to be slaughtered in the court of the Temple where the whole congregation can gather. According to Pittinzky (2018), “By slaughtering it and offering it to the one and only God, Israelites actively repudiated the gods of Egypt”: the lamb symbolizes the Egyptian God. The blood is then taken and painted on to the doorposts and lintels of their houses. Before the night ends, they should consume the lamb, which should be roasted over a fire. The meal for the night before the 15th is roasted lamb, bread (unleavened), and bitter herbs. The bitter herbs are eaten in remembrance of

slavery in Egypt. Exodus does not describe which bitter herbs were used for the meal. However, Gardner (2005) uses later Talmudic sources to suggest five possible herbs: *Lactuca serriola* (compass lettuce), *Cichorium pumilum* (chicory), *Sonchus oleraceus* (sowthistle), *Eryngium creticum* (eryngo), and *Centaurea spp.* (centaury). The congregation has to eat all of the meal and burn the remains if there are any. YHWH instructs the congregation to eat the meal hurriedly as a reconstruction of the “original Passover,” where He passed over all the houses that had blood signed on the doorposts and lintels.

It is not entirely clear when the Passover was celebrated in the narrative of Exodus 12–14. Was it in Egypt before departure, as the text in Exodus 12 initially indicates? However, Exodus 12:29–32 states that the Hebrews were commanded to leave Egypt on the same night the Egyptian firstborn were killed. They were forced to take unleavened dough with them due to the need for flight (Exodus 12:39) and celebrated only a vigil on the night of departure (Exodus 12:42). Did the festival take place while they were fleeing Egypt? This seems to be the most plausible suggestion in light of the narrative. Thus, the sacrifice of the lamb and the vigil would have taken place on the night of departure, to be followed by seven days of eating unleavened bread while on foot. The problem now is that the timeframe of the initial flight would not necessarily allow enough time for the full seven-day festival, especially if it is to contain no work and daily sacrifices, as suggested in Leviticus 23.¹² Exodus 8:27 suggests that three days were initially requested, while the account in Exodus 13:17–20 and 14:1–3 suggests a similar timeframe. Further, the fleeing Hebrews were immediately pursued by

¹² See Klawans (2001) for further reading on sacrifice.

Pharaoh and his army, and the text speaks of the fear of being chased and caught (Exodus 14:10), the panic (Exodus 14:10, 15), and the disappointment (Exodus 14:11–12). As Levy (2004) suggested, the arrangement of the narrative is not entirely clear. If the festival was to take place while on foot, it would have been a much shorter celebration, and the proposal for a full seven days (Exodus 12:6–7) would be a later stipulation inserted into the text during the editing process.

In Exodus 12:14, it is said that Passover is a festival that requires a celebration and that the celebration is continuous, not a one-time celebration. The duration of the festival is seven days. This means seven days each year are presented to YHWH through the festival of Passover. Laws were constituted at the first Passover on how to celebrate the festival. These laws are to eat unleavened bread and to do no work (*'ăsar*).

Exodus 12:31, 51 records that the Israelites went out from Egypt on the 15th day of Nisan, the first day of the Passover celebration. The tradition is exclusively celebrated by Israelites. No non-Israelites can join the celebration by sharing the Passover meal (Exodus 12:43), unless circumcised (Exodus 12:44). This implies an unwritten rule that no woman can eat the Passover meal. Women may celebrate, but shall not eat the meal.

The Passover meal is eaten inside a house. It is not allowed for the meal, especially the lamb, to be eaten outside of the house. The bones of the lamb should remain complete (Exodus 12:46). Because they obeyed these laws of Passover, YHWH led the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 12:50–51) on the 15th of Nisan. After some repetitions as to how to celebrate Passover, in Exodus 13:8 Moses adds one more notice to the tradition, which is for parents to inform and teach their children to remain grateful and to acknowledge that their deliverance from Egypt came from God, the YHWH.

The Passover laws are about not only how to conduct a proper celebration but also how to show gratitude towards YHWH for what has been done. God demands all the firstborns of the nation, including their livestock. However, the firstborn sons are not to be sacrificed but redeemed (Exodus 13:11–16). The seven days of the festival of Passover were celebrated when the Israelites had just left Egypt and were heading through the wilderness towards the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17, 14:11). It was celebrated while the congregation was on the move.

Symbolically, the Passover as recorded in Exodus signifies redemption and liberation, as a celebration of life itself, as the blood on the Israelites' lintels and doorposts saved them when God struck down the people of Egypt. In fact, Passover also signifies the emergence of life from death, the agricultural cycle, and profound change in life itself. For example, Philo of Alexandria noted that Passover takes place in the month of the vernal or spring equinox, when the earth sees more sunlight and less darkness (Prosic, 2004).

Other Biblical Material

Outside Exodus 12, references to Passover are also found in Numbers 9:4–14 (Passover on Sinai and the possibility of celebrating Passover in the second month for those found to be impure); Joshua 5:10–12 (Passover after entering Canaan); 1 Kings 9:25 and 2 Chronicles 8:12–13 (Passover within the context of the account of Solomon's reign); 2 Chronicles 30 (Hezekiah's Passover); 2 Kings 21–23 and 2 Chronicles 35:1–19 (Josiah's Passover); Ezra 6:19–22 (Passover after returning from exile); Ezekiel 32:17–32 (an oracle delivered, according to the LXX, on the 15th day of the first month, denouncing Egypt, Pharaoh, and his army and their descent to the underworld); and Ezekiel 45:21–24 (which includes the Rite of Purification immediately before the Passover (Ezekiel 45:18–20)). Apart from providing a larger literary context in the Old Testament itself, this material assists in understanding the significance of the festival for the New Testament.

Some have proposed that evidence for precursors of Passover may be found in Genesis. For example, Snyder and Shaffer (2015) argued that the recognition of Passover began when a conflict occurred between Jacob's son Joseph and his brothers, which eventually led to slavery in Egypt. The proposal that the Passover—as presented in Exodus—begins in the context of slavery is indeed an important aspect of the exodus and thus of the Passover's message of liberation from slavery.

From the references to Passover elsewhere in the Old Testament (see above), I would like to identify a couple of issues. The first concerns the calendrical question of the timing of festival. Exodus 13:4 mentions the month of Abib, while Exodus 23:15 speaks of the “appointed time” in the same month, without specifying exactly what this appointed time might mean. Deuteronomy 16 lists Passover as one festival—along with the festivals of Weeks and Booths—in the annual ritual calendar. As with Exodus, Deuteronomy only mentions the month of Abib, although Deuteronomy 16:6 specifies that the Passover should begin in the evening at sunset, since this is when the people initially set out from Egypt. Only in Leviticus 23 (verses 5 and 6) is more explicit detail provided. Here the festival is to begin on the 14th day of the “first month,” beginning at twilight. The following day, the 15th day of the first month, is the beginning of the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is to last seven days, work is not allowed, and daily sacrifices are to be offered. Indeed, with its distinctly priestly focus, Leviticus connects the seventh day (Sabbath), the 14th day (Passover) and the 15th day (Unleavened Bread).

A second question concerns the role of women. Exodus 12 is explicit in that only those who are circumcised could partake of the Passover, including its preparation and consumption. This prohibition continues, as Prosic (1999, p. 106) noted, in the Temple Scroll from Qumran, which forbids women and minors from taking part in the Passover ritual and

requires that the participants be at least 20 years old. Prosic also noted that the same prohibition can be found in Jubilees 49:17. On this question, I would like to anticipate a later section and consider the New Testament question as to who was involved in preparing the festival, especially the Passover meal. Passover itself is a seven-day celebration, which logically requires quite a few preparations. In “Sister Haggadah,” Mark 14:12–17 surprisingly shows female disciples of Jesus in charge of preparing the Passover meal. It is evident that in the Markan tradition, female disciples had the responsibility of preparing the Passover supper (La Barge, 2005).¹³ These women were obviously not the Twelve Apostles: “To be a disciple, one had to be summoned by Jesus’ peremptory call to follow him literally around Galilee. One had therefore to leave work and family; and one was consequently exposed to hostility and opposition, even from one’s family” (Meier, 1999, p. 137). Despite the study conducted by Lloyd (2013), where she argued that the women who followed Jesus were in fact categorized as disciples of Jesus by definition, I would describe these women as the followers of Jesus who were loyal to him throughout his ministry. The Markan tradition records these women as Mary from Magdala, Mary the mother of James the Younger and Joses, and Salome, as well as many other women who went to Jerusalem with him for the festival of Passover (Mark 15:40–41; see Meier, 1999). The Fourth Gospel also mentions that these followers showed up at the crucifixion of Jesus and at his resurrection (the empty tomb in John 20:11–18). These women are Jesus’ mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25–27). The Lukan tradition shows that with Mary Magdalene (who is

¹³ La Barge (2005) uses the phrase *Paschal* supper, which I have replaced with Passover supper to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding between Passover and Easter in this study.

frequently mentioned throughout the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel) there were also Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, as well as many unnamed women who followed and served Jesus and the Twelve Apostles (Luke 8:2–3).¹⁴ These women were Jewish, as is apparent from their names, and they were from Galilee (Lloyd, 2013). In a later chapter, the Passover meal in the New Testament, which in this study's focus is John 14, is discussed and analyzed. If not all, then some of these women might have taken part in preparing the Passover meal.

Theological Interpretations

As one would expect, the biblical narrative in Exodus already begins the process of theological elaboration, although to put it that way suggests theological considerations follow the act itself. Obviously, the reality is more complicated, for the account itself is shaped by the theological and ritual framework. Thus, Passover is not only a festival for the Israelites to express gratitude, to acknowledge the glory of YHWH, and to celebrate the exodus but also an exertion of God to show the Egyptians His power and glory. YHWH demands acknowledgement, not only from the Israelites but also from the Egyptians (Exodus 14:4). With every year the nation of ex-slaves celebrates the festival, which entails that it is a year for masters to witness the glory of God. Studies show that 598 troops and 5,550 civilian Israelites came out of Egypt on Passover day (Humphreys, 2000), and thus it may be assumed

¹⁴ Meier's (1999) study shows that Acts is the only book that acknowledges the existence of female disciples as reflected through the use of the word *matheria* rather than *mathetes* when describing the disciple Dorcas (or Tabitha in Hebrew).

that the number of members of the Egyptian army who chased the Israelites on that day was also large. (Exodus 14:7: six hundred chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The number is to add Pharaoh's army.)

The text as we have it presents these two peoples as being theological opponents. The Israelites worship YHWH, the God that delivered them out of slavery, the Hebrew God. The Egyptians worship multiple gods. The most well-known god of Egypt is Ra': "The Israelites in the Nile Delta region of Egypt during the time of the Exodus would have been familiar with the Egyptian god Ra', since there were temples dedicated to Ra' in this region" (Ulmer, 2010, p. 183). This god was acknowledged as the sun-god in human form and was positioned as the creator of the world (Piankoff, 1964). "By day Ra' travelled in his barque through the sky and by night he passed through the underworld; he was reborn and he aged" (Ulmer, 2010, p. 185). Ra' often signifies "evil" in its Hebrew root (Cassuto, 1982). As well as gods in human form, the Egyptians also worshipped gods in animal forms as they found them more accessible (Hornung, 1982). YHWH is an "abstract" concept of God as He does not have a fixed form. He showed his existence through different forms: pillars of cloud and fire to the Israelites during the exodus (Exodus 12:17–22); all ten plagues; Moses' miraculous power (Exodus 4:1–17); and the burning bush in Mount Horeb (Exodus 3:1–12). The animal forms of the Egyptians' gods were more accessible in terms of concept and form. These gods came in forms such as snake, lamb, falcon, dog, crocodile, frog, and bull (Ulmer, 2010). There were also *Bennu*, a solar and creator male deity, who came in a bird form; *Nekhbet*, a vulture goddess who was worshipped in Upper Egypt (Hart, 2005); *Hesat*, a maternal cow goddess; and *Menhit*, a lioness goddess (Wilkinson, 2003). The list of Egyptian gods goes into thousands, in multiple forms.

While the text of Exodus as it now appears illustrates the theological battle between these two peoples, with a people who worshipped multiple gods being defeated by slaves who worshipped only one God, we should keep in mind the many studies that show how the monotheism presented in the text is an editorial overlay of older religious assumptions. Taking a history of religions approach, Day (2002; see also Römer, 2015; Smith, 2001, 2010) argued in careful detail that the development of a monotheistic understanding of YHWH arose in a Canaanite context, in which YHWH gradually acquires some of the characteristics of the Canaanite gods while rejecting the characteristics of others. These include El, Baal, Asherah, Astarte, and Anat; the astral deities (Sun, Moon, Lucifer); and the underworld deities (Mot, Resheph, Molech, the Rephaim). Day (2002) proposed that initially there was a struggle between those who emphasized monolatry and those who continued to worship a range of minor deities before the Babylonian exile. Only with Deutero-Isaiah do we find a full expression of monotheism, which became the norm in the post-exilic period. This thesis relates to my earlier observations concerning the process of writing the texts of the Old Testament, which was spurred on during the exilic period. Thus, the rising dominance of monotheism would require an editing process of earlier traditions to emphasize the monotheistic perspective in the Exodus and Passover narratives.

As one may expect for such an important festival, each and every item has been analyzed and developed in a symbolic and theological direction, from the significance of the seven days (Prosic, 1999, p. 95) to the unleavened bread (Pittinsky, 2018). Full discussion of these elaborations would constitute a thesis in itself, so I will focus on the most relevant feature for my study: the core theme of redemption and how this is interpreted between the Jewish and Christian traditions. Thus, Deiss (1975, p. 35) suggested that “Passover is at one and at the same time a memorial of creation, of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, of the

deliverance from Egypt and finally a prophecy of the last day when God's glory will fill the earth for eternity." Parco (2004) goes little further and defined the festival in terms of two levels of meaning. The Jewish Passover is a commemoration of the exodus, which set the Israelites free from bondage in Egypt, while the Christian Passover is a gathering of the disciples of Jesus Christ in communion with the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of human beings. Cook (1999) developed a similar line of argument, suggesting that Passover is not only a celebration of the exodus but also a messianic redemption of God's people in the future. Cook clearly has New Testament input on the definition: "This messianic element proved especially attractive to the early Christians, except that they saw Passover as signaling freedom for all humanity, achieved through the saving death of Jesus as the Christ" (Cook, 1999, p. 1). Finally, Theiss (1994) added an eschatological meaning to Passover, in which he includes the death of Jesus Christ. For Theiss, the Christian Passover enriches the Jewish Passover tradition through the role of Jesus Christ.

Extra-Biblical Sources

While history of religions approaches tend to focus on the way the exodus motif was attached to more ancient festivals of the agricultural cycle, with their apotropaic rites, harvest and thanksgiving festivals, sanctification rituals, and associated ritual drama (Prosic, 1999), or more specifically to the biblical evidence that two separate agricultural festivals—Unleavened Bread and Passover—were eventually connected (Coogan, 2008), in this section my primary concern is with sources that fall outside the later-determined canon of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The first text is from the deuterocanonical book, Wisdom of Solomon 18:5–25. The emphasis in this text—influenced by Greek literary styles and ideas—is noticeably distinct, with little in the way of specific guidelines for the ritual of Passover itself and much in terms

of cosmic symbolism (light and dark, the all-powerful word leaping from heaven into the world, and so on) and stark contrasts. The righteous and the doomed appear in a series of contrasts, with a focus on the latter as not only the firstborn but many bodies pile up due to God's vengeance. The theme continues in a poetic manner to deal with the wandering in the wilderness and how those who strayed were punished, while those who did not, found their way back to God, not least through prayer and incense. Also notable in this text is the broadening of the Passover to "the ancestors" as such, which entails drawing in the patriarchs who appear in Genesis leading up to Moses. In Wisdom 18:9 we also find references to the law, sacrifices, and the covenantal theme of blessings and curses (Schenker, 1996).

A further source is the Hellenistic historical tragedy from the first century B.C.E. by Ezekiel the Tragedian (Jacobson, 1984; see also Holladay, 1989, pp. 344–405). The story of the exodus—*exagoge* in Greek—is rewritten in terms of a play. For my purposes, the important sections are lines 152–174 and 175–192, where Ezekiel speaks in some detail of the Passover. The first version is delivered by God to Moses, while in the second version Moses gives the instructions to the people. Notably, that the month of the Passover (Nisan) is to be the first of the year; preparations begin on the 10th of the month so as to begin the festival on the 14th, on the day of the full moon before nightfall; families, under the head male, may use either a lamb or a calf; the eating of the whole roasted animal should be done while "girded up" with sandals and a walking stick; hyssop should be used to paint blood on the doorways; the seven days of eating unleavened bread are to include sacrifices of firstborn animals. Two features are worth noting: the seven days of eating unleavened bread are to symbolize the seven days it took to walk from Egypt to Palestine (obviously, this does not accord with the 40 years of the biblical text). Second, the unleavened bread signifies the evils suffered while in Egypt. Ezekiel's *Exagoge*—not often studied—provides evidence of

increasing attention to the Passover ritual and its components in the first century B.C.E. Thus, we see a process of elaboration taking place before the texts of the New Testament were written.

A further major source is the Book of Jubilees, of which the written sources date to the first century B.C.E., although it may have initially been written in the late second century B.C.E. (Vanderkam, 1989a, 1989b; see also Segal, 2007).¹⁵ Offering a substantial rewriting of Genesis 1 to Exodus 12, as well as providing evidence for divergent traditions of biblical texts, the important chapter concerning the Passover is Jubilees 49. The basic rules of celebration are similar to Exodus 12, although there are some variations. For example, while the lamb is to be sacrificed before evening on the 14th of the first month, it should be eaten in the evening of the 15th. More specifically, “between the evenings, from the third part of the day until the third part of the night. For two parts of the day have been given for light and its third part for the evening” (Jubilees 49:10). Wine is also to be drunk (Jubilees 49:6), with the purpose of “glorifying, blessing, and praising” the Lord of their father. It is an eternal festival, to be held on exactly the same day every year, for it is written on “heavenly tablets” (Jubilees 49:8). If any man who is pure neglects to celebrate the Passover, it counts as a sin. Subsequent celebrations should take place only in the “sanctuary” (tabernacle or temple), with every male over 20 years of age present (Jubilees 49:16–17). For Jubilees, it is clear that the Passover has come to be seen as a centralized sacrificial ritual in the central sanctuary,

¹⁵ Extant texts exist in Hebrew (from Qumran), Greek, Latin (a shorter version), and Ethiopic, since this book is regarded as canonical by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

and is not to be celebrated elsewhere, with a distinct prescription for males over 20 to participate. It is also a time for celebration and jubilation, assisted by wine as though at a banquet. This feature at least draws the text closer to the New Testament's Last Supper, where wine becomes a central feature.¹⁶

While multiple Hebrew copies of Jubilees have been found at Qumran, attesting to the importance of this text among the Essenes, little has been found concerning Passover celebrations. Tantalizing allusions appear in fragmentary remains, with little further detail about how the Passover itself was celebrated (Colautti, 2002, pp. 164–168). A small exception is that the *Temple Scroll* seems to separate the Passover from the festival of Unleavened Bread, but the major question concerns the calendar. As many studies have shown (Ratzon & Ben-Dov, 2017; Saulnier, 2012; Stern, 2010; Talmon, 1951; Vanderkam, 1998), those responsible for the Qumran scrolls shared a solar calendar with other breakaway groups in the first century B.C.E., in comparison with the luni-solar calendar used in Jerusalem. The year was taken at 364 days, with seven-day weeks, 52 weeks, and 91-day seasons. This meant that the Passover would be held on exactly the same day every year, rather than its variable date according to the luni-solar calendar. As the *4QCalendrical Document A* (4Q320) puts it, “The festivals of the first year: On the third day from Sabbath [Tuesday] of the course of the sons of Maaziah is the Passover” (from Pitre, 2015, p. 163). The relevance of this difference has generated significant debate concerning the timing of the

¹⁶ Colautti (2002, pp. 163–164) draws on Vanderkam (1998) to point out that the overall structure of Jubilees, which follows jubilee cycles of seven and 49, is to present the exodus and Passover as part of this cycle, with an implicit call for a new exodus and recovery of the land.

Last Supper, since the Synoptic Gospels clearly follow the luni-solar calendar, while the Gospel of John seems to follow a solar calendar (for a survey of the debate, see Pitre, 2015, pp. 158–171; see further Humphreys, 2011). I will return to this question later.

The calendrical issue also appears in the first fragment of Aristobulus (preserved only in the works of Eusebius of Caesaria), in which he sought to connect the date of Passover with Egyptian, Macedonian, and Roman calendars (see Holladay, 1995, pp. 128–133). In particular, the positions of the sun and moon become important in this cosmic reckoning, for Passover takes place after the spring equinox, at a time when the moon—in contrast to the sun—is at the opposite extreme of the autumnal equinox. The mention of Aristobulus is admittedly brief and comes to us third hand (via Eusebius quoting Anatolius on Aristobulus), but it provides another piece of evidence as to the increasing importance of calculation based on the movement of heavenly bodies.

Two more significant sources are those of Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus. The relevant material in Philo is found in *On the Special Laws* 2:145–87 and in *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (QE) 1:1–23 (Philo, 1937, 1953). For Philo, the “*diabasis*,” or “passage”—as he also calls the “*pascha*”—is an allegory for the soul’s liberation from slavery to the passions. The section in *Special Laws* emphasizes that the whole people sacrificed the lambs, for each was made a priest for a day out of spontaneity, to celebrate escaping from a land “brimful of inhumanity.” This priesthood of all requires a general purification, through ritual and daily practices, along with the purification of each home where the Passover is to be celebrated, which connects with Philo’s core theme of the Passover being an allegory for the soul’s purification from bodily passions. As with Jubilees and Aristobulus, Philo spends time on calendrical observations based on heavenly bodies, numerical calculation, and zodiacal speculations, stressing that the year begins for the Jews

with the vernal equinox. Philo is given to rhetorical flights, especially in terms of bread, both leavened and unleavened, as well as allegorical flourishes such as the linking the unleavened bread with the bread in the temple, which represents the twelve tribes. Thus far, I have considered the *Special Laws*, so let us now turn to the *Questions and Answers on Exodus*. In this text, purification of the soul is emphasized, with almost every item—from the perfection and wholeness of the lamb, through the evening timing of the festival, to staff in hand and sandals on the feet—of the Exodus narrative relating in some way to the “Passover of the Soul.” The text also speaks of each acceptable male being a purified “priest” for a day, as well as mentioning from time to time social peace and harmony. Two items stand out in light of my later concern with the Gospel of John. In question 15, Philo sought to answer why the bread is unleavened and the herbs are bitter. The literal meaning pertains to haste and the life of bitterness as slaves they are to leave behind. But the “deeper level” refers, he argued, to the need to avoid a soul “puffed up” with pride, and the herbs signifying the passion and wickedness of one’s former life, with its weeping, sighing, and groaning. Or, rather, the bitter herbs signal a “psychic passage” from this former life to one of impassivity and virtue. While the specific language may differ, we do find a comparable emphasis in John’s account of the Last Supper, where the emphasis lies on a new life, the life of spirit and truth, and the passage away from an older life. In summary, while Philo provided relatively little material concerning the minutiae of the Passover’s actual celebration at the time (due to his effort at commentary on the biblical texts), one feature that connects his approach with the Gospel of John should be mentioned: the tendency to elaborate. In Philo, this elaboration is in the direction of the “deeper meaning” of allegory, but his concern with the new life of the “soul,” in its passage from a former state of sin and being ruled by the passions to one of purity and peace, echoes in a way the elaborations placed in Jesus’ mouth in the account in John.

The penultimate extra-biblical source is that of Flavius Josephus, especially the *Antiquities* 2:311–313 and 3:248–251.¹⁷ While Josephus refers to the Passover at other points (carefully analyzed by Colautti, 2002), my focus is on these texts. Keen to explain to his educated Roman audience the meaning of the festival, he pointed out that the Greek *pascha* means “passing over.” In the first text Josephus offered a rather brief account that goes little beyond the Exodus account. He does added that the Egyptians were keen to provide gifts and lamented the way they had treated the Jews. The second text is slightly more extended, noting that the first month of Nisan is the same as the sun being at the zodiacal sign of Aries. He also indicates that the seven days of unleavened bread had developed into a daily sacrifice of two bulls, a ram, and seven lambs, along with a goat’s kid as a sin offering for the priests—obviously with reference to temple practice. Similarly, the discussion of the “first fruits” of the harvest fits within this framework, where the priests are again central.

To summarize this extra-biblical material on the Passover leading up to the time of the New Testament writings, it is clear that the Passover was a central festival. In some of the texts, such as Wisdom of Solomon, Jubilees, Aristobulus, and Philo, cosmic and calendrical calculations feature, while with Philo we find a tendency to elaborate allegorically and at some length on the meanings of each item in the festival. There are some differences, such as whether the festival is to be held only in the temple or can be held in each household, whether wine is drunk, and what the symbolic meaning of the Passover might be—as a passage from

¹⁷ I leave aside Pseudo-Philo, since the Passover is best an ephemeral theme in this work (Colautti, 2002, pp. 184–185).

one physical and spiritual state to another. All of them assume at that time the continuance of animal sacrifice, whether in the temples alone, in the temple and in homes, or primarily in homes. However, what we do not find in this material much in the way of indicating the specific practices at the time. All of the texts offer re-readings, interpretations, and elaborations on the text of Exodus 12. This entails a looking back, with an eye on the present, seeking to explain to contemporary audiences what these texts mean. But this means they are by and large restricted to the framework of the Exodus material. By contrast, I am interested in whether it is possible to find a detailed outline of what practices were observed at the time the New Testament texts were written. For this, I need to turn to a text, the Mishnah Pesachim 10, which actually appeared after the Gospel of John. The reason why I will use this text will become clear, but first, I need to offer an excursus into the world of Halakha.¹⁸

Excursus: Halakha—A Framework for Understanding the Passover Haggadah

The reason for dealing first with the Halakha is because it functions as one of two great traditions in Jewish interpretation, the other being Haggadah. However, one cannot understand the function and role of Haggadah—especially the Passover Haggadah—without

¹⁸ I leave aside developments since that time, which are indeed many. As a small sample, these include deliberations over why legumes are banned (Shemesh, 2015), how ethics are related to the Passover (Kelly, 2013), the increasing role of women in light of the “Sister Haggadah” (Harris, 2016), and the appropriation by Zionism in the 20th century (Don-Yehiya, 1992; Locker-Biletzki, 2015; Rockaway, 2011; Uris, 1958).

understanding Halakha.¹⁹ In its basic sense, Halakha is derived from the word *halakh*, a Hebrew word that means “to walk” or “to go” (Jacobs, 1906). In other words, Halakha concerns legal matters, in terms of how one should walk or go in life. By contrast, Haggadah concerns non-legal texts, in terms of stories, parables, and anecdotes, including in its orbit history, poetry, prayers, and theology.²⁰ Spero (1996) observed that the development of Halakha received a major impetus by studying the great work of halakhic authority, Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik (*Halakhic Man* and *The Halakhic Mind*). Spero drew attention to the Rabbi’s claim that Halakha is the only source of Jewish philosophy. Spero did not completely agree with the claim, as he thinks the philosophical paradigm attached to Halakha is not an immediately obvious one. He agreed that Halakha is the primary source of norms and practices in the Jewish tradition, but did not agree with the philosophical dimension attributed to it. At the same time, Spero also examined the work of classical Jewish philosophers and found them to be biblically sourced. Similarly, Goldberg (1996) found that while Halakha has been important in the development of philosophy in the past, it is less in the present. Ultimately, Halakha is one mechanism to ensure the continued relevance of the biblical texts in ever-changing situations: “Halakha was given by God to His people to be developed creatively ... Thus, the real significance of Halakha is instrumental rather than intrinsic” (Spero, 1996, p. 59).

¹⁹ See Revel (1913) for further reading.

²⁰ See Nulman (1993) for further reading.

In terms of origins, various theories have been propounded. For example, Schiffman (2015) suggested it is cognate with Akkadian tradition, in which the word most probably refers to “property and tax.” Lowy (1997) suggested, following Gilat (1984), that evidence of an ancient “strict prohibition of work with the aim of limiting capital punishment to the offenders” (p. 163), although it ultimately comes to refer to the “must” and “must not” of religious and everyday life. Another significant source comes from the Qumran scrolls. One example is the work of Hidary (2015), who argued that fragmentary manuscript 4Q264a is distinctly halakhic, where he found playing musical instruments on the Sabbath is permitted while reading scripture (unlike later prohibitions, as suggested by Noam and Qimron (2009)).

I would like to address three issues in relation to Halakha: women, the New Testament, and contemporary developments. In regard to women, Atzmon (2011) bridged a dialogue between Halakha and Haggadah to discuss women and marriage, which was a “silent” subject in Judaism. Referencing the work of Hauptman (1991), Atzmon tried to break the silence on the subjects. He observed that Halakha sees marriage as a tool for a male to fulfil his religious responsibility of reproduction without considering any emotions of the woman involved. At the same time, Haggadah also objects to the idea of limiting a woman’s voice in marriage. Atzmon acknowledged this contradiction, for the sake of overcoming a centuries-long tradition that prioritized men and their voices above women.

Second, and in relation to the New Testament, Tomson (1990) focused on how Halakha appears in the letters from Paul, such as in the way Paul deals with the problem of food offered to idols in the Corinthian community (see also Ellis, 1993). In reply, Van Uchelen (1995) suggested that one may distinguish between Pharisaic-rabbinic Halakha and what he

called Pauline Halakha. In other words, Halakha provides a dynamic form of the tradition of the law, so that its framework is not fixed for all time but is adaptable to new situations.²¹

This reality also appears with the third issue: contemporary developments of Halakha. For instance, Lichtenstein (2002, p. 1) investigated “whether and how sensitivity to the human and social factor has impacted, legitimately, upon the formulation and implementation of halakha.” Kohen (2004) observed how one might view Israel’s current economic system as seen through Halakha, while Warburg (2007) took Halakha into the realm of medicine and organ transplants. Specifically, Warburg asked whether Halakha can answer the question concerning whether or not to donate organs, concluding that it is permitted. At a greater limit, Blidstein (1997) attempted to connect liberal democracy with Jewish tradition and culture, concluding that even though such democracy has a specific Western provenance, “the halakhic community has more than enough reason to enthusiastically embrace democracy as a fulfilment of its own basic commitment to human dignity” (pp. 6–7). By contrast, a note of resistance to accommodating Western values appears in the work of Stern (2002), who focused on the question of marriage and equality between the sexes. The particularly liberal notion of equality is one that emerged among Diaspora Jews, especially in North America, with an impact among other communities. Yet, in terms of the halakhic tradition, this liberal value faces some problems. The equality associated with the right to love and be loved between couples of the same sex remains an issue within Jewish communities and tradition. Stern (2002) observed: “The corpus of Jewish tradition is not easily reconciled with the

²¹ See Bockmuehl (1991) for further reading.

thoroughgoing egalitarianism of modern Western society” (p. 11). The debates continue. Halakha is explored in all parts of Jewish life. It is a source of law, thoughts, perspectives, philosophies, and even theology, even while it often meets limits. However, it has also been subject to a wide range of interpretations and over the years, Halakha has needed to adjust and face new challenges.

In light of this discussion, what bearing does Halakha have on the Passover tradition? Initially, one may expect that since the Passover material stipulates a ritual, it would fall into the category of law and thus of Halakha. But this is not actually the case, for the outline of the Passover ritual in Exodus 12 is actually part of a narrative. Halakha may be able to deal some of the laws that surround Passover, such as purity and circumcision, but the actual ordering of the Passover Seder, as it came to be called, actually falls to the task of Haggadah.

Passover Haggadah (*Haggadah shel Pesah*)

I now come to the final piece of extra-biblical material on the Passover, which will become the key for interpreting the Last Supper in the Gospel of John. It is called Mishnah Pesachim 10, the first written form of what would later become the Passover Haggadah, which would come to contain a detailed description of what should take place during a Passover ritual, or Seder (order).²² There are a number of problems, especially concerning the dating of the full Passover Haggadah and its forerunner in Mishnah Pesachim 10. I will address the problem of provenance and dating in a moment, for it needs to be prefaced with a discussion of Haggadah.

²² See Neusner (1991) for further reading.

Although Haggadah is a wider term, designating elaborations on biblical texts in terms of stories, anecdotes, poetry, parables, and so on, the term is often associated directly with the Passover. As Kulp (2005) observed, Haggadah is “a written work containing the text of that which is recited on Passover eve.” Importantly, this written work is composite, being “comprised of selections from the Holy Scriptures, their expositions in Talmudic and Midrashic literature, prayers and benedictions, legends and hymns, and a guide for the ritual of the ceremony” (Glatzer, 1996). Or, as Zemel (1998) observed, the Passover Haggadah is a “bewildering amalgam of different texts and genres, constructed in such a way as to leave any reflective reader wondering why this curious document is arranged as it is” (pp. 57–58).²³ For such an important text to have this nature, it must have emerged over time, with constant additions, adjustments, and—significantly for my treatment of John—variations in actual practice. As Finkelstein (1943) observed, Haggadah and the institution of the order (Seder) ritual of the Passover did not immediately come into one final form, since it was shaped and adapted over time (see also Rosen-Zvi, 2008; Safrai and Safrai, 2015). This is not to say that one may do whatever one wishes in a Passover celebration, but that within its recognizable form one may vary the actual practices.

To give a few examples of how the Passover Haggadah introduces variations from the biblical text, I begin with the position of Moses. Avioz (2009) observed that Moses is missing

²³ Zemel (1998) goes on to propose: “The Haggadah’s organization suggests that the negotiation of such an alignment of positions may be accomplished by juxtaposing recitable texts in ways that are reminiscent of what might be construed as conflict-talk or an argument among participatory roles as they are animated during the recitation of the text” (p. 58).

from the Haggadah. Even though the anonymous editors had many opportunities to mention Moses, they do not do so. Why? Avioz concluded that the reason for the omission of Moses is to keep the Haggadah purely and solely as a medium to give thanks and to praise God. Avioz added: “Compensation for not mentioning Moses in the Haggadah can be found in medieval illustrated Haggadot (such as the Sarajevo Haggadah). In these Haggadot the text is illustrated with illuminations depicting various periods in the life of Moses” (Avioz, 2009, p. 50). Of course, this topic has generated considerable and ongoing debate. Another position is represented by Henshke (2007), who suggested that Moses is consciously denied a presence in the Passover Haggadah. He quoted a text from the Haggadah, which reads: “‘The Lord brought us forth from Egypt’—not by an angel, not by a seraph, nor by an agent, but the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself.” He argued that the text indicates Moses was not simply omitted but actively denied a presence. He critiqued Daube’s (1966) perspective on the reason for the absence of Moses in the text. Daube argued that Moses does not appear in the Haggadah due to anti-Christian bias during the period. However, Henshke considered that there is insufficient evidence to support Daube’s argument (see also Rovner, 2002, p. 427). Even so, Henshke ends his argument in a similar way to Avioz. They both agreed that Haggadah wants the participants of the Passover supper to focus their acknowledgement on God, rather than on any human being. In other words, Haggadah rejects the idea of human redemptive action, for Moses was ultimately not the one who delivered the Hebrews out of Egypt: “All is in the hands of God, and in his hands alone” (Henshke, 2007, p. 69). A dissenting voice may be found with Arnow (2006), who argued that Moses does appear, although obliquely. Indeed, for the medieval Jewish sage, Maimonides, there are two levels in the text. A young and immature audience is to be told that God the agent of liberation and

salvation, but a wiser and more mature audience can be given the explanation of how Moses was involved in the exodus (see Ivry, 2007).

A second example concerns the role of the book of Daniel in the Haggadah. Obviously, the main text to which the Passover Haggadah relates is Exodus, but Moskowitz (2010) argued that the book of Daniel also plays a significant role. In analyzing the similarities, Moskowitz noted the usage of the number four. Daniel contains the prophecy of four beasts, and there are many reoccurrences of the number four in the Haggadah (see Salamon, 1999).²⁴ Moskowitz suggested that the number four in the Haggadah represents the Tetragrammaton YHWH. More substantively, Moskowitz stressed the similarities in terms of literary patterns and indeed the structure of the Haggadah and the book of Daniel.

While the effort to connect the Passover Haggadah with Daniel may emphasize an eschatological, and even an apocalyptic, tone, the core theme is that of redemption and liberation. There are many Jewish elaborations on this theme in relation to the Haggadah, but I focus on one example, by Hoffman (1979), before comparing it to a Christian effort. For

²⁴ Salamon (1999) identified many foursomes in the Passover Haggadah, such as the festivals of spring, liberation from slavery, freedom, and eschatological redemption; the four cups of wine; four questions; four sons; four biblical texts (Deuteronomy 26:5–8); four blessings over food (*karpas*, *hamotzi*, *matzah*, *maror*); four blessings in the *birkat hamazon*; and four specified times for *matzah*—breaking, eating twice, and *afikoman*. She concludes that these foursomes reflect the four major themes of life: “physical and emotional slavery, physical and spiritual Exodus, joy after deliverance and hope for the future through the belief of the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic period” (Salamon, 1999, p. 28). On the tendency to numerical emphases, see also Ganz (1981).

Hoffmann, the Passover Haggadah is primarily concerned with salvation or redemption from a Jewish perspective. For Hoffman, the key is *matzah*, the unleavened bread that has already been identified as a central feature not only of the Passover meal but also of the seven days that follow. Agreeing with Zeitlin (1948), he considered that *matzah* represents salvation, and indeed is a symbol of salvation. *Matzah* is two-dimensional, dealing with the past and the future, as he quoted Rabbi Joshua: “On that night they were redeemed, and on that night they will be redeemed in the future” (Hoffman, 1979, p. 52). I would like to compare and contrast Hoffman’s effort with that of Hanhart (1995) who tried to build Passover Haggadah through Mark’s narrative of the resurrection of Jesus (see also Berry, 1997). For Hanhart, the Gospel of Mark seeks to interpret the events in 70 C.E.—the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem—and its aftermath in light of Paul’s theology of God’s salvific plan. As God saved the Israelites from the Egyptian masters, so God will also save the Jews from the destructive war of 67–70 C.E.

What may be learned from this discussion of the some of the features of the Passover Haggadah? The key lesson is flexibility. Since the Passover Haggadah developed over time and conflated a whole series of textual references, along with elaborations, additions, and modifications, it comes through the tradition as a living rather than ossified ritual. Indeed, as Zemel (1998) observed, the texts entice participants to position themselves as a part of Jewish tradition both in the past (during the exodus) and in the present; it is a self-critical document. He concluded that Haggadah is an open text. It is open for adjustment and development. Or, as Vincent (2010) pointed out, “our understanding of the past, the collective memory transmitted through the liturgy, shapes our actions in the present and the futures available to our imagination” (p. 151). This key point concerning the continuously developing tradition of

the Passover Haggadah has a direct bearing on my treatment of the Gospel of John, a bearing that will become clear in the next chapter.

The Order of the Passover Meal

Thus far, I have not pinned down the date of the first extant manuscripts of what is now known as the Passover Haggadah. In fact, the earliest manuscripts appear quite late (see Mann, 2015), with one of the earliest found in Book 9 of Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*.²⁵ The book is called *Sefer Korbanot*, or Book of Sacrifices, and the first part of this book deals with the Passover. While quite detailed, it is noticeable that the focus is as much on sacrifice in the temple as in one's home. But the date of this work is late, usually put between 1170 and 1180 C.E., and it went through numerous subsequent revisions, initially at Maimonides's own hand then by later commentators. Even later come the extant manuscripts of the Passover Haggadah in their own right, with the "Golden Haggadah" of the early 14th century, perhaps from Barcelona, and the Sarajevo Haggadah of the late 14th century. Printed versions only appeared in the 15th century, after Europe's belated adoption of Chinese printing presses.

Obviously, we are far from the time of the writing of the Gospel of John, although the task of reconstructing earlier versions follows a similar path to that of studies of the text of the Hebrew Bible. In this case, the earliest extant manuscript is Codex Leningradensis, which

²⁵ While the oldest manuscripts of the books of *Mishneh Torah* are kept at the Columbia University Library, one may also find resources in both Hebrew and English on a number of internet sites, such as www.chabad.org.

dates to 1008 C.E., although it witnesses to a Masoretic tradition that is centuries older. Until the discovery of Hebrew texts at Qumran, witnesses to pre-Masoretic versions of the Hebrew Bible were found in Greek translations such as the LXX, along with Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian. A comparable situation exists in relation to the Passover Haggadah, for a relatively brief and early version appears in the Mishnah, specifically in Mishnah Pesachim 10. I will quote the brief text in a moment, but in this case too we need to consider the question of dating.

In one of the most comprehensive studies of the Passover Seder, Bokser (1986) argued that based on evidence in Mishnah Pesachim 10, the Passover Haggadah originated approximately 200 C.E. (see also Hauptman, 2002; Strack & Stemberger, 1992; Yuval, 1995). Others such as Epstein (1957) tried to push the date a little earlier, perhaps to the watershed date of 70 C.E. By this point, there is no manuscript evidence, so one has to rely on the assumptions of an earlier tradition. This is so for those such as Finkelstein (1943), Cassuto (1982), and Tabor and Stern (2008), who argued that even though no Haggadah was found until 70 C.E., the idea of conducting the Passover supper in a particular order had already existed for some time.²⁶ The only evidence that one may adduce for this assumption is the number of extra-biblical texts, as surveyed earlier, which largely date from the first century B.C.E. This increased attention would support the existence of at least some tradition of practice, although it is notable that much attention was devoted to the celebration in the

²⁶ Apart from the traditional assumption (Johnson, 2013) that the Mishnah was given to Moses on Sinai in oral form, Joslyn-Siemiatkoski (2009, p. 20) suggests that the traditions forming the Mishnah date possibly from 300 B.C.E.

Jerusalem temple. Only after its destruction in 70 C.E. would the impetus arise not only for continuing the practice in homes but also for the long process of writing down and codifying the material. In this situation too, we find that “the Mishnah continued to lessen the significance of the Passover lamb and shift the theme of redemption over to the matzah” (Choy, 2014, p. 8).

Concerning the use of the Passover Haggadah and its earliest form in Mishnah Pesachim 10 for engaging with the Last Supper in the Gospel of John, it is by now well-established that the texts gathered in the New Testament, along with many that are outside the canon, have clear Jewish roots (Pitre, 2011).²⁷ Indeed, for Pitre, the last meal Jesus had with the disciples was should be seen as having many Jewish elements, so much so that Jesus positions the meal as a “new Passover.” Thus, it seems plausible to me to deploy the Passover Haggadah, and its earliest written form in Mishnah Pesachim 10, for the following reasons:

- 1) The events of the Last Supper took place 100 years earlier.
- 2) The Gospel of John was written at around the time, 100 C.E., that the Mishnah perhaps began to be put in written form.
- 3) Mishnah Pesachim 10 already provides a distinct ordering of the Passover (see Neusner, 1977) that has many resonances with the account in the Gospel of John.

As for the terminology of Mishnah, it comes from the verbal root *shanah*, to study or review by repetition. Mishnah Pesachim 10 simply means *Mishnah tractate Pesachim* chapter 10, which explains the regulations of the meal of Passover eve. “Mishnah is written almost entirely in what is called Mishnaic Hebrew. A few scattered sentences in Aramaic exist and

²⁷ See Chang (2010) for further reading.

include some sayings from early rabbis as well as quotes from documents of realia (e.g., marriage contracts, leases, and divorce certificates)” (Johnson, 2013, p. 3).²⁸ Given its relatively early date compared to other secondary traditions (and written down around the same time at the New Testament), the Mishnah has taken on a significant authoritative form. As Hayes (2008) pointed out, “Mishnah is read as a literary text, rhetorical text, or performance, focusing on genre, style, structure, and a wide range of literary features” (p. 1). At the same time, it is notable that nearly every feature of the Mishnah is open to debate and differences of opinion. For example, even in the relatively short text of Mishnah Pesachim 10, we find rabbis from the “bet” (houses or schools) of Shammai, Hillel, Eliezer ben Zadok, Gamaliel, Tarfon, Akiba, Jose, Ishmael, and so on (see further Nelson, 2015).²⁹ Indeed, the presence of such differences of opinion reinforces my earlier point concerning the malleability of the Passover tradition and its practise.

With these deliberations in mind, I would like to quote here the whole of Mishnah Pesachim 10. Although one may find many translations of this text on the internet, I quote the translation from Danby (1933):

10. 1. On the eve of Passover, from about the time of the Evening Offering, a man must eat naught until nightfall. Even the poorest in Israel must not eat unless he sits down to table, and they must not give them less than four cups of wine to drink, even if it is from the [Paupers'] Dish.

²⁸ See Greenspan (2003) and Myers (1987) for further reading.

²⁹ See Hauptman (1998) for further reading.

2. After they have mixed him his first cup, the School of Shammai say: He says the Benediction first over the day and then the Benediction over the wine. And the School of Hillel say: He says the Benediction first over the wine and then the Benediction over the day.

3. When [food] is brought before him he eats it seasoned with lettuce, until he is come to the breaking of bread; they bring before him unleavened bread [*matzah*] and lettuce and the *haroseth*, although *haroseth* is not a religious obligation. R. Eliezer b. R. Zadok says: It is a religious obligation. And in the Holy City they used to bring before him the body of the Passover offering.

4. They then mix him the second cup. And here the son asks his father (and if the son has not enough understanding his father instructs him [how to ask]), “Why is this night different from other nights? For on other nights we eat seasoned food once, but this night twice; on other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but this night all is unleavened; on other nights we eat flesh roast, stewed, or cooked, but this night all is roast.” And according to the understanding of the son his father instructs him. He begins with the disgrace and ends with the glory; and he expounds from *A wandering Aramean was my father* ... until he finishes the whole section.

5. Rabban Gamaliel used to say: Whosoever has not said [the verses concerning] these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are they: Passover, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs: “Passover”—because God passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt; “unleavened bread”—because our fathers were redeemed from Egypt; “bitter herbs”—because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt. In every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt, for it is written. *And thou shalt tell thy son in that day saying. It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.* Therefore are we bound to give thanks, to praise, to glorify, to honour, to exalt, to extol, and to bless him who wrought all these wonders for our fathers and for us. He brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from

mourning to a Festival-day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption; so let us say before him the *Hallelujah*.

6. How far do they recite [the *Hallel*]? The School of Shammai say: To *A joyful mother of children*. And the School of Hillel say: To *A flintstone into a springing well*. And this is concluded with the *Ge'ullah*. R. Tarfon says: "He that redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt and brought us to this night to eat therein unleavened bread and bitter herbs." But there is no concluding Benediction. R. Akiba adds: "Therefore, O Lord our God and the God of our fathers, bring us in peace to the other set feasts and festivals which are coming to meet us, while we rejoice in the building-up of thy city and are joyful in thy worship; and may we eat there of the sacrifices and of the Passover-offerings whose blood has reached with acceptance the wall of thy Altar, and let us praise thee for our redemption and for the ransoming of our soul. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast redeemed Israel!"

7. After they have mixed for him the third cup he says the Benediction over his meal. [Over] a fourth [cup] he completes the *Hallel* and says after it the Benediction over song. If he is minded to drink [more] between these cups he may drink; only between the third and the fourth cups he may not drink.

8. After the Passover meal they should not disperse to join in revelry. If some fell asleep [during the meal] they may eat [again]; but if all fell asleep they may not eat [again]. R. Jose says: If they but dozed they may eat [again]; but if they fell into deep sleep they may not eat [again].

9. After midnight the Passover-offering renders the hands unclean. The Refuse and Remnant make the hands unclean. If a man has said the Benediction over the Passover-offering it renders needless a Benediction over [any other] animal-offering [that he eats]; but if he said the Benediction over [any other] animal-offering it does not render needless the Benediction over the Passover-offering. So R. Ishmael. R. Akiba says: Neither of them renders the other needless. (pp. 150–151)

A few observations. This text differs notably from the other extra-biblical material I surveyed earlier. Those texts, from the Wisdom of Solomon to Josephus, tended overwhelmingly to offer various retellings of Exodus 12. Instead, Mishnah Pesachim 10 provides a clear outline—with differences of opinion—for the actual order of celebration. Further, the focus is on a celebration in the home rather than in the temple (although this appears in the earlier Pesachim), with a concern for the necessary steps, acts, and quotations from various parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. Finally, the texts of Midrash Pesachim 10 presents a series of steps that would later be given specific names and many further elaborations. I would like to draw on these terms to exegete the text quoted above.

Qadesh (*or* Kadesh)

Qadesh means to make holy or consecrate and it designates the first step of the meal. In Midrash Pesachim 10, this appears with debate between Shammai and Hillel in regard to the blessing or Benediction (*brk* is the Hebrew root meaning to bless). The one thinks the day should be blessed first, while other thinks it should be the wine, which is mixed (initially water and wine, and later white and red wine). Before we arrive at this verse, stipulations are made that everyone, even the poorest, should partake even if it is an act of charity. No fewer than four cups of wine should be poured. Here, the emphasis on wine actually connects with its importance in the very different account of Jubilees (see above), where we also found an emphasis on celebration and even excess.

Urchatz (*Washing*)

With this second step, we already meet the limits of the early text of Midrash Pesachim 10, for there is no mention of washing. In the later tradition, this would become an important feature after, but not during, the blessing.

Karpas (*Greens*)

These appear in verse 3 of Midrash Pesachim 10, although—strictly speaking—it is only the lettuce and the *haroseth*, which is eaten with bitter herbs, that count as “greens.” The *matzah* is the unleavened bread. Although it is made from grains, it does not count as a “green.” Some quibbles appear in the text, with an initial suggestion that the *haroseth* is not mandatory, followed by Eliezer’s command that it is indeed a religious obligation.

Yachatz (*Breaking of the Matzah*)

Again the sparseness of Midrash Pesachim 10 appears, for the breaking of the *matzah*, which would become part of the tradition, is not mentioned here. Later tradition would indicate that the larger piece should be kept for desert (*afikoman*).

Maggid (*Recitation*)

Now comes the crucial verse, verse four, known in the later tradition as *maggid*, the recitation of the Exodus. It is the time for the second cup of wine to be poured. The son—presumably the eldest—now asks his father a question. The father has to teach his son how to ask the question should he not know. The question is, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” In the Midrash, the question has a number of subclauses, concerning seasoned food, leavened and unleavened bread, and the need to eat only roasted meat. The tradition would soon convert this initial question into the four questions known as *Mah Nishtanah*, which are the first two Hebrew words in the question “What is different ...?” Later, the questions would become: Why on other nights do we eat *chamets* and *matzah*, but tonight it is only *matzah*? Why on other nights do we eat other vegetables, but tonight it is only bitter herbs? Why on other nights do we eat meat roasted, stewed, or boiled, but on this night all meat is roasted? Why on other nights do we dip vegetables once, but tonight we dip them

twice? To answer all these questions, the father is to retell the exodus story, with a focus on thankfulness to God for bringing the Israelites out of slavery. In my analysis of the Gospel of John in the next chapter, these four questions will become important for analyzing how the gospel reflects the Passover tradition.

Midrash Pesachim 10 pays special attention to the core message of the ritual, which is a remembrance of how God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt. The *pesach* sacrifice, *matzah*, and the bitter herbs should be part of this step. The sacrifice is offered as a symbol of how God passed by the Israelites' houses and struck down the Egyptians' houses. *Matzah* is eaten due to the redemption God performed: "Bitter herbs are eaten because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt." The Midrash makes it obvious that the purpose of the ritual is to make all participants experience the feeling of being free from slavery and redeemed by the merciful God.

This step includes verse 5, which is referred to as Rabbi Gamaliel's "Three Things." After the mention of "A wandering Aramean ..." (Deuteronomy 26:5–8),³⁰ Gamaliel holds forth concerning the three key items from the meal: "Passover, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs: 'Passover'—because God passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt; 'unleavened

³⁰ The full text from Deuteronomy 26:5–8 reads: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders."

bread’—because our fathers were redeemed from Egypt; ‘bitter herbs’—because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt.” Only then can the *hallelujah* be sung. As one would expect, this important part of the ritual would see immense elaboration over time, for it is the crucial story of liberation and redemption, as the further observations put in the mouth of Gamaliel indicate. Not to be outdone, the other rabbis—Shammai,, Hillel, Tarfon and Akiva (altogether they make up the “five rabbis”)—all have some further comments to make in verse 6 of Mishnah Pesachim 10.

The next five steps of the ritual that became common in later practice simply do not appear in the Midrash, which moves immediately in verse 7 to the blessing (*barech*) associated with the third cup of wine. But let me mention the intervening steps as they became the norm (Kolatch, 1991; Sicker, 2004). These are *rohtzah*, the second washing of hands; *motzi*, the two blessings that are to be recited before eating the bread; *matzah*, the eating of the unleavened bread; *maror*, the eating of the bitter herbs; and *korech*, placing the bitter herbs between two small pieces of *matzah*. Instead of these careful stages of the meal, with all their symbolism, the Mishnah being discussed here is simply interested in the wine and blessing and praise. Indeed, it is precisely the praise (*hallel*) that runs through the third and fourth cups of wine. The third cup begins with a blessing over the meal—hence the later elaboration of stages of the meal at this point—but the praise runs throughout.

By this point, the Midrash is more concerned with the effects of the wine and “desert,” and whether one is defiled or not in the aftermath of the meal. The later tradition would add *tzafun*, focused on the desert (*afikoman*) of the left-over unleavened bread; the *barech*, or blessing, also known as the *birkat hamazon* contains a Hebrew blessing from Halakha; the *hallel*, which is the moment for yet more songs of praise, mainly from Psalms 115–118 and 136, and is followed by *nishmat* (a recited prayer); and *nirtzah*, which concludes the ritual

with a prayer for the night to be accepted by God. As the tradition developed, further biblical texts were drawn into the celebration, not merely in regard to the exodus narrative, but also from the Psalms (van der Toorn, 1988, 2017).

By contrast, Midrash Pesachim 10 stipulates what is to be done if the wine should make one sleepy. The text itself is a little befuddled. Verse 7 concludes with: “If he is minded to drink [more] between these cups he may drink; only between the third and the fourth cups he may not drink.” Admittedly, this is not entirely clear. On the one hand, a participant may drink between “these cups,” which one assumes are the third and fourth cups that have just been mentioned. On the other hand, one is not supposed to drink between the third and fourth cups. Verse 8 begins in Danby’s (1933) translation with a reference to dispersing to join in revelry. The term revelry is *afikoman*, which is also translated as “desert.” As we say earlier, this came to mean in the later tradition the second and larger half of the unleavened bread that was to be eaten at the appropriate point. However, in the Midrash there is no breaking of bread or preservation of some of the unleavened bread, so one can understand why Danby has translated the euphemism (*afikoman*) as a reference to revelry, to carrying on the drinking after the feast. This does indeed seem to be the sense of the Midrash, for the eighth verse continues with stipulations as to how one should deal with dozing and sleeping: “If some fell asleep [during the meal] they may eat [again]; but if all fell asleep they may not eat [again]. R. Jose says: If they but dozed they may eat [again]; but if they fell into deep sleep they may not eat [again].” The cryptic nature of this verse is indicated by the need to fill in the gaps and add meanings (so also with other translations). The closing verse 9 has no parallel with the later tradition, concerned as it is with purity and defilement after the meal.

To conclude, Midrash Pesachim 10 is relatively brief, focused on key items such as the blessing, unleavened bread, greens, bitter herbs, and above all the recitation of the Exodus

narrative as it has a bearing for today. Further, the wine receives much attention, which is only attested to before this text in Jubilees. It is precisely this wine that features, along with the bread and the discourse of redemption, in the gospel narratives, to which I turn in a moment. But it is worth noting that Midrash Pesachim 10 is also more earthy, with its concerns over how to deal with the effects of a minimum of four cups of wine, than the later development of the Haggadah, with its increased number of steps, gathering of biblical texts, psalms, and hymns of praise.

The Passover Meal in the Synoptics

As a preparation for my treatment of the Gospel of John in the next chapter, the final section of this chapter deals with the presence of the Passover Seder in the Synoptic Gospels, those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.³¹ I will use the structure of the Passover Seder as identified in the preceding analysis. If we take the perspective of the Hebrew Scriptures for a moment, then this material too may be seen as “extra-biblical” (see Colautti, 2002).

Starting with the gospel of Matthew, the festival is briefly described as a supper Jesus had with his twelve disciples. Matthew describes the order of the Passover supper quite well. Unlike the Fourth Gospel and Luke, Matthew mentions the step of singing the hymn as part of the order of a Passover supper. In the Passover Haggadah, the step of singing the hymn could be identified as *hallel*. The participants of the Seder are to be seated when singing the

³¹ My analysis follows the canonical order from Matthew to Luke and the Fourth Gospel. The order is not as significant in this discussion, as the contents of the Passover event among the Synoptic Gospels are similar to one another. The Fourth Gospel is the task text, so it is discussed separately.

hymns, which may be from the Psalms. Normally the Seder ends with a prayer that the night's service be accepted. The Seder in the gospels has been adjusted into Jesus' tradition to fulfil what he is meant to be doing.³² Matthew has Jesus saying the prayer in a place other than where the supper takes place. The prayer takes place in Gethsemane. Readers might notice that Jesus and the disciples go to Mount Olives before proceeding to a place called Gethsemane. However, these two names refer to the same place, as Gethsemane is an urban garden located on Mount Olives in Jerusalem. Matthew does not describe the complete order of the Passover supper, but does show that the Passover Seder is the scenario of Matthew 26:17–42.

In more detail: Matthew starts to establish the Passover from verse 26:17. Jesus and the disciples do mention Passover in their conversation about preparing the Passover meal. Without referring to any particular disciple, Matthew shows that the disciples discuss the question of where to have the meal, using the phrase φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα, “eat the *pascha*,” instead of saying “Passover supper” or “Passover meal.” At this stage, it is unclear where Jesus and the disciples are located. However, the anointing at Bethany, prior to the Passover preparation passage, may indicate that they are still in Bethany. Jesus then orders the disciples to go into the city to prepare a house to eat the Passover meal. The city in this phrase refers to Jerusalem. Therefore, Jesus and the disciples have the Passover meal in Jerusalem, in the house of somebody who is not significant. The person whose house is used for the Passover meal ritual is referred to only as a “certain man.” This might be due to the

³² This adjustment is discussed in the next chapter.

conspiracy around the city to kill Jesus. The hatred could come from the “rabbinic ways” of Jesus. Jesus offers fresh interpretations of existing sacred texts; interpretations of the Torah and teachings in Judaism and Jewish culture; and proposes new ways to interpret existing narratives, which makes him a prominent scholar of the Torah (Elbom, 2017). Matthew 26:3 presents “the chief priests and the elders of the people” as a group of people who are preoccupied with maintaining the stability of the national community (Catchpole, 2019, p. 2) and who worry that the success of Jesus’ signs might have a divisive and confusing effect (Umoh, 2000, p. 196). Another important factor is the political issues relating to the Roman imperial presence (Horsley & Hanson, 1985). The Romans saw the province as troublesome: 90 percent of the population were peasants (Borg, 1988) and they attacked and robbed not only the ruling Romans but also the elite Jews. Should Jesus make the name of this “certain man” known, it could become a threat to the person, as he might be identified as one of Jesus’ followers.³³ The apparent secrecy may have multiple causes, ranging from perceived disruption to the stability and peace needed during the Passover, through to Roman imperial concerns over a restless province. Although this discussion is not in line with my main focus, I acknowledge this scenario as one of the possibilities behind the choosing of the place for the Passover meal.

Although the text of Matthew covers the supper between verses 26:17–25 and 26:26–30, the Passover meal as a ritual actually starts at verse 26:20. It starts when Jesus sits down with the twelve disciples and begins to eat. The first step, *qadesh*, allows participants to talk to one

³³ There were other resistance movements such as Sicarii and Zealots with followers at the time who could see Jesus’ movement as a threat to them.

another before the blessings are recited, which is then followed by drinking wine. At this stage, Jesus announces the betrayal to the disciples. The disciples then exchange questions with each other and with Jesus to find out who would betray him. After this conversation, Jesus recites the blessing (Matthew 26:26). *Urchatz* and *karpas* are not literally described in the passage. However, *urchatz* should be assumed to have been carried out prior to the meal as it was one of the solid customs to at least have the hands washed before a meal. *Karpas* may be assumed to have been carried out as it is reflected through the phrase “while they were eating” (Matthew 26:20 and 26:26) and significantly in when Jesus signifies that Judas has dipped his hand into the bowl (Matthew 26:23).

Attention will now turn to the bread Jesus breaks and gives to the disciples. Besides wine, bread is a significant feature of a Passover meal. The text does not specifically describe the kind of bread eaten; however, as the meal was eaten during the festival of Passover, I would say it was unleavened bread that Jesus gave to the disciples. The bread is broken and given to the disciples, which makes it *yachatz*. The texts do not indicate whether the bread was eaten directly or if some was kept as *afikoman*. However, according to Matthew, the bread and wine are identified by Jesus as symbols of his body and blood (see Shaver, 2018). Matthew 26:26, 27 and 27 are interpretative texts. What Jesus says in the texts is seemingly theological. The passage does not describe Jesus eating the bread and drinking the wine. Thus, it is assumed that the bread and the wine are only for the disciples. My interpretation is that Jesus wanted the disciples to be one with him. It could be another way of reassurance for the disciples who are concerned about Jesus’ departure, concerned about not having a leader and teacher in the middle of the unconducive atmosphere with the Jews and Romans. The interpretative texts seem to be the core message of the passage. Blood is featured in this passage and the Exodus event. Matthew has Jesus’ blood as the covenant for the forgiveness

of sins, or, in the other words, the blood of Jesus saves. Before the Israelites were freed from Egyptian slavery, blood was the key to saving them from the tenth plague. The blood came from the Passover lamb, and the ritual was treated as a perpetual ordinance throughout the generations. The blood referred to in these two different ages under the same tradition refers to sacrificial blood, “the controllable spilling of blood” (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1992, pp. 332–339). Blood was assigned a ritual function in the Old Testament (Gilders, 2004).³⁴ It was seen as a gift to God and other emerging deities at the time (Starbuck, 2016). Blood was indexically signed with a red color in the Old Testament (Noegel, 2016). It is still recognized as having strong symbolic power, even in the Christian tradition today (Biale, 2007).³⁵

Jesus and the disciples end the ritual by singing a hymn. Matthew uses the article “the” instead of “a,” which shows that “the hymn” is a part of the ritual. People having the Passover meal would always sing this hymn. Readers were assumed to be familiar with the hymn. This could be recognized as either *hallel* or *nirtzah*. The familiarity with the ritual of the festival decreased the need for Matthew to mention literally the order, step by step,

³⁴ Gilders (2004) did a careful text analysis and produced a list of texts containing blood symbolism: Genesis, 3–4, Genesis 38, Joshua 2, 1 Kings 22, Isaiah 1, Jeremiah 4, Ezekiel 16, Ezekiel 23, Joel 4, Nahum 2–3, Lamentations 4, etc.

³⁵ For further references in relation to the Israelite perception of blood as a symbolic feature, see Eberhart (2012), Hart (2009), Kedar-Kopfstein (1978), McCarthy (1976), Meyer (2005), and Sperling (1992).

throughout the passage. The order of the ritual was not seen to be as significant as the purpose of the ritual itself, at least as presented by Matthew.

The ritual Jesus had with the disciples also conduces conversation similar to *maggid* in the Haggadah where participants ask questions and the leader of the ritual answers by recollecting the story of Exodus to show thankfulness towards God for being merciful to their ancestors. Jesus made the disciples think about betrayal, crucifixion, and his death to preach the interpretative significance of the bread and wine.

For the Gospel of Mark, we find a similar redaction and structure of the Passover story as Matthew. It starts with the betrayal confirmation, the Passover meal, Peter's denial, and the prayer in Gethsemane. Mark has a similar structure Matthew. There are some minor differences, such as the way Mark replaces the word τὴν χεῖρα with ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος, which makes the order of the ritual more apparent. Matthew does not mention bread until the passage of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

By contrast, Luke has the same structure with slightly different redactions, as Luke stresses Judas' betrayal (Luke 22:3–6 compared to Matthew 26:3–5) and the prediction of Simon Peter's denial (Luke 22:31–34 compared to Matthew 26:33–35) more strongly than both the previous gospels. Luke introduces the demand of Satan as the cause of both events while Matthew and Mark casually describe the events as occurring as personal wishes of Judas and Simon Peter. Luke also presents a plot twist prior to the prediction of Peter's denial, which is the dispute over who is the greatest among them all. Luke does not have the singing of the hymn. Further, Luke 22:24–30 is an account of how Jesus wanted the disciples

not to worry about not having him around them,³⁶ to trust that he is always with them, and to know that they are special in his eyes should they do what he commands. This account echoes the account in Exodus concerning the liberation of the Israelite ancestors from slavery in Egypt. The theme of reassurance that resonates from time to time in the Exodus narrative also appears in Luke 22:28–30, where Jesus reassures the disciples.

At the same time, Luke does not show as distinctive an order of the Passover supper as Matthew and Mark. Both Matthew and Mark have the scenario of Peter's denial occurring outside the supper place, while Luke has the scenario occurring while Jesus and the disciples are still inside the place. Another plot twist is added before they proceed to Mount Olives (Luke 22:35–38). This second plot twist is seen as a fulfilment of Jesus towards Isaiah 53 (Matson, 2018). He knows that he is going to be arrested. He wants the disciples to be ready for whatever confrontations are coming. Despite being Seder-liturgically distinctive, Matthew and Mark do not possess the details Luke does. Luke omits the mention of Gethsemane as the place where Jesus prays. Instead of describing further details of the place's name, Luke informs the reader that going to pray in Mount Olives is one of Jesus' habits. This raises the question of whether or not the prayer in Mount Olives is part of the Passover Seder. This fact also suggests that Matthew and Mark acknowledge the existence of Passover and its Seder. Luke does not respond to the scenario of Passover Seder as the other two gospels do. However, the prayer on Mount Olives has different scenarios between the gospels. Both Matthew and Mark have Jesus as the only one who prays (Jesus asks the disciples to pray

³⁶ Gardner (2014) also acknowledged the fear and weakness of the disciples before the ascension event.

once he finds them asleep instead of staying awake and waiting for him), but Luke has Jesus and the disciples pray at the same time for different reasons. He commands the disciples to pray that temptations be cast away from them, while he prays for strength for the upcoming trial, which will lead to his crucifixion and death. Matthew and Mark have Jesus praying in three separate sequences before Judas and his crowd arrive, while Luke seems to summarize the three sequences into one and has Jesus repeating the same instruction to the disciples, which is to pray.

It has been mentioned previously that the order of the Passover supper is quite flexible within the tradition, as shown in the Synoptic Gospels. I would therefore conclude that the order of a Passover meal ends with a prayer, and occasionally the participants sing songs describing the miracles that happened on the night of the Exodus in ancient Egypt. Matthew, Mark, and Luke end the Seder with prayers. One might argue that the Passover Seder scenario behind these texts is vague. However, all becomes clear in later chapters focusing on the Passover Seder scenario in the Fourth Gospel, especially in the case chapter of John 14. As Carmichael (1991) observed: “That meal is portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels as having taken place in a Passover setting. The participants would all have been familiar with the rituals and symbols of the festival” (p. 63).

Summary and Conclusion

This relatively long chapter began with a survey of scholarly positions concerning the Exodus narrative. I distinguished between those who seek to uphold the historicity of the narrative and those who propose a “salvation-historical” approach. I also identified differing positions in regard to the written origins of relevant biblical literature, opting for the consensus position that the major impetus was most likely the destruction of the first temple

and the Babylonian exile. I also broached the major theories for the origins of Israel in Canaan.

All of this was background material for the treatment of the Passover. The main text, with which I began, is Exodus 12. After detailed analysis of the features of this Priestly text, I considered other sources within the biblical canon, discussed the inevitable theological elaborations, and then spent some time with extra-biblical sources. Beginning with Jubilees and ending with Josephus, these sources mostly fell within the important first century B.C.E. and witness the development of a distinct Passover tradition. However, these texts, by and large, offer re-readings—depending on their genre and audience—of Exodus 12. Nine of them provided much in the way of what may have been practised at the time.

Since I was searching for a structure with which to analyze the Last Supper in the Gospel of John, I turned to the Passover Haggadah, although this required a counterpoint with the other great Jewish tradition of Halakha. My initial investigation of the Haggadah more broadly—which is closely associated with the Passover Haggadah—encountered a problem with dating. The earliest extant manuscripts describing the Passover Haggadah appeared no earlier than the 12th century C.E., with stand-alone manuscripts appearing only in the 14th century C.E. To address this problem, I turned to an earlier text, the Midrash Pesachim 10, which scholarly consensus dates to 200 C.E., with some scholars trying to push it back a century or so earlier. Obviously, this is much closer to the date of the New Testament and the emergence of its writings. Indeed, these texts all seemed to emerge from the ferment that followed the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E.

With this development in mind, I analyzed Midrash Pesachim 10 to see what it says about the Passover Seder. This is indeed the first text that offers a description of how the Passover meal should be celebrated in homes. At the same time, it became clear that the way

the Midrash describes the celebration is relatively brief, with a somewhat more earthy and wine-saturated approach than the later and clearly more pious and sober development of the Passover Seder. That said, it became possible to identify a sequence of steps, with a major focus on verbal elaborations of liberation, redemption, and salvation, which led me into the final section concerning the way the Synoptic Gospels present the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples. Of course, the Synoptic Gospels differ from the Gospel of John in many respects, although there are some overlaps. Throughout, it has become clear how much the Jewish context determined the way the Last Supper is presented. On this matter, I have been most influenced by Pitre (2011, 2015), who deployed rabbinic literature such as the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Midrashim to better understand Jesus' world in the New Testament. He analyzed how worshipping God was crucial in Jewish tradition, especially early on during the exodus (Exodus 25–40 describes how the Tabernacle was built in immense detail, for it was the prototype of Temple of Solomon). Pitre (2011, 2015) also noted that the audience, Jewish people during the New Testament period, were hoping for a new exodus to happen. This hope for a new exodus is avowed through Jesus Christ, along with the need for a new Passover. Pitre (2011, 2015) agreed that the supper, the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples, was indeed a Passover meal. However, he presented it in a way that answers and corresponds to the hope of Jewish people. Pitre (2011, 2015) explicitly observed the connection between the first Passover (Exodus 12) with the Passover meal Jesus had with his disciples, but still acknowledged the development (which resulted in both differences and similarities) of the tradition itself from the exodus to at least the first century C.E. In discussing the differences and similarities, he noted that Jewish Passover is not only a meal. It is also a sacrifice (Pitre, 2011, 2015).

Chapter 2: The Gospel of John

Although I have already broached the other tradition, Christianity, in the last section of Chapter 1 with the discussion of the Synoptic Gospels, the current chapter tackles this tradition directly, with a focus on the Gospel of John.³⁷ To reiterate: my thesis is that the narrative of the Last Supper in John, with a focus on the apparently exclusivist claim of John 14:6, takes place at the intersection of two traditions, a much older Judaism and the new Christian tradition. The fact of this intersection undermines and indeed overturns the exclusivist claim of either tradition, but especially that of Christianity. While Chapter 1 dealt primarily with the Jewish tradition of Passover, this chapter deals with the Last Supper of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Is the Last Supper as presented by John a Passover meal, or is it something new? How does John 14:6 fit into this scenario, especially its key words of “way,” “truth,” and “life,” and its assertion that no one comes to the “father” except through Jesus? Are these terms influenced by Exodus and the Passover tradition? Should they be understood primarily in this light? These are the questions I seek to answer.

Scholarship on the Gospel of John and John 14

Before answering these questions, I need to undertake a literature review of scholarship on the Gospel of John with a view to works that are relevant for this study.³⁸ First and

³⁷ See Burney (1922), Byrne (2014), Coloe (2017), King (2015), and Lewis (2018) for further reading.

³⁸ See Skinner (2015) for further reading.

foremost, I shall address commentaries by the great Johannine scholars. One is a commentary by Bultmann (1971). The original title of the volume is *Evangelium des Johannes*. This volume consists of an in-depth and complete interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Bultmann rearranged the whole gospel under comprehensive themes and treated chapter 21 as a postscript; except the conclusion, which covers the gospel only to 20:31. It is pertinent to note here Calvin's criteria for good commentary writing:

In 1539 John Calvin, in a letter to his friend Simon Grynaeus, suggested two criteria for good commentary writing: *perspicua brevitatis* and *mens scriptoris*. In other words, a good commentator balances two major concerns: first he is brief and clear in his writing, and second, he lays open the mind of the original writer. (Shidemantle, 2013, p. 871)³⁹

Although Bultmann's commentary is large, his points are made briefly and clearly.

Commentaries on the Fourth Gospel are also produced as chapters in books. Books under the title *The Gospel of John* are plentiful and easy to find. These include book chapters by Moloney (1998), Grayston (1990), Bruce (1983), Lindars (1972), Barclay (1999), and MacGregor and Morton (1961). Their works are categorized as classic Johannine works, which are still appreciated and acknowledged today as having built the foundation of Johannine scholarship.

Over time the subject has become more varied. The gospel is being studied from different points of view.⁴⁰ However, I will limit my discussion to recent works (20 years old

³⁹ See Bruner (2012) for further reading.

⁴⁰ See Brodie (1994) for further reading.

and less), beginning with Jerome H. Neyrey (2009) who saw the gospel from a cultural and rhetorical perspective. He offered new perspectives on the gospel. Neyrey's volume provides us with a wide collection of general information on cultural values from first-century Mediterranean societies. These cultural values are listed as status, honour, space, labelling, the concepts of limited good, agency, worship, shame, etc. The book as a whole contains a wealth of cultural material and is invaluable for the study of the Gospel of John or perspectives from cultural anthropology on the New Testament passages, themes, and concepts (see van der Merwe, 2011, pp. 377, 380).

The Fourth Gospel is also studied in light of the church. Byers (2017) saw a relationship between the gospel and the church and argued that the Fourth Gospel should not be separated from the church or vice versa. In other words, ecclesiology is as central as Christology in the Fourth Gospel. My standpoint in this study is to treat Christology as the central theology of the gospel. Acknowledging Byers' work does not necessarily mean I have to change my standpoint. I will still consider the ecclesiastical aspect of the gospel. However, Christology is my focus in this study. In 2010, Paul Anderson published the third edition of his work on John 6. He examined the Fourth Gospel from a Christological perspective. His method of examining Johannine works is similar to mine, which is to consider the origins of the gospel. Authorship is one aspect he considered when developing his interpretation. In his work, Anderson compares his point of view with those of scholars such as Bultmann (1971), Barrett (1972), and Brown (1997), to whom I also refer in this study.

One of the most recent Johannine studies I would like to acknowledge in this chapter is *Creation, Matter, and the Image of God in the Gospel of John* by Dorothy Lee (2018). The image of God is commonly studied from generation to generation. However, subjects such as creation and matter are seemingly rare and especially interesting. Lee studied how the senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell are treated in Johannine texts. In her careful textual study, she showed how the subjects of creation, matter, and God are reflected throughout the texts in the Fourth Gospel. Her work revealed that the foundational idea of creation in the Fourth Gospel is sourced from the Genesis creation story. Lee, however, agreed with Byers' argument that Johannine ecclesiology is inseparable from Johannine Christology.

Besides ecclesiology and Christology, a Eucharistic view also has a place in Johannine writing and scholarship.⁴¹ Debates have been going on around the subject to determine whether or not Johannine texts contain sacramental teachings.⁴² Moloney (2017) hinted at Eucharistic texts within the Fourth Gospel in his work, *He Loved Them to the End: Eucharist in the Gospel of John*. He conducted careful analyses of John 6:1–15, 6:51–58, 13:1–38 (central statement: 18–20), and 19:34–35. The important point made by Moloney with regard to the widely-known Eucharistic-like text, chapter 13, is that the Eucharistic elements are not the main features of the chapter. Supporting his argument, Léon-Dufour (1987) argued that chapters 13–16 in the Fourth Gospel reflect Eucharistic ideas in a testamentary form.

⁴¹ See MacGregor (1963) for further reading.

⁴² While Cullmann (1953, pp. 37–116) is open to the presence of sacramental teaching, Odeberg (1929, pp. 235–269) is not so enthused.

Moloney's comment that all of those Eucharistic texts reflect the Eucharistic practice of the post-Easter community is interesting. He refers to the period after Jesus as post-Easter. Easter in his term would probably not relate to the festival of Passover, but would refer to the Eucharistic tradition that was celebrated by the early Christian community. This is an insight for the Easter–Passover discussion.

The next question that arises is how the gospel views women. The first work that attracts my attention is that of Kearney (2017). His in-depth work on the gospel revealed that only seven women appear in the Fourth Gospel: Maria, the mother of Jesus; a Samaritan woman; a woman caught in the act of adultery; Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus; Mary of Magdala; and Mary, the wife of Clopas. All except the wife of Clopas have significant roles in the gospel. Kearney pointed out how, in John, Jesus never calls his mother Mary by name, but does use the name of Mary of Magdala, who showed grief on his disappearance from the tomb. Kearney refers to Marsh (1968) who argued that John used Mary the mother to represent Jewish tradition and Mary Magdala as Jesus' disciple (follower). At this point, John's literary style seems obvious. He is all about focusing the narrative on Jesus, his life, his followers, and their loyalty to the faith through symbolization. The Samaritan woman is used as the symbol of Jesus' redemption of unbelievers; the adulterous woman is the symbol of forgiveness;⁴³ Martha and Mary are symbols of true believers; and Mary Magdala is the symbol of the counter-figure of Eve, the woman traditionally believed to have brought sin into the world. Mary Magdala brings the good news of the rising of Jesus from death.

⁴³ See Lee et al. (2012) for further reading.

However, despite these special acknowledgements of women, Brown (1975) argued that John sees both men and women as equal. Thus, the fact that the Fourth Gospel acknowledges women and their involvement in the life of Jesus therefore becomes a support argument for women's involvement in the Passover festival tradition.

Another important topic within Johannine scholarship is the concept of holiness in the gospel. Dirk van der Merwe (2017) discussed the fourfold concept of holiness according to John. This subject of interest comes from the field of Christian spirituality and mysticism, which van der Merwe suggested has been increasingly discussed and studied over the past few decades. He revealed the fourfold dimensions: a unity among the followers of Jesus; the preparation of Jesus' disciples to continue his mission; the wide proclamation of Jesus as the son of God; and the glorification of God. His careful analysis of the subject comes in two separate parts, which initially show that the subject is not a simple one. It requires an in-depth theological reading into the gospel. Van der Merwe identified the keywords of holiness, such as Holy Father, Holy One of God, and Holy Spirit, to investigate the concept of the fourfold dimensions of holiness. My acknowledgement of his work is due to the similarity of our research methodology. I find careful literary analysis a strong method for conducting biblical work.

So far, it has been shown that the theological and the Christological approaches to Johannine scholarship are both well recognized. In this light, my decision to develop a Christological-theological methodology has a solid basis in Johannine scholarship.

There are significant commentaries on the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John, with the majority focusing on the chapter as a whole. They tend not to divide the chapter into pericopes (smaller meaningful units of the text), or even into specific theological reflections. Therefore, I could not find any specific study of John 14:6. By specific, I mean studies where

the text is studied word by word within the context of the historical and socio-cultural background. As described in the introduction chapter, this study seeks to investigate whether or not the text reflects the theme of salvation, understood in a specifically Christian sense.

I focus on works around the text of John 14:6, especially those related to exclusive and inclusive claims of the text. Lee (1950) pointed out the universalist values that spread through the Fourth Gospel due to the pressure of the Hellenistic environment. He accentuates the saving attitude towards the whole world embraced by the gospel. The deficiency of his work is that he does not study particular texts. He interprets some texts throughout the gospel to identify universalist values within the text. In other words, Lee studies the theme of salvation, but he does not study the theme specifically in the Fourth Gospel. However, it is important to take into account the fact that this work is now almost 70 years old.

More recent works tend to be exclusivist and have particular axes to grind. For example, Daniel's *Develop a Presentation of the Plan of Salvation* (2016) tends to come to the text with a pre-understanding concerning salvation. This preconception determines his hermeneutics, which is problematic, as such a pre-understanding or preconception suggests he is using the method of eisegeses, which is the opposite of exegesis. Franke's *Still the Way, the Truth, and the Life* (2009) is more promising, since it deals with the keywords of the text. Unfortunately, Franke did not study the text from a literary perspective, and did not consider the historical and socio-cultural context as the background of the study. He observed the uniqueness of Jesus Christ through the text, but his focus was not on the question of what the text initially says and reflects. Like Daniel (2016), Franke introduced meaning into the text rather than taking meaning out of the text (eisegeses over exegesis), a method that I oppose. According to Daniel (2016), "Such religious geniuses have indeed spoken many truths, but

those truths are truths, only insofar as they finally point to the Truth of God, that is, the life and work of Jesus Christ, the Truth” (p. 30). In Daniel’s effort to show Christ’s uniqueness, he gives voice to an exclusivist position.

There is also a recent article by Burns (2015) in which he mentions “the way,” “the truth,” and “the life.” He approached these key words through an ecclesiological lens. However, he did not study John 14:6 specifically; he removed the three key words from their text-context. Furthermore, he did not present his own arguments or interpretations, but quoted the opinions of other scholars. The only item of value in Burns’s study is his suggestion that we should not merge the key words into one but should be aware of the link word “and,” as this shows the comparison between the three distinct terms. I believe the word *kai* turns “the way,” “the truth,” and “the life” into three different words with three different and separate meanings. This is a valuable perspective in this study.

Tuppurainen (2016) concluded that chapter 14 is a repeated announcement of Jesus’ departure. Some scholars use theological platforms to study the text, for instance, Kim’s (2010) effort to interpret the text following Calvin’s theology (unlike my methodology). Kim studied Calvin’s approach to John 13–17 to develop the doctrine of union with Christ. These kinds of work seek to emphasize the exclusive values within John 14:6 without further study of the text itself. A further instance is Webster’s *The God Who Comforts: A Forty-Day Meditation on John 14:1–16:15* (2016), which offers a spiritual and contextual commentary on the gospel. This Professor of Pastoral Theology utilizes John 14 to strengthen his work in the field. The text is studied in light of pastoral values, such as healing, reflecting, believing, etc. Love (2006) described the Fourth Gospel as a book of salvation. There are events in the Fourth Gospel that are categorized as a salvation history of the gospel, including John 14. It is a salvation-historical text. Unfortunately, Love does not conduct a literary study of John 14:6.

Porter and Evans (1995) also talk about salvation in the Fourth Gospel, stating that the gospel itself wants to prove the pre-existence of Jesus. They argued that if God alone can give salvation, then the agent of salvation, which is Jesus Christ, must come from God. However, they do not provide the textual study to support their argument. In contrast with all of these scholars (barring Lee) is Ashton (1985), whose study of salvation is in relation to John 4:22: “salvation is from the Jews.” Prior to conducting my study, I was hesitant to use the cross-reference method. I was concerned it could divert me from achieving the most plausible interpretation. However, as I went deeper into my study, I realized that cross references (especially comparative references) could help me in building the most plausible interpretation of John 14:6. Therefore, Ashton’s coherent work on John 4:22 is taken into account in this study.

With this literature review of scholarship on the Gospel of John in mind, with a focus on chapter 14 and verse 6, I am now able to broach directly the question of the influence of the Passover in this gospel. I have indicated which works surveyed above have influenced my research and which I have found not so helpful. As already stated, my ultimate concern is to determine is whether John 14:6 presents an exclusivist claim by Jesus, and thus of Christianity itself.

The Passover Meal in the Gospel of John

Does the Gospel of John present the Last Supper Jesus celebrated with the disciples, as a Passover meal? As I seek to show, the weight of evidence indicates that it is presented as a Passover meal. The chapter 14 of John presents a scenario that happened some time before the actual festival of Passover began in Jerusalem. However, I consider chapter 14 as a part of the festival and I treat the supper Jesus has with his disciples as a Passover Seder, which means “order” (Kulp, 2005). It is the Passover supper of Jesus with his disciples, not just the

usual supper that occurs during the festival. Jesus' hour of departing from the world was approaching (John 13:1). He would not live to commemorate the festival or have a Passover meal at the same time as other Jews; therefore, the Passover supper was arranged within the available time.

The festival of Passover starts to be noticeable in the Fourth Gospel from the time Jesus visits Bethany and meets Lazarus and his two sisters (John 12:1). The gospel indicates that the festival is part of their Jewish tradition (John 12:9). This is a strong indication that the meal Jesus had with his disciples was part of this celebration. However, as disputed among scholars, John 13:1 states that the meal they had could have been partaken of before the festival of Passover. The biblical text uses the words "now before" (the festival of Passover). It is translated from the word *πρός*, which has at least three different translation options: 1) to the advantage of; 2) at, near, by; or 3) to, towards, with, with regard to. It is acceptable to assume that the phrase could also become "now at" (the festival of Passover). This confirms the setting of time of the festival with the Synoptic Gospels. However, in my observation, the phrase "now before the festival of Passover" does not refer to the time when he had the meal with the disciples. The setting of time before the festival is a reference to when Jesus became aware the time for his death was approaching. Again, I confirm that the setting of time of the Passover meal is the same in all the gospels. I regard the meal Jesus had with his disciples, as recorded in the gospels, as indeed the Passover meal. The setting of time justifies this view. However, I do not regard Jesus' Passover meal with the disciples as a chronological event. It is during his Passover meal, as indicated by John in 13:1, that Jesus realizes that he does not have much time left to be spent with his disciples, or, in the other words, he realizes that he cannot expect to have enough time to wait for the actual Passover meal according to tradition.

The written account of the ritual in the Fourth Gospel is longer than that in the Synoptic Gospels. The ritual goes from verse 13:2b to 17:26, an elaboration that reminds us of the tendency in the Passover Haggadah to elaborate extensively on the central recounting of the Exodus narrative (as also with some of the extra-biblical literature surveyed above, such as that by Philo of Alexandria). As for the long speeches by Jesus in the Gospel of John, Zimmermann (2011) observed:

The figurative speeches in John are wild allegories that immediately depart from the realm of the actual image and are pervaded by theological “deeper meanings.” In addition, the high Christology of the Fourth Gospel is opposed to the parabolic discourse. Whereas the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels speaks about the kingdom of God in parables, the Johannine Jesus speaks about himself in the first person, dressing this speech in the garb of “I am” sayings. (p. 244)

Unlike the Synoptics, the Fourth Gospel does not mention the setting of place of the meal. The Synoptics’ “certain man” is not mentioned at this time. The ritual starts with Jesus cleansing his disciples. The tradition was that everyone had to be clean (bathed) for the meal. Jesus reversed the tradition by humbling himself to wash his disciples’ feet. The Fourth Gospel surely shows the purpose of this deed in John 13:11 and 15.

One other noticeable feature to defend the idea that this was a Passover meal is the reference to “bread.” Bread is used in this ritual, which—as we have seen—is central to the Passover Haggadah. From the texts, readers are informed that the bread was given to Judas Iscariot. It is, however, possible to assume that bread was also eaten by the rest of the disciples. The Fourth Gospel does not explicitly describe the order of the ritual. The fifteen stages of the Passover meal are not as apparent in John as they are in the Synoptic Gospels.

One would then ask whether bread is as significant as wine in the festival meal. However, there is no mention of wine. The Synoptic Gospels do not mention the word “wine,” but the word “cup” is mentioned throughout the ritual in all three gospels, indicating that wine is poured and consumed during the meal. What about the Fourth Gospel? The passage in chapter 15 is of importance for investigating the role of wine in the festival meal. In chapter 15, John has Jesus substituting himself with the vine and substituting the disciples with the branches of the vine. There is a notion of oneness in this vine and branches metaphor: if the disciples do what Jesus asks them to do, Jesus is in them and they are in Jesus. Obedience and oneness seem to be related to one another in this instance.⁴⁴ Obedience is a way of exhibiting trust in God (Fretheim, 1996). The theme of the Passover meal focuses on slavery and freedom. As Rabbi Gamaliel is quoted as saying in Midrash Pesachim 10: God “brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a Festival-day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption.” In keeping with this theme, the words obedience and oneness represent another way to vocalize slavery and freedom. However, it shall not be acknowledged in this thesis as slavery and freedom, as it does not come from the Egyptians or other masters. It is not slavery, for “the vine-grower” needs “the branches” to be part of “the vine” in order to bear fruits. Bearing fruit is then freedom (from slavery). The obedience Jesus demands from his disciples bears fruit, which is the oneness with him and his father. This fruit is similar to what John 15:18 describes, which

⁴⁴ Exodus 38:32 shows how Israelites need to do what God commands them to do in order to be protected by God, to be granted whatever they ask or need, as reflected through Joshua 1:7. This obedience and oneness in the exodus age echoes through John 15:4.

is a sort of protection that would be granted by God if they were to become branches of the vine.

The Fourth Gospel takes the concept of bread and wine to a whole new level of understanding. The character of the gospel is significantly seen in this kind of way. Bread and wine turn the disciples into one with Jesus, which is later acknowledged in the Christian tradition as the value of the sacrament of the Eucharist: “Symbolism is the heart of the Fourth Gospel” (Bartholomew, 2003, p. 1). Bread and wine, or in this instance, bread and vine, fall into this category (of symbol). At this point of the discussion, I would like to address the argument of MacGregor and Morton (1961), which is discussed in the work of Guyette (2007). Both authors argued that there is no account of the Last Supper in the Fourth Gospel at all, a point with which I disagree. However, as widely agreed, the Fourth Gospel is written in a different style from that of the Synoptic Gospels, and therefore MacGregor and Morton, and Guyette, argued that the symbol of the bread and wine are received passively by the disciples.⁴⁵ I accept this argument to the extent that the disciples might not have understood the symbolism before Jesus explained what the bread and wine represented. However, it is not wine in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine and its branches instead of a cup of wine. Textually, it is not apparent in the Fourth Gospel that Jesus explains what the bread symbolizes. However, the obedience and oneness theme in John 14 is also present within the Synoptics in the discussion of the theological meaning of the bread. Following Vawter’s (1956) view, Guyette asserted that the vine is used by Jesus to represent the

⁴⁵ They refer to the twelve disciples. However, the Synoptic Gospels describe Judas Iscariot as having already left the table before Jesus explains the symbolism of the bread and wine.

Eucharist tradition. My response to this argument is that it might be true when the texts are approached from a sacramental perspective. However, the Eucharist is a later tradition. It does not fit into the context of the time.

The Haggadah requires all participants in the meal to position themselves as the Israelites who have just been delivered out of slavery into freedom by God. Jesus guides the disciples to have the same understanding by putting them into the same situation, but with a slightly different theme. “Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5b) is a vigorous statement, both for Jesus and his disciples. However, it should be seen as theologically on the same level. The metaphor of the vine in John 15 seems to create the impression that John gives special attention to Jesus as the vine. The vine does not just emerge in the New Testament. A detailed description of viticulture had already existed since the Old Testament in Isaiah 5. The passage could be seen as metaphoric in the same way as John 15. Isaiah describes the relationship between God and Israel while John describes the relationship between Jesus (and God, the father) and his disciples. Isaiah explains in detail what to do with an unfruitful vineyard in order to harvest good grapes. It is not a simple procedure; it is thorough and needs a long time, four to five years, to harvest the *enab* (Sasson, 1994). Isaiah also shows that wine is used to worship God (Isaiah 62:8–9). All these literary indicators show how wine and God, or vine and Jesus, are related to one another in many ways. The Old Testament also shows that blood and grapes have a literary connection, as apparent in Deuteronomy 32:14. Therefore, substituting blood with wine or vine is an accepted concept in the New Testament, especially in the Fourth Gospel. The Synoptic Gospels do not include Jesus teaching the metaphor of the vine as a part of Jesus’ last teachings during the Passover meal, before his arrest and death. The narratives in the Synoptics after the meal record that Jesus told the parable of the purse, bag,

and sword.⁴⁶ However, Matthew has one vineyard metaphor, which comes before the third time Jesus foretells his death and resurrection (Matthew 20:1–16). This metaphor has a different interpretation to that of the Johannine vine metaphor. In Matthew, Jesus acts as the landowner of the vineyard, while the Johannine Jesus acts as the vine and points out the “oneness and obedience” of the disciples as his branches.

The Haggadah shows that the use of questions and answers throughout the meal is the central device. The Fourth Gospel is consistent with this style of question and answer. A child participating in the Passover meal ritual asks the first question to start this question and answer process. In the Passover Haggadah, as it developed from Mishnah Pesachim 10,⁴⁷ the four questions became known as *Mah Nishtanah*, literally “What is different?” (see Guggenheimer, 1995, pp. 24–27). John has Simon Peter start the process by asking the purpose of the washing of their feet. There are four people asking questions during the meal Jesus had with the disciples: Simon Peter, the One Whom Jesus Loved, Thomas, and Judas (not Iscariot). Table 1 shows the features of *Mah Nishtanah* in both the Haggadah and the Gospel of John.

⁴⁶ See Snodgrass (2008) for further reading.

⁴⁷ As noted earlier, Midrash Pesachim 10 has a son say, if he is old enough: “Why is this night different from other nights? For on other nights we eat seasoned food once, but this night twice; on other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but this night all is unleavened; on other nights we eat flesh roast, stewed, or cooked, but this night all is roast.” It can be seen how the four questions arose from this text.

Table 1

The Features of Mah Nishtanah in the Haggadah and the Gospel of John

Passover Haggadah	Gospel of John
Question 1: Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either leavened bread or matza, but on this night we eat only matza?	Simon Peter asks: “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” (13:6) “Lord, where are you going?” (13:36) “Lord, why can I not follow you now?” (13:37)
Question 2: Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables, but on this night we eat bitter herbs?	The One Whom Jesus Loved: “Lord, who is it?” (13:25)
Question 3: Why is it that on all other nights we do not dip [our food] even once, but on this night we dip them twice?	Thomas: “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (14:5)
Question 4: Why is it that on all other nights we dine either sitting upright or reclining, but on this night we all recline?	Judas (not Iscariot): “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” (14:22)

Mah Nishtanah Number 1

The festival of Passover is also seen as the beginning of the festival of Unleavened Bread. In this section, I intend to disclose the difference between the two festivals. In my

observation, the view that Passover is the festival of Unleavened Bread is the result of ambiguity in accounts of both festivals in the Old Testament. Wagenaar (2004) argued that these uncertainties and contradictions in the Old Testament may be the result of historical processes in which the festival of Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread were merged, distinguished, and subsequently merged again.⁴⁸ He concluded his analysis by arguing that the present texts present a combined festival of both Passover and Unleavened Bread. Thus, the Haggadah and Midrash Pesachim 10, as part of Jewish later tradition, reflect this change to a merged festival, which is recognized as both the festival of Passover and also the festival of Unleavened Bread.

I include this discussion to acknowledge the origin of the custom of eating unleavened bread as expressed in the first *Mah Nishtanah* (MH) in the Haggadah. The first MH in the Haggadah expresses the main characteristic of the festival of Passover, which is to only eat *matzah*; no leavened bread is allowed to be consumed. The comparison between other nights and “this night” implies that the night of the Passover meal is distinct. Although for the next seven days Jews are still prohibited from eating leavened bread, the first MH implies that “this night” is a definite night that is focused on God’s Passover action towards their

⁴⁸ Wagenaar (2004) argued that based on a pre-priestly festival calendar, both festivals were originally independent festivals with the argument that the festival of Passover originally stipulated the slaughter of the Passover sacrifice, while the festival of Unleavened Bread stipulated a week of not consuming unleavened bread.

ancestors in Egypt. Therefore, it is the night of the festival of Passover, not merely a festival of Unleavened Bread.

Although there has been some debate around whether or not the bread carried out of Egypt was leavened or unleavened, there is a general consensus that the Israelites indeed intended to bring out leavened bread. However, due to insufficient time to prepare the bread—it was considered to be a difficult and time-consuming task (Macdonald, 2008)—and undertake the exodus event afterwards, the dough had not yet risen when they left Egypt. Thus, the bread they brought out from Egypt was unleavened bread (see Collins, 2016).

The first MH also indicates that *matzah* was eaten every other day throughout the year. However, on the night of the Passover meal and for the rest of the week, *matzah* could not be consumed with leavened bread. The entire week was devoted to *matzah*. Bread was one of the main meals of the Israelites and it was usually served with wine (Miller & Hayes, 1986). Bread, wine, and olives were three significant features of Israelite cuisine, even in the post-Second Temple era (Hareuveni, 1980). The significance of bread can be seen through the fact that the word “bread” in Hebrew, *lehem*, refers to food in general. Making bread was a part of their daily activities and bread was eaten at most meals (Marks, 2010). This implies that bread was an important part of Israelite culture. Due to the softness and pliability of bread, it was served mostly with gravies, juices, and, in this particular case, wine (Borowski, 2003). It

is now clear how bread comes with wine in most instances throughout the biblical texts, including at the Passover meal.⁴⁹

Moving to the first MH by Simon Peter in John, three questions are addressed to Jesus. They are not rhetorical questions. Simon Peter seems distressed and surprised at Jesus' action and announcement. The main purpose of Simon's questions is to identify Jesus' plan. The similarity between Jesus in this instance and the father in the Passover meal ritual (who leads the ritual and answers the four questions) becomes apparent. Both these figures respond to the questions. Jesus explains the reason behind the washing of the disciples' feet.

"Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" is not a rhetorical question. John 13:4 indicates that it is obvious what Jesus is about to do; however, it is not obvious to Simon Peter (and probably the other disciples). It was not common for a Rabbi to humble himself and wash his disciples' feet, as expressed in Peter 13:8, "You will never wash my feet."⁵⁰ Humbling himself (humility) is one of many interpretations of Jesus' action in this particular passage. It is an immediate message that can be seen literally through Simon Peter's reaction. It appears to be a custom of hospitality for servants to wash the feet of guests, which can be tracked

⁴⁹ During Roman colonialism in the eastern Mediterranean, the type of bread consumed also became a symbol of class struggle. While peasants were disdained for eating what the Romans called *panis plebeius* (made with whole grains, especially barley), the ruling classes in the Hellenised cities preferred fine white breads made from wheat (Boer & Petterson, 2017, p. 229).

⁵⁰ The functions of a Rabbi have been undergoing changes and adjustments following the needs of communities and congregations since Jewish emancipation during the 18th and 19th centuries (Hyman, 1998).

down through Genesis 18:4 (acting as a servant, Abraham wished to wash the Lord's feet) or through I Samuel 25:41 (Abigail states that a slave is to wash the feet of the Lord's servants). One of many interpretations is that the act of washing the disciples' feet is an act by Jesus to welcome his disciples into the household of God (Coloe, 2004). The Passover meal is held in each household, and therefore it is acceptable to consider Jesus' act as a symbol of him welcoming the disciples into God's household, as he and God the father are one, and he is going to the father's house. The oneness theme becomes apparent, especially when John has Jesus emphasize his action in verse 13:8, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

The next two questions asked by Simon Peter are responses to the announcement of Jesus' departure, which is briefly described in verse 13:33. Jesus' message—to love one another—following his announcement, does not seem to concern the disciples. They seem more unsettled by the announcement of his departure. Simon responds by asking where he is going to go. Instead of giving an immediate answer to the word "where," Jesus answers with a description of the destination. He is going to a place where the disciples cannot yet join him. This description contains a spiritual nuance. Until now, Jesus and his disciples have been taking journeys and trips together; where Jesus went, the disciples went too. Now he is describing a place where the disciples cannot yet come; he is referring not to a physical place but to a spiritual state.

However, verse 13:38 is not an answer to Simon's question of why he cannot follow Jesus. Jesus is responding to his statement that he would lay down his life for Jesus, rather than giving the reason why Simon cannot follow him now. There is not a direct answer from Jesus as to where he is going. John has Jesus unexpectedly talking about his father's house in verse 14:2. Readers would then assume Jesus meant to inform his disciples that he is departing to his father's house. This suggestion is supported by the argument mentioned

earlier; that Jesus washes his disciples' feet as a symbol to welcome them to the household of his father despite the fact they cannot join him yet. Jesus needs to complete this task as he does not have much time left (John 13:1: "Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world"). Hence, the answer to the question of why Simon (representing the other disciples) cannot follow Jesus to his father's house is that his father's house is not located in "this world," as indicated in verse 13:1. I would therefore assume that the term "this world" refers to the physical world, where the disciples can follow Jesus everywhere he goes.

The main notions from the first MH, in both the Haggadah and John, are that of *matzah* and the father's house. These two notions are as significant as each another in their contexts. *Matzah* was important to the Israelites, especially during the festival of Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread that followed. Without *matzah*, there might not be a festival of Passover. The Book of Exodus provides a more narrative explanation—the pressure of time and rushed departure—but this became the textual justification for *matzah* during the festival of Passover. Therefore, it is a law to have *matzah* at the festival. The father's house has as much significance as the father himself. The father's house is the place to where Jesus is departing. The father's house is the destination for Jesus and also for the disciples later on. As observed earlier, the father's house does not refer to a physical building, as implied in John 2:13–22 when Jesus refers to the temple as his father's house.⁵¹ Gundry (1967) investigated

⁵¹ This is despite the fact that John theologically explains that the father's house actually refers to Jesus' body (John 2:21). Jesus introduces the temple as his father's house, while John indicates that the temple refers to his body. This is one of the *semeions* Jesus presents in the Fourth Gospel as signposts to his messianic identity (Köstenberger, 2018, p. 377).

the keyword *monai* (rooms, dwelling places) in John 14:2 and reveals that the word *meno* (plural) has a spiritual meaning. Thus, the father's house refers to a spiritual space, which Gundry concluded is the space of God's household or family. He acknowledged the term "house" (*oikia*) when reading the father's house; however, his analysis showed that *oikia* in John 4:54 and 8:35 bears the sense of "household" rather than "building" (Gundry, 1967, p. 71).

The first MH, in both the Haggadah and John, indicates the main and significant aspect of the event, which is the festival of Passover. However, it is apparent that there is a switch of focus between the two sources. *Matzah* leads to remembrance of the exodus, while John's focus is the father, consistent with the main theology of the Fourth Gospel, which is to declare the (oneness) sonship of Jesus and the father (see Koester, 2008; Latz, 2010).⁵² John shows the focus of the Passover meal that night has changed. The father, as the God who brought the Israelites out from Egypt, is still the main subject of the Passover meal's elaboration, discussion, and question and answer. However, the story has been modified from how God liberated the Israelites from slavery to how God was the father of Jesus and would take care of the disciples once Jesus departed.

⁵² Latz's (2010, p. 166) work showed that "abiding is John's preferred and primary way to characterize discipleship and that, as this abiding is based on the relations between Jesus and the Spirit and the Father, John in some way gestures toward a Trinitarian logic."

Mah Nishtanah *Number 2*

In the second MH, bitter herbs (*maror*) and Judas Iscariot are the main topics of discussion. The Haggadah states that only on the night of the Passover meal are *maror*, bitter herbs, eaten without any other vegetables. It could symbolize the bitter experience of slavery the ancestors had in Egypt or could also be a symbol of how the Egyptians embittered (*merreru*) them (Brumberg-Kraus, 1999, p. 174). The interpretation of *maror* in the meal has developed over time.

Meanwhile, one of the disciples, whom John identifies as “the One Whom Jesus Loved,” asks a question about the upcoming betrayal. This unidentified disciple may well be Lazarus, as hinted at in John 11:3 (Filson, 1963).⁵³ He wants to know who among the disciples is going to betray Jesus. Jesus answers in an indirect way. Instead of giving a name, he uses the gesture of giving the dipped bread to the disciple in question, which causes further confusion among the disciples. Unlike Mark, who has the disciples expecting the betrayal from Judas, John provides a different description of this matter. Judas, who is going to betray Jesus, is not expected to be the betrayer by the other disciples. The disciples are confused by Jesus’ gesture. One might argue that the disciples should have had the knowledge that “one of you is a devil” (John 6:70b) as it was announced prior to the festival of Passover. However, as chapter 7 does not recall any reaction from the disciples about the announcement, it is

⁵³ Admittedly, many possibilities have been proposed for the “One Whom Jesus Loved,” including John himself, Lazarus, Thomas, Mary Magdalene, James the son of Zebedee, and even the Samaritan woman (Köstenberger & Stout, 2008, p. 209).

reasonable to assume that Jesus has talked about the betrayal beforehand.⁵⁴ The prior announcement might have been a later addition in the gospel.

Although Judas son of Iscariot is famous in the Christian tradition, and indeed in cultures influenced by Christianity, not much is written about him in the gospels. It is quite a difficult task to gather any historical information about him. John presents Judas only for a brief moment during the Passover meal. After the dipping of the bread, Judas disappears and then reappears when Jesus and the disciples have finished their Passover meal (John 18:1–11: “Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees”). Judas misses a significant portion of Jesus’ speech during the meal. He misses the significant departure-like messages from Jesus, his Rabbi. The theology of the father and the spirit is not declared to Judas. This might be due to the decrease in interest from the post-apostolic generation towards the person who, according to the gospels, betrayed Jesus before his death (Laeuchli, 1953). Origen, one of the early Christian sources to record the image of Judas Iscariot, regards him as the covetous keeper of the moneybag. John positions Judas Iscariot as the betrayer, the one who was appointed to betray him. I write “appointed” as Jesus expects the betrayal and allows Judas to hand him over to the authorities. As John 13:27 has Jesus say to Judas, “do quickly what you have to do now.”

These two main topics in the second MH indicate that “unfavorable things” played a significant role. I have identified literary parallels between *maror* and Judas Iscariot. Jews eat

⁵⁴ Texts are open to possibilities of leaving gaps in between them, which interpreters are encouraged to fill with suggestions.

maror together with other vegetables to countervail the bitterness of *maror*. However, the Passover meal requires them to be able to taste the bitterness, without any countervailing from other kinds of vegetables. Tasting the bitterness is the purpose of eating *maror* during the Passover meal. Its literary parallel with Judas Iscariot is the “unfavorable” aspect, which I observe is apparent in both the bitterness and the betrayal. Both fall into the unfavorable category. However, the Haggadah and John show that, despite their unfavorable aspects, both are significant for the ritual. *Maror* is needed for the acknowledgement of the bitterness experienced by the Israelites. The participants of the ritual are expected to experience symbolically the same feeling their ancestors experienced in the past in order to be aware of the salvific action of God during the slavery and the exodus. On the other hand, Judas Iscariot was expected (by Jesus) to betray him. John describes Jesus as having already anticipated that Judas Iscariot was going to bring the soldiers and authorities to arrest Jesus. It is also worth noting John 18:2: “Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place.” It implies that John knew of the betrayal once Jesus handed the dipped bread to Judas Iscariot. Therefore, it can be said that according to John, the betrayal happened during the meal.

Similar to the bitterness aspect in the Passover meal, the Johannine betrayal is an anticipated action. The betrayal is allowed to happen by Jesus, the betrayed. The betrayed chooses the betrayer, as shown in John 13:18: “I know whom I have chosen.” There is no description of Judas leaving the table immediately without any words or actions being addressed to him. This means the betrayal at the Passover meal is not one where the betrayed

does not anticipate the forthcoming betrayal and resulting in unexpected drama.⁵⁵ The question of whether or not to acknowledge Judas as an opponent of Jesus arises. Counet (2011) has conducted a careful deconstruction of Johannine texts on Judas Iscariot and found that Judas Iscariot held an important role among the disciples before Jesus' crucifixion, especially during the festival of Passover. John might have not intended to reveal this significance, but Counet found that his texts generate a deeper level of interpretation and meaning regarding the role of Judas Iscariot. Counet saw Judas as a confidant of Jesus. Despite the literary representation of him as a traitor, Counet perceived the role of Judas as heir to a divine mission. This idea is supported by the Gospel of Judas, in which Judas' role was carried out with Jesus' consent (Williams, 2015). However, "people felt uncomfortable with the idea of a sheerly arbitrary rejection of the good" (Williams, 2015, p. 32). Therefore, with the lack of a historical record of Judas Iscariot, he is mostly regarded as "the antagonist character," as shown in Schneider's 1980 painting. Judas is belittled in this image as Schneider has titled the painting *Born to Lose*. He is presented in the painting as naked and covered with red thorns, looking down. Schneider paints Judas Iscariot as a sinner. The painting can be interpreted as Judas Iscariot walking in sin.

Thus, the second MH points out the unfavorable aspects that became significant for the Passover meal rituals.

⁵⁵ For works that describe more possible scenarios and impacts of betrayal, see Platt and Hall (2005) and Marshall (2008).

Mah Nishtanah Number 3

The third MH in the Haggadah indicates that dipping food, especially in saltwater and *haroseth* (seasoned or sweet paste), is not carried out on a daily basis. This adds another distinctive feature to the Passover meal. There are two distinct dippings of food in the third MH. The first one involves dipping the food into saltwater, which symbolizes the tears of the ancestors who were slaves. The second dipping is into the *haroseth*, which symbolizes the sweetening of bitterness (*maror*). In Midrash Pesachim 10, this dipping is followed by the father's explanation of the exodus story. John briefly describes this element when Jesus identifies Judas as the betrayer: "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish" (John 13:26). The dipping of the food distinguishes the Passover meal from any other meal, as the dipping symbolizes historical exodus values.

Unlike the Haggadah with its explanation of the MH, John does not have any particular interpretation of Jesus' act of dipping the bread. John only records that Jesus does the dipping prior to Judas leaving the room. My assumption is that Jesus has to dip the bread as part of the ritual because he knows that he will send Judas out of the room to "do quickly what you are going to do." In my observation, the significance is not in the dipping action itself, but in the involvement of bread in the action. John does not specifically describe the continuation of this ritual as he pays particular attention to Jesus' last teachings to the disciples. His last teaching is intensively deep. He teaches not only the theology of the father, the son, and the spirit, but also the consequences of being his followers. He prepares the disciples with the knowledge of what will possibly happen after his departure, and how they should react towards each aspect of it. Searles (2017) observed that this last teaching is the moment when Jesus describes the benefits of abiding in him, but it is also an opportunity for him to explain the accompanying hardships that will follow.

The third MH responds to the second MH in the Haggadah. The participants are expected to taste the bitterness before proceeding to taste the sweetness. The tastes and the changes represent the historical values of the exodus. Meanwhile, the third MH in John is a response to the whole theme at the beginning of the meal, which is about Jesus' departure to his father. The question is asked by Thomas, who still does not know or understand Jesus' announcement of his departure, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" This question is quite straightforward. However, this third MH in John is the core of this study as it, to a large extent, requires Jesus to give a lengthy explanation, which contains deep theology concerning him and the father (and eventually the spirit as well).

John has Jesus delivering the last teachings during the meal. The disciples have been asking about his destination for a while, but Jesus does not give a direct answer. If Jesus had answered the question of where he was going the first time he was asked, there would probably not be the revelation of how Simon Peter was going to deny Jesus three times. This whole matter of identifying Jesus' destination could have been presented in a plain conversation such as, "Lord, where are you going?" "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward as I am going to prepare some places for you in my father's house." This plain statement would not have had Jesus revealing the denial, and the core task text (John 14:6) would probably not exist. When Thomas asks again for his destination, as expected, Jesus does not give a direct answer. Thomas expresses their frustration at asking him a question and receiving no clear answer by saying that because they still do not know where he is going, how would they even know the way to the destination. Therefore, the third MH in John is peculiar. It is needed in the construction of the Passover meal story between Jesus and the disciples.

The similarities between the third MH as it appears in the Haggadah and as it appears in John are located in their peculiarities. The third MH in the Haggadah brings out the distinctive feature of the Passover meal, while its echo can be seen in John, where it is needed for John to be able to include Jesus' last teachings. Compared to the Synoptic Gospels, John focuses more on what Jesus had to say before his departure. John's third MH is the key to Jesus introducing himself as "the way, the truth, and the life," which are deep theological and Christological themes, and which are also the main focus of this study. Each stage of the Passover meal seems to have its own Johannine interpretation.⁵⁶

Mah Nishtanah *Number 4*

To address the fourth and last MH in the Haggadah and John, I begin by focusing on how they progress to also include third parties in the meal ritual. The fourth MH in the Haggadah is about the positions participants must take during the meal. They are required to recline and are prohibited from sitting upright. The Haggadah indicates that slaves always stood during meals in ancient times. As this is a celebration of freedom, participants are obliged to recline to symbolize their freedom from slavery.⁵⁷ Slaves are one of the third parties in the Haggadah (Phillips, 1984). The Passover meal gives the impression of being a celebration of freedom—freedom from slavery. Slaves are still acknowledged in this ritual; however, they are acknowledged as a reminder of a circumstance involving God's actions—

⁵⁶ John mentions only the stages that have interpretative meanings.

⁵⁷ The Introduction of Haggadah in line 52, "This year we are slaves; next year may we be free man" serves as the answer to the fourth MH, as explained by Zemel (1998, p. 61–63).

the actions of liberation and salvation. I distinguish these two actions into two different settings. Liberation and salvation did not occur at the same time. Liberation happened when God delivered the Israelites out of the land of slavery, while salvation occurred when God protected and led them into the Promised Land. The Passover meal is therefore a ritual of celebration of both of God's actions, as the Israelites would not have become free people without having been both liberated and saved.

Thus far, I have spoken of slavery in Egypt as it is presented in the account of Exodus (see Schirrmacher, 2018) and as it has been evoked in the Passover Haggadah. Exodus emphasizes the ruthless circumstances created by the Egyptians who acted as their masters (Exodus 1:13–14). The Hebrews did not have the right to defend their lives and their children's lives (Exodus 1:15, 2:11). However, it is necessary to distinguish between slavery in the Ancient Near East and in the Greco-Roman period, when the New Testament was written and when the Midrashim, Talmudim, and indeed the Passover Haggadah itself began to take written form. In the Ancient Near East, slavery was indeed present, but it was not the core driver of economic surplus. Royal and ruling class houses had slaves, and conquered peoples may have been put to forced labor—as the account in Exodus reflects in its own way. A major feature was what is called “debt-slavery,” in which an unpaid debt was geared to ensure the creditor was able to ensure labor, which was in perpetual short supply (Chirichigno, 1993; Dandamaev, 2009; Diakonoff, 1987; Mendelsohn, 1978). In this light we understand the various efforts to mitigate such slavery. For example, Exodus 21 stipulates limitations on such slavery. The service of a slave last for only six years. The masters were ordered to respect the rights of their slaves, as can be seen in verses 3, 8, and 10. Slaves were allowed to keep what they owned before serving as slaves. The masters had no right to keep what belonged to the slaves before they entered service. Young women were to be released

from their service should the master not be satisfied with their service. A slave could serve his master for his entire life if he wished to do so (Phillips, 1984). In respect to the core issue of labor shortage (Boer, 2015), a significant feature was not only tenured labor, but periodic labor service on behalf of the monarch. Often, this labor service would be one month a year, on a rotating basis, for the sake of major building projects. The tendency, however, was to increase the time of labor service, which would lead to hardship among the peasantry as they had less time to engage in local agricultural production. A further feature was the estate system, which was established for supplying temples and the royal court. In these cases, the yield demanded was higher, at 50 percent, with the remainder left for maintenance of the laborers. The usual form taken for ensuring laborers on the estates was through tenure obligation or the inability to pay back a massive debt.

By contrast, by the time of the New Testament, and the texts that became normative for Judaism, a different system emerged. Initially in Greece a new slave-system became the norm, which arose from the centuries-long absence of imperial power in the Mediterranean in the late second and well into the first millennium B.C.E. In this case the “big peasants” of the Greek city-states became slave-owners, with slaves primarily to work the fields. How is this system different? Slavery became the core driver of economic surplus, upon which the glittering culture of ancient Greece built itself, while despising those upon whose backs it was built (de Ste. Croix, 1981). In this situation, the notion of “freedom” arose, as a stark contrast to the “unfreedom” of slaves. Not only was the whole economic system geared to slavery, with slave market economies but also the Greek and Roman worldview simply could not imagine a world without slaves—and this is clearly reflected in the New Testament (Boer & Petterson, 2017). Both the Greeks and Romans adopted previous systems when they first arrived, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, but they also began to impose slave systems.

In some areas, large estates were established, especially on the Italian peninsula, while other areas, such as Palestine, became a major “quarry” for slaves. One conquest after another—as with the Jewish wars—led to massive enslavements and transportation of those captured. In this Greco-Roman context, the Passover meal’s celebration of liberation from slavery took on a whole new meaning.

Another third party in the fourth MH in John is “the world.” In the discussions between Jesus and the disciples during his last teaching, Judas (not Iscariot) questions Jesus on his plan to reveal himself. As announced, Jesus would reveal himself only to his followers, which does not necessarily refer only to the disciples. John describes Jesus’ followers as those who loved Jesus and kept his commandments, which means that the disciples were also Jesus’ followers. The fourth MH in John states that Jesus would reveal himself only to his followers, not to the world. The world therefore refers to the group of people who were not Jesus’ followers. It is rather difficult to define this type of follower and their opposite. If the followers are those who love Jesus and keep his commandments, then presumably those who do not love Jesus and do not keep his commandments come under the category of non-followers. This suggests that, should one not know about Jesus and therefore not acknowledge him and his existence, both theologically and historically, one cannot be categorized as non-follower. Thus, the world in this passage refers to those who know about Jesus but do not love him and do not keep his commandments. This is the type of non-follower that both Judas (not Iscariot) and Jesus refer to in this fourth MH. This type of non-follower type may be categorized as a third party in the fourth MH in John.

The similarity between the fourth MH in the Haggadah and in John now becomes apparent. They both involve third parties in the ritual. Both of these MH acknowledge slaves and non-followers. However, they stay only on level of acknowledgement. Such third parties

do not participate in the ritual. The Passover meal in the Haggadah is to celebrate life as free people, and in John it is to celebrate the disciples being one with Jesus and the father because of their love for him and their obedience in keeping his commandments.

In summary, I have sought to show how there is a significant connection between the Johannine account of the Last Supper and the Haggadah concerning the Passover meal. The tradition of the Passover meal comes from the Jewish tradition and is still recognized and acknowledged in contemporary Christian texts. Some, although not all, of the orders from the Passover Haggadah—first reflected in Midrash Pesachim 10 and developed in later the elaborations—are reflected Christologically in John 14. With this identification completed, I now turn to focus on the text of John 14:6, seeking to interpret and understand it in light of the Passover meal.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life in Light of the Passover Meal

This section is focused on the text “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’.” I seek to interpret this text in light of the wider literary context of the Passover meal occurring throughout chapters 13–17 of John. Indeed, these chapters may be described as the “Passover meal” section of the Gospel of John. I will argue that these terms—“the way,” “the truth,” “the life,” and “coming to the father”—relate to Passover concepts. I seek to show the connection between this section, in particular the key text, and the tradition in which Passover is commemorated. Importantly and in light of my core thesis, John 14:6 emerges from the tradition of Passover and is at the same time claimed as a distinct moment for Christian identity. This means that the text itself embodies two religious traditions. I start this discussion by addressing the question of which text rearrangement I use in this study.

The Question of Textual (Re)arrangement

I consider the arrangement as crucial for a study of the text due to the fact that *aporia* (a concept introduced by Eduard Schwartz in 1907) in the Fourth Gospel is too visible to be ignored.⁵⁸ The arrangement does affect the context of the text and therefore it affects the interpretation of the text. For instance, if chapter 14 was put before chapter 13:1, one would not assume that the festival of Passover provides the background for the narrative in chapter 14. It would not be apparent whether the event in chapter 14 occurred during a supper, or a Passover supper, or during one of the general talking and teaching sessions Jesus usually had with his disciples. Therefore, the arrangement of the gospel is important.

As far as I could trace the scholarship back, Westcott (1881/1975) had already suspected that the structure of the Fourth Gospel was unusual. He found problems with repetition in the gospel. These issues were later explained by Kugel (1975) and Breck (1994) and summarized by Ellis (2003) as follows.

Ellis analyzed the proposals by John Gerhard, which appeared in an unpublished doctoral thesis from the Catholic University of America in 1975 (it was accessible to Ellis, but not to me). According to Ellis (2003, pp. 134–136), Gerhard discovered the five section abcb'a' structure of the gospel's chiasms (see also Breck, 1994; Lund, 1942; McCoy, 2003;

⁵⁸ See also Burge (1990), who explains the “difficulties” within the gospel, such as stylistic evidence to support the suspicion of additional editorial hands, ideological tendencies that are against the author’s view in the text, and contextual evidence where the text offers parallel or contrasting accounts, or there may even be major literary rifts in the narrative.

Welch, 1981). Further, Kugel (1975) showed that the basic two-line parallelism of Hebrew poetry is not in fact “synonymous” parallelism, as it is usually called, but rather that the second of the two lines both parallels and goes beyond the thought of the first line. His formula, “A is so, and what’s more B,” says it all. Finally, Breck (1994) demonstrated the critical importance of the pivotal center section of John’s chiasms for understanding the meaning of the chiasms as a whole. In another work, Ellis (1999) proposed that there are approximately 100 concentric chiasms in the Fourth Gospel. The issue of repetition is also identified by Segovia (1991), who found and analyzed repeated geographical journeys in the course of the public career of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

There is also the issue of textual displacement. Scholars such as Lewis (2014) and Bernard (1929) argued that displacement of the text may have been caused by accidental displacement of the papyrus leaves of the early manuscripts of the Fourth Gospel. Thus, the present result was formed by such chance disordering. Moffatt (1918) added that transpositions and interpolations probably occurred due to copyists and later editors of the gospel. My additional comment is that all the aporias and anomalies within the gospel could be due to the fact that early Christian documents were mostly codices, which included long paragraphs (MacGregor & Morton, 1961). When the copyists, redactors, or later editors found pieces of a codex (which it is assumed would have been disordered), it is possible that they rearranged those pieces in the wrong order.

Thus, it becomes a matter of urgency that a response to all these “biblical anomalies” be found. Rearrangement of the gospel, especially around text that could potentially influence its literary context, is therefore essential.

In this research, I use Hoare’s (1944) rearrangement. In his rearrangement, chapter 14 is divided into two different parts: 13:20–14:14 comes first and then 14:13-24a follows. In

between is 16:5b–23 (Haenchen, 1980). I use this arrangement because it puts all these verses into an understandable story plot. Both Hoare and Haenchen appear to be against the “here and there” reoccurring events and conversations (in this case, most are responses from the main character, Jesus). They arrange the passages and verses into one narrative flow. Such an approach seems to counter the notable features of the Fourth Gospel’s literary style, which are repetition and variation (Van Belle, Labahn & Maritz, 2009). It also diminishes the interrelationships between texts within the gospel.

This suggestion for rearrangement is also supported by Howard (1943), who argued that the closing words of chapter 14 seem to refer to a time after the discourse in chapters 15–16. I support this thesis. Verses 30–31 in chapter 14 literally express departure-like statements. Jesus, as the main character in most of the events in the Fourth Gospel, informs the disciples that he intends to stop talking, which is part of the supper they are having, and asks them to leave the place with him. It is odd to have the conversation still going in the next chapter and verse. The oddness is increased by having Jesus raise a new topic of conversation. Verses 30–31 should therefore be placed after the last verse of chapter 16, and before the first verse of chapter 17. It will then read as follows:

16:33 I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!

14:30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me;

14:31 but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

17:1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.”

Furthermore, 16:5 contradicts 14:5 where Jesus criticizes the disciples for not asking where he is going, whereas Thomas has already asked him and has received a response from Jesus in quite a lengthy conversation. This rearrangement is unlike the common rearrangements by Bernard (1929), Lewis (2014), MacGregor and Morton (1961), Moffatt (1918), and Spitta (1910). Moffat, for instance, inserts verses 7:15–24 between chapters 5 and 6 where the setting of time of chapter 7 would be the Sabbath, the same time as the events in chapter 5 take place. This change creates a significant difference since, besides the difference of time setting, the setting of place is also significantly different; for example, verses 7:15–24 no longer takes place in Galilee during the festival of Booth, but in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate (pool of Beth-zatha). Moffat also completely rearranges chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16. Lewis (2014) and Bernard (1929) agree in changing the order of chapters 4, 5, 6 to 4, 6, 5. I personally tend to agree with this suggestion for rearrangement. If chapter 6 is placed before chapter 5, the story flow will be compatible, as the setting of place in chapters 4 and 6 is the same, Galilee. This rearrangement is in contrast to Moffat's suggestion. McDowell (1937) observed that Lewis and Bernard also radically rearrange chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16.

The gospel itself consists of three main parts: the prologue (1:1–18), the main narrative (1:19–20:31), and the epilogue (chapter 21) (Howard, 1943). That means that chapter 14 is one narrative in the gospel. More recently, O'Day (1995) suggested that the Fourth Gospel should be divided into just two parts. Chapters 1–12 should become one and be acknowledged as the Book of Signs and chapters 13–20 become the Book of Glory. Sloyan (1991) argued that the scene-to-scene process is best described as episodic as the plot development in the gospel is rather loose.

Nevertheless, despite all these major forms of rearrangement, Woll (1980) and Segovia (1985) argued that the original core of the farewell discourse is found in John 13:31–14:31.

The farewell discourse is the main focus of this study. Thus, it is appropriate for me to take John 13:31–14:31 as my frame of context to underlie this study. However, this frame of context would make more sense if it started from the beginning of chapter 13, which, as Pitre (2015) and Perrin (2017) observed, contains the beginning of the paschal meal story.⁵⁹ Therefore, the context-text for this study is John 13:1–14:31, taking into consideration Howard's (1943) suggestions for rearrangement.

John 14 is a part of the wider context-text of chapters 13:1–38 and 15:1–17:26. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John does not have a pre-setting of events occurring throughout the section. Jesus is not described as requesting his disciples to prepare a room for the meal they are going to have. The section, including the Passover meal, starts with John showing that Jesus had known about his death (a term mostly replaced with “departure”) prior to the meal taking place, and presumably he had also known about the betrayal by Judas Iscariot.

The Keywords: The Way, The Truth, and The Life

Before I consider in detail the words of John 14:6, I would like to summarize the arguments presented earlier concerning the presence of elements of the Passover Haggadah in the Gospel of John. The order of the Passover meal as described in the Haggadah and Midrash Pesachim 10 does not have quite the same import and effect in John as it does in the Synoptics. In John's presentation, Jesus performs *urchatz* (washing hands) in his own way

⁵⁹ See further Pitre (2015), who formed fresh arguments for the Last Supper as a paschal meal, bearing significant implications for Jesus' aims, not just for himself but for his ongoing movement (Perrin, 2017).

and he does not merely omit the traditional order of the Passover meal, but instead he transforms the order according to his own agenda. Instead of washing his hands as obliged by Jewish law and tradition, Jesus cleanses his disciples' feet. Jesus also performs *karpaz* and *matzah* at the same time. John 13:26 does not specify whether or not Jesus and the disciples consumed vegetables prior to consuming bread. However, the aspect of dipping food into the dish and eating bread are included in John's Passover meal. As the order is not as significant as the teaching during the meal, I place my focus on the teaching (which would be the last teaching Jesus has with his disciples in physical form before his death). This teaching could be the transformation of the core purpose of the Passover meal, *maggid*. Instead of retelling the story of exodus, Jesus "retells" noteworthy teachings. The main aspect of the teaching is about Jesus being the son of the God, the father. This aspect has been retold by Jesus, not only to the disciples, but also to the wider audience multiple times throughout the gospel.⁶⁰ Therefore, it is indeed a retelling of his teaching at this stage of the Passover meal.

14:2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 14:4 And you know the way to the place where I am going." 14:5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* [emphasis

⁶⁰ The theology of sonship is reflected through John 11:44–50; 10:17–18; 8:16–29, 38–55; 6:27, 32–65; 5:17–47; 4:21–23, 53; 3:35; 2:16; 1:14, 18.

added]. 14:7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.

I have conducted a careful analysis of the keywords of the text: “the way,” “the truth,” and “the life.” These keywords should be understood in light of the festival of Passover, especially as a distinct Passover meal.⁶¹ It is distinct because Jesus does not merely repeat the tradition. Instead of repeating what has been done for generations, at least since the exodus narrative, he transforms the tradition in accordance with his so-called divine mission. The above narrowed text-context contains the other disciples as passive figures, while Jesus and Thomas are active figures. Jesus is informing them of his death in a semi-abstract way. The concept of him departing to his father’s house and preparing places for the disciples is not abstract; however, the disciples are in a state of not knowing who his father is or where his father’s house is. This could go further to include questions such as what kind of house he is referring to, as this departure story is an aftermath concept, which, at the same time, is an after-death concept.

John does not seem to favor the word “death” in his narratives. He describes Jesus’ death in other ways; for example, “depart from this world and go to the Father” (13:1); “I am with you only a little longer” (13:32); “where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward” (13:36); “I go to prepare a place for you” (14:2); “because I am going to the Father” (14:12); “In a little while the world will no longer see me” (14:19); “while I am still with you” (14:25); “I am going away” (14:28); “I am going to him who sent me” (16:5);

⁶¹ See Derickson (2018) for comparison reading.

“On that day” (16:23); and “the hour has come” (17:1). Therefore, I will use the term “departure” when referring to Jesus’ death.

Jesus uses the keywords to explain his departure to the disciples. My aim here is to investigate whether John has the same agenda, and whether the order of the Passover meal ritual does affect his narrative on Jesus’ last teachings.

Hodos (*The Way*)

In regard to the “way” (*hodos*), let us return for a moment to the Passover Haggadah. As Jesus’ extensive elaborations constitute a *maggid*, I investigate the origin of *maggid* in the ritual itself. As well as *Mah Nishtanah*, *maggid* also consists of declaring verses from Deuteronomy and reciting the ten plagues that happened in Egypt. Deuteronomy 26:5–8 is declared first:

You shall make this response before the Lord your God: A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders.

This piece of text briefly explains the ultimate reason why the night is being celebrated through a meal. These *maggid* texts bear the nuance of liberation and salvation. As explained in the Haggadah, the night is about salvation from slavery. The Aramean ancestor in the text refers to Exodus 1:1–7; this text explains how Jacob came to Egypt with his household, which grew into a nation. The Egyptians response to this phenomenon in the text refers to Exodus 1:9–10. Jacob’s generation, which has grown bigger, cries to be rescued by Jacob’s

God, and ends up with salvation, which was enabled through the exodus. Salvation is the main theme. The night is preserved to celebrate that act of salvation.

Maggid in Jewish tradition is seen as the way the community converses with God in a sort of mystical way. *Maggid* in the Haggadah does indeed consist of monologues and dialogues among the participants. The monologues and dialogues contain the brief historical retelling and giving thanks to God for the salvation.

The story of the ten plagues is recited due to the understanding that although the night is centered on salvation, participants need to also acknowledge those who have been affected by the plagues, which presumably refers to the Egyptians (Klein, 1992, p. 126). This shows that the Passover meal (the order itself) acknowledges the free and the “burdened.” To represent this acknowledgement, participants remove a drop of wine from their cups using a fingertip.

Switching to the Johannine *maggid*, the transformation is apparent. Just as in stage one of this research where John 14:6 was interpreted as a salvific text, I will now show that a similar theme is revealed in John.

There are three major keywords in John 14:6. However, too often the words *hodos*, *aletheia*, and *zoe* assumed to have theological and spiritual meanings, instead of being analyzed historically. The lack of historicity is a gap in Johannine studies of John 14:6. Kittel (1985) and Moloney (1998) argued that the disciples already have an understanding of the meaning of *hodos* when Jesus explains that he is the way to the father. Other scholars, such as Carson (1986), Barclay (2012), and Ridderbos (1997), see *hodos* in a spiritual way. They argued that the texts show Jesus presenting himself as the way for the disciples to follow. This perspective sees *hodos* as indicating “how” the disciples should live. They will need to live like Jesus. Jesus has shown how he lives his life as the son of God. Therefore, they should also follow his example. This idea resonates throughout the account of the Passover

meal. John repeats the importance of living life as Jesus does. It starts from when Jesus performs *urchatz*. Jesus sets an example by washing the disciples' feet. He instructs them to perform the same act towards one another. Then it continues to the teaching of the vineyard in chapter 15, where Jesus hopes the disciples will abide in him. However, chapter 14 also has adequate evidence for *hodos*. John 14:12 promotes the belief that the disciples need to perform the same actions as Jesus does, as they are supposedly the believers. They are asked to imitate the way Jesus lives his life. I can now say that the understanding of *hodos* in John 14:6 appears to be an extension of the explanation of *urchatz*, which is the second step in the order of the Passover meal ritual described in the Haggadah.

I can now also argue that there is an echo of *hodos* in the exodus narrative and in the history itself, should *hodos* be interpreted as “how” one should live. It starts when God commands Moses to warn Pharaoh of the final plague. He obliges the Israelites, all of the adults, to gather silver and gold as a preparation for the exodus (Exodus 11:2). *Hodos* becomes more apparent and intense as the Israelites progress to leave Egypt. It is apparent in the ordinances God gives on how to celebrate Passover. Exodus 12 presents details on how the Israelites should live post-exodus. They are ordered to celebrate Passover as a festival to God. They are obliged to acknowledge the festival as a day of remembrance. *Hodos* in this narrative and history is apparent in every statement that begins with “You shall.” The core of *hodos* seems to be in Exodus 13:8, where the festival of Passover is celebrated in order to have all the generations of Israelites acknowledge the acts God had performed for them. It then continues to describe what the Israelites were obliged to do once they entered the land of the Canaanites (Exodus 13:11–16). *Hodos* in the Book of Exodus, especially in post-exodus narratives, seems to indicate the way the Israelites had to live in accordance with the commands and demands of God; everything they do has to be an act of acknowledgement

and thanksgiving to God. They are required to acknowledge that God brought them out of Egypt (Exodus 12:17, 25; 13:3–5, 9, 11, 14), the land of slavery, into Canaan, the land of milk and honey, and the opposite of slavery and suffering.⁶² They are also required to celebrate their freedom through the festival of Passover (Exodus 12:14, 17; 13:6, 15b). All the “how” instructions (*hodos*) circulate back to acts of acknowledgement and thanksgiving from the Israelites to God.

Returning to the Fourth Gospel, John provides a scenario where the disciples are stirred to acknowledge the existence of Jesus as the son of God, the father. This idea is as repetitious as the demand to acknowledge and give thanks to God in the Book of Exodus. This can be seen in how Jesus expects the disciples to have the ability to understand that he is the son of God, the father (John 14:1b, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). As the disciples are unable to grasp the sonship idea directly, it is important for Jesus to emphasize that he is indeed the way. The message for them is to become like him, as in to live their life doing what Jesus commands them to do, as extended into the concept of abiding in him and the metaphor of vineyards. All the ideas or concepts in the account of the Passover meal are related to each other. John does not merely provide 14:6 without further explanation. He explains “the way” throughout the account of the Passover meal. Thus, what kind of *hodos* is Jesus requiring from the disciples? They need imitate what Jesus has done for them (John 13:15). John 13:34 specifically describes the fact that the disciples need to love one another just as Jesus has loved them.

⁶² In other words, *hodos* is a passage from one condition (slavery and oppression) to another (freedom and a promised land). A road, a way, a path, has a beginning and an end, but the end is so often a disappointment from the anticipation and dreams along the way.

Love is the aspect that distinguishes the disciples from “the world.” This aspect can be extended for interpretation in today’s context. John clearly shows that the instruction to imitate Jesus and abide in him, and also the command to continue doing his work, refers to the active verb “love” (*agape*).⁶³ Thus, the answer to the question of *hodos*—how the disciples should live—is by loving one another.

To love is a commandment that can be traced back to the Old Testament narratives. To love is one of the post-exodus ordinances. Through Moses, God commands the Israelites to have love among them. They are obliged to show love towards other Israelites but also towards non-Israelites, referred to in Leviticus 19 as “aliens” or non-citizens. To love was one of the ordinances to be observed after the Israelites left Egypt and on their way to the land of Canaanites. This ordinance is again reinforced in the New Testament, in this case in the Fourth Gospel. Scholars have distinguished differences between the concept of love in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Petcu’s (2018) work is a recent analysis of the concept of love in the New Testament, which revealed different stages and different meanings of the word love. Thompson (2015), who worked on Leviticus 19, argued that the word love in this passage could create ambiguity. However, Kaminsky (2008) showed that the concept of love in Leviticus is constrained by a political agenda. Love in Leviticus is not as wide a concept as love in the New Testament. Kaminsky observed that love in Leviticus is applied only to the Israelites and the non-Israelites who reside within their community. I do

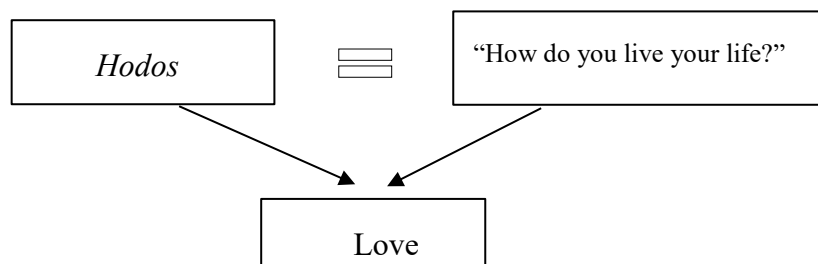
⁶³ The Greek word used by John to describe the love Jesus had towards his disciples and the love he wanted them to perform is *agape*, one of seven definitions of love in the Greek tradition: *eros*, *philia*, *ludus*, *pragma* (which could also become *storge*), *philautia*, and *xenia*.

not intend to investigate the different concepts of love as they occur in the Old Testament and New Testament. My focus now is to accept that “to love” is the answer to the question of “how to live” arising from *hodos*. I focus on the act of love as described in the account of the Passover meal, rather than on the concept of love itself.

In the account of the Passover meal, John presents love as an action to be performed among the disciples. In John 13:34–35, there are three different figures: Jesus, the disciples, and everyone else (which may be seen as “the world”). Jesus wanted the disciples to love one another, so “the world” can identify them as his disciples. It implies that “the world” is not familiar with the act of love. In this view, to a certain extent, the act of love seems to be exclusive. It seems to be present only in the circle of the disciples. However, as the narrative progresses to chapter 14, the fourth MN in John, Judas (not Iscariot)’s question has Jesus clarifying this exclusive notion. When Judas (not Iscariot) questions Jesus about his revelation to the disciples instead of the world, Jesus explains that those who are incapable of performing the act of love are not his disciples. They are regarded as “the world”: people who do not perform the act of love. Earlier, I explained that “the world” would not be considered as Jesus’ followers. Therefore, the act of love is the key feature to determine whether or not one is a follower of Jesus. This argument is briefly described in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The Way to Live is to Love



The way (*hodos*) is to love. The way to live is to love. By declaring he is *hodos*, Jesus is encouraging the disciples to love because that is how they could depart to the father, just as he does.⁶⁴

Aletheia (The Truth)

The next concept to consider is *aletheia*. The first question to arise is why Jesus has to reassure the disciples that he is the truth. When Judas (not Iscariot) seems to look for the answer to the question, “How can they know the way to where Jesus is going,” Jesus explains that he is indeed the way, which means they should then know of the “way” Judas (not Iscariot) is asking, but he also adds that he is the truth. Howard (1943) answered this prime question by observing the Hellenistic impact on the text. John is presumed to be part of this impacted culture. *Aletheia* in the Hellenistic tradition refers to the noun “knowledge.” Howard argued that it becomes necessary for Jesus to declare that he is indeed the truth. This truth becomes not merely a philosophical concept and an understanding in the disciples’ and Johannine readers’ culture, but a living entity. Jesus is the knowledge of the disciples; the disciples should have known him. His existence as the son of God, the father, should be recognized as a knowledge of the tradition at that time. The repetitions of Jesus’ effort to declare his sonship throughout the account of the Passover meal makes it clear why Jesus has

⁶⁴ See Fenton (1995) for further reading.

to reassure and confirm that sonship is indeed a knowledge, a tangible instance.⁶⁵ Jesus covers the understanding of the concept of truth, both from the perspective of Torah and Hellenism. He declares that he is not only God's will, but he is also tangible.

Carson (1986) and Barclay (2012) took a more philosophical-spiritual perspective towards this concept of truth. Carson (1986) considered Jesus to be an incarnated truth (of the Torah). He argued that John 14:6 is Jesus trying to convince the disciples that he is the living example of love in the Torah. This argument may be justified when it is considered that the Torah teaches how to perform the act of love. Jesus has love and asks his disciples to have love for one another. Should he acknowledge himself as the incarnated truth of the Torah, it may be assumed that the Torah does contain the teaching of love. Leviticus 19 demonstrates this point and thus Carson's argument is valid. Barclay (2012) supported this argument by adding a sense of moral truth to this particular concept of truth. He argued that Jesus is telling the disciples that he is the living example of his teaching. When he teaches about love, he performs the act of love. *Urchatz* in chapter 13 adequately reflects this argument. Before Jesus teaches the disciples to wash each other's feet, he has already washed their feet. "For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you," is a strong statement to reflect this incarnated truth perspective.

⁶⁵ Vroom (1989) explained the different treatments of the concept of "truth" between the Torah and Hellenistic culture. According to the Torah, "truth" refers to God's will, while in Hellenism the concept of "truth" refers to something tangible.

Aletheia also has its own manifestations in the exodus narrative. Truth bears a nuance of non-truth, an expression of not believing and not trusting that needs to be negated. For *aletheia* to be accepted, there should be a prior doubt. This hesitation has happened ever since God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Despite the impression that God finds Moses special (for he chose him when he was still unborn), Moses does not believe in his capability to lead the Israelites out of their suffering (Exodus 3:11). Responding to this hesitation, God reassures him that he will be with him along the journey. However, Moses is still not convinced that he can carry out the task God has assigned to him. He seeks complete reassurance from God (Exodus 3:13; 4:1) and, after being given what he asks for, he still hesitates (Exodus 4:10). The disbelief and hesitation do not only come from Moses. God anticipated that they would come from the Israelites as well, as shown in how he prepared Moses to perform multiple miracles for the Israelites. Both Moses and the nation he is about to lead again show disbelief and hesitation towards God's plan for their deliverance when Pharaoh demands they make bricks without any straw. It continues even after they leave Egypt. When they rest in Pi-hahiroth, they find Pharaoh and his army are getting closer to capturing them. They experience fear and bear hesitation towards Moses and God (Exodus 14:10–12). This scenario reveals a pattern of behavior that occurs when circumstances turn harsh, and God is questioned and regarded as untrue. This shows how the "truth" is treated by the tradition. Associated with the term *emeth*, derived from the verb *aman*, truth comes from the root idea of faithfulness (Ramsdell, 1951). God's words and promises were not seen adequate until actions followed to prove their validity. In the tradition, if God was true, he should have been faithful to them by not letting them face all the hesitations throughout the whole exodus event. Not being faithful means being untrue.

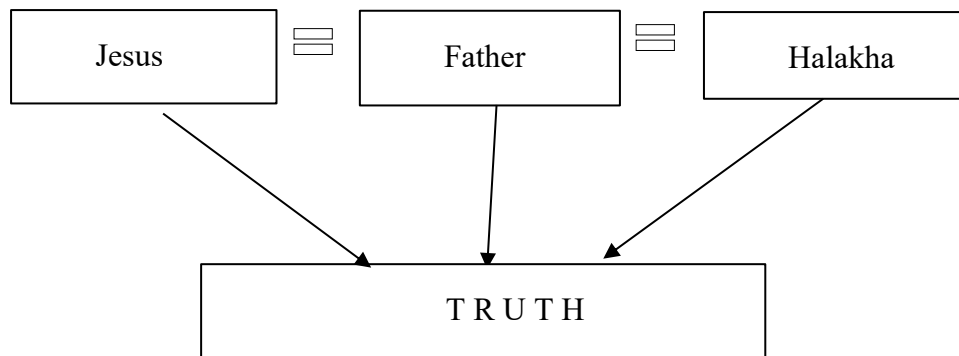
God repeatedly has to perform acts for the Israelites for them to have faith in him, to believe that he is delivering them out of their suffering. The importance of the concept of truth is apparent in John 14:6 when Jesus declares he is indeed the truth. He says the disciples know the way and the way is true. *Aletheia* has been a significant concept in Judaism and its traditions throughout the generations, especially when it comes to examining a true identity. Matthew 24:4–5 warns there will come characters claiming to be the Messiah. This has been proven to occur. Ever since Jesus' time, Jewish modern history records figures claiming to be the Messiah. One of the most significant figures was Shabbetai Zevi, whose followers continue to live according to his teachings and ideology even now (Hathaway, 1997; Marks, 1994). Matthew 7:5 also records the existence of so-called “false prophets.”

Brown's (1984) perspective on the definition of *aletheia* is that it is indeed defined in light of *hodos*. John 14:6 is interconnected with verse 7. This interconnection provides an understanding that the knowledge (or acknowledgement) of Jesus and the father must come to those who understand the *hodos* of Jesus. In the other words, the disciples are able to see that the lifestyle Jesus taught, which is love, is true, if they live that kind of lifestyle. Verse 7a indicates that the disciples will know the father, if they know Jesus. However, verse 7b is no longer a conditional statement. It is a confirmation that the disciples do know Jesus, which means they also now know the father. The word “know” in this verse is *ginosko* in Greek, which also means “to have knowledge of.” It is now apparent that *aletheia*, the truth, in verse 6 is supported by *ginosko*, to have knowledge of, in verse 7. Jesus is *aletheia*, and therefore the father is also *aletheia*. The disciples have the knowledge of who Jesus is, that is, the son of the father, the figure who was briefly unknown by the disciples but is now known. John does not only describes a circumstance where the disciples know the father but also emphasizes that they have indeed seen him, because they have seen Jesus. This is a situation

in which “knowledge” means something tangible, or the truth. They have experienced the “being of Jesus,” which automatically means they have experienced the “being of the father.” They have experienced the concept of *hodos*. Truth then refers to knowledge (*gnosis*). Jesus wishes the disciples to acknowledge him as the truth, as Jews regard Halakha as truth (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Jesus and the Truth



Zoe (The Life)

The next question to be resolved is can the life (*zoe*) also be seen in light of *hodos*? As I have previously done with *hodos* and *aletheia*, I start the analysis by involving the negation of the word. Jesus’ declaration of himself as the life had to occur in response to a situation of “no life” or death. This declaration could be a response to the announcement of Jesus’ death. However, as previously mentioned, John does not use the word “death.” To describe the death of Jesus, John uses the term “departure (to the father’s house).” However, I suggest that the use of the word *zoe* is a response to the preceding verses of chapter 14. Verses 1 to 3 indicate Jesus’ efforts to reassure the disciples that his departure is not a physical death. Jesus

convinces the disciples he is not facing a death that will stop him from “being”; instead, he is going to his father’s house to prepare places for them. Jesus wants the disciples not to imagine his death as an end. In fact, he is not facing death, because he is the life.

Jesus’ declaration of himself as the life has happened prior to the account of the Passover meal. He declares himself as *zoe* to Mary in John 11:25. In this instance, John includes the theme of resurrection.⁶⁶ The life that Lazarus was about to be granted comes after the resurrection. The phrase “I am the resurrection and the life” also indicates the same meaning of both terms; the resurrection is indeed the life. Jesus continues his statement to Mary by declaring that everyone who believes in him will never die. Despite the theological and spiritual meaning of this claim, it might become the reason why, especially in chapter 14, John does not use the terms die or death (see Minear, 1993). John does not describe Jesus as a character who is going to die. Jesus is not dying. Jesus is departing to his father’s house. He lives, as he is the life itself. He will continue to live to prepare the place for his disciples.

Life is the situation of not dying. This is the situation that Jesus is facing, not death. Brant (2004) argued that death had been seen as a consequence of sin. In my observation, this argument could be supported by the way Jesus uses the term “those who believe in me” will not die. This means death is not a destiny for his disciples, his followers, or those who believe in him (and the father). Death, or what is now seen as the consequence sin, is not an outcome for Jesus’ followers. They live a life that is not leading to sin (death). Allegorically, Egypt is seen as sin (where death happens during the final plague); the exodus event is seen as

⁶⁶ See Perry (2005) for further reading.

redemption by God from sin, and the land of the Canaanites is seen as a new life—the life redeemed. The absence of death in chapter 14 is now explicable in light of this understanding.

Furthermore, the meaning of *zoe* in this particular verse is not merely the situation of not dying. The definition does not stop at that level. When Jesus declares he is *the* life, rather than he *is* life, it is possible that he is referring to himself as a certain kind of life. *Zoe* in John 20:31 may be what John is referring to when he states that his purpose in writing the gospel was so Jesus' followers may have life in his name. The idea of the kind of life in Jesus' name is described throughout John 14:13–14 as a life of surrendering to and believing in Jesus and his father. According to Mbamalu (2014), this kind of life refers to the present reality, or what is called “realized” eschatology, as supported by Johannine scholars such as Aune (1972), Brown (1966), and Dodd (1953). This kind of life is the life the disciples had during their discipleship with Jesus—a life driven by the will of the father. This kind of life may also refer to the life Jesus owns after his resurrection, as *zoe* in John 14:6 is the response Jesus gives to the disciples after they hear the announcement of his departure. The life he is going to own eternally is *zoe* in this particular text. This kind of life is also owned by the father, as stated in John 5:26, “as the father has life in himself so has he given the son to have life in himself.” All these understandings of life have parallels with the tangible aspect of *aletheia*. Mbamalu (2014) suggested that the narrative of creation in Genesis lies behind the Johannine concept of life. The narrative of creation preserves the tangible aspect of life. It is something to experience, not merely an abstract philosophical concept. It is an experience designated for Jesus' followers. This should be the plausible meaning of this kind of *zoe*.

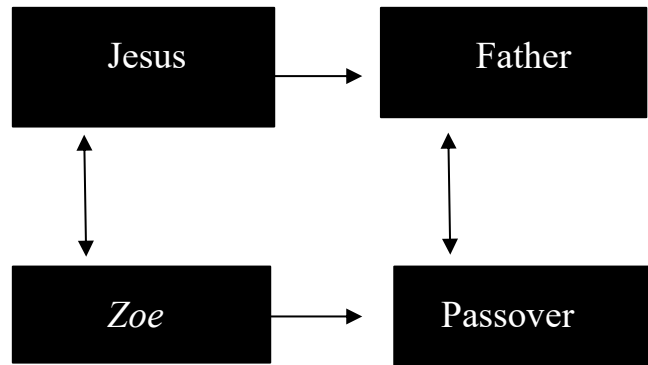
However, further investigation is still needed in relation to how *zoe* is presented in the Book of Exodus. I seek to investigate how this particular concept is reflected through the

event of exodus and its narrative. Compared with *hodos* and *aletheia*, *zoe* is not so apparent throughout the narrative. A metaphor for life can be found in the account of the final plague in Egypt. It is the plague that finally provides the opportunity for the Israelites to be released from the land of Egypt. It is a plague of death throughout the land of Egypt, which means that both the Hebrews and the Egyptians would be affected (Exodus 12:12 explains that even animals in the land of Egypt would be affected by this final plague). However, it is the command of “Passover” that saves the Israelites from this death plague. Death passes over the Hebrews’ houses. The firstborns of the Hebrews are excluded from death, as they do what God commands them to do (Exodus 11–12). This interpretation gives a new definition to Passover. Passover in this light may be seen as life, as Passover is then seen in contrast to death. This is the life granted to the Hebrews’ firstborns on the night the first Passover was instituted. The night when death passed through the land of Egypt is the night of Passover, the night of life for the Hebrews, which God commands them to celebrate as a festival. Thus, to this point, I can say that the festival of Passover is a festival celebrating life, the life spared on the night, the life spared by God, or, in the other words, the life given by God.

It can now be said that the festival of Passover has an indirect impact on the declaration Jesus makes in John 14:6. Not only do Jesus and his disciples eat the Passover meal but also his teaching (particularly a declaration or a claim) has a similar value to that of the Passover narrative on the night of the exodus, as described in Figure 4.

Figure 4

The Relationship Between Passover and Jesus' Declaration



Jesus is interconnecting himself with *zoe*, which is reflected through the event of Passover (and celebrated through the festival of Passover). However, the event of Passover is the result of an act of mercy from God, the father. It is given by the father himself. At the same time, Jesus, as seen throughout the Fourth Gospel, is declaring himself as one with the father. All these elements and figures interconnect with one another to create not only theological and Christological meaning but also historical values.

No One Comes to the Father Except Through Me

In regard to this subclause in John 14:6, it is important to examine the terms used in the Greek phrase “*oudeis erchetai pros ton Patera ei mē di’ emou.*” The first term to be examined is the word ἔρχεται (*erchetai*). From the root *erchomai*, this word has multidimensional meanings. Besides translating literally as “come,” *erchomai* also has metaphorical meanings such as to come into being, arise, come forth, or to find influence. This meaning has nuances of “come to the Father” and “finding influence from the Father.” When Jesus states, “No one comes to the Father except through me,” it may indicate an

understanding that no one would be influenced by the father if they were not influenced by Jesus in the first place. They do not only come to meet the father, but they are to experience the father. The word *erchomai* also means “to come from one place to another,” which indicates a journey between at least two different places (place of arrival and place of departure). This meaning bears a dimension of two different situations in life. The phrase “one comes to the Father” suggests that one leaves a life of not “knowing” the father into a life of full understanding of the father. A life of not knowing the father refers to the life of “non-followers,” a state of life where there is no encouragement or invitation to perform the act of love. When one recognizes, acknowledges, and follows Jesus, one’s status changes from a non-follower to a follower. The rest of the phrase has a similar literal meaning as read in English.

John 14:6b, “No one comes to the Father except through me,” is an elaboration of the preceding statement, John 14:6a, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” The strength and the core of this verse actually lies in the last statement in John 14:6b. Verse 6b is as significant as verse 6a; however, without verse 6b, John 14:6 would not bring out the message Jesus wants to declare. Without verse 6b, the verse would lose its relationship with the preceding and following verses. The scenario is described as follows:

14:5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

14:6a Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

14:6b No one comes to the Father except through me.

14:7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

This arrangement only provides for the relationship between verse 5 and 6 but disconnects verse 7. Should verse 6b be included and verse 6a be omitted, the relationship would only occur between verses 6 and 7, and verse 5 would be disconnected. The point I am showing here is that both verse 6a and verse 6b are as significant as one another, although both come to relate to different verses (preceding and following). However, verse 6b is there to support verse 6a.

In verse 6b, Jesus is emphasizing what he claims in verse 6a. He is everything he says in verse 6a; therefore, only he himself could bring anyone to the father. John shows the distinctiveness of the character of Jesus and his role through verse 6b.⁶⁷ Verse 6 is the answer to the question asked in verse 5. The questions in verse 5 are where (is Jesus departing to) and what (is the way), instead of how (to get there). Through verse 6, Jesus is addressing the second indirect question by explaining that he is indeed the way. Verse 6b is Jesus answering the first question of verse 5, that he is going to his father. The whole of verse 6 is informing Thomas and the other disciples in the room that Jesus is the way, should one want to go to the father. There is no other son, there is no other way to the father. Jesus is a special character. There is no indication of him being special in a cultural way, a religious way, or in any other way. He is special because he is the son of God, the father. He is departing to where his father is. His statement has no association with Judaism or any other traditions. The statement simply claims a father–son relationship. No other person could be the path to the father, because there is no other son than Jesus himself. There is no one who is in the father as Jesus

⁶⁷ See Davey (1958) for further reading.

is in him (John 14:10). The dwelling of the son in his father only describes what happens between Jesus and the father. Jesus' words and actions do not belong to him but to the father. After John 14:6, Jesus tries to describe his distinct relationship with the father throughout the passage, especially from John 14:7–14. Thus, the expression “No one comes to the Father except through me” generates a description of the unique relationship Jesus has with his father. It is the relationship John echoes throughout the gospel, as seemingly voiced in John 20:31 as the purpose of this gospel. Carson (2005) sees John 20:31 as the cornerstone for determining how to read the gospel. John 14:6b is a supporting statement for this idea.

Saying that Jesus is departing to his father and that he is the way to get there, does not make literary sense, as the statement becomes, “I am going to the father, and I need to go through myself in order to get there.” Therefore, I interpret this verse as more of a teaching for Jesus' disciples rather than as a verse explaining his personal journey to the father. He is telling Thomas and the other disciples that if they want to go to the father, they must go through Jesus. This is a metaphorical expression for common minds. However, as I explained earlier concerning the most plausible meaning of the text John 14:6, it comes down to an understanding that the text is Jesus informing his disciples he is going to the father and encouraging the disciples to do the same thing. They need to live their lives the way Jesus lives his life to be able to depart to the father. The disciples need to do what Jesus commands them to do so they can join him in the father's house. John 14:6 is a piece of information, an invitation, and an encouragement.

Summary and Conclusion

Following on from my investigation of the Passover tradition in the first chapter, which entails a distinct (Jewish) tradition, in this chapter I have engaged in a detailed examination of John 14:6. The chapter began with a literature review of scholarship on the Gospel of John,

focusing on the crucial verse, John 14:6. In this review, I found relatively few engagements with John 14:6, which is a little strange since this verse has become a leitmotif for those who wish to claim the exclusiveness of Christianity, even in light of its many divergences and different traditions. From this point, I investigated the Last Supper as presented in the Gospel of John. While the presentation clearly differs from the Synoptic Gospels, the key feature is the way Jesus elaborates at great length on the meaning of the supper, which has close analogies with the Passover Seder and its desire to elaborate on the exodus narrative. In this light, I focused on the four questions, known as *Mah Nishtanah*, and found significant parallels and overlaps with the Passover Seder as it developed through history.

All of this enabled me to examine John 14:6 in light of the Passover Haggadah. Through an analysis of the keywords way, truth, and life, as well as a treatment of the subclause, “No one comes to the Father except through me,” I sought to show how these words should be understood in light of the exodus narrative, its annual celebration in the Passover ritual, and in light of the new claims that the Gospel of John makes on behalf of Jesus. I hope to have shown through this careful analysis and exegesis that there is enough clear evidence that the claims made in John 14:6 arise at the intersection of two religious traditions, one an older tradition embodied in the Hebrew Scriptures and its associated texts and rituals (which came to be called Judaism), and the other a new tradition for which the Gospel of John, among other early Christian texts, is a key witness.

In other words, we have an intersection, a crossing between two religious traditions precisely at the point where Jesus—in John’s record—claims to be the way, the truth, and the

life, to the point where Jesus is the path to the father.⁶⁸ Is this a contradiction that cannot be resolved, or is it a more dialectical reality, in which the claim to one path takes place at the point where two paths meet? In other words, is it a zero-sum game, a situation of either–or in which one wins and one loses, or is it a situation where things that contradict each other also complement one another? The answer to these questions appears in the final and third chapter.

⁶⁸ See Fredriksen (2000) for comparison reading.

Chapter 3: The Intersection

In this chapter, I address directly the intersection—and its implications—of the two traditions, specifically in terms of the Passover and Last Supper, and more widely in terms of the older Jewish tradition and the much newer Christian tradition.⁶⁹ By comparison with the previous chapters, this chapter is relatively brief. However, the brevity does not in any way mitigate its importance, for here the thesis I have been examining comes explicitly to the fore. The chapter begins by returning to an old question; whether the Last Supper with Jesus and the disciples can be seen as a Passover meal. After considering this question, I focus on whether or not John 14:6 presents an exclusivist claim on behalf of Jesus and thus of the religion that takes his name, Christianity.⁷⁰

Similarity in Difference: Passover Meal or Last Supper?

Even though I have already indicated that I see the Last Supper, as variously presented in the Synoptic Gospels and especially in the Fourth Gospel, is in many respects also a Passover meal, I would like to return to this question here. In fact, it is not a new question in biblical scholarship (Carson, 1984; Christie, 1931–32; Edersheim, 1992, pp. 389–401; France, 1986, pp. 43–54; Higgins, 1954–55; Jeremias, 1966, pp. 15–88; Kilpatrick, 1952–53; Leaney, 1967; Marshall, 1980; Morris, 1971, pp. 774–786; Stallings, 1995, pp. 158–169; Strack & Billerbeck, 1922, pp. 812–853). Higgins (2012) argued that there are some

⁶⁹ See Burkett (2002) and De Silva (2018) for further reading on Christian traditions.

⁷⁰ See Smith (2006) for comparison reading.

indications the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels was a Passover meal. This idea had already been proposed by Jeremias (1966). Both Jeremias and Higgins found that although the Fourth Gospel has a slightly different setting of time (of crucifixion), it has elements of Passover within the narratives. Routledge (2002) considered that the Synoptics see the event in a more historical way than the Fourth Gospel, which focuses more on the theological implications of the event. Therefore, Routledge advised readers not to take the chronological order of events around the Last Supper into account. Instead, he proposed that the features of Passover in the Fourth Gospel are later additions from the context of the Christian church.

In another account, Brumberg-Kraus (1999) did not explicitly state that he distinguishes the Passover meal from the Last Supper. However, his discussion of the rituals associated with the Last Supper and the Rabbinic Seder suggests he does not regard the Last Supper as a Passover meal. The Passover meal has its own ritual, which does not appear to have occurred during the Last Supper. At one level I can agree, for the accounts of the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Fourth Gospel do not reflect completely the ritual of a Passover Seder, if we use *Mishnah Pesachim 10* as the literary source of the Passover ritual. At the same time, we should remember a point I stressed earlier, namely, that there was always flexibility in the way the Passover was celebrated. There were certain boundaries as to what would count as a Passover meal, but the tradition also reveals variations depending on the situation, leaving open the omission of some items and the addition of others—although not the core features such as the recounting of the story of liberation and redemption. In this light, we may say that although the supper Jesus had with his disciples before the crucifixion was distinct, so much that all the gospels recorded the event in their own ways, it did take place during or immediately before the festival of Passover. Even more, as I have argued, the specific features that we find in the Synoptic Gospels and in John reflect at a deeper level

many features of the Passover Seder. It is not merely the timing of the Last Supper, but also the features such as bread and wine (or the allegory of the vine), the acts of washing, the experience of bitterness and betrayal, and above all the elaboration on what redemption and salvation means, that suggest the structure of the Passover Seder, albeit with some variations, which were allowed within the tradition.

To go further, Pitre (2011) sought to bridge the gap between the Old Testament and its Passover with the New Testament and its Passover. It is refreshing to see how Pitre unravels the Last Supper to show how much Judaism and the Jewish tradition affect and contribute to the gospel accounts of the Last Supper, especially considering the fact that Jesus was a Jewish historical figure. Jesus used Jewish ways to speak, to think, and to perform his deeds, although this does not mean Jesus completely supported all Jewish views and values. Pitre's method is by referencing rabbinic literature such as the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Midrashim to better understand Jesus' world in New Testament. He analyzed how worshipping God was crucial in Jewish tradition, especially early on during the exodus. He also noted that the audience, Jewish people during New Testament period, were hoping for a new exodus to happen. This hope for the new exodus is avowed through Jesus Christ. This then brings the concept of the new Passover. Pitre (2015) agreed that the supper, the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples, was indeed a Passover meal (although note the way he steps back from this position a little later). However, he presented it in a way that answers and corresponds to the hope of Jewish people. Pitre explicitly observed the connection between the Passover as presented in Exodus 12 with the Passover meal Jesus had with his disciples, while at the same time acknowledging the developments of the tradition until the first century C.E., which resulted in both differences and similarities. In discussing the differences and similarities, Pitre noted that Jewish Passover is not only a meal, it is also a

sacrifice. In fact, what is notable about the Last Supper in comparison to the development of the Passover Haggadah is that while the latter de-emphasizes the theme of sacrifice, Jesus in the Last Supper narratives recovers this theme of sacrifice. In this case, it is no longer animal sacrifices—a roasted lamb in one's home or a more elaborate animal sacrifice in the temple—but the sacrifice of himself.

This discussion raises an even greater question: is Easter itself in some respects also a Passover? I raise this question here, since it is an inter-religious question as it involves two religions and two traditions, and it requires a complex answer. This is a case of both overlaps and differences.⁷¹ Heeren (1984) commented on a two-year project conducted by Zerubavel (1982), who proposed that early Christians separated Easter from Passover because they wanted to segregate themselves from the Jewish community and its tradition. However, Heeren argued that Zerubavel ignored some important considerations. Heeren suggested that the numbering without names system in the Jewish tradition should be taken into account when it comes to deciding whether or not the anniversary of the crucifixion falls on the night of the 14th of Nisan. In other words, Heeren argued that Easter should not be dissociated from Passover. Here we come across the issue of similarity in difference. On the one hand, Easter is not Passover. Although the early church decided to commemorate Easter in line with the festival of Passover—even though the eastern and western branches soon differed as to the date—this situation can lead to a misleading generalization (Mosshammer, 2008). For the Christian churches, Easter is a time to remember the death and resurrection of Christ,

⁷¹ See Sabourin (1982) for further reading.

while Passover is a completely different tradition. The way Christian theology sought to deal with the problem of similarity in difference is to argue—problematically at times—that Jesus Christ was both the fulfilment of sacrificial tradition in the Old Testament and the fulfilment of future redemption anticipated in the Passover feast. Thus, freedom from slavery becomes liberation from sin; entry into the Promised Land becomes everlasting life (Black, 2004).

However, similarity in difference has another side: the question of similarity. While Easter and Passover are not the same, and while the Last Supper and the Passover meal are not the same, they are in many respects similar. In this aspect, I have been influenced by the question of transliteration and translation. Passover is derived from the word *pesach* in Hebrew and *pascha* in Greek. In many languages, Easter is spoken of as either *pesach* or *pascha*, depending on the way these words are represented in the language question. For example, in Indonesian, my first language, Easter is known as *Paskah*. This usage creates an automatic understanding that Passover is Easter and vice versa. In fact, the English word Easter is a curious term, even an anomaly compared with the usage in other languages. The word “Easter” derives from the name of the goddess *Eostre*, who appears to have been an ancient agricultural fertility goddess in Europe, celebrated during spring when new life was coming forth, or when life was awakening from winter. Obviously, in the northern hemisphere this is the same time as the *paschal* month, when the Christian church’s liturgical cycle also celebrates spring and new life (Wallis, 1999). I do not seek to press this linguistic and temporal connection too far—at least in terms of the northern hemisphere—but it does illustrate the way Easter and Passover do indeed overlap in so many ways. My earlier argument concerning the presence of many features of the Passover Seder may be seen as a more substantive argument for the deep connections between the two traditions.

As should now be clear, what I seek to argue is that the relationship between the Passover meal and the Last Supper, and thus between Passover itself and Easter, is a relationship of similarity in difference. They are the same and yet they are not the same. I would like to put this question in two other ways. The first is perhaps the more obvious one: the Last Supper took place in a context deeply influenced by the Passover tradition and the practice of the Passover meal on the 14th of Nisan. It should be no surprise that the account of the Last Supper shows many signs of this influence. At the same time, the Last Supper, and then the tradition of Easter that grew up around it, as well as the central account of the death and resurrection of Jesus, is distinct. While it was deeply influenced by its Jewish context, within the framework of Roman colonial presence, it also marked out the beginnings of a new path.

The second approach is more dialectical. If I might put it this way: the Last Supper, and especially the words of Jesus in John 14:6, took place at the intersection of two religious and cultural traditions. One was much older, going back thousands of years, and came to be called Judaism. Its presence in the Last Supper was in terms of the way so many aspects of the supper reflected the practices and assumptions of this long tradition, particularly the Passover Seder—as I have argued in detail. The other tradition was only in its infancy, yet to be articulated clearly, but in hindsight it was indeed a distinct tradition. It emerges above all from the accounts and words of the Last Supper, as well as its ensuing narrative accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It built itself on the basis of the older tradition, but it was by no means the same as that Jewish tradition.

It is precisely this duality, this intersection of the two traditions, the reality of similarity in difference, and thus difference in similarity, that leads me to the final and main question of this thesis.

Does John 14:6 Make an Exclusivist Claim?

This section answers the main question of this study, which is whether or not John 14:6 confirms the existing belief among Christians that the text claims Christianity is the only “right” religion, and that the others are “wrong.” In other words, is this zero-sum, or winner-takes-all, approach correct? This belief has been widely held and utilized (interpreted via eisegeses) among Christians, and I intend to investigate whether or not the text of John 14:6 confirms the belief or if I can find new perspectives in the text.

Analysis of keywords in the text revealed the text itself relates to the festival of Passover. John 14:6 relates to the celebration of the festival, but there are also some reflections on the exodus as an event and a narrative in the Old Testament (with the Book of Exodus as the primary source). To resolve the primary research question, I raise four subquestions as guidance:

- 1) Does the text come from a particular religious and cultural tradition?
- 2) Does the tradition have a specific impact on the text?
- 3) Is the text exclusive?
- 4) Is there any justification for the text to be used as an exclusivist Christian claim?

To conclude the analysis of the text, another significant question needs to be raised and that is the question of what John wanted to say through the text, that is, what could be the most plausible interpretation of John 14:6.

To address the first question, I must reflect on the previous analyses of this study. In the introduction, I indicated my standpoint on the Fourth Gospel and its context. I acknowledge John the son of Zebedee as the author of this gospel, a historical figure. A historical figure must come with a historical context. His intense description of the figure of Jesus Christ and his identities and exceptionalities may come from 14 years as an active missionary (Parker,

1962). He is a reflection of what he wrote in John 14:6. John is the living example of a follower of Jesus. He was a Galilean. He lived in Galilee, possibly with his mother, Salome. Thus, the Galilean culture would have had an impact on him, and it should be noted that Jesus also came from Galilee (Ehrman, 2014, p. 404). Therefore, it is fair enough to say that Galilee had its own influence on how John wrote the gospel and on how the character of Jesus Christ was built. Galilee was surrounded by the Sea of Galilee (where the Jordan River flows through, being referred as *Kinneret* in Hebrew, also known as the Lake of Gennesaret and the Sea of Tiberias) and the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the scenes of Jesus with water (John 1:26–33; 2:1–12; 4:1–42; 5:1–18; 6:16–21; 7:37–39; 13:120; 19:34) and brief reflections on the lives of fishermen are not unusual. Galilee was under the control of the Roman Empire, and by the time John composed the gospel, the relationship between the Jews and the Roman Empire was a relatively hostile one (Sanders, 1993). Wars were in the background during the composition of the Fourth Gospel. This description indicates that John had maintained a strong fellowship with Jesus. Therefore, besides Judaism (including its laws and customs) as the primary traditional influence at that time, the political relationship between Galilee and the Roman Empire was another aspect that might have influenced John during the composition of the gospel. Thus, the text of John 14:6 does come from a particular tradition, which is Judaism along with (Greco) Roman political and religious influences.⁷²

John himself grew up as a Jew, as did Jesus. Wassen (2016, p. 11) considered Jesus as a Jew, not only at birth but also at death. They lived and practised Jewish laws and customs,

⁷² One of many instances is reflected in John 12:20, which indicates that Jews lived alongside the Greeks and they were aware of the Jewish festivals (in this text it is the festival of Passover).

including the practice of celebrating the festival of Passover. This links to question number two on the impact of the tradition towards the text. Judaism had a cleansing or purification ritual with water, as practised by John the Baptist in the first chapter of the gospel, but also the cleansing act Jesus performs in chapter 13. The background of chapter 14 is the festival of Passover. The setting of time of the narrative is during the festive month. As with other Jews, Jesus and his disciples celebrated the festival of Passover. This point alone shows that Jesus was Jewish. The influence of further aspects of Jewish tradition and culture on the character of Jesus has been analyzed by Vermes (1973). He observed that the Jewish tradition acknowledged Jesus as a carpenter, an exorcist, a healer, and a teacher.

This study is based on the premise that the meal Jesus had with his disciples was indeed their Passover meal. The approximate time of the meal is debatable, with differences between the Synoptic Gospels, which clearly locate the meal on the evening of Passover, and the Gospel of John, which seems to time the meal a day or two earlier. As we have seen, there are many studies devoted to this question, especially in light the different dates of the Passover between the luni-solar and solar calendars (ably surveyed by Pitre, 2015, pp. 158–171). Even with these differences in mind, I argued that the meal as recorded in John was Jesus' Passover meal with his disciples, as his time of departure was approaching. The festival itself was a Jewish festival. John is describing Jesus practising one of the Jewish customs. Despite the transformed agenda of the meal (from the original tradition of thanking God for delivering Israelites out of Egypt to Jesus' last teachings to his disciples), I can still identify some of the stages in the order of the meal as aspects of a Jewish ritual, as discussed in Chapter 1. The festival did not belong to the Greco-Romans. This particular and Johannine-distinctive tradition was part of Jewish tradition. To this extent, I can now say that Jewish tradition did indeed have a notable impact on the text.

Therefore, the text has to be understood from the perspective of this particular tradition. *Hodos*, *aletheia*, and *zoe* need to be read through the prism of the Jewish perspective, together with the expression, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” However, I have also argued that the text is fully Christological and so expresses differences with the Jewish tradition. The text does not seem to reflect the tradition of Judaism in a literal way, although Jews would probably have interpreted the text from their perspective. John 14:6 is part of the transformation from a retelling the exodus story to a declaration of sonship. Jesus is bringing the disciples’ attention to himself; to be aware, to acknowledge, and to participate in the concept of sonship. The practice of having the Passover meal was indeed a Jewish practice but the content of the ritual was transformed from historical (remembrance) to Christological (teaching). Further discussion on this particular aspect of the text comes later in this section. The next question to be addressed is whether the declaration in the text is exclusive.

One way to determine whether or not the text is exclusive is by investigating the audience. The audience can fall into two major categories: the direct audience of Jesus during the meal and the intended audience of the gospel.⁷³ John creates the impression that Jesus was having the meal with “his own” (ιδίους), which “he loved to the end.” John does not specify who exactly were in this category. However, tracking the narrative back to before the festival, Jesus is described as spending time with “his disciples” (John 12:16). This indicates Jesus

⁷³ There are also two other minor categories that cover the Christian tradition that took the Gospel of John as one of the four Canonical Gospels: the audience created by the text, and non-Christian readers who regarded Jesus as the Messiah.

was having the meal with his disciples. This leaves me with the option of Jesus having the meal with his disciples, the circle of the twelve, as they were all male disciples. Livingstone and Cross (2005) support this argument by observing that the meal was eaten by Jesus and his twelve disciples. I am inclined to accept this argument as the circle of the twelve was indeed mentioned and it reacted to the scenarios that happened during the meal, which I have explained through the four *Mah Nishtanah*. The act of Jesus washing the disciples' feet gives an indication that there would not have been many people in the room with him besides his twelve disciples. In John 13:14, Jesus explains that he is acknowledged as the Lord and teacher by the group with whom he is having the meal. John 1:38, 49 records that the twelve disciples address Jesus as Rabbi, but also as the son of God and the king of Israel.⁷⁴ As well as proving that John, and therefore the disciples, use the Jewish term "Rabbi," this also means Jesus was indeed having the meal with his twelve disciples in John 14:6. Köstenberger (1998) provided a careful literary analysis to argue that Jesus was primarily acknowledged as a Jewish religious teacher. However, in John 3:2, John indicates that Jesus was addressed as Rabbi not only by the twelve disciples. A Pharisee named Nicodemus also addresses Jesus as Rabbi. Nicodemus's use of the word "we" in the text instead of "I" suggests that he was not the only one, suggesting the possibility of Jesus having more followers outside the circle of the twelve. This idea is well supported throughout John 6:25, where John shows that the followers of Jesus, who also acknowledged Jesus as Rabbi, were a crowd. It is not only the circle of the twelve, or Nicodemus himself, but a multitude. In the post-resurrection scene in chapter 20, Mary Magdalene even addresses Jesus as Rabbi (or Rabbouni, "my Rabbi"),

⁷⁴ See also John 3:2, 4:31, 6:25, 9:2, 11:8, and 20:16.

which positions her as one of Jesus' disciples as well. Thus, it can be seen that Jesus had many disciples or followers. However, this does not mean that Jesus was having the Passover meal with all of them, as John only records his engagement with the members of the circle of the twelve. There is no indication of engagement with disciples other than the circle of the twelve.

I can now say that the direct audience of the text is the circle of the twelve. Jesus delivers his message to his twelve disciples. The encouragement and the invitation in John 14:6 are therefore directed to them. The next investigation goes to the intended audience of John. From the above description of the nature of Jesus' disciples, it is apparent that John intended to direct the message of the text to a bigger audience than just the circle of the twelve. It is clear he wanted to spread the message to Jesus' followers, widely, geographically, and socially. I say geographically to take into account the wide spread of Jesus' followers, both inside and outside Galilee, around the time when the oral traditions began to surface.⁷⁵ The closing verses in the gospel contain ambiguities. When John describes Jesus performing signs in the presence of his disciples, it might signify the eleven (Judas Iscariot was not actively involved in discipleship) or the bigger crowd. However, verse 31 identifies these disciples as those who were not eyewitnesses to the signs Jesus performed, which might then refer to the widespread disciples (for example, the diasporic disciples). In other words, John's intended audience may be the larger audience of Jesus' disciples, those who could not see Jesus but were expected to believe in him. These could be the Greeks as

⁷⁵ See Horsley (2003), Kelber (2003), and Labahn (2015) for further reading.

investigated by Dodd (1953) or, as argued by some scholars, they could be Christians in general or the Johannine community (e.g., Allen, 1955, p. 92; Brown, 1984, p. lxxviii; Ellis, 1984, p. 5; Lincoln, 2005, pp. 82–89; Ridderbos, 1997, pp. 651–653). I would say they were early Christians, the followers of Jesus Christ post-resurrection, considering the gospel was composed in 100 C.E. Wang (2016) suggested this intended audience were members of the Johannine community facing severe persecution, which explains the messages about how the world would treat the disciples unfairly. John is reflecting his contemporary reality through Jesus’ last messages or teachings. Wang’s investigation of the intended audience leads to the conclusion that these people were the believers, or in my observation, they were Jesus’ disciples, Jesus’ followers. The term “Christian” was used to categorize members of this group. This explanation suggests that this group consisted of Jews but also non-Jews, including “gentiles” such as Greeks. It is clear that even at this time, this “Christian” group was not a centralized organization with well-structured teachings, rituals, or doctrines. This group was formed purely out of the belief in Jesus Christ who died and was resurrected, as described by John. The belief system only gained a distinct identity as a religion (differentiated from Judaism) by the second century C.E. (Bennema, 2013), by which time the Fourth Gospel had already been composed. It became an organized structure only when Christianity was made the religion of the empire by Constantine in the early fourth century C.E.

In light of this argument, I would like to provide another angle to my emphasis on the intersection of two religious traditions. In one sense, a tradition requires time to develop, to gain experience in different contexts, gather a body of teaching and assumptions, and adapt to circumstances, and indeed to experience differences of opinion and splits. Thus, to speak of a nascent tradition by the end of the first century C.E. (when the Gospel of John was most

likely written) is a description made in hindsight, after Christianity did indeed become a distinct tradition, with all its variations. Then it becomes possible to look back and identify the origins of the tradition. But what about the people experiencing this belief system in the first century C.E.? Did they see it in this way? On the one hand, it is difficult to place oneself—thousands of years later—in a different context, with its cultural and social assumptions. On the other hand, we may consider some factors that provide at least some insight.

It seems clear that the early Christian communities saw themselves primarily in continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures and in light of Jewish assumptions and practices at the time. There were many such groups at the time, who argued that they embodied the truth and indeed the fulfilment of the hopes of the Hebrew Scriptures, feeling that the Jerusalem authorities had compromised themselves in siding too closely with the Romans (Josephus may be seen as a defender of this Roman perspective). In other words, the early Christians did not see themselves as a distinct religion. The text of the Gospel of John is deeply Jewish, and even its Christological values carry on the messianic tradition, although in unexpected ways. Thus, to say that John 14:6 belongs exclusively to Christianity would not be correct. Readers, not only Christians, need to consider the Jewish aspects when reading the text. This particular tradition has to be taken into account when interpreting the text. The Jewish tradition contributed some of its values and perspectives into Johannine Christology. It is possible that John directed the text to Christians; however, these Christians were not organizationally the same as Christians after the third and especially fourth centuries C.E. These Christians were the followers and disciples of Jesus Christ, who no longer had the opportunity to experience his existence. They could be the eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ,

together with one to two subsequent generations, in which case they could be categorized as the early Christians.

In this light, it is a mistake to read John 14:6 as an exclusive claim for Christianity, that only Christianity—a distinct religion—provides the path for salvation. From the above discussion, it is apparent the text comes from a particular traditional background. However, the text does not describe a Christian religious tradition, as it came to be known later. To put the issue more dialectically, in one respect John 14:6 does make an exclusive claim in terms of its content, and it is directed at “Christians.” In another respect, the terminology of “Christian” in this situation does not yet entail a distinct religion with its distinct traditions; it merely designates followers of the Christ. In other words, they were followers of the Messiah, the “anointed one,” whom they saw as fulfilling the Hebrew Scriptures. The claim of John 14:6 arose from the Jewish tradition; it responded to Jewish hopes, customs, and laws, and also to contemporary Jewish life in Jesus’ time.

By now it should be clear that the claims based on John 14:6—as I have often experienced them—miss the point. These claims become transformed into “there is no salvation outside the church,” “if one is not Christian, one cannot go to heaven,” “only through Christianity, can one be saved,” “only through being a member of a Christian church, can one go to heaven,” or “religions other than Christianity cannot enable entry into heaven.” As I have shown in the previous analysis and discussion, these claims cannot be justified. John 14:6 comes from a Jewish background and at the same time reflects Christological values. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,” is a statement about Jesus’ distinctiveness among other Jewish leaders; it is an encouragement from Jesus to his eleven disciples to be able to live life the way Jesus lived his; and it is an invitation for the disciples to participate in performing actions that would

enable them to depart to the father. Departing to the father has the same meaning as coming to the father, which refers to the concept of abiding (e.g., John 13:34) but also the concept of unification. This unification is reflected throughout the text, identified through phrases such as “God is in him, he is in God” (e.g., John 13:32), “believe in God, believe also in me,” “if you know me, you will know my father,” and most importantly, “no one comes to the father except through me.” To follow and to imitate Jesus is the raw meaning of John 14:6. Jesus had shown his distinctiveness as the only son of the father, and this aspect is expressed throughout the text. This is the impression John created for the Christian readers. John wanted them to know that Jesus is indeed a messianic figure. Jesus was both a Jewish teacher and a Rabbi, and yet he was unlike the other Jewish leaders, for the messianic embodiment was not quite what was expected, especially in light of the message of love, *agape* (Ringe, 1999; see also Miller, 2000, p. 279).

When expressing Jesus as *hodos*, *aletheia*, and *zoe*, John was pointing out how distinctive Jesus was, and by adding “No one comes to the father except through me,” John was showing how important Jesus was. This also indicates that having a belief was truly significant at that time. I can still observe the significance of such a belief nowadays by observing how Christianity has impacted the religious relationships among Indonesians, especially the relationships of Christian Indonesians with others. I discuss this aspect further in the conclusion to this study. John must have realized how the departure of Jesus would impact the strength of his followers’ faith in him. This particular text was one of encouragement.

I have mentioned at times that the text of the Gospel of John may be seen in terms of similarity in dissimilarity. Thus far, I have been emphasizing how it is similar with its Jewish context and assumptions. But how is it dissimilar? The answer lies in John’s distinct

Christological concern, which is distinct from the Synoptic Gospels as it focuses on the identity of Jesus Christ as the only son of God. This seems to suggest that the time John composed the gospel was the time Christology began to surface, although I can argue that the Synoptics contain Christological aspects as well. However, Christology in the Fourth Gospel is voluminous. The Christological aspects of the Fourth Gospel are displayed on a completely different level than those in the Synoptics. John 14:6 is indeed an account of the festival of Passover; however, it was transformed when Jesus brought a perspective to the tradition that was no longer a Jewish perspective, but a Christological perspective. The Christological aspect of the account of the Passover meal is the concept of sonship. The account revolves around how Jesus promised his disciples that because he is the son of God, they would be well taken care of by “the advocate” whom the father would send after his departure; they should therefore not fear the Jews or the Romans. It also includes the invitation to the disciples to become one with him as he is one with the father.

Chapter 13 points out the Christological aspect of how to lead by example. Jesus encourages his disciples to practice the same actions towards one another and, in a wider aspect, towards the intended audience. Leading by example is Jesus’ character as a leader and it is done through love. The way (*hodos*) Jesus lives is by performing the act of love. When one becomes his disciple, one must be able to perform the act of love. The text progresses to chapter 14, where John shows that Jesus is one with the father, because he is the only son who was sent to do his father’s work. But John also introduces a third figure, the holy spirit who will be sent by the father once Jesus departs. The Christological aspect of this chapter is the concept of the father, the son, and the holy spirit (later identified as the Trinity). Because he is in the father and the father is in him, whatever the disciples ask from the father in Jesus’ name will be given. John continues his Christological effort in chapters 15 and 16, where he

uses the metaphor of the true vine. Jesus invites his disciples to become one with him as he is one with the father, so the spirit (the advocate) will be sent to be with them when the world finally performs its hatred towards them as the followers and disciples of Jesus. The negation of all these aspects would be if one is not a disciple, one does not perform the act of love and therefore does not know the father and does not have the holy spirit as the advocate.

My focus in chapter 14 is on the level of Jesus as one with his father. The Christological aspect John is trying to show through verse 14:6 is indeed Jesus' distinctiveness. The implication of the text for the followers and disciples is the privilege of being Jesus' disciples (or followers in the context of John's intended audience). The text reflects the transformation from liberty from slavery into liberty from the world, a liberation from fear of the world (the world here meaning non-followers). Jesus' last teachings in the account of the Passover meal are indeed Christological. The same teachings were retold in a Johannine way and addressed no longer only to the eleven disciples, but to the widespread followers of Jesus.

Thus, to use John 14:6 to condemn other religions for not following Christian traditions would not be ideal. To claim that only Christians can experience salvation—which is often expressed as “going to heaven”—would not be wise. The original teachings did not involve Christianity as a religion and tradition. They were Christological without connection to any social or religious institution. Therefore, Jesus is not saying that only Christianity is the right religion, and other religions are therefore wrong by definition. True, the Christological aspects of the text later became recognized as Christian teachings and traditions, and given the theological title of “Christology.” However, Christianity was not instituted at the time Jesus had his Passover meal with the disciples. Therefore, I would argue against putting Christianity as a social institution into a text that has the context of a transformed Jewish tradition, manifested in this case through the Passover meal.

I have argued that John's audience for the text was indeed composed of Christians. This is true to the extent that these were early Christians who did not manage to experience life with Jesus in physical way and were not yet fully instituted as Christians through a religious organization. My point is that Christianity as a social institution should not be read into the text because it did not exist in Jesus' time and was not fully instituted during the Johannine community's time. Christianity should not be seen the primary context of the text.

To summarize my argument in response to the exclusivist claim some see in John 14:6, I initially returned to the question of whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal, which led me to ask the broader question as to whether Easter is in some way also a Passover festival. This discussion led me to emphasize the theme of similarity in difference. I then addressed directly the core question I have been examining throughout this thesis: whether John 14:6 can read in an exclusivist manner. There were two parts to my answer. The first is that the claim is often expressed in terms of a distinct ecclesiological organization, known as the Christian church in all its many forms, which has come—after 2,000 years—to define what “Christianity” means. However, this ecclesiological structure simply did not exist at the time of the first century C.E., when texts such as the Gospel of John were written. Instead, we may speak of a group of followers, gathered in isolated communities that were small in number and facing significant external pressure and opposition. That these followers saw themselves initially in terms of the Jewish tradition is clear, for they based their claims to Jesus' messianic status in terms of the Hebrew Scriptures. The fact that early debates and struggles concerned “gentile” Christians—especially as more followers began appearing in the Hellenistic world and then in Rome—indicates how central this initial Jewish tradition was.

The second part of my answer returned to the issue of similarity in difference, for in the midst of the similarity there were distinct differences. I argued that the difference in John's

presentation of Jesus is in terms of Christology—a somewhat anachronistic term, since it comes from the later tradition of theology, but it clearly expresses the focus of the Gospel of John.

Finally, I would like to return to an earlier point. In hindsight, the early movement of Christians did become a religious tradition, with its assumptions, structures, theology, differences, and splits. Only from this perspective has it become possible to identify this tradition's origins with the events around Jesus of Nazareth and the way they were recorded in the New Testament. From this perspective, we can say that at the very moment John has Jesus make an apparently exclusivist claim—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"—he does so at the complex intersection of two traditions, the one much older and the other only just beginning. Is this a rejection of the older tradition? No. Is it an affirmation of a new departure? Yes. But then so was the exodus, as celebrated by all Jews through the Passover on an annual basis. Similarity in difference; the intersection of two religious traditions. And when you have two instead of one, you have many.

Conclusion

I have stated my main thesis on a number of occasions throughout this study, with a number of features. These include the fact that one cannot speak of a distinct religion called “Christianity” in the first century C.E., for at that time there were followers of Christ in various small communities. Thus, to claim that Christianity is exclusivist is anachronistic and misses the point. In other words, the Fourth Gospel, particularly John 14:6, is designed to be read by the followers of Jesus’ teachings, especially during the transition period when the Jewish tradition was still acknowledged and Christianity was only at its beginning. John 14, however, acknowledges the role of non-followers as well. Based on this understanding, I can say that one can be a follower without being a “Christian”; or, as it is known in the Roman Catholic tradition, an “anonymous” follower.⁷⁶ Jesus’ teachings did not constitute a religion. His followers (the audience) at that time were not following a religion. Christianity during the first century C.E. existed to distinguish Jesus’ followers from the world. The exclusivity of the text is not located within the claim itself, but in the audience of the text. It is exclusively for the followers of Jesus Christ. I stress this point, since John 14:6 is used at times in multi-faith contexts to condemn other religions and assert that only Christianity provides the path to

⁷⁶ I have adapted this term from Karl Rahner’s (1986, p. 207) notion of an “anonymous Christian,” which he defines as a person who “lives in the grace of God and attains salvation outside of explicitly constituted Christianity.” Rahner’s emphasis was a little different from my emphasis, in that he was speaking of those who have never heard the Christian message, but still lived their lives in terms of the salvific grace of God, through Jesus Christ.

salvation or the ability to “go to heaven.” Based on the in-depth examination in this study, I can now say that the claim cannot be justified, since the text is not speaking about a “religion” and therefore does not condemn other religions.

At another level, however, I have also argued that we may also view the developments of the time in hindsight, as the origins of what later became a distinct religious tradition. This approach entails a shift in perspective, but it complements the conclusion outlined in the previous paragraph. If we take the perspective of today, or indeed of some 1700 years of Christianity, it has become a “religion,” a complex body with many parts and emphases. In this light, the material we find in the New Testament and especially the text I have been examining in the Fourth Gospel is now seen as the origins, the first shoots of what later became a religious tradition. But this means John 14:6 appears at the intersection of two religious traditions, and so its apparently exclusivist claim must at least apply to both of these traditions. We may see this point in terms of content and form. In terms of content, the claim of John 14:6 seems to be exclusivist, and many Christians have seen it in such a way. But in terms of form, it cannot be exclusivist, since it includes both Judaism and what became Christianity within its orbit. The way, the truth, and the life refer at least to both, and “coming to the Father” must—at the level of form—include at least two.

For the remainder of this conclusion, I will address a number of further issues, particularly the implications of the findings for particular communities, how it might influence those communities, and areas for further research.

Implications for Multi-Religious Countries

The discussion of the multi-religious context arises from the background of this study. I have observed the text of John 14:6 being utilized by Christians, particularly in Indonesia. A

similar utilization by Christians outside Indonesia also takes place. Therefore, I would like to present the implications of my findings for a multi-religious context, including Indonesia.

The text has been interpreted to respond the current context of the community, which, in this case, is the multi-religious country of Indonesia. Being a minority, Indonesian Christians read John 14:6 from their perspective. This way of reading the text is recognized in this study as *eisegeses*, in which the context of the biblical text itself is ruled out and replaced with what is seen—if it is at all recognized by those doing so—as the more applicable context of today. As mentioned in the introduction, there is an apparent paradox in making this point, for my study has arisen from a particular context, that of Indonesia. In Indonesia, I frequently come across people who use John 14:6 as a “proof text” to claim the exclusivity of Christianity. Does this mean that my research topic and the conclusion that John 14:6 cannot be read in such an exclusivist way is also context-determined, or context-contaminated as I have termed it? Is my research also a form of eisegesis? As I indicated in the introduction, I distinguish between a research question *arising from* a particular context, but not being *determined by* that context. Instead, my resolute focus has been on the *exegesis* of the text.

Why do some Christians in Indonesia, or indeed in other multi-faith contexts, make a eisegetical claim in relation to John 14:6? One reason may be an “inferiority complex” and the desire not to feel inferior. Thus, the text is read in light of the circumstances of inferiority. The text is utilized to justify the minority religion’s position among other major religions. From a Christian’s perspective, the text says, “We are not inferior. We shall not fear the superiority and power of others because we are the only way to salvation. Jesus claims that only through Christianity can one go to heaven.” These interpretations have now been proven to be implausible.

These findings may have potential impacts on this community, among which I anticipate the following.

First, should the concern of inferiority have been the cause of those implausible interpretations, the findings of this study would reinstate that concern and put it at risk. This might eventually result in a refusal of the findings. The long-term implication of this scenario is the avoidance of exegesis as a method of biblical interpretation, which could then cause the creation of many more implausible interpretations.

Second, these findings could be accepted and acknowledged. They would refine the existing interpretations of the text. The long-term implication would be that readers would understand the value of exegesis and deploy this approach more frequently and rigorously when reading biblical texts, especially those that may have a significant impact on communities, even if the conclusions challenge long-held beliefs. More plausible interpretations could be obtained in the end.

Third, these findings may be accepted with recommendations and suggestions. New perspectives might emerge when exegesis starts to be utilized.

Fourth, the church communities most influenced by these findings may be the new and existing radical-evangelical movements, since these findings may challenge deeply held beliefs and positions.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study is sufficient to answer the main question of whether or not the text of John 14:6 can be read as saying that only through Christianity can one obtain salvation. However, this study touches on various topics of discussion, mostly within Johannine literature. My suggestions for further research are as follows.

The first suggestion is to determine the original author of the Gospel of John. This is not a simple task; however, it is important. Identifying the author or authors is crucial for interpreting the whole content of the gospel. Authorship determines the perspective of the gospel. The events, ideologies, views, and values could be determined by having knowledge of the original author.

The second suggestion is in regards to (1984) analysis of the keywords in John 14:6, as he examined only *aletheia* and *zoe* in light of *hodos*. My in-depth study has justified this perspective; however, I still see value in examining all the keywords, including verse 6b, before proceeding to look at the relations of all the keywords.

The third suggestion is the event of Passover in the Book of Exodus, in the development of the Passover Haggadah, and in the Fourth Gospel. I note that since the festival has been brought forward over generations and has been recorded, adjusted, and developed, it is necessary to examine the validity of the festival through this material. Further scholarship may reveal new perspectives on all Passover-related biblical work, as well in the development of Christian festivals. There could be many possible scenarios arising from this scholarship. I plan to do further work on the subject of the timing of the Passover meal in the Fourth Gospel. I have addressed the subject briefly in this study, and I am open to examining the subject more thoroughly in the future.

The fourth suggestion is a further in-depth examination of the term of “love” and the act of love referred to by Jesus within the section on the Passover of meal in the Fourth Gospel. There has been some scholarship around this theme, such as the work of Black (1999), Haraguchi (2014), Keim (1995), and Robinson (2015); however, they do not completely cover the many dimensions of love as presented by John.

Lastly, I hope for some thorough investigations of the Passover meal (Seder) in the Synoptic Gospels, possibly using the same method as I have used in this study. I have touched on this briefly, and I wish for the investigation to be continued more thoroughly.

Significance

For Scientific (Scholarly) Research

This study demonstrates that John 14:6 does not make an exclusivist claim in the way it is so often understood. I have already explained the reasons for this conclusion, which is the result of careful analysis of the Passover tradition and the Gospel of John. This finding differs from many existing works on the Bible, especially in Indonesia. Since it challenges the assumptions of such works, it can be seen as a new development and a valuable insight within Johannine scholarship, particularly around the subject of John 14:6. Indeed, I found the text of John 14:6 has not attracted much attention in biblical scholarship, in any part of the world. Hopefully, this study will contribute to changing this situation.

For the Faith (Theological and Ecclesiological)

My hope is that this study may be fruitful in the realm of knowledge exchange among Christians in Indonesia and Christians worldwide, especially those who live in faith-diverse communities. Although I realize that my findings would need to be promoted in a variety of formats—spoken, written, social media—my hope is that readers will stop making unexamined biblical claims and using those claims to suit their needs, which I consider an act of context-contamination. My hope is for a harmonious community whose members avoid conflicts (in this case conflicts in the name of religions or faiths) by being responsible when reading their sacred texts and knowing how to treat them.

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