The Gospel of John: The "End" of Scripture

FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, S.D.B.
Australia-Pacific Province of the Salesians of Don Bosco
Melbourne, Australia

The explicit citations of the sacred Scriptures of Israel in the Gospel of John are plotted to culminate in Jesus' final word from the Cross. The words of Jesus are regularly presented as the fulfillment of Scripture, and his words are even read as Scripture. The Gospel of John is a presentation of Jesus as the continuation and perfection of Israel's sacred Scriptures.

Many good storytellers wait till the end of the events they narrate to let their readers know what drove them to put pen to paper. This was certainly the case with the four evangelists, as can be seen in Matthew (Matt 28:16–20), Luke (Luke 24:44–49), and John (John 20:30–31). It was also the case for Mark 16:1–8, once one has come to grasp the subtlety of the enigmatic vv. 7–8: "But go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you into Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you. And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." However, there may be a hint of something more in John 20:30–31 than the message that the author wants his readers to go on deepening their belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that by believing in him they might have life in his name. He tells his readers that a selection has been made from the many accounts that could have been written (v. 30: gegrannmena), and that he has written (v. 31: tauto de gegraptai) this particular collection of possible episodes from the life and teaching of Jesus to lead them further in their faith journey.

The author is concluding a document that he has "written": literally, "a scripture" (graphe). At this point, we should notice the two-fold use of a Greek verb (graphe) that points to the author's decision to produce a written document, and ask whether this indicates anything more than a factual assertion that he had created a written "story"—one among many possible such narratives (v. 30)—to communicate his message, or his "discourse" (v. 31). We

---

2 There are a number of exegetical difficulties in v. 31, especially surrounding the use of the verb "to believe." For a discussion, and an explanation of the interpretation offered here, see Francis J. Moloney, The Gospel of John (SP 4; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1998).
3 The author of the Fourth Gospel will be referred to as "he" throughout, respecting the masculine gender of the Greek expression where he most reveals himself in 19:25–27. Occasional use of the expression "John" will also be made, out of respect for the tradition and for simplicity. It presupposes nothing about the identity of the real author, whose identity is beyond scientific control.
4 Narrative critics rightly distinguish between the "story," i.e., the succession of events, the interaction of charac-
might also notice, however, that earlier in ch. 20, following the return of Peter and the other disciple to their homes in v. 9, the author adds an aside, commenting for the readers that these two major disciples in the Johannine story "did not yet know the Scriptures (hē gra phē).

Here the reference is clearly to the Sacred Scriptures of the Early Church, made obvious by the plural form of the Greek expression hē gra phē, universally used by Christian authors to refer to the HB, revered as a sacred and authoritative text by both Jews and Christians. But the author writes of their lack of knowledge that Jesus must rise from the dead (v. 9). The implication is that if they had known the Scriptures, they would have already known that Jesus must rise from the dead. Would Peter and the Beloved Disciple have known this if they had read the Sacred Scriptures of Israel? Or does John have another gra phē in mind—a Christian story of Jesus that was also Scripture?

To suggest that the author of the Fourth Gospel may have regarded other Christian writings that told of Jesus' resurrection, or even his own story of Jesus, as "Scripture" (vv. 9, 30, 31) is a surprising claim. Such a suggestion was made by Dwight Moody Smith for all four Gospels in his 1999 Presidential Address to the Society of Biblical Literature in Boston. What follows attempts to develop further some of Moody Smith's suggestions for the Gospel of John. 

THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

A number of valuable analyses of the Johannine use of the OT have appeared over the past several decades. However, as far back as 1922, Alexander Faure pointed to a distinctive feature of the use of Scripture in the Fourth Gospel that has not been given the attention it deserves. As with all Gospels and the letters of Paul, the Fourth Evangelist has regular recourse to the Scriptures of Israel. Faure pointed out, however, that the introductions to the biblical citations change their character halfway through the gospel. This "pattern" is unique to the Fourth Gospel. Seven direct citations from the OT appear across the first half of the gospel. These citations either have no introduction (twice), or they are introduced by a form of the expression, "it is written" (estin gegrannomenon, six times). This indication to the reader that

ters, time, and place, etc., and the "discourse," i.e., the underlying message communicated by the narrative. Once we would have called "discourse" "the moral of the tale." For this, among many, see the important work of Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978.


Alexander Faure, "Die alttestamentlichen Zitate im 4. Evangelium und die Quellenscheidungshypothese," ZNW 21 (1922): 99–121. Full and critical attention to this textual phenomenon lies at the heart of the important study of Obermann, Die christologische Erfüllung. Much of what follows has been influenced by Obermann's book.
a passage from Scripture follows does not, however, take away from the significance of each biblical reference. From 1:23–12:13–15, the citations of Scripture are always associated with a moment of revelation to “the Jews” that takes place during Jesus’ public ministry. They appear as follows:

- In 1:23 (no introduction), Scripture is used to suggest that Jesus is Lord.
- In 2:17 (“it was written”), Scripture points to the body of Jesus as the temple.
- In 6:31 (“it is written”) and in 6:45 (“it is written”), Scripture is used to support the claim that Jesus is the living bread.
- In 10:34 (“is it not written?”), Scripture indicates that Jesus is Son of God.
- The use of the Scriptures in 12:13 (no introduction) and 12:15 (“it is written”) provides the biblical background for the acclamation of Jesus as king.\(^9\)

One could claim that there is a sense in the first half of the Johannean story that the narrative tradition of the graphē of the OT continues into the Gospel of John. However, the first half of the tale uses Scripture to proclaim to “the Jews”—the audience in all the above citations from the OT—who Jesus is. From 1:19–12:19, Jesus is among “the Jews” during his public ministry. The Scriptures serve as background to support the Fourth Evangelist’s claim that Jesus is Lord, temple, living bread, Son of God, and king. In the midst of misunderstanding and inability to understand who Jesus is and what he is doing during his public ministry, Scripture provides the correct explanation to “the Jews,” whose sacred text is cited.\(^9\)

The Johannine narrative comes to a turning point in chs. 11–12: Jesus turns toward the cross. These chapters serve as a narrative “bridge” out of the public ministry into the story of the cross.\(^8\) In 12:1–19, Jesus enters Jerusalem and surrounding rumblings of discontent continue themes begun in 11:45–57. The practice of either not introducing an explicit citation, or simply stating “it is written” reappears, in close proximity (12:13 [no introduction]; 12:15 [“it is written”]). This manner of referring to the Scripture ends with these two passages that use Scripture to proclaim Jesus’ royalty.

“The hour” of Jesus has been held in abeyance from early in the story (2:5) until now; it has not yet come (see 7:6, 30; 8:20). However, with the advent of the Greeks and their request to see Jesus (12:20–22), Jesus is able to announce that “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (v. 23).\(^1\) The arrival of the hour of Jesus serves as a clear indication to the reader that the story is turning toward an account of the lifting up of Jesus on the cross (see

---

\(^8\) On the ambiguous nature of this royal proclamation within its Johannine context, see Moloney, John, 350–51, 358–59.


\(\text{On this passage, its relationship to the earlier “hour” passages, and its function in introducing Jesus’ passion as his hour, his glorification, and the manifestation of the glory of God, see Francis J. Moloney, The Johannine Son of Man (2d ed.; Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 161–85.}\)
of each

They

ample.
support

likelihood; they are not necessarily
neutrality between them. The choice of
which of the two is the main point may
depend on the context in which they are
used.

3:14; 8:28), his moment of glorification, and the revelation of the glory of God (11:4). Jesus’ words to “the Jews” make the point explicitly: “Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw everyone to myself” (12:31–32). In case anyone has lingering doubts about what is meant by “the hour,” “the lifting up of the Son of Man,” and “glory and glorification,” the storyteller adds a word of explanation: “He said this to show by what death he was to die” (v. 33). The theme of Jesus’ crucifixion has been drawn into the center of the narrative.

The die has been cast, but Jesus’ words are misunderstood and rejected, and he withdraws and hides himself from them (12:34–36). From this point on, every reference to the Scriptures is introduced by a fulfillment formula. The formulae vary slightly, but across the second half of the Gospel of John, the Scriptures do not only reveal Jesus to “the Jews.” They are “fulfilled.” There are six such passages, and they intensify as the narrative draws toward its dramatic conclusion. Five of these passages are:

- In 12:38, the evangelist’s questions about the failure of “the Jews” to accept what God was making known in and through Jesus is explained: “It was that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled (πληρωθῇ).” As Jesus turns toward the cross, the Scriptures are being fulfilled. This is a first hint of a relationship that might exist between the fulfillment of Scripture and the cross of Jesus.

- In 13:18, Judas’ betrayal takes place “that the Scripture may be fulfilled (πληρωθῇ).”

- In 15:25, Jesus describes the hatred meted out against him: “It is to fulfill (πληρωθῇ) the word that is written in their law.”

- In 19:24, as Jesus is lifted up as King on the cross (see 19:17–22, in the light of 18:28–19:16b), the Roman soldiers cast lots for his seamless undergarment. The reader is again informed: “This was to fulfill (πληρωθῇ) the Scripture.”

- The death of Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of the Scriptures that spoke of the Passover Lamb (19:36) and of a promise that future generations would look upon the pierced one (v. 37). Both of these citations are introduced with the formula found in v. 36: “For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled (πληρωθῇ).” Thus, from 12:38 onward, every citation from the Scriptures is associated with Jesus’ death, and they all point to the author’s belief that in and through the event of the cross the Scriptures are fulfilled.

The sixth passage that makes explicit reference to the Scriptures is found in the Johan-
nine description of Jesus' death. The process of "fulfillment" appears to come to its climax in 19:28–30a. This passage is based on Ps 69:21 (LXX Ps 68:22): "After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished (teteletai), said (to fulfill [teleiothē] the Scripture), 'I thirst '" (v. 28). Here, however, the fulfillment of Scripture is not expressed by the verb used to this point to express "fulfillment" (plerōo), but by two very similar verbs that also mean "to fulfill," taking this idea further. The verbs found in v. 28 are telō and teleioō. Their dictionary meaning is very broad: "to fulfill, perfect, bring to final accomplishment." These Greek verbs and the associated noun (telos) carry a rich double meaning. It is the first place, associated with the passing of time, something comes to its telos when it arrives at its "end" moment. In Jesus' case, this means the cross. Secondly, however, the same expression is used to indicate the final and perfect accomplishment of a deed or a task. In Jesus' case, this means the final fulfillment of his task: to make known God's love (see 17:3). Nowhere is this double meaning better exemplified than in John 13:1. The evangelist announces that Jesus' love for his disciples was so great that he loved them eis telos ("to the end"). He loved them to the final moment of his life, his death on the cross, and in that moment he brought his task of making known God's love to its finest and final moment of expression. On the cross Jesus makes known consummate love (see also 4:34; 17:4).

The death of Jesus not only fulfills the promises of Israel's sacred Scriptures, but it brings them to their "perfect end," their telos. As we have seen in the brief explanation of 19:28–30a, John has used various forms of the Greek noun and verb associated with telos earlier in the narrative to promise a final moment that would bring God's design to that "perfect end" (see 4:34; 13:1; 17:4). The presentation of Jesus' death as perfection and fulfillment, however, comes to a dramatic conclusion in 19:30a. Although not associated with a citation from Scripture, Jesus' exclamation from the cross authoritatively announces that everything has been brought to its final accomplishment, and thus all is fulfilled: "It is accomplished" (v. 30a: teteletai). The carefully plotted use of the Sacred Scripture of Israel across the Fourth Gospel, read in close conjunction with the unfolding of Jesus' story, leads steadily to its climax: "it is accomplished." This is a first, and very important, indication that the revelation of the glory of God in and through the death of Jesus, as told in the story of the Gospel of John, is the "end," the fulfillment, of the biblical story.

THE WORD OF JESUS AND SCRIPTURE

More can be uncovered from the passages that run from 12:38–19:36, indicating that Israel's Scripture has been fulfilled. In two of the citations from Scripture, the reader is

---

11 See Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt and E. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (2d rev. and augmented ed., ed. E. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker). See esp. 21:15–17. However, placing them side by side, in such close proximity, has an intensifying effect. The RSV (for example) catches the interplay between verbs as follows: "knowing that all was now finished (teteletai), said (to fulfill [teleiothē] the scripture), 'I thirst'... When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished' (teteletai)."
informed that "the word" (ho logos) of the prophet or the law is fulfilled (12:38; 15:35), and
in the other three citations, the Scripture (hie graphê) is fulfilled (13:18; 19:24, 36). The Word
(ho logos) and the Scripture (hie graphê) of the OT continues to be narrated in the Gospel of
John. But in the prologue to this gospel Jesus is presented as God's word become flesh (1:1-2,
14). It is not a long step to link Israel's Word of God, its Scripture, and the story of Jesus.
For John, Jesus fulfills Scripture in his "lifting up" on the cross. His cry that everything has
been accomplished (19:28-30b) indicates that his revelation of God's love has been perfected

However, other events are associated with the moment of Jesus' death. "He bowed his
head and handed over the Spirit (pantedoken to pneumâ)" (19:30b). The Scriptures have been
fulfilled and perfected in the death of Jesus (v. 28), and the Spirit is given to the nascent
Christian community, symbolized by the presence of the Beloved Disciple and the mother of
Jesus (vv. 25-27, 30b). A new community is given the gift of the Spirit, as Jesus has now
been glorified (see 7:37-39). This ecclesial reading of the Johannine crucifixion satisfacto-
riely plays out in another reference to the fulfillment of Scripture found in this gospel. In
17:12, Jesus indicates to the Father that not one of those the Father gave him has been lost,
"that the Scripture might be fulfilled (plerothê)." This fulfillment, however, unlike every other
"fulfillment" statement in the second half of the story, is not associated with an OT text. How-
ever, shortly after his final prayer, in a close temporal and literary relationship with that
moment, Jesus commands the arresting party in the Garden that his disciples go free, and
the reason for that request is given by the author: "This was to fulfill (plerothê) the word he
had spoken, 'Of those whom you gave me, I lost not one'" (18:9). Despite scholarly debate over
a possible "Scripture" that might be behind the fulfillment formula in 17:12, the answer is
not to be found in the Scripture of the OT. In 18:9, the Scripture of 17:12 is clarified as the
word Jesus had spoken. The Scripture that is fulfilled is the word of Jesus! The close juxtapo-
sition of 17:12 and 18:9 reflects the storyteller's conviction that Jesus' word (18:19) is the
fulfillment of Scripture (17:12). This further supports the suggestion that—for the Fourth
Evangelist—Jesus' life, teaching, and especially his death, fulfil the biblical revelation.

With the relationship between 17:12 and 18:9 in mind, one can turn to the only other
place in the gospel where the verb "to fulfill" and "the word" of Jesus are associated. In 18:32,
after "the Jews" explain the need for a Roman execution (v. 31), the narrator adds: "This
was to fulfill (plerothê) the word (ho logos) Jesus had spoken to show by what death he was
to die." This explanation repeats, verbatim, the narrator's earlier comment, following hard
on the heels of Jesus' final use of the verb "to lift up" (hypoôi) to speak of his crucifixion: "And

14 For this reading of 19:28-30, see Moloney, 142-49; Idem, "The Johannine Passion and the Christian
Gospel (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2001), 179-211. This interpretation of the passion takes as its starting point
the astute observation of R. E. Brown, "The Johannine Crucifixion scene is, in a certain way, less concerned with
the fate of Jesus than with the significance of that fate for his followers" (The Gospel According to John [2 vols.; AB
15 For this reading of 18:9, in association with 17:12, see Moloney, "The Johannine Passion," 27-29.
16 No other use of pleroô (see 5:29; 7:8; 12:3; 15:11; 16:6, 24, 17:13) is associated with graphe (Scripture) or
Jesus' logos (word).
I, when I am lifted up from the earth (huposthō), I will draw everyone to myself." The narrator adds: "He said this to show by what death he was to die" (12:32-33). As the "Scripture" of the word of Jesus in 17:12 is fulfilled by "the word" of Jesus in 18:9, the same process is taking place here. Jesus has spoken of his being "lifted up" in death, and thus 18:32 looks back to this word of Jesus to claim that in his death by Roman crucifixion the word that Jesus had spoken in 12:32–33 is fulfilled. Reaching further back into the gospel, one finds that Jesus has spoken of his future "lifting up" on two earlier occasions (3:14; 8:28). Jesus' indications in 3:13, 8:28, and 12:32–33 that he would be "lifted up" are promised fulfillment in 18:32. Thus, the climactic nature of 19:28-30a, where Jesus' death is interpreted as the completion and fulfillment of Scripture, is further enhanced as the fulfillment of a "new Scripture": the word of Jesus.17

It is thus reasonable to suggest that the careful plotting of the citations from the OT, culminating in 19:28–30a, side by side with John's use of words of Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture (17:12 and 18:9; 12:32–33 and 18:32), points to the truth that the Johannine crucifixion narrative is the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Everything we have seen points in that direction. Rightly, therefore, has Moody Smith claimed: "John continues to go its separate way, rooted in the ancient biblical narrative but affirming in ways different from Matthew and Luke that the narrative comes to a theological climax and end with Jesus. Jesus' tetelestai from the cross means that the narrative is finished as well."18

THE WORD OF JESUS AS SCRIPTURE

There are two further passages in the gospel where the Johannine use of the expressions "the Scripture" (he graphē) suggests that, not only does the word of Jesus fulfill the Scriptures, but also the word of Jesus is Scripture. At the beginning of the gospel (2:22), and then at the end (20:9), a reference is made to Scripture in two "asides" that come from the narrator. These passages are in contexts that are unusual, and they have proved difficult for interpreters. However, these brief comments inserted into the narrative from time to time by the narrator are like stage directions from an artist who wrote a drama. More than anything else, they render explicit the mind of the author.19

The Johannine account of the purification of the temple (2:13–22) closes with a reflection from the narrator. He first explains that the temple Jesus would rebuild in three days was the temple of his body (v. 21). Earlier in the account, as Jesus was driving out the money-changers and the dealers, his disciples remembered that it was written: "Zeal for your house

17 Many have suggested that Isaiah's Suffering Servant in LXX Isa 52:13: "he will be lifted up" (huposthēsetai) lies behind the Johannine use of huposthō. See, for example, C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 307; Moloney, Son of Man, 63–64. If this is the case, then the sacred Scriptures of Israel also lie behind the fulfillment of Jesus' word in 3:14; 8:28, 12:32–33, and 18:12.
19 See also Obermann, Die christologische Erfüllung, 390–402.
will consume me” (v. 17). The OT reference (LXX Ps 68:10), however, says that the suffering of the person at prayer has consumed him. The verb is in the aorist tense (kataphageni). But the Johannine rewriting of this passage from Scripture changes the tense of the verb in the Psalm, a tense that referred to a past experience, to a future tense (kataphagentai). In some future time, there will be a moment when Jesus’ zeal for the house of God will consume him. The disciples “remembered” this passage from the Scriptures, promising that Jesus’ actions would eventually lead to his destruction. But at this point in the story the readers are not told that they understood what this Scripture meant. As Jesus and “the Jews” clash for the first time, Jesus announces that some future experience will lead to the destruction of his body. They remember this “Scripture” (v. 17), but their coming to understand what it means is something that lies ahead of them. Only after Jesus has been raised from the dead will they believe the Scripture and the word of Jesus.

Thus v. 22 must be read in close association with v. 17. The narrator closes his explanation of what Jesus meant by the destruction and the restoration of his body by telling the reader that only at a later stage, after Jesus had been raised from the dead, did the disciples reach beyond the mere “remembering” of v. 17. In this second moment they remembered that he had said these things about his death and resurrection, “and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken (v. 22).”20 The two expressions “the Scripture and the word” are juxtaposed to produce a meaning that is uniquely and boldly Johannine. The use of “and” (kai) is what scholars call epexegetical.21 This means that the words after the “and” explain the words before the “and.” “The Scriptures” and “the word which Jesus had spoken” are, for this author, one and the same thing. The word of Jesus uttered in v. 17 is the Scripture “remembered” by the disciples after Jesus has been raised from the dead (2:22).22 The claim of the prologue, that Jesus Christ is the Word of God become flesh (1:1–2, 14, 17) is being acted out in the story of the gospel.

Once we have seen this association of the Scriptures with the word of Jesus at the beginning of the gospel (2:22), its return at the end, in 20:9, may be assessed as a “frame” around the narrative as a whole. The narrator both begins (2:22) and ends (20:9) his story with comments that seek to explain the nature of the relationship between the original disciples and “the Scriptures” (he graphê). After the discovery of the empty tomb, and the sight and belief of the Beloved Disciple, recorded in 20:8, the narrator further remarks: “For as yet they did not know the Scripture (tên graphên), that he must rise from the dead” (v. 9). This remark has led to endless scholarly discussion of the faith of the Beloved Disciple in v. 8. There appears to be a contradiction between an affirmation of the faith of the Beloved Disciple in

---

v. 8, and this odd remark about the disciples' lack of knowledge of the Scriptures in v. 9.\textsuperscript{23}

The subtlety of the storyteller, and his understanding of this story of Jesus as Scripture, must be appreciated fully to understand this enigmatic passage. Like many other accounts of "journeys of faith" across the gospel (see especially 2:1-4:54; 9:1-10:21; 11:1-44), the Beloved Disciple moves from an absence of faith (v. 2), through an expectant half-belief as he runs to the tomb. He sees the empty tomb and the cloths, but he waits for Peter (vv. 4-5). The evangelist finally announces that the sight of the signs of death overcome by the action of God produces belief: "He saw and believed" (v. 8).\textsuperscript{24} Unlike Mary Magdalene, the gathering of the disciples and Thomas (vv. 11-28), the Beloved Disciple does not see Jesus, and thus must be judged as the first disciple to merit Jesus' final blessing: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (v. 29). For the Fourth Evangelist the Beloved Disciple is the model of all disciples. All subsequent readers of this text may not see Jesus but, like the Beloved Disciple, they will be blessed if they are able to go on believing, without "seeing Jesus."\textsuperscript{25}

What, then, are we to make of 20:9? Crucial to the interpretation of this verse are the first words, especially their temporal indication: "for as yet they did not know (oudeπo gar édeisai) the Scripture. What we have seen so far suggests that the author regards the story of Jesus, as it is recorded in this gospel, as the continuation and completion of Scripture, the consummate expression of the biblical narrative. However, the two disciples, Peter and the Beloved Disciple, are characters in the story. They are "not yet" in a situation where they can read the Scripture and find there that Jesus must rise from the dead (see 2:22). They belong to that situation in time paralleled by the disciples who "remembered" the Scriptures in 2:17, but did not understand the Scriptures and the word of Jesus until he had been raised from the dead (2:22). Such disciples, those of 2:17, 22, and 20:9 (see also 12:16), are in a "not yet" situation of ignorance that will be overcome by a later generation.

The readers of this text are now able to listen to or read the Scripture that has been known since the second century as "the Gospel of John," and recognize the revelation of God's action in the resurrection of Jesus. The enigma of 20:9 is resolved if we recognize that for its author, the Johannine narrative is itself "Scripture." But the characters in the story are not able to be readers of the story. Peter and the Beloved Disciple are in a "not yet" situation as far as the Scripture (he graphè) of the Johannine narrative is concerned. It has not yet been written! A later generation may not be able to have the same experience as the Beloved Disciple: enter the tomb and see the cloths; and thus come to faith without seeing Jesus. However, for the author of the Gospel of John, they are in a more privileged situation. They have the Scripture

\textsuperscript{23} For a summary of the debate, see Moloney, John, 253.

\textsuperscript{24} See ibid., 518-24.

\textsuperscript{25} The interpretation of the quality of the faith of the Beloved Disciple in 20:8 has long been a problem, reaching back as far as St Augustine (see In Johannis Evangelium, CXXI.9 [CCSL 36; Turnhout: Brepols, 1954], 663-664). For my understanding of 20:1-29 as the telling of three journeys of faith (creating an inclusion with 2:1-4:54) that challenge the readers (see vv. 9, 21-23, 29), see Moloney, John, 515-42. The Beloved Disciple comes to faith without seeing Jesus (v. 8), while the other believers, Mary Magdalene (v. 18) and Thomas (v. 28), come to faith only after they overcome a very physical approach to the risen Jesus (vv. 16-17; v. 25). It is the Beloved Disciple's experience that lies behind Jesus' blessing of those who believe without seeing in v. 29. For more detail, see also B. Byrne, "The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20," JSNT 23 (1985): 83-97.
of the Gospel of John and thus they can match the faith experience of the Beloved Disciple.

The use of "fulfillment" language across the second half of the gospel, culminating in 19:28–30a, shows that the author claims to have brought the story of Israel's Scripture to an end. As this is the case, the story the evangelist tells, heard and read by later generations, is the completion of Israel's Scripture. Indeed, as he closes his gospel account, he tells all who have heard and read the Scripture of the Johannine Gospel, that it has been written precisely for that purpose (20:30–31).

CONCLUSION

The readers of the story told in the Gospel of John, members of Christian communities who have to live their Christian lives without ever seeing Jesus are blessed with a book of Scripture. The life of Jesus continues much that "has been written" in the Scriptures (1:23–12:15) and his death brings them to completion, to an "end" (12:38–19:36). Scripture is fulfilled in his word (17:12 and 18:9; 12:32–33 and 18:32) and indeed, Jesus' word has become Scripture (2:22; 20:9). Thus, as John closes his story, he states what he claims to have done.

His readers face the task of believing in the in-between-time, in the time of the absence of the physical Jesus, waiting for his return (see 14:1–3). They are summoned to recognize that they are as blessed in their belief as were those who believed on the basis of what they saw (see v. 29). Like the Beloved Disciple (see v. 8), they believe without seeing Jesus (v. 29). It is the desire of the author that all those who read this book or hear its proclamation be a community of beloved disciples.26 Although the technical expression ἡ γραφὴ in the author’s final statement of his purpose for writing the Gospel is missing, its associated verb (γράφω) appears twice. The book was written so that a narrative telling the reader how Jesus, the Word of God, has lived his story might confirm what was proclaimed in the prologue. If Jesus is the revelation of God as his Word (1:1–18), then his story must also be "word" (logos) and Scripture (γραφή) (1:19–20:31).27 In order to make this clear, John has made a selection from the many "signs" that Jesus performed, which could have been written (v. 30; γραμμένα).28

A belief that reaches beyond all human, historical, and cultural conditioning accepts that Jesus is the long-awaited Christ, but only in so far as he has come from God and returns to God, the Son of God: he has made God known (see 1:18). Eternal life is possible for those who come to know God through Jesus Christ, the one whom God has sent and has made God known (see 17:3). Jesus being the Christ is entirely conditioned by the greater truth:

---

26 See Byrne, "The Faith of the Beloved Disciple," 94.
he is the Son of God. The author has shared his belief in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, by means of the story that he has written (tauta de gegraptau).

The reader reads or listens to the Scripture of the Gospel of John. The journey of Jesus and the journey of the reader have been completed. But the storytelling is successful only if the one emerging from an encounter with this gospel is led more deeply into belief in Jesus and all that he made known about God. The author has written his story that the readers may deepen their lives in God, life as a result of this exposure to the Word of God: the Johannine story of Jesus understood as the last and consummate “Scripture” (v. 31).29

29 The author of the Gospel of John would not have been alone in this. For a discussion of other early Christian works that appear to make this claim, see the reference in note 5, above.