The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel: A Key to Johannine Spirituality

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Chapter Seven

The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel

A Key to Johannine Spirituality

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I. Introduction

I last saw Raymond Brown a few weeks before he died. By strange coincidence our conversation on that day turned to death, its inevitability, its meaning for us personally and for our work, and what lay beyond that mysterious frontier. Ray told me he had been asked if, following the publication of his massive Death of the Messiah, he planned to write a work on the Resurrection. He had replied, "I prefer to research that topic face to face." It was such a quintessentially Raymond Brown remark, deep spirituality buried in a self-effacing bon mot. Little could either of us have guessed how soon that research would begin. I venture as fool where his wisdom forbade him to tread. I hope he will accept this essay on the Resurrection as a tribute to his enormous contribution to scholarship, his even greater gift to the church, his wise mentorship, and our friendship.

My purpose in this lecture is to explore the contribution of the Fourth Gospel (henceforth FG, which I will also refer to as John)\(^1\) to our understanding of the meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus, which is the foundation and the distinguishing feature of Christian faith. As such it is, or should be, at the center of Christian spirituality, that is, of the lived experience of the faith. I am going to propose that bodiliness is the linchpin of resurrection faith. The Church professes belief in the resurrection of the body. However, the bodiliness of the Risen Jesus is often discreetly circumvented in both scholarly treatments of and preaching on the subject of resurrection. I suspect that the reason for this reticence is that, for the post-Enlightenment critical mind, bodily resurrection is imaginatively implausible and thus intellectually unassimilable.\(^2\) On this topic faith seeking understanding runs into an imaginative impasse. The Gospel of John might offer the critical mind some resources for negotiating that impasse.
I will proceed in five unequal steps. First, I will lay out some methodological presuppositions for my reading of the text of John 20, the Resurrection Narrative. Second, I will briefly sketch the contours of Johannine anthropology, and third, I will offer a brief synopsis of Johannine eschatology, particularly as it differs from that of the Synoptics. Fourth, I will look at the texts in John that form the context for the interpretation of 20:19-23, the raising of the body of Jesus as the New Temple. Finally, I will interpret John 20:19-23, within the context of the chapter as a whole, as the textual expression of Johannine faith in the personal glorification of the human Jesus, his bodily resurrection, and the spirituality that expresses that faith.

II. Presuppositions

The enormous volume of scholarship on the resurrection in general and John in particular requires me to focus my approach in this lecture clearly. My basic presupposition is that the text itself, i.e., the literary work that is the FG as it now stands, and specifically that text as a narrative, both mediates theological claims and intends to transform its readers through their engagement with it. As the evangelist states explicitly in the first conclusion of the gospel, “these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). In other words, I am using literary criticism to access the theology and spirituality of the gospel rather than historical criticism to establish the facts. I am not asking about the history of the text, either its sources or its redaction, although I will pay attention to historical critical issues when appropriate. Nor am I concerned with the historicity of the events recounted, i.e., “what really happened” after Jesus’ death. My research has convinced me that Jesus’ dead body was buried and the location of his tomb was known to certain of his disciples, that he actually rose from death to new life, and that he really appeared to his disciples during a certain period of time. In other words, I am assuming that the resurrection account in the gospel is true and has a historical basis even though the meaning of “history” differs in relation to different aspects of “the hour.” My concern, however, is with the resurrection account in the Johannine text as we now have it. Consequently, I subscribe to the basic methodological presupposition of literary criticism in general, namely, the narrative unity of the final text.

This methodological choice rests on the theological presupposition that the mediator of biblical revelation is the text itself rather than the historical events to which the text witnesses. In other words, the locus of revelation is not behind the text but in the text. Of course unless something had happened on the first Easter there would be no story to tell. But finally our only access to the meaning of what happened is the story itself. Engaging an ancient text in such a way that it mediates meaning in the present requires exegesis, i.e., the attempt to
understand what the text in its own context says. But finally only interpretation, which goes beyond exegesis, allows the text to exercise its transformative power on the reader.11

Consequently my final presupposition is hermeneutical. The purpose of this study is to engage the text as a mediation of meaning. Although I assume that there is continuity between the intention of the real author, i.e., the Fourth Evangelist (henceforth FE), and the meaning of the text as it stands, it is the text that gives us access to new possibilities of Christian being in the world. What is finally important is not what the historical agent we call “John” intended to say but what the text we call John actually does say. The reader’s interaction with the text gives rise to meaning that transforms the reader into the believer who has life in Jesus’ name.12

III. Johannine Anthropology

Much discussion about bodily resurrection is subverted from the start by the fact that modern westerners tend to read the gospel texts through the lens of a basically Greek philosophical anthropology in which the human being is understood very differently from the way it is understood in the Semitic anthropology of the biblical writers, including the evangelists. John’s anthropology, although expressed with Greek vocabulary that has clearly influenced his understanding of the person, is thoroughly rooted in the Hebrew language and sensibility.13 The pertinent Greek terms, ψυχή (usually translated as soul), ζωή (translated as life), θάνατος (death), σάρξ (flesh), αἷμα (blood), πνεῦμα (spirit), and σῶμα (body), constitute a semantic field in which all the terms are interrelated and mutually qualifying. Although in English these terms each denote a component of the human being, in biblical usage they each denote the whole person from some perspective or under some aspect. Ignoring this difference can result in serious misunderstanding, such as the tendency of many moderns to hear cannibalistic overtones in Jesus’ invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood in John 6:52-58. And mistranslating the terms σάρξ and αἷμα in that passage, i.e., “flesh and blood,” as “body and blood,” leading to the identification of flesh with body, then leads to an erroneous identification of bodily resurrection with physical resurrection. In other words, it is crucial to understand what these anthropological terms meant in the context of John’s first-century Judaism as a basis for understanding how they function in the FG.

John uses the terms for life, ψυχή and ζωή, very consistently. Ψυχή refers to the person as a living human being. In John 10:17-18 Jesus speaks of freely laying down and taking up his ψυχή, meaning his natural human life.14 Ζωή, which also means life, is virtually always explicitly or implicitly qualified in John with the adjective αἰώνιος (eternal), not in the sense of indefinite temporal extension of natural life but as a qualitatively different kind of life. “Eternal life” is a technical theological term in John meaning God’s own life lived
by Jesus as the λόγος incarnate, and participated in, before as well as after
death, by those who, born of God through the Spirit, are now τέκνα θεοῦ,
children of God (cf. John 1:12-13; 3:5-6). Jesus sums up the purpose of the in-
carnation: “I have come that they may have ζωή, and have it abundantly”
(10:10). The term refers not to some quality or even power possessed by the
human being, but to the whole person as divinely alive.

Θάνατος, the opposite of life in both its natural and its divine sense, is a richly
ambiguous term in John. It means the human person without life. But, as Jesus’
lapidary self-revelation to Martha in 11:25 makes clear, there is death and death.
Those who die, as all humans must, may, like Jesus’ opponents in 8:24, “die in
their sins,” i.e., be finally dead, denizens of Sheol where they are cut off from all
meaningful personal and communal existence and especially from communion
with the living God (cf. Ps 6:6). Or, conversely, even though they die, they may,
like Jesus, live with eternal life in the glory of God. In John 11 Lazarus is a sym-
bolic instrument on which are rung all the changes and interrelations of which the
concept of θάνατος as opposition to both ordinary human life and eternal life is
susceptible.15 In John, Jesus’ death was simultaneously real human death and his
glorification as Son of Man (cf. 12:23 and elsewhere).16 But once again, death is
not simply an event; it is a condition of the whole human subject.

Σάρξ and αἷμα, usually translated as “flesh” and “blood” respectively, are
closely related terms. For moderns these terms denote substances that are
separable components of a human being. Flesh, in John’s anthropology, is not
a part of the human but the human being as natural and mortal.17 To say that in
Jesus the Word of God (λόγος) became flesh (σάρξ) is to say that he became
fully human, i.e., subject to death.18 In the Psalms especially we see “flesh”
used to speak of humanity in its weakness and mortality: “God remembered
that they were flesh, a passing breath that returns not” (Ps 145:21, see also
56:5; 65:3, and elsewhere). In John 6:51 Jesus says that he is the living bread
come down from heaven, and that the bread he will give for the life of the
world “is [his] flesh.” Jesus is not talking about a physical part of himself. He
is saying that in giving himself totally in death, which is only possible because
he is flesh, i.e., mortal, he gives life to the world.

If flesh denotes the human as mortal, “blood” used in combination with
flesh focuses on the mortal as living. Blood is not simply a part of the human
being but the “livingness” of one vulnerable to death. In Gen 9:4 God says to
Noah that all living creatures are given to humanity as food but “flesh with its
lifeblood still in it you shall not eat.” Blood, then, can stand for life itself and
“flesh and blood” means the living human being. When Jesus, in John 6, says
that believers must consume his flesh and blood he is not talking about eating
and drinking physical substances but about receiving as food his living human
self in the community’s eucharistic meal.

The rich ambiguity of the word θάνατος which can refer to physical or
eternal death, is reflected in the ambiguity of the word πνεῦμα. Spirit can
mean the breath of life, i.e., God’s creating gift to every mortal that returns to God when the creature dies, or the Spirit of God who came to rest permanently on Jesus (cf. John 1:31-33), who gives this Spirit without measure (cf. 3:34) to those who believe in him, making them children of God whose divine life death cannot touch. Jesus says in 6:63 that “the flesh” is futile, i.e., doomed to death, but that “the spirit” gives life (πνεῦμα ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν). When he then goes on to say that his words are “S/spirit and life” (πνεῦμα . . . καὶ ζωή) he plays on the ambiguity of spirit as both human life and divine life.

The most important term in this anthropological semantic field in relation to the Resurrection of Jesus, and the one John uses in a subtle way that marries Semitic and Hellenistic understandings of the human, is σῶμα, “body.” Because moderns tend to think of the body as a distinct substance in the human composite, the physical component as distinguished from the spiritual, they tend to equate it with flesh, itself misunderstood as the soft, solid component in distinction from blood and bones. In other words, body is understood as a physical substance that is integral to but only a part of the person.

For John, body is the person in symbolic self-presentation. The person may be living or dead, but it is the whole self, the bodyself, who is living or dead. In Semitic thought once the dead body begins to decay, to fall apart, the person is no longer a person. Whatever trace of the individual may survive in Sheol, it is not a human being because it does not enjoy subjectivity, community, or union with God. The body is quintessentially the person as self-symbolizing, i.e., as numerically distinct, self-consistent, and continuous, a subject who can interact with other subjects, and who is present and active in the world. A corpse, in John’s vocabulary, is also called a body (John 19:31, 38, 40) precisely because it symbolizes the whole person, the bodyself, in its transition from being to non-being or from presence to absence. It is the symbolic (i.e., perceptively real) person in the process of becoming absent, and when the person is finally and fully absent, when the corpse has decomposed (which does not happen in the case of Jesus), it is no longer considered a body. In short, if Jesus as flesh, that is, as earthly human being, is the symbolic presence of God’s glory in this world, Jesus as body is his own symbolic presence to his contemporaries. Prior to his death the two, flesh and body, i.e., the human person, are coterminous, as they are in all humans in this life. The issue of “body” as distinct in some sense from flesh only arises when Jesus dies and the two are no longer strictly coterminous.

The issue of Jesus’ real presence in and after his passage through death dominates the Last Supper in John (chs. 13–17) as well as the Resurrection Narrative (ch. 20). Where is the Lord? Has he gone where his disciples cannot follow? Are they orphans, deprived of the glory of God that had been present in the flesh of Jesus? Are future believers condemned to a faith based on hearsay about events in which they did not and do not participate? Unless
Jesus is bodily risen, i.e., unless he is alive in the full integrity of his humanity symbolized in his body, he is not present, either as the presence of humanity in God or as God’s divinely human presence to us.

The crucial anthropological-theological issue for the topic of resurrection is, then, the relation of flesh to body, i.e., of the pre-Easter person of Jesus as mortal human being to the post-Easter person of Jesus as glorified Son of Man. By way of anticipatory summary I will propose that the relation of flesh to body is precisely what is altered by Jesus’ glorification. In his pre-Easter existence as flesh the body of Jesus, i.e., his personal symbolic presence, was conditioned by his mortality. He was subject to death and to the limitations of space, time, and causality that natural human life entails. In his glorification Jesus goes to the Father as a human bodyself and in his resurrection he returns to his own in the full integrity of his humanity. His body is real, both continuous and discontinuous with his earthly body. He is numerically distinct, a personal subject who can be intersubjectively present and active, but he is no longer subject to death or determined by the spatial, temporal, or causal coordinates of historical existence. And he will be present as this same bodyself throughout post-Easter time in the range of symbols through which his personal presence will be manifest.

IV. Johannine Eschatology

A final preliminary subject that is crucial for a consideration of bodily resurrection in John is eschatology. It has long been recognized that John’s treatment of the end of Jesus’ earthly life is quite unlike that of the Synoptics. Jesus’ Passion and death in the FG are not presented as a kenosis that requires divine vindication through resurrection. Indeed, Bultmann suggested in the middle of the last century that

If Jesus’ death on the cross is already his exaltation and glorification, his resurrection cannot be an event of special significance. No resurrection is needed to destroy the triumph which death might be supposed to have gained in the crucifixion.

The Resurrection Narrative in the FG, in such a view, is merely a concession to the tradition which, by the time John was written, considered the resurrection intrinsic to the kerygma. I would suggest that, while it is true that the resurrection of Jesus is not understood in the same way and does not play the same role in John that it does in the Synoptics, it is nevertheless essential to John’s theological purpose. Integral to understanding John’s presentation of the resurrection is a grasp of his eschatological presuppositions especially as they differ from those operative in the synoptic tradition.

As is well known, early Israelite eschatology was a collectivist, national, and this-worldly expectation of Israel’s ongoing prosperity if it remained
faithful to the covenant (see, e.g., the classic formulation in Deut 30:15-20). However, the conundrum of the suffering just person and the prosperous sinner (e.g., Psalm 73; Job) gradually led toward a more universalistic hope for individual vindication beyond death. In the figure of the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13–53:12) Israel achieved a central insight into the redemptive potential of the suffering of the just person within and for the guilty community. This insight was developed in both the intertestamental literature (ca. 200 B.C.E. to 100 B.C.E.),27 and within the latest books of the Jewish Bible, notably Daniel, 2 Maccabees, and Wisdom of Solomon, where we find traces of two strands of eschatological speculation, each of which supplied categories for the Christian interpretation of Jesus’ death and resurrection.28

The Synoptic Gospels operate primarily within the earlier of these two strands, which for convenience I will label “resurrection eschatology,” developed in the context of the Syrian persecutions and the Hasidean-Hasmonean controversies in Palestine in the second to first centuries B.C.E. Faithful Jews were being persecuted and even martyred for their fidelity to Torah, but they were strengthened by the hope that they would be vindicated by God after death. The clearest OT expression of this eschatology is found in Dan 12:1-3 and 2 Maccabees 7, both of which are influenced by the Suffering Servant image in which the martyrs are assured that they will be restored even in their bodies, that Israel will be reconstituted, and that the unjust will be finally punished.

The eschatology that functions in the Synoptic treatment of resurrection, like that of Daniel and 2 Maccabees, is fundamentally futuristic and apocalyptic. It envisions an “end of the world” at which all the dead will be bodily raised to appear before the glorified Christ, the divine judge, who will assign them to eternal reward or punishment on the basis of their comportment in this life (cf. Matt 25:31-46). This final event is conceived in apocalyptic terms as an unexpected cosmic cataclysm (see Matt 14:15-44; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 17:22-37). Those who die before the final event are judged at death and go to an interim reward or punishment, like Lazarus and Dives in Luke 16:19-31, or perhaps even to purgative suffering (see, e.g., Matt 18:23-35), while awaiting the universal judgment at the end of time when individual fates will become definitive. This is essentially the Pharisaic eschatology of Jesus’ own time.

The role of bodily, even physical resurrection in this eschatology is essentially functional. It renders the just and the unjust present for final vindication.

John operates within the other strand of late pre-Christian Jewish eschatology, which I will label “exaltation eschatology.”29 It developed in the Hellenistic context of Diaspora Judaism, probably in the late second to first centuries B.C.E. Jews who had remained faithful to Torah even far from Palestine were being persecuted not only by non-Jewish authorities but by their assimilated and worldly coreligionists. Once again there is appeal to a post-death solution to the problem of the intrahistorical victory of the unjust. The clearest (deutero) can-
onical expression of this eschatology occurs in Wisdom 1–6, probably written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew. In these chapters a Torah-loving “wisdom hero” is persecuted by the foolish who mock his fidelity to the Law, repudiate his claim to be God’s son, and are infuriated by his accusation that they are unfaithful to their training and tradition (cf. Wis 2:10-20). Unlike the traditional wisdom hero, e.g., Joseph or Susanna, who is rescued before death, the Jews for whom Wisdom of Solomon is written were being killed. Thus it became necessary to introduce the possibility of post-death salvation. The influence of the LXX version of the fourth Suffering Servant Song from Isa 52:13–53:12 and of the Daniel 7 figure of the Son of Man on the hero in Wisdom of Solomon is virtually certain. The theme of exaltation-for-judgment is combined with the theme of entering into an intimate relationship with God in a nonterrestrial realm. The text tells us that even though the hero is killed, “the souls of the just are in the hand of God . . . . They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead . . . but they are in peace . . . . God took them to himself” (Wis 3:1-6).

Bodily resurrection does not figure explicitly in this sapiential understanding of the destiny of the just and unjust because the judgment of the ungodly takes place in their very choice of evil by which they “summon death” (cf. Wis 1:16), and the just are exalted by and/or assumed to God in their seeming death. However, the assumption or exaltation of the just is not simply immortality of the soul in the Greek philosophical sense, that is, the natural indestructibility of a spiritual substance. It is life in the Jewish sense, i.e., a gift from God, who alone possesses it by nature and who freely bestows it on those who are loyal to the covenant. And life, even after death, in which the body did not participate in some way would have been inconceivable to the Jewish imagination. So while nothing is said of bodily resurrection in sapiential eschatology, it is fundamentally susceptible to it.

The predominantly realized, non-apocalyptic eschatology of John’s Gospel as well as John’s presentation of the resurrection of Jesus reflect this exaltation eschatology. In the FG a person’s fundamental option to believe or not believe in Jesus (cf. John 5:29) situates her or him, even in this world, in eternal life or eternal death (cf. John 3:15-19; 5:24 in relation to Wis 1:16). People are thus divided into two groups, the children of God and the children of the devil (John 8:41-47). Death is not a moment of judgment but one of definitive establishment in that state of life or death in which the person has been living before death (cf. 8:2 in relation to 11:25). Judgment is neither a universal nor a future phenomenon, for those who believe are never judged (5:24) and those who do not believe are already judged, not by Jesus but by their very choice of unbelief (3:18-19).

Two conclusions can be drawn about sapiential exaltation eschatology in relation to the Gospel of John:

1. Bodily resurrection is compatible with, perhaps even implicit in, but not explicitly affirmed in sapiential eschatology. However, it could easily become
explicit if the right pressures were brought to bear upon it, e.g., by the Easter experience of the first followers of Jesus.

2. If bodily resurrection *did* become explicit within a sapiential eschatology it would not have the same meaning it has in a future, apocalyptic eschatology. It would not be seen as vindication of the persecuted, since this vindication takes place in the very death/exaltation of the just one, nor as a victory over death, because death never has any real power over the one who is a child of God. It would be essentially a manifestation of the meaning for the whole person of life in God now lived in all its fullness. And in the case of Jesus it would be a condition of possibility for his post-Easter personal presence to his disciples and his continuing action in the world.

I would suggest that the bodily resurrection of Jesus in John is presented in terms of the sapiential anthropology and eschatology of the Wisdom of Solomon. The Resurrection Narrative in John 20 is, therefore, not a concession to the constraints of early Christian tradition but a narrative-theological exploration of the Easter experience of the first disciples and its implications for the spirituality of the Johannine community. This entails making a distinction between the glorification or exaltation of Jesus on the cross (i.e., the passage of Jesus to God) and his resurrection (i.e., his return to his own), which, though related, are not strictly identical in John.

V. The Textual Framework for John’s Resurrection Narrative

Bearing in mind the gospel’s narrative unity and against the background of John’s sapiential anthropology and eschatology, we turn now to the text of the FG with our original question: what is John’s contribution to our understanding of the bodily resurrection of Jesus? Pertinent texts occur in virtually every chapter of the gospel, but since I intend to concentrate on John 20:19-23, Jesus’ appearance on Easter night to his disciples, I will briefly situate that passage in relation to the texts most important for understanding it and make reference in passing to other texts.

A. The Prologue

John 1:1-18, the Prologue, differs notably in form, content, and function from the rest of the gospel, which is concerned with the career of the Word incarnate. The Prologue begins in eternity, in the bosom of God, from whom the Word came forth to tent or tabernacle among us (ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐν ζωή) by becoming flesh (σάρκι ἐγένετο), i.e., human, in Jesus Christ. The term λόγος designating the pre-incarnate Word, never appears again in the gospel even though the activity and speech of Σοφία, the Word personalized as divine Wisdom, are ubiquitous in the earthly career of Jesus. Jesus, the human being, has become the symbolic presence of God in history that the Word is in eternity.
An analogous linguistic strategy occurs in the other direction at the end of the gospel when the earthly Jesus becomes the Risen Lord. Jesus says, “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father” (John 16:28). As the Word through incarnation became flesh, i.e., assumed the existential mode of humanity in time, so the human Jesus through his glorification assumes a new mode of being in God that transcends history and that, without repudiating his humanity, transforms it. John 20 is a narrative exploration of this new mode of presence and its significance for Jesus’ followers.

B. The Textual Framework for the Symbolic Use of Body

Two nested prophecy-fulfillment schemas with parallel structures culminate in the central event of the Resurrection Narrative, the raising of the New Temple of Jesus’ glorified body in the midst of his community. The major schema is constituted by the logion of Jesus in the Temple during his first Passover in Jerusalem, John 2:19-22, and its fulfillment in the appearance to his disciples on Easter evening, John 20:19-23. Nested within that overarching schema is another with the same structure: the logion of Jesus in the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles in 7:37-39, and its fulfillment in the piercing of Jesus’ side in 19:34.

1. The first prophecy-fulfillment schema: Jesus as Temple

Jesus’ first public act in John, which has the programmatic significance of his appearance in the Synagogue of Nazareth in Luke 4, is his prophetic gesture in the Temple. Mary Coloe, correctly in my opinion, sees this not as a cleansing of the Temple in which valid worship was still possible, but rather as a termination of the Temple and its cult, which Jesus would replace. “The Jews” demand an authenticating sign. Jesus replies, “‘Destroy this temple (ναός) and in three days I will raise it’ (2:19). “The Jews” take him literally, a clear Johannine indication that Jesus was not speaking of the physical Temple in which they were standing. The evangelist clarifies, “He [Jesus] was speaking of the temple of his body” (σῶμα), which his disciples would understand only after his resurrection (cf. 2:20-22). This is the first time the word, σῶμα, “body,” is used in John, and it is explicitly identified with ναός Temple. Like the use of ὄγος in the Prologue, which looks back to eternity and is not used of the historical Jesus who is the Word made σάρξ “flesh”, σῶμα is used here in prediction and will not be used again until Jesus is glorified. In other words, what flesh is to ὄγος its symbolic locus in the pre-paschal dispensation, σῶμα is to the glorified Jesus, his symbolic locus in the post-paschal dispensation.
This prophetic logion, which occurs in Jesus’ first public appearance, is balanced by a narrative at the end of the gospel that fulfills it. In John 20:19 we are told that the glorified Jesus “stood into the midst” or “rose up in the midst” of his disciples, who were behind closed doors. This image of Jesus arising in the midst of the community evokes the raising of the New Temple, the new presence of God in their midst, which Jesus had promised in ch. 2.

2. The second prophecy-fulfillment schema: Body as Temple

Between these two scenes is another prophecy-fulfillment schema, this time constituted by the logion of Jesus in the Temple at the feast of Tabernacles in John 7:37-39 balanced by the narrative that fulfills it, the scene at the cross as Jesus dies in John 19:25-34.

The context is again the Temple in Jerusalem, this time at the joyful feast of Tabernacles celebrating the Sinai covenant. It is the last and the “great day” of the feast, the eighth day evoking both creation and eschatological fulfillment, just as the sabbath that follows Jesus’ death is a “great day,” namely, Passover (cf. John 19:31). The symbols used in the feast of Tabernacles are water from the pool of Siloam and light from innumerable torches shining in the darkness, both Johannine symbols for Jesus. Jesus now identifies himself as temple. He cries out to all who thirst to come to him and drink, again, as in ch. 2, citing Scripture.

The translation as well as the source of the Scripture text Jesus evokes in this scene are much debated. Two translations are grammatically possible. Following the argumentation of Germain Bienaime, and without denying that the ambiguity in the text may have been intentional on the part of the FE, I prefer, for the theological reasons given below, the translation that would make Jesus, rather than those who believe in him, the originating source of the living water.

If anyone thirst, let [that one] come to me
And let the one who believes in me drink
As the Scripture said, “Out of his interior (κολαία) [or from within him]
Will flow rivers of living water (7:37-38).

The evangelist, as in ch. 2, clarifies Jesus’ saying: he was speaking of the Spirit that “was not yet [given]” because Jesus was not yet glorified. Once again Jesus’ word can only be understood after “the hour” of the Paschal mystery.

The search for the OT source of Jesus’ citation, which would clarify the meaning of the “rivers of living water,” has led scholars to Exod 17:6, where God tells Moses to strike the rock in the desert and water will flow (and Pss 78:14-16 and 105:41, which celebrate that event); Zech 14:8, which predicts that in the eschatological day living waters will flow from Jerusalem (and Ps 46:5-6, which celebrates the streams that gladden the holy city); Isa 55:1-3, which invites all who are thirsty to come to the water. Given John’s sym-
phonically allusive use of the OT, I would not reject any of these texts as part of the background for the logion in John 7:38, but I think the most important text, which controls the use of the others, is Ezekiel 47, where the prophet is shown the abundant streams of lifegiving waters that flow from the side of the Temple, beginning as a trickle (47:2) and growing to a mighty river giving life, health, and freshness to all living things. This is certainly a description of the Spirit promised in John 7:37-38, which is unleashed in the world as a trickle of water from the pierced side of the glorified Jesus, specifically identified now as “body” (19:31).

The translation of κοιλία has also exercised exegetes. It means literally the inner cavity of the human body, whether the breast, the womb, or the belly, and consequently, symbolically, the interiority of the bodyself. Rivers of living water, the Spirit, will come from within the body of Jesus glorified as the water sprang out of the cleft rock in the desert to give life to the historical people and will flow from within the eschatological temple to give life to the world.

The text that fulfills the prophetic logion in John 7 is 19:34, which recounts that a soldier opened the side of the glorified Jesus with a lance and blood and water flowed out. Throughout the Fourth Gospel water is symbolic of or closely associated with the Spirit, as it is in John 7. Blood, as we saw earlier, is the locus or bearer of the life of the person as mortal. Just before the dead body of Jesus is pierced he has “handed over the Spirit” (v. 30), an expression used nowhere in Scripture or secular Greek to refer to death. Consequently most commentators agree that John used it to convey the coincidence of Jesus’ physical death, i.e., his glorification, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Blood (symbolizing his human life, given for the life of the world [cf. 6:51]) and water (symbolizing the Spirit) flow from the New Temple to give life to the New Israel, the community gathered at the foot of the cross. The evangelist in 19:37 cites Zech 12:10, “they shall look on him whom they have pierced,” which evokes the Suffering Servant but also Zechariah 13 and 14, which describe the messianic gift of purifying and flowing waters of which Jesus had spoken in John 7:38. Jesus’ body on the cross is both the New Paschal Lamb slain to give life and the New Temple from which that life pours forth.

In summary, the schemas we have examined weave a symbolic tapestry within which the glorified Jesus can be discerned as the New Temple raised up in the midst of the New Covenant people. From him flows the Spirit who will be, in them, the promised presence of Jesus throughout all time.

VI. The Glorified Body of the Risen Jesus in John 20

A. The Significance of the Resurrection of the Body for Christian Faith

We turn finally to the Resurrection Narrative in John 20 to explore the role of the body of Jesus in the post-paschal dispensation. I have suggested that
just as the term “flesh” functioned, throughout the lifetime of the historical Jesus, to denote his real presence in his mortal humanity, “body” functions after the glorification to speak of his real, divinely human presence as Risen Lord in and among his disciples. If Jesus ceased, at his death, to be a living human being then Christian faith as Christian has no real object. Bodiliness, the condition of possibility and symbolic realization of human self-identity and continuity, intersubjective presence, and action in the world, is integral to the meaning of real, living humanity. But if bodiliness can only be understood in terms of the physical materiality that characterized the earthly Jesus, it is imaginatively implausible and consequently incredible for many if not most people today, as it was for Paul’s listeners in Athens (cf. Acts 17:32) and some of his converts at Corinth (1 Cor 15:12-19).

In what follows I am proposing that the Resurrection Narrative in John functions not primarily to proclaim or explain what happened to Jesus after his death (since, in John, he was glorified on the cross and has no need of vindicatory restoration) but to explore what his glorification meant and means for his followers. In other words, the glorification in John is Jesus’ passage to God and the resurrection is Jesus’ return to his own. This twofold destiny of Jesus is not a chronological succession of separate events but two dimensions of his post-paschal life. As Jesus promised on the eve of his death, “I go away (ιπαγω) and I come to you (ἐρχομαι προς ὑμᾶς) [14:28], both verbs in the present. The bodily resurrection is the condition of possibility for the fulfillment of that promise.

B. Structure and Content of John 20

Proposed structures—historical, chronological, literary, theological, and spiritual—for John 20 are legion. Any well-crafted literary work is susceptible to diverse structurations depending on how it is read. So, without disagreeing with most of those that have been proposed, I will offer a layered literary-theological-spiritual structure that I think can help us address the question of the body of the Risen Lord.

1. Literary structure

On the surface level the chapter is narratively divided into two parts: 1-18 and 19-29, each unified by place and time (Figure 1). In Part I, which takes place on Easter morning in the garden of the tomb, we read of Mary Magdalene’s discovery of the open tomb (vv.1-2), the Beloved Disciple coming to believe on the basis of what he and Simon Peter saw in the tomb (vv. 3-10), and Jesus’ appearance to and commissioning of Mary Magdalene (vv. 11-18). In Part II, which takes place in Jerusalem where the disciples were gathered on Easter evening and again the following Sunday, we read of Jesus’ appearance to and commissioning of his assembled disciples (vv. 19-23) and his
appearance a week later to Thomas (vv. 24-29). In vv. 30-31 the evangelist concludes both ch. 20 and the gospel as a whole by telling his readers that henceforth the gospel text will function for them as the signs of Jesus had for his first disciples, i.e., as mediation of revelation leading to salvific faith.50

Figure 2

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE OF JOHN 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I</th>
<th>Part II</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>19-23</td>
<td>24-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP &amp; BD</td>
<td>MM</td>
<td>THOMAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISCIPLES</td>
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<td>30-31</td>
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<td></td>
<td>US</td>
<td>31</td>
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50
At a deeper level (Figure 2) the five scenes form a *dramatic* literary whole in which the first two scenes rise from the situation of the earthly disciples to the culminating appearance of Jesus to the community and the last two descend from that appearance toward the post-Easter audience. Each scene has its own revelatory crisis and subsequent resolution that prepares for the succeeding scene. In the first scene this crisis is v. 7, the BD seeing the face cloth; in the second, v. 16, Jesus calling Mary by name; in the third, v. 21, Jesus identifying his disciples with himself in mission; in the fourth, v. 27, Jesus inviting Thomas to believe; and in the fifth, v. 31, the evangelist identifying the “the things which are written” as the signs for later believers.

![Figure 3](image-url)  
**THEOLOGICAL-SPIRITUAL STRUCTURE OF JOHN 20**

2. Theological and spiritual structure

Most important for our purposes, however, is the *theological* structure of ch. 20, which is a careful answer to the question, “Where is the Lord?” and the resulting response to the *spiritual* question, “How can he be encountered today?” Our primary interest is in the central scene, the appearance to the disciples, but what precedes is crucial preparation and what follows focuses the Easter event on post-Easter disciples.

The first scene opens with Mary Magdalene coming to the tomb early on Easter morning and seeing the stone taken away. She concludes instantly, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have put...
him” (20:2). She voices the position of one who has not grasped the meaning of “the hour,” Jesus’ transition from the dispensation of the flesh to the dispensation of glory. She is seeking “the Lord” whom she equates with his corpse. The equation of person with body and body with flesh, therefore of person with flesh, is precisely what Easter faith must transcend. Mary Magdalene personifies the theological problem of how the earthly Jesus (the Word made flesh) is related to the glorified and risen Lord. And at the end of the chapter, the Thomas scene will suggest that this is precisely the problem for Jesus’ disciples of all time.

At Mary’s report Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple run to the tomb and examine its contents. Both see in the tomb the abandoned burial cloths and the veil (σουδάρτον) that had been on Jesus’ face, not lying with the cloths but carefully and definitively wrapped up and placed aside. We are told that the BD (not Peter) “saw and believed” (20:8). In John, to see and believe is to respond in faith to a revelatory sign (σημεῖον). But the question is, “What did he believe?” since the next verse tells us that “as yet they did not know the scripture that he must rise from the dead” (20:9).

Johannine symbolism as well as the literary structure of the episode suggests to me that the sign that led the Beloved Disciple to believe was neither the open tomb nor the linen cloths but the face veil, linguistically related to the face veil that Moses wore to protect the Israelites from the glorification of his face by his encounter with God on Sinai (cf. Exod 34:27-35). Jesus, the New Moses, had definitively left behind the veil of his earthly flesh as he returned to the glory he had as Son with God before the world was made (cf. 17:24). The first installment of the answer to the question, “Where is the Lord?” has been supplied: Jesus is with God, i.e., he has been glorified. Neither the fact nor the meaning of the Resurrection as Jesus’ return to his own is yet available.

The next scene, redolent of allusions to both the garden of the first creation (cf. Gen 2:8-15 and 3:8-10) and the Song of Songs (especially Cant 3:1-4), brings the lover, Mary Magdalene, to the garden of the tomb searching for her Beloved and refusing comfort or enlightenment from anyone, even angels, who cannot tell her where he is. No one doubts that the center of this episode is the recognition scene in which Jesus, whom Mary takes for the gardener, directly addresses her, “Mary.” He is indeed the divine gardener inaugurating the New Creation, the Good Shepherd calling his own by name, and the Spouse of the New Covenant rewarding the search of the anguished lover. Mary recognizes him as her Teacher. But she is still struggling out of the darkness of her pre-paschal literalism into the light of Easter. Jesus forestalls her attempt to touch him, to encounter him in the flesh as his disciples could and did prior to his glorification. Jean Zumstein helpfully provides a paraphrastic translation of v. 17a, the famous “Do not touch me” verse, as “For you I am not yet ascended to the Father.” Jesus, glorified on the cross, has indeed gone to the Father, but in Mary’s perception he has not yet ascended, for she has not yet integrated into her realization that Jesus is risen the fact that he has also been glorified. Jesus
redirects her to the community of his brothers and sisters, which is, in a mysteri­ous way, his glorified body. Mary understands that the “brothers and sisters” means “the disciples” and she arrives as the first apostle of the resurrection, announcing: “I have seen the Lord” (20:18).

Furnished with the essential knowledge that Jesus is both glorified (from the first scene) and risen (from the second scene), that is, with the theological answer to the question “Where is the Lord?” the reader is prepared for the chapter’s central scene, which will answer the question “How are post­paschal disciples to encounter the Risen Lord?” The negative answer from the first two scenes is that it is not through physical sight or touch of his earthly body, that is, not in the flesh, but somehow in his disciples. Scene three narratively explores this cryptic answer.

The central scene is the shortest and least circumstantial in the chapter. Its depth derives largely from the fact that it is suffused with the Last Discourse(s) material, which itself is suffused with the themes and even the language of the New Covenant from Isaiah 51–56 and 65–66, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36–37.57 These themes include the sealing of the New Covenant itself and its gifts of peace, joy, seeing the Lord, knowledge of the Lord, purification from sin, a New Spirit, and a new heart. The New Covenant will unite YHWH with his purified and faithful spouse, the New Israel, and the sign of their mutual belonging will be the New Tabernacle, God’s own presence, raised up in their midst.

When the scene is displayed structurally (Figure 4) it is clearly perfectly balanced, with one all-important exception. The scene falls into two parts, evoking the two dimensions of the Sinai covenant, the theophany followed by the gift of Torah (cf. Exod 19:16–20:17). Each part of John 20:19–23, the christophany and the giving of the Spirit who is the New Law placed in their hearts, opens with a solemn declaration, “Peace be to you,” the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise that he would see them again and give them a peace that the world cannot give or take away (cf. 14:27).

Part I, the christophany, is the revelation of the Risen Jesus to the com­munity of his disciples. The Jesus standing in their midst is no shade from Sheol. He is Jesus, the one who had been crucified and pierced, who had died, and whose body had been buried. His body, marked with the signs of his glorification through death and its lifegiving fruit of the Spirit, establishes both his identity in himself and his capacity to reestablish his presence to and relationship with them. But the Jesus standing in their midst is not simply resuscitated. He is alive with a new life that is bodily but no longer subject to death or to the laws of historical space, time, and causality. He is the same person, Jesus, but in a new mode of being and presence.

Part II of the scene is the giving of the New Law, i.e., the Spirit, promised in Isa 55:7, Jer 31:33, and Ezek 36:26–27 and 37:1–10, 14, 24. This Spirit both unites them to Jesus and empowers them for a new life in which, sent as Jesus
Figure 4

STRUCTURE OF JOHN 20:19-23

19a Being then evening on that day the first of the week
19b and the doors being shut where were the disciples for fear of the Jews
19c Jesus came and stood into the midst.
19d And he said to them, "Peace to you."
20a And saying this
20b he showed them his hands and his side.
21a Therefore rejoiced the disciples seeing the Lord.
21b And he said to them again, "Peace to you."
21c As the Father has sent me
21d I send you."
22a And saying this
22b he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.
23a If of anyone you forgive the sins they are forgiven to them
23b whomever you hold they are held."

was sent by the Father, they will continue his mission as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (cf. 1:29 with 20:21-23). Jesus bestows the Spirit of the New Covenant by breathing on his disciples, as God had breathed the first human into life and new life into the dry bones in Ezekiel’s vision, a clear indication that this New People, the community with whom this New Covenant is made, is indeed a New Creation.58

This brings us back to the one notable exception to the perfectly balanced structure of the passage. Except for v. 19c, “Jesus came and stood (or rose up) in(to) the(ir) midst,” every member in the passage has a corresponding member. We have just been told that the doors where the disciples were gathered had been closed (κεκλεισμένον) for fear of “the Jews.” Suddenly Jesus arises among them.59 (He does not, as some have naïvely pictured it, come through the doors or walls!) The preposition εἰς with the accusative suggests motion to the interior. But the interior in this text is not a physical place. It is “where the disciples were gathered together” (20:19).60 Jesus arises in the midst of the community. The verb “to stand” or “to arise” evokes Jesus’ promise in ch. 2 to raise up the New Temple, his body that his enemies will have destroyed. In the OT the sign of the New Covenant was to be that YHWH would establish his tabernacle in the midst of the renewed people:

I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will multiply them, and put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God and they shall be my people. Thus the nations shall know that it is I, the Lord, who make Israel holy, when my sanctuary shall be set up among them forever (Ezek 37:26-28).
This New People will worship not in a physical place, whether temple or mountain, but in Spirit and in Truth (cf. John 4:21-24). Jesus the Truth now pours out on them his Spirit.

What is structurally exceptional about this line, “Jesus came and stood in(to) their midst,” is that there is no corresponding member at the end of the scene. Literally there should be a notice that, having finished that for which he came, Jesus left, or that he vanished from their sight (cf. 20:2 in relation to v. 1, and 20:10 in relation to v. 3). But even though Jesus will come again, he never leaves, suggesting the new mode of Jesus’ presence to his disciples.

Two further points, which cannot be explored in depth here, must be made before leaving this central scene. First, the group to which the Risen Jesus comes in John 20 is not the Twelve, the seventy-two, the apostles, the trio of Peter, James, and John, or any other select group. He comes to “the disciples,” which in John is an inclusive group of men and women, itinerants and householders, Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Believers, the Church as community and not as hierarchical institution, is the foundational symbolic expression of the Risen Jesus. The Church is his body.

Second, the commission in John is to continue the work of Jesus who came to take away the sin (singular) of the world, i.e., the fundamental sin of unbelief. The disciples will carry on this mission by forgiving sins (plural), the expressions of unbelief that are renounced by those who come to believe in Jesus. Sometime after the third century a linguistic anomaly in which “retention of sins” was gratuitously paired with “forgiveness of sins” found its way into the translation of v. 23 and was eventually enshrined dogmatically in the decrees of the Council of Trent. The exegetical basis for this move was interpreting John 20:23 as a parallel of Matt 16:19 and 18:18 on binding and loosing through interpretation of the law, thus reading John 20:23 as an elliptical antithetical parallelism. The apologetic basis was the establishment of the Catholic discipline of confession as a sacrament against its rejection by the Reformers.

Whatever might be said about the apologetic motive, it is highly questionable to read John in terms of Matthew, especially when the respective contexts differ completely. In any case the text of John 20:23 does not say anything about “retaining sins.” Translated literally it says: “Of whomever you forgive the sins, they are forgiven to them; whomever you hold are held fast.” In the second member there is no direct object, “sins,” nor indirect object, “to them.” The verb “to hold,” κρατέω does not mean, in secular or biblical Greek, “retain.” It means “hold fast,” “grasp,” even “embrace” (cf. Matt 28:9 where κρατέω is correctly translated “held” or “embraced”). And it normally takes an objective genitive, as it does in this case, τινος, “whomever.” In other words, the text as it stands is a synthetic or progressive parallel. The community that forgives sins must holds fast those whom it has brought into the community of eternal life. This may be a reference to baptism, but hardly to
penance. But whether or not there is an explicit sacramental reference, translating this text as it stands rather than by supplying supposedly missing words to create a parallel to Matthew accords well, in both form and content, with Jesus’ own descriptions of his mission from the Father, which he is here committing to his disciples.

“All that the Father gives me will come to me and the one who comes to me I will not cast out.” (6:37)

“. . . it is the will of the One who sent me “that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me.” (6:39)

“I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my Father’s hand. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one. (10:27-29)

While I was with them, I kept in your name those whom you have given me, and I guarded them, and not one of them is lost. (17:12)

This was to fulfill the word which he had spoken, “Of those whom you have given me I have not lost any. (18:9)

The importance of this point lies in how John understands the community of the New Covenant. The community is the ongoing bodily presence of Jesus in the world. As the Father had sent him, so he sends his disciples (v. 21). They are to live by his Spirit, which he breathes upon them (v. 22), and to carry on his mission of receiving those whom the Father gives them and holding them fast in the community (v. 23) as Jesus received his disciples from the Father and held them fast amid the evils and dangers of the world. Jesus (in the flesh) is no longer in the world, but they (his body) are in the world (cf. 17:11). They are to do his works, and even greater works than he had done in his earthly career (cf. 14:12). The community is not, according to John, an agent of a departed Jesus exercising judgment, which Jesus explicitly said he was not sent to do and does not do (12:47). The community in all its members is Jesus at work in the world and his work is to take away sins by giving life in all its fullness.

There is no indication in the text, as this church founding scene ends, that the reader should expect anything further. So the next scene opens unexpectedly with the news that one of the Twelve, Thomas, was not with the community when Jesus came. Significantly, Thomas is called “the twin.” He has a double identity: he is both a disciple of the earthly Jesus and he shares the experience of later disciples who were not present on Easter. Narratively the evangelist establishes the identity of pre-Easter and post-Easter disciples, for whom the structure of faith is essentially the same.

The glorified Jesus, not bound by earthly conditions of physicality, is again sensibly, i.e., bodily, present even though the doors are closed, and he knows of Thomas’s refusal to believe on the basis of the disciples’ witness, “We have
The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel

seen the Lord." Jesus invites Thomas to touch him even as he challenges him to renounce the unbelieving demand to do so and become believing (v. 27). Thomas rises to the challenge. He confesses what he cannot see with his bodily eyes, that the Jesus who addresses him is "My Lord and my God" (v. 28). Jesus' response is all-important. He accepts Thomas' confession of what he cannot see based on what he has seen, both in his pre-paschal experience of Jesus and in this Easter experience. But Jesus equates Thomas' "seeing" to the "not seeing" of all disciples down through the centuries who will not have seen Jesus in the flesh or in Easter appearance (20:29). Their believing will be based on "seeing" him in sacramental signs, "hearing" him in the community's witness, and especially in the "things written" in the gospel. Following Jesus' turn in blessing to his future disciples in v. 29, the evangelist addresses the readers directly by equating the signs of the earthly Jesus with the gospel text itself. Just as his first disciples had to discern in his ambiguous historical signs the revelation of God in Jesus, and the Easter community had to discern their Lord and God in the mysterious person risen in their midst whom they are not to touch physically, so all later disciples must discern the new bodily presence of Jesus in the ecclesial community, Eucharist, and Gospel. In all these cases Jesus, as the locus and revelation of God's glory, is perceptible only to the eyes and ears of faith responding to the symbolic modes of his presence.

John 20 as a whole, and especially the contrast between the Mary Magdalene and Thomas scenes in light of the central scene of the raising of the Temple of Jesus' body in the midst of the New Covenant people, tells us something crucial about the body of the glorified and risen Jesus. It is human and material but not physical. In other words, mortal flesh has become glorified body. In the Mary Magdalene scene Jesus restrains Mary from trying to touch him physically not because he is a ghost or because he disdains her love and desire. It is because she does not completely grasp that he has not been resuscitated like Lazarus to life in the flesh. Jesus redirects Mary's attempt to relate to him by pointing her to his presence in the community where she will touch him, encounter him, in a new way corresponding to his new mode of being and presence.

In the Thomas scene Jesus invites Thomas to touch him. The glorified Jesus can self-symbolize quasi-physically if that is necessary, but this is not how he ordinarily chooses to be present, to Thomas or to us. Thomas becomes "not unbelieving but believing" when he, like Mary, moves from the dispensation of the flesh to the dispensation of glory. He recognizes Jesus as the person he knew in the flesh but who, while remaining himself, is no longer in the context of history. These two seemingly contradictory facts, that Jesus is himself in the full integrity of his humanity and that he is no longer subject to the historical coordinates of space, time, and causality, are mediated by the concept of body as symbol. In the context of history the human person self-symbolizes in and as her or his mortal (i.e., fleshly) bodyself. Person as subject, body as symbolic self-expression, and flesh as physical, i.e., mortal, locus of the person as body-
self are coterminous, which leads us to spontaneously identify them without distinction. John's Resurrection Narrative suggests (as does Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and Luke in the Damascus road event in Acts 9:5) that the glorified person, Jesus himself in his divine humanity, continues to self-symbolize, that is, to be bodily present and active, but no longer in mortal flesh. He can be present when, where, and how he wills: in the community itself and in its actions of preaching the Word, celebrating Eucharist, and ministering to the needy. He can be present to the individual believer in prayer or even in vision, although John, like spiritual writers down through the centuries, warns that this is an exceptional and always ambiguous occurrence that is not to be sought or privileged. Materiality as the condition of symbolic self-expression is what bodiliness connotes. It is that which marks the person Jesus as distinct from other persons and self-continuous, as a subject who can relate to other subjects, and as one who can act effectively in the world even though not conditioned by it. Materiality, which is the condition of possibility of sensibility, is no longer equated with physicality. The glorified body is a body, Jesus as body, but it is no longer a fleshly, that is, a mortal or historical body.

VII. Conclusion

In summary and conclusion: The bodiliness of Jesus' resurrection is crucial to Christian faith, theology, and spirituality for a number of reasons. First, only if Jesus is alive in the full integrity of his humanity, which entails bodiliness, can he be in God the first fruits of humanity's incorporation into divinity. Humanity is not a transitory mode of the Word that he abandoned in death.

Second, because body is the symbolic mode of presence, both self-presence as subject and intersubjective presence to others, the real and personal existence of Jesus as human after his death and his continuing presence to his followers requires bodily resurrection.

Third, symbols are the perceptibility of what is otherwise not able to be encountered and because body as material (not as physical) is the condition of possibility of perceptibility, Jesus can only self-symbolize in various ways if his post-resurrection humanity is bodily.

Fourth, body is not exhausted in the notion of "flesh," i.e., humanity as mortal. Jesus as the Word-made-flesh experienced the condition of mortality but by his glorification he transcended that condition and became capable, in his humanity, of a range of self-symbolization that is not limited by space, time, or causality.

Fifth, the Church's faith in the real presence of Jesus in his ecclesial body, in his Eucharistic body, in the textual body of Scripture, is also expressed in the spirituality tradition of those mystics whose direct experience of Jesus as friend, lover, and spouse has been nurtured especially by the Canticle of Canticles and the Fourth Gospel. We see this Jesus mysticism in writers such as
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Origen, Gertrude of Helfta, Bernard of Clairvaux, Catherine of Siena, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and later writers.

In short, John’s Gospel is a primary source and resource for the experience in the church of the glorified human Jesus, personally alive, present, and active throughout all time. The church’s spirituality is an ongoing exploration of the existential meaning of Jesus’ promise:

I will not leave you orphans: I am coming to you. Yet a little while and the world sees me no longer, but you see me, for because I live you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you. (John 14:18-20)

Notes

1. For convenience I will refer to the Fourth Gospel and to the evangelist as “John” without thereby implying any particular position on the identity or gender of this individual. I basically accept the reigning consensus of scholars that the Fourth Gospel was written, sometime between 80 and 110 (probably around 90) C.E., by an anonymous second-generation Christian who was part of a “school” within the Johannine cluster of communities. See Maarten J. J. Menken, “Envoys of God’s Envoy: On the Johannine Communities,” *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 23 (2000) 45–60 for a good summary of the results of scholarship concerning the matrix out of which this gospel emerged.


3. Throughout this paper I am indebted to the excellent work of Mary Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001). Her treatment of Jesus’ action in the Temple in John 2 is the best interpretation I have read, largely because it places this mysterious episode within the theological context of the gospel as a whole rather than reading it as a Johannine version of the Synoptic accounts, which have somewhat different functions within their respective Passion Narratives.


6. Translations of texts from the Gospel of John are either my own or that of the NRSV unless otherwise noted. Translations of other parts of the Bible are from the NRSV.


8. A renewed interest in the historical and literary processes that produced the Fourth Gospel as well as the sources the evangelist might have used is reflected in the collection edited by Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher, *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

9. Jean Zumstein, “Lecture narratologique du cycle pascal du quatrième évangile,” *ETR* 76 (2001) 1–15, gives a very good explanation of how the “incoherencies” that historical critical work discovers are often products of the method itself and that, if the text is dealt with as a narrative, many of these apparent “seams,” “aporias,” “doublets,” and inconsistencies cease to be such.

10. *O’Day, Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, makes this point with full argumentation. She concludes, “Revelation lies in the Gospel narrative and the world created by the words of that narrative” (p. 94, emphasis in the text). I would nuance this somewhat by saying that revelation occurs in interaction with the text in order to avoid the possible implication that revelation is somehow quasi-propositional.


13. A good introduction to Semitic anthropology is Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 1996) (originally published by SCM in 1974). The Gospel of John, as we will see in dealing with his eschatology, is not devoid of hellenistic influences coming probably through OT sapiential materials, especially Wisdom of Solomon. However, this influence is controlled by Hebrew understandings of God, the human, and the end of human life. A thorough study of Johannine anthropology, which is completely beyond the scope of this paper, would proceed by tracing the path from concrete and stereometric (to use Wolff’s term) Hebrew usage through the changes rung on the terms in the Greek of the LXX into the FG. I suspect that the most original development is precisely John’s exploitation of the distinction, not possible in Hebrew but possible in Greek, between σῶμα and σώμα.

14. Andrew T. Lincoln, “‘I am the Resurrection and the Life’: The Resurrection Message of the Fourth Gospel,” in Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998) 129, makes the important point that Jesus could not have been speaking of laying down his divine life. However, he immediately slips into the mistaken identification of φυσική with σώμα, leading to an understanding of bodily resurrection as fleshly or physical resurrection.


16. I am grateful to Francis Moloney for sharing with me his fine paper, as yet unpublished, “The Johannine Son of Man Revisited.” His understanding of the Johannine use of “Son of Man” for the revelation of God in the human event of Jesus Christ, especially in his being “lifted up” on the cross, is very helpful for understanding resurrection in John.

17. Flesh is a good translation of sarx, a more differentiated term than the Hebrew bāšār, which denotes the human in his/her infirmity or weakness (Wolff, *Anthropology*, 26–31). But the
Hebrew term covers the territory of "body" virtually completely whereas Greek distinguishes sarx from sōma, a crucial distinction for John's theology of resurrection.

18. For a very rich treatment of the meaning of flesh in John see Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 29–64.

19. Here I disagree with Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 45–46, who suggests that there is no significant difference between σάρξ and σῶμα. I will argue that there is a critically important difference. Jesus does not rise as "flesh," but as "body."

20. It is interesting that psychosomatic medicine is discovering in various ways how completely the whole human is "body," not in the reductive sense of being nothing but material, but in the sense of being, as a whole, a "body person." This understanding is closer to the biblical understanding than the reductionistic anthropology spawned by the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, contemporary understandings of the human are still quite dichotomous, as is evidenced by the mechanistic approaches to medical procedures.

21. The Hellenistic influence on John's thought as well as the exploitation of the possibilities of the Greek language are clear here. Bāšār is not used to speak of a corpse (although nepeš occasionally is) but only of living creatures, whereas John does not use sarx (which the LXX uses for bāšār) but sōma to speak of the corpses on the cross (19:31) and specifically of the dead body of Jesus (19: 38, 40) and of his risen body (2:21-22).

22. John L. McKenzie, "Sheol," *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965) 800, says that Sheol "is less a positive conception of survival than a picturesque denial of all that is meant by life and activity."

23. I have dealt at length with the concept of symbol, especially as it functions in John's Gospel, in *Written That You May Believe*, 63–77. See also Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 9–28. A still very important work on symbol in theology and especially on the body as the primary symbol by which a person is present to him/herself as well as to others is Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," *Theological Investigations 4, More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 221–52, especially 245–52 on the body. It is especially interesting that the term "body" does not seem to play a distinct enough role in Semitic thought to merit a term of its own in distinction from "flesh." The only bodies known to human experience were fleshly ones, either the potential human, the "earth creature" (hā ādām) of Gen 2:7, or the living person, nepeš or bāšār.

24. I find very suggestive the point made by Mary Coloe in "Like Father, Like Son: The Role of Abraham in Tabernacles—John 8:31-59," *Pacifica* 12 (February 1999) 1–11: "In speaking of Jesus as both Temple and Tabernacle there is no dichotomy as the two are intrinsically related as the flesh (1:14) is related to the body (2:21). The Tabernacle and the Temple serve the same symbolic function even though they recall different historical eras" (p. 4, n. 6). I think that in fact flesh and body denote different and subsequent modes (analogous to historical eras) of the presence of Jesus to his disciples. Flesh indicates his career as a mortal and body, his glorified life. But the two terms denote the same person and the same presence of the glory of God among humans in that person.

25. Just after finishing work on this paper, and too late to incorporate it substantively into this text, I came upon a fascinating article on the body of Jesus in its displacements, transformations, and resignifications that brings a confirming postmodern light to bear on this topic. See Graham Ward, "Bodies: The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ," in John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) 163–81, especially 168 on the point here. See also his article, "Transcorporeality: The Ontological Scandal," *BJRL* 80 (August 1998) 235–52.


27. Although the dating of the "intertestamental" period as well as the category itself is debated I am using it here to suggest the overlapping of late pre-Christian Jewish thought and the development of the canonical New Testament. My thanks to my colleagues, John Endres, Barbara
Green, Gina Hens-Piazza, as well as to GTU research librarian Kristine Veldheer for help with this and other sections in the paper.


33. It is important, however, but beyond the scope of this essay, to note that Jewish anthropology was influenced by Hellenistic philosophy in the immediate pre-Christian period. This is evident in the use of terms such as “incorruption” (ἀθανασία) in Wis 2:23 and “immortality” (αἰώνιος ζωή) in Wis 3:4. On the other hand, the biblical influence appears in the notion that death is not intended by God but entered the world through the envy of the devil (cf. Wis 2:23-24) in contrast to the notion of death as natural passage into nonexistence that the enemies of the wisdom hero enunciate in Wis 2:1-22.

34. This “moral dualism” of the FG is not absolute, and 1 John 2:19; 3:4-10 in relation to 5:16-17 suggests that the historical Johannine community had trouble with it. However, it seems to stem from the “two-way theology” that appears pervasively in the OT (e.g., in Hos 14:9; Amos 5:14-15; Mic 4:2, 5; Jer 5:4; Ps 1:1, 6; Prov 2:12-15, and elsewhere), but which comes to very explicit articulation in the Wisdom of Solomon (e.g., 1:4-8, 14; 2:24; 3:7-19; 5:6-7). Interestingly, Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life*, 165–66, says that the “two way theology,” which is perfectly compatible with an eschatology of immediate assumption at death, was combined with a notion of bodily resurrection only after 70 C.E., e.g., in 4 Ezra and *Epistle of Barnabas*.

35. See Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 15–29, for a very good treatment of the structure and content of the Prologue, particularly in relation to the issue of the presence of God in Jesus that is our concern here. Coloe also summarizes other influential theories concerning the structure and dynamics of the text.

36. Mary Coloe’s interpretation of Jesus as replacement of the Temple, the place of divine glory, with Jesus as the locus of the glory of YHWH is strongly reinforced by the article of Carey C. Newman, “Resurrection as Glory: Divine Presence and Christian Origins,” *The Resurrection*, 59–89. Newman convincingly argues that the real cause of the break between the early Christian
community and Judaism was "that the resurrection of Jesus, as depicted in early Christian creeds, confessions, and hymns, was interpreted as his investiture with, and inauguration of, eschatological divine presence—that is, the Glory of Yahweh" (p. 87).

37. I will use the convention of placing "the Jews" in quotation marks when the expression denotes the so-called "Johannine Jews," that is, the collective representative figure in the Fourth Gospel that signifies rejection of the light, in order to warn the reader not to equate this literary stereotype with actual Jews, either those of Jesus' time or those of later periods.

38. Lincoln in "'I am the Resurrection and the Life,'" 126, says of the Temple episode, "it is made clear that not only will the incarnate Logos die, but also that he will rise and the bodily form of his resurrection will continue to be an essential feature of his identity" (emphasis added). However, on pp. 128 and 141 Lincoln seems to equate risen bodiliness with physicality, which may reflect a lack in his philosophical repertoire of a notion of materiality that is not physical rather than a conscious position on the nature of glorified bodiliness. His evident concern is to affirm the bodilyness of the Risen Jesus.

39. I am indebted to my colleague David Johnson, who pointed out to me that the Greek "ἐστιν" was rendered in the Peshitta (Syriac version from 5th century C.E. but related to the much earlier Old Syriac) by the term qam, from the root qom, which means either "stand" or "arise as from sleep or from death" as well as "to stand up" or "to be present." See R. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, founded upon the Thesaurus syriacus of R. Payne Smith*, edited by J. Payne Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903). John's construction, Jesus "stood into" (ecm1 ἐστιν), suggests that the more dynamic translation is to be understood since simply appearing or standing would not suggest motion. I am inclined to think that "stand into" is best translated as "arose among," especially in light of John 2:19 and 21-22 where Jesus predicts that he will "raise up" (ἐγερθῶ) the new temple and the evangelist clarifies that Jesus was referring to the temple of his body, which the disciples would understand after he "was raised from the dead" (ἐγερθη ἐκ νεκρῶν).

40. P. Van Dieman, in his 1972 Rome dissertation, *La semaine inaugurale et la semaine terminale de l'évangile de Jean: Message et structures*, proposed a modification of Marie-Émile Boismard's thesis of the "weeks" of Jesus' life as a structure of the FG. Van Dieman argued that in John the first and last weeks of Jesus' life are actually composed of six days and an eighth day while the seventh day, the Jewish Sabbath, is passed over in silence. The eighth day is both the first day of creation and the eschatological day of the New Creation. Consequently this "last and great day of the feast" of Tabernacles is a day symbolic of both the New Creation and the Resurrection while the day after Jesus' death is Passover, the silent end of the old dispensation, and the resurrection, inaugurating the new, occurs on the eighth day.


42. The evangelist will identify Jesus, the Sent One, with the waters of Siloam in John 9:7, and Jesus will identify himself as "the light of the world" in 8:12 and 9:5. This is not the only time the FE "recalls" something that has not yet happened.


44. Bienaimé, "L'annonce des fleuves d'eau vive," 422-31, discusses the positions of C. C. Torrey and André Feuillet among others on these suggestions. He himself regards Exodus 17:6 as the "texte fondamental de la citation" (431-32), which is enriched by Pss 78 and 105 and Ezekiel 47. He concludes, however, that the primary point of the evocation of Ezekiel 47 is to recall that the water flowing from the Temple is the water of the new paradise and thus that the text in John 7 is more about the New Creation than about Jesus as the New Temple (454). I would place the emphasis the other way around.
45. James Swetnam, “Bestowal of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” Bib 74 (1999) 556–76, cites Edwyn Hoskyns (The Fourth Gospel [London: Faber, 1947] 532) on the peculiar language for the death of Jesus, παραδοσάτα τὸ πνεῦμα. In Mark Jesus “gave up the ghost” or expired [ἐξέπνευσεν]... in Matthew he “yielded up his spirit” [ἀπήκεν τὸ πνεῦμα]; in Luke he “gave up the ghost” or breathed his last [ἐξέπνευσεν]. Swetnam says John’s expression is “unparalleled in the Greek language as a description of death” (564). Hence his conclusion, following Hoskyns, is that the primary meaning of the account is the “bestowing of the Spirit” rather than simply Jesus letting go of his human life. However, it also obviously means that Jesus died.


47. Brown, in The Gospel According to John. 2 vols. AB 29-29a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966–70) 1139 says, “It is our contention that John presents the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit in a special role, namely, as the personal presence of Jesus in the Christian while Jesus is with the Father.” It is unusual for Brown to label a position as his personal opinion rather than presenting it as a convincing conclusion from the data he has provided. I think he understood the originality of his “contention.” He may be suggesting that Spirit is the mode of bodiliness of the glorified Jesus, which is my position. But because the dichotomous western mind tends to equate “spirit” with “disembodied” as in “pure spirit” it is difficult for this term to function clearly in discussing bodily presence. The fact that Brown entitled one of his books The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus (London and Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973) suggests that he considered Jesus/the presence of the glorified and risen Jesus as bodily. Hence the importance of the statement above.


50. The debate continues about whether the verb in v. 31 is a present subjunctive (πιστεύετε) suggesting that the intended audience is the Christian community itself, or an aorist subjective (πιστεύοντες), which would suggest that the gospel is directed to possible converts. Gordon D. Fee, “On the Text and Meaning of John 20,30-31,” The Four Gospels 1992, 2193–2204, argues convincingly, against D. A. Carson, “The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered,” JBL 106 (1987) 639–51, that both from a text-critical standpoint and in terms of meaning the present tense reading is preferable. I agree with this position and assume it in what follows.

51. A leitmotif of the Christian mystical tradition is the question of how to find, how to encounter, the seemingly absent Lord. John of the Cross begins his classic poem on the mystical life, Cántico espiritual, with the anguished address of the bride-soul to Jesus, “Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me groaning?” (see The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross, rev. ed., trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodríguez [Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991], citation from p. 44). But the question predates John of the Cross by centuries, e.g., Augustine’s famous “interrogation of the creatures,” and continues up to the present. The path runs from the Canticle of Canticles in the OT through the Gospel of John in the NT into the Jesus mysticism (sometimes called “bridal mysticism”) of the subsequent tradition.

52. Σωδάριον is the Greek transliteration of a Latin loanword, sudarium. The root suggests that it was a “towel” or a “handkerchief. Most significantly, it appears in the Aramaic of Targums Ps.-Jonathan and Yerushalmi (Codex Neofiti I) as soudarā, סודרה or סודרה, to translate הגלגלה, a unique word for the face-veil of Moses in Exod 34:33-35. It has the same sense in Syriac. In other words, Σωδάριον in the FG is probably equivalent to the LXX’s καλυμμα in Exodus 34, meaning “veil,” and if John’s community was originally Aramaic-speaking and read or heard the OT in Aramaic they would have heard Σωδάριον as equivalent to the LXX’s καλυμμα in reference to the face-veil of Moses. Σωδάριον, however, would be preferable to the very common word καλυμμα if the intention was to call attention to the unique character of Jesus’ face-veil, as Moses’ face-veil was designated by a unique word. That Jesus’ face-veil was not simply a normal burial cloth seems to be suggested by the notation that it was not lying with the burial clothes but wrapped up into a place by itself. Paul’s use of the face-veil of Moses (2 Cor 3:6-18) to speak of the passing away of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the New suggests that this symbolism was not unfamiliar in early Christian circles. Jesus, in John, is the mediator of the New Covenant. The relation of Σωδάριον to καλυμμα was pointed out decades ago by F.-M. Braun, Le Linceul de Turin et l’évangile de S. Jean: Étude de critique et d’exégèse (Tournai and Paris: Casterman, 1939) 34–35.

53. Brendan Byrne, in “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20,” JSNT 23 (1985) 83–97, also proposes that the Σωδάριον is the sign, but he explicitly disagrees with me about its meaning. He locates the meaning in the contrast of Jesus’ face-veil with Lazarus’s: Lazarus had to have the veil removed by others, whereas Jesus removed his own. I would not reject that interpretation, but I think there is considerably more involved, namely the evocation of the Mosaic-covenantal motif. However, Byrne’s thesis concerning the relation of the “seeing and believing” in the 3-10 episode to that in 24-29 is a real contribution. In a sense the whole of ch. 20 is an exploration of the “absence” (I would say the absence/presence) of Jesus and the role of signs, historical signs and ecclesial ones, in the handling of that experience. I am in substantial agreement with his conclusion: “The Gospel of John seems to me to be composed very largely to give subsequent believers access to the central events of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection and return to the Father and to assure them that in this access they can have an encounter with Jesus every bit as valid and indeed more fruitful than that of those who actually saw him” (p. 93). I am, however, not persuaded that there is a hierarchical comparison, explicit or implicit, in 20:29.

John, in ch. 20, uses κήπος for “garden.” In the LXX the garden of creation is παράδεισος, while the garden in the Song of Songs is κήπος, suggesting that the stronger allusion is to the Canticle. However, there is a progression in the OT from the paradise in which humanity was created in union with God and from which it was expelled because of sin, through the alternating possession and loss of the land (a garden or a desert) because of Israel’s fidelity or infidelity to the covenant, to the garden of union in the Song of Songs. So the allusion in ch. 20 is probably to both paradise regained, i.e., the New Creation, and the New Covenant. For a different interpretation of the use by John of κήπος see John N. Suggit, “Jesus the Gardener. The Atonement in the Fourth Gospel as Re-Creation,” Neot 33 (1999) 161–68, at 166.

55. “Teacher” is the quintessential identity of the historical Jesus in John, as the primary relationship to him is that of “disciple.” This address by Mary, with her attempt to touch him physically, suggests that she is still short of full Easter faith which, somehow, she seems to possess by the time she reaches the disciples to whom she announces, not that she has seen the Teacher or even Jesus, but that she has seen the Lord.


57. I was impressed by the paper delivered by Rekha Chennattu, “‘If You Keep My Commandments’: Exploring Covenant Motifs in John 13–17,” at the August 2003 convention of the The Catholic Biblical Association of America, in which she used the account of the covenant renewal in Joshua 24 to highlight the covenant themes she proposes that John used to structure his presentation of discipleship as a covenant relationship. If John presents discipleship as a covenantal relationship there is all the more reason to think that his understanding of the post-Paschal community’s relationship with God in Jesus is the realization of the New Covenant.

58. Ενεφύσησεν (έµοφσάω) in v. 22 is a NT hapax legomenon. There are only three uses of the term in the OT, all directly connected with creation: Gen 2:7, the enlivening of the “earth creature” with God’s breath; Wis 15:11, which refers to that event; Ezek 37:9, in which the prophet is told to breathe upon the bones of the house of Israel that it might be recreated. The use of the word in the LXX of I Kgs 17:21 is either a mistranslation or a reinterpretation of the verb צָה (stretched or measured) in the Hebrew text.

59. See n. 39 on the possible meaning “arise” for “came and stood.”

60. Charles H. Cosgrove, “The Place Where Jesus Is: Allusions to Baptism and the Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel,” NTS 35 (1989) 522–39, presents a fascinating argument for the community as the “flesh” of Jesus and the “hard saying” in John 6 as directed at the crypto-Christians in the Johannine community who want a faith that does not express itself in public community participation. Because “the life of the Spirit is present nowhere else but in the concrete fleshly existence of the community” (p. 535) it is only by participating in the Eucharist (and thus identifying oneself publicly with Jesus) that one can have life. I think this is a very thoughtful suggestion. The community in its historical existence would be the flesh of the glorified Jesus who is, in himself, glorified body.

61. James Swetnam, “Bestowal of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” represents well the position, with which I am here disagreeing, that the Spirit was given in 20:22 to “a restricted group of disciples, possibly only to the ‘Twelve’” as “an agent of empowerment to help [the restricted group] to act with regard to the forgiveness of sins” (p. 572). I agree with Raymond Brown, The Gospel According to John, 1044: “... we doubt that there is sufficient evidence to confine the power of forgiving and withholding of sin, granted in John xx 23, to a specific exercise of power in the Christian community, whether that be admission to Baptism or forgiveness in Penance. These are but partial manifestations of a much larger power ... given to Jesus in his mission by the Father and given in turn by Jesus through the Spirit to those whom he commissions. ... John does not tell us how or by whom this power was exercised ... [but] that it was exercised.”

62. The gospel, especially ch. 4 which includes the story of the conversion of the Samaritans at Sychar and of the (probably Gentile) royal official and “his whole household,” suggests that at least after the resurrection the community included not only Jews but Samaritans and Gentiles.
The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel

63. John’s use of body is quite different from Paul’s, which is an image for the unity and mutuality of the “members” within the church of which Christ is the head. In John the church is a mode of Jesus’ presence, his bodyself, present and active in the world.

64. The pertinent decrees were made in the 14th session of the Council of Trent (1551). See Heinrich Denzinger and Adolf Schönmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum (34th ed. Freiburg: Herder, 1965) 1703, defining John 20:23 as the institution of the sacrament of Penance, and 1710, concerning the requirement of an ordained minister for the sacrament.

65. Raymond Brown takes a judicious position on the Tridentine declarations that John 20:23 is the establishment of the Roman Catholic penitential discipline as a sacrament that can only be administered by the ordained. He distinguishes between what the text (or the text’s author) intends, which could hardly be what Trent defined, and the legitimate and diverse disciplines developed by various Christian communities. See The Gospel According to John, 1044-45.

66. Raymond Brown, “The Resurrection in John 20,” accurately translates this text: “If you forgive people’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you hold them they are held fast.” He takes it for granted that “them” refers to sins, which is not really what the text suggests since there is a real textual parallel between ἐπαναλαμβάνω in 23a, which he reads as “people,” and ἄνυτινον in 23b, which he reads as “sins” (implied). He says, however, that whatever positions Patristic or Tridentine writers took, “there is no requirement to think that the evangelist had them in mind” (p 204, n. 16). I suspect that this is one of the cases in which Brown tries to walk a tightrope between the results of his scholarship and official church teaching based on pre-Divino Afflante Spiritu approaches to Scripture.

67. T. Worden, “The Remission of Sins,” Scripture 9 (1957) 65–79, 115–27, is a study of virtually all Patristic references to the possibility of forgiveness of sins committed after baptism. In the first three centuries, when this was a hotly debated issue, there is no reference to John 20:23 as warrant for such a practice, even by those Fathers who held adamantly to this possibility. This argues strongly that John 20:23 was not understood by those closest to its composition as having anything to do with the sacrament of Penance, which in all likelihood did not exist in any form in the Johannine communities.

68. It is interesting to note that there is only one passage in the OT where ἀφίζω and σκέτω occur together in reference to an object. It is Cant 3:4, a passage whose influence on John 20 has already been noted. The words constitute a negative and a positive expression of the union between the spouse and the Beloved (Israel and YHWH). “I held (ἐκπάν 1κμ) him and would not let him go (εἰσπάν ζητοῦσα) him and would not let him go (ἀφίζομα).”

69. When, two decades ago, I suggested this symbolic significance to the identification of Thomas the Twin in The Johannine Resurrection Narrative, 579–85, it seemed “too symbolic” for some readers. Recently, however, perhaps as literary approaches have made scholars more amenable to symbolic material in the gospel, John N. Suggit, in “Jesus the Gardener” (n. 54 above), proposed that Thomas is the twin “to remind disciples that Thomas is their (emphasis in original) twin. Thomas, the twin, the representative of every disciple, was prepared to accompany Jesus to share in his death”—referring to 11:16 (p. 162). Interestingly, Suggit feels he still has to justify (p. 167) this type of interpretation!

70. Brown, “The Resurrection in John 20,” 205, says that Jesus turns the tables on Thomas. Thomas demanded to probe Jesus physically and Jesus now probes him spiritually by inviting him to do what he demanded.

71. There is no basis in the text for reading a hierarchy of “blessedness” in Jesus’ macarism. Thomas is blessed for his believing based on seeing; later disciples are blessed for their believing although they have not seen.

72. Ward, “Bodies” (n. 25 above) 176, says: “The body of Jesus Christ [after the resurrection and ascension], the body of God, is permeable, transcorporeal, transpositional.” I find this an intriguing way of expressing the mode of being of the glorified Jesus.