

Chapter Ten

Pass on the Power of One

(Text 5)

The Gospel of John

Section A Introduction

John opens his gospel with:

"In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God."

Immediately time (that is, the beginning) and place (that is, with God) are introduced. The rest of the sentence says : "and the Word was God"

John captures the moment in time and space when the Ultimate Cause of material being breaks into the reality of material being.

In the Catholic liturgy prior to Vatican II in the 1960's the Catholic Eucharist included this Prologue to John's gospel at the end of the Service. It was known as 'the last gospel'. Whatever about criticisms of the pre-Vatican church, at least there was the attempt to adjust the

cosmology of the church into that of John's gospel. Priority was given to this rather brief chapter. An example comes to mind of when an elderly Irish nun, teacher of a class of thirteen year olds, was amazed at their ignorance of its importance. Forthwith they were ordered to learn the chapter off by heart and were recite it frequently by heart for the remainder of the year.

In his prologue John also echoes the summary theme at the end of *Acts* Section C, that is, the three Commandments that are pivotal for the construction of a society. As John puts the theme, these relate to blood, (c/f killing) flesh (c/f adultery) and the will of man (c/f business and honesty).

Throughout his gospel John develops the sense of a living Authority and a living Word. These have already been introduced in the book of *Acts*. John identifies these with the person of Jesus Christ. His first presentation of the Authorised, Living Word in his Prologue or Section A, also echoes the opening chapters of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, with "In the beginning." John identifies the Word with life itself and light itself. For John Christianity is a new start.



Section B

Heed Characteristics of Live Authority

As noted, throughout the gospels and *Acts* there is a structural sequence of time(law) and then place(order). This sequence is uniformly used, not only in text structures, but also in the details of sentences such as at the close of Luke's gospel and in the opening sentence of John's gospel.

In his structure John therefore deals with the subject of living authority first.

Section B groups paragraphs in parallels similar to the start of Luke's gospel. There is a run of six places in the text. Then these places are paralleled by six more places in the same sequence as the first set.

The pairs are:

1.	Bethany beyond Jordan	Judea at Jordan
2.	Into Galilee	Into Galilee
3.	Cana in Gailee	Cana in Galilee
4.	Jerusalem and the Temple	Jerusalem and the Temple
5.	Jerusalem and the Temple	Jerusalem and the Temple.
6.	Night	An hour

The sixth pair of paragraphs do not explicitly mention a place but rather a time, that is "night" and then "an hour". But because both appear to follow on from the carefully paired paragraphs above them, they are included here in the list. The two things time and place appear to be merging together.

What are obvious points in common to each pair? All the paragraphs here relate to the identity of Jesus. They all appear to present Jesus as an authorised person.

Consider Living authority

1. represents God (c/f the first point in Mark's definition of what authority is based upon).
2. invites
3. uses power
4. relies on the household. To digress a little here, recall how Matthew bases his description of an environment of internalised law on what one could consider to be a well-run household.
5. works for the Father.
6. gives witness to God.

Other Sections in the other gospels and *Acts* end with a "focussing chorus" or summary. It is therefore not

surprising to find the last sentence of Section B refers to Moses who gave the 10 Commandments to the Jewish people. Here Jesus claims that it was about himself that Moses was writing.

As Section B unfolds and if the background of John's community is taken into account, one realises that besides the historical interactions that directly involve Jesus, something else is going on. And, in a sense, Jesus continues to be involved in the present situation in the community in which John is writing.

Text Background

Firstly consider the background of *Acts*. As the story has unfolded it appears the two perspectives of 'law' and 'order' appear find some reconciliation within the person of Paul. Before conversion Paul was a highly educated and meticulous Pharisee. But then he took the gospel to the Gentiles. On the other hand, while there was a reconciliation of the two views within his own person, one wonders if there a similar reconciliation within the Christian community and what were their potential divisions like decades later. In the intervening 40 or 50 years there was the destruction of Jerusalem, the growth of the church, expulsion of Christians from the synagogues, decades of persecution and the demise of almost all those who had had any personal contact with Jesus etc.

By the turn of the century what was going on in the community of John with its "hybrid" combination of

people from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds?

It appears a definitive difference between the two groups had remained. Just as time and place, or law and order do not fuse, even in language, neither had the two sides of Jews and Gentiles fused within John's community. If John was to set a framework for the future, he would have to deal with the tensions arising from a 'mosaic' type combination of people within the very fabric of Christianity.

Address to Gentile Christians

John firstly deals with the subject of Living Authority. One could assume that Christians with a Jewish heritage had already been trained in the sense of a moral God and respect for the authority of the law. Their weakness was not likely to lie in this area.

So John specifically address his Section B towards the Gentile Christians and he deals with their attitudes. Within the text it appears there are a number of 'clues' suggesting that this is the case.

(a) It appears there is a **Gentile background** for the sorts of people who take part in the stories in Section B. How so?

1. In the first pair of paragraphs John the Baptist is baptising in the Jordan. He refers to baptising in the Holy Spirit. Reference is made here to disciples coming **into Judea** (that is,

from outside a place dominated by the Jewish tradition). This is a reminder of Gentile converts coming into Christianity without the requirement of circumcision. They are being baptised instead 'in the Holy Spirit.'

2. Consider the next paragraph pair. Jesus goes "**into Galilee**" (a more Gentile setting to start with) and "into Galilee". In the first paragraph here two disciples ask Jesus "Rabbi, where do you live?" This indirectly suggests that the two are newcomers. Then there is the Samaritan woman, definitely an outsider. In the latter paragraph Jesus is saying to his disciples "I sent you to reap where you have not laboured. Others have laboured and ye into the labour of them having entered." One could argue that this statement appears relevant to the situation of Gentile Christians. They have come into a group after so much the ground work regarding moral standards has already been done by Jews and Jewish Christians. Indeed perhaps these words apply mainly to John's historical situation as the words do not appear to fit so neatly into an historical account about Jesus.
3. The third pair of paragraphs relate to **Cana/Galilee** and to Cana/Galilee. In the first instance there is the miracle of water being made into wine. This image could apply to those Gentile people who have been converted to full membership of the new church. In the

second paragraph there is the arrival of a courtier - apparently of a Gentile household.

4. The next pair shows Capernaum (in **Galilee**) and in Galilee. In the first instance here Jesus is with his disciples and with the members of his own family. But he does not stay long. There is a suggestion here that it is Jesus himself who is on the outer. By contrast, in the second scene there are slaves meeting the courtier. This is surely a Gentile household as Jews were not supposed to own slaves. Then the whole household is converted to a following of Jesus. The writer implies that these people have a greater sense of belonging within their own household than what Jesus has.
5. The next pair of paragraphs is situated in the **Temple in Jerusalem** and in the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus throws out the traders. He is now unwelcome in the Temple. In the second of the pair Jesus performs a miracle and this is considered to break a law forbidding work on the Sabbath day. The writer implies that Jesus himself is now on the outer of Judaism itself.
6. Finally, consider the paragraph pair which uses a time scene rather than one of place. Nicodemus is told that he needs to be born again of water. Recall that Gentiles are initiated into the group through baptism by

water and the Holy Spirit (and not by circumcision). Baptism is enough to make them full members. The second pair here, shows Jesus' claim to be the one about whom Moses wrote. In this sense his authority exceeds that of Moses. By staying with Jesus, the aim of the Judaic law is fulfilled. The point is made there is not the need for circumcision and all the other Jewish trappings of law.

(b) As further evidence that Gentile Christians in particular are addressed on the subject of living authority consider again the historical situation of John.

It is likely that people from a Gentile background would be somewhat "light" on obedience to rules and "light" on respect for group leadership. It is not surprising therefore that at the close of the first pair of paragraphs above **people are warned:** "for whoever disobeys the Son they will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." People are reminded that ultimately it is Jesus the Living Authority who makes the laws. By implication, Jesus knows whether or not the rules are being respected and he can follow up about it!

(c) In previous gospels (namely Luke) people of a Gentile/Greek philosophical background are urged to give direction to their lives. John appears to pick up on the theme about the importance of a **sense of direction.** How so? Greek philosophy (the background of Gentiles)

relies heavily on rationalism which in turn depends on the evidence of material things and logical argument about these things. For example one needs to stack glasses in a cupboard separately from pots and pans if order is to prevail.

In John's Section B, at the end of every pair of paragraphs, there is a sentence to stress the **need for faith**. In one exception here, the word "knowing" is used and this is used in the same sense. For Gentile Christians, belief requires them to move beyond rationalism based upon material evidence. Belief requires people to make a leap of faith. People need to believe that Jesus is both alive and authorised to lead them. They need to trust Him.

(d) The **main subject matter** of the paragraphs in Section B infers that people of a Gentile background have the right to full membership in the combined group. In John's community these people may have felt they had been sidelined. They have therefore failed to take up their full share of responsibility for the future viability of the whole group. They are challenged here to be responsible and to think in terms of where the whole group is going.



Section C

Characteristics of the Living Word

It appears (according to the *Reality Search* analysis) that the theme John picks up in Section C is that of the Living Voice or the Living Word. How is this theme developed? John uses the same method of pairing paragraphs in a parallel way as he does in the Section B of his gospel as set out below.

	Location	Location
1	across sea	across Jordan
2	mountain alone	remained.in place
3	sea journey	on journey to
4	synagogue	tomb
5	not Judea	not openly
6	Temple (c/f home)	Bethany (c/f home)
7	into Jerusalem	into Jerusalem
8	Temple	(in Temple)
9	out of temple	where I am
10	passing along	Going away was hidden
11	Porch Solomon	Jesus has gone

There are 11 apparent pairs in this Section C. Perhaps by now the practice of finding key words and their paragraphs was established sufficiently in the early church for John to put places as paragraph hooks in a

in the groupings. More recent scholars appear to agree that there are at least two dramas unfolding within this text - one between Jesus and his opponents, and the other one closer to the time of John and in relation to members of his own community. In the presentation of each of the paragraph pairs in Section C there is an indication that Jesus is moving further away from Judaism itself. At the same time there is a suggestion that he is also 'moving away' from people who rely on Jewish rituals rather than on the Living Jesus.

Consider the following:

1. The first of the 11 pairs has Jesus **crossing water**. This pairing has special significance as crossing water is symbolic of breaking with the past.
2. Jesus is then shown going to the mountain **alone** and also remaining in a place (instead of going to the side of his dying friend Lazarus.).
3. Then Jesus is on a sea **journey** and a land journey.
4. The 4th paragraph pair presents **a synagogue** and then **a tomb**. For people deeply hurt by being frozen out of the synagogue this is presented as a tomb. The Authorised and Living Word in the Christian sense is not in the synagogue anyway.
5. Jesus is then moving, **'not in Judea'** and later 'not

openly.'

6. Jesus goes to the Temple and then in the second paragraph he goes to Bethany. Is there a pair here? At the end of the first paragraph there is a reference to each going **to the 'home of him'**. In terms of the paired paragraph Jesus is in Bethany with his close friends. It appears that he considered this to be his home-base. In terms of the underlying theme, Jesus is gradually moving away from the Temple. This is in contrast to an earlier scene in his life when the Temple was named by himself as "my Father's house."
7. The 7th pair of paragraphs both shows Jesus going **into Jerusalem**.
8. The 8th pair shows Jesus **in the Temple** and in a meeting that takes place in the Temple.
9. The 9th pair shows Jesus **out of the temple**. In the second paragraph the key words are "Where I am". In an historical sense here, he has been forced out of the Temple.
10. The 10th pair shows Jesus **moving** along and also going away.
11. The last "pair" shows Jesus in the porch of Solomon. Time is mentioned in the first of these two paragraphs, that is, it was winter. But there isn't any second paragraph! Why so? In the

paragraph above this Jesus says he is going. But the writer has him continuing to debate with his opponents. Then, in the 2nd paragraph of the next and last pair Jesus has done what he has threatened to do. He has gone away.



In terms of characteristics of the Living Word which appear common to these paragraph pairs and are described within them, consider the following:

The Living Word

1. appeals to the crowd,
2. is sought after,
3. achieves goals,
4. brings life,
5. is doubted and outlawed,
6. is aware of death threats,
7. has public witness,
8. is conscious of timing,
9. is a voice from heaven,
10. is the light of the world,
11. speaks like a shepherd.

Critique of Jewish Christians

Some scholars claim there is an underlying debate in John's gospel which reflects a conflict in which his own community was involved. Was this between Jewish converts to Christianity and people who remained in the synagogue? Or, is it a conflict between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians? Or is it a conflict between the leadership of John's Community and the membership, especially the Jewish Christians members?

Section C reflects problems of Jewish Christians as converts to Christianity. Whatever about their problem in accepting fellow Gentiles, one wonders. Are they having problems in accepting Jesus Christ himself? At the turn of the century how are they rating the figure of Jesus as compared with the rich and proven traditions of the Judaism from which they have come?

Consider the main players of Section C.

The eleven pairs of paragraphs are provided by key words or "hooks" relating to place. The paragraphs show the presence of Jewish Christians. At times the inference of this presence appears vague. At other times the text specifically refers to Jewish Christians and the difficulty they have in accepting Jesus even within his historical life-time. At such times it appears some of these people may claim to be Jewish converts. But their conversion is on the surface. They still think of themselves as a sect of Judaism. They still cling to and appear to value the heritage of their past rather than their inheritance of the Kingdom of Jesus. Their 'pretence' of belief in Jesus has a negative effect on the whole group. Consider the presence of people with a Jewish background:

1	<p>In the first paragraph pair people see Jesus as a prophet. This shows people with a Jewish expectation. Only people with this background would label him as such.</p> <p>In the second paragraph of the pair the people already knew John the Baptist. So they were familiar with Jewish people being baptised in the Jordan.</p>
2.	<p>The second pair shows people wanting a king (a Jewish aspiration).</p> <p>There is also a family with long-term connections with Jesus (a Jew himself).</p>
3.	<p>In the third pair there is a fear amongst disciples to take Jesus on board (a fear</p>

	<p>common to those who are basing Christianity upon their Jewish heritage). In the second paragraph the people mentioned were associated with the family of Lazarus, so they also came from a Jewish background.</p>
4.	<p>Fourthly there is the theme of Jesus promising new life in the Eucharist and then Jesus bringing Lazarus to new life. But the disciples are also murmuring and Judas is ready to betray Jesus. The text says that historically the disciples of Jesus found it difficult to accept his teaching about his ongoing life in the Eucharistic meal. But one also wonder if John suggests that that this remains the case for Jewish Christians in the time of John.</p> <p>The second paragraph here shows people connected with Lazarus and so they are of Jewish background. But after the giving of new life to Lazarus, some went off to betray Jesus to the Pharisees.</p>
5.	<p>In the first of these two paragraphs the brothers of Jesus do not believe in him. Then, people coming in from the country were seeking purification. Both sets of people here are of Jewish background.</p>
6.	<p>In the 6th" pair the Jews ask "Is he about to teach the Greeks?" People of Greek background would not be saying this. But</p>

	<p>Jewish Christians, feeling cut off from their roots, would be likely to be asking the same question some decades later in the new church.</p> <p>In the second paragraph here there is direct reference to Jews believing in Jesus with the suggestion they are no longer sure about this. .</p>
7.	<p>In the 7th pair both the paragraphs here refer to Pharisees. Is there any later Christian connection to these people? We recall that Paul also described himself as a Pharisee even after his conversion to Christianity. In the new community, it is likely people were also prone to distinguish themselves as having the background of a Pharisee even after they claimed to be Christian and had been rejected from the synagogue.</p>
8.	<p>In the eighth pair there is an important indication of what was going on in John's community. The literal translation of this text talks about the "having believed him Jews." The text tells us of Jews who did believe in Jesus once. But now they are having second thoughts. Again we hear echoes of John's church.</p> <p>The second of these paragraphs also provides a reference. This appears to apply more to the Jewish Christians of John's church than to those with whom Jesus is</p>

	<p>pictured as addressing. The text says "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground dies..." In John's case there is an implication here that unless Jewish Christians are prepared to drop so much of their ritual and previous framework of culture and thinking, then the new church will not be able to be 're-born'.</p>
9.	<p>In both cases of the paired paragraphs here there are echoes of people from a Jewish background. Thus "they took up stones" to throw at Jesus. This behaviour would come from people whose Jewish laws had been broken.</p> <p>In the second paragraph here the people say "We heard out of the law..." Again they have a Jewish background.</p>
10.	<p>In the 10th pair of paragraphs one is faced with people of Jewish origins. The first statement here states "we of Moses are disciples." We wonder if people were still saying this in John's community decades later</p> <p>In a statement of the matching paragraph one is told that "even of the (Jewish) rulers many believed." In the latter case, within Jesus' lifetime they believed but were afraid to own up to this belief because of pressure from other Jews. Given the background situation of John one wonders if there was also a similar degree of pressure being</p>

	<p>exerted amongst Christians who were formerly Jews.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>In the 11th paragraph "pair" we read from the literal translation "Until when the life of us holdest thou?" This complaint would hardly come from Jews who knew they were Jews for life. Rather it appears to come from people who find themselves committed to something for life but they are not sure what it is.</p> <p>There is no second paragraph in this pair. But the paragraph still carries the weight of a summary statement (like the central paragraph of a concentric circle). Unless Jewish Christians accept the full reality of Jesus the Living Word they will lose him.</p>

It appears that the arguments in Section C are so bitter because it has bearing on the very survival of the emerging group. Indeed, it is hard to see how exchanges as bitter as this would be conducted with ordinary Jews who in the time of John and even at the time of Jesus may have preferred to get on with their lives and forget about the Christian message.

It appears that in the gospel on one level the historical Jesus is confronting Jewish leaders and those of a Jewish background who are wavering about continuing to

follow him. Then on another level John, the writer, presents Jesus as the Living Word. The Jewish Christians are wavering about accepting Jesus in full. As the underlying argument gains momentum at both levels Jesus claims that those who cleave to their background undercut his full, living reality. They are attempting to "kill" him.

The Challenge

What is the challenge that John puts forward? Re-consider Section B. Here Jesus is presented as the Living Authority. Gentile Christians are challenged to have faith and obey the Living Authority of Jesus. They are challenged to recognise that they are full Christians and should be sharing in responsibility for the group. On the other hand what happens in Section C? Here Jesus is presented as the Living Word. In this Section people with Judaic roots are challenged to let go of their past and trust in the on-going, Living Word.

One question. Why are the Jewish Christians addressed more harshly than the Gentile Christians?

It would be of help here to re-consider the basic symbol of Christianity, that is, the cross or its more detailed presentation of the crucifix. It can be argued that a cross represents the two societies (law and order) in dialectical tension. The down beam represents Judaism with its roots in the laws of nature and history. The cross beam represents the Gentile world with its mode of rationalism and its outreach and openness to order in all its forms. It

is the down beam (c/f a society based upon law) that supports the cross beam (c/f a society based upon order). The law-based group of people with their 'fixture' into reality need to allow their more free-wheeling 'cousins' to rely upon them. If the law/time/family-based section of a community waver and/or close out the others, then the whole the Christian enterprise fails.

How is the challenge to Jewish Christians in Section C constructed? Consider the situation of this sub-group. Jews set great store on their salvation history. John therefore sets out to show them that Jesus has "out-done" and continues to "out-do" whatever is great and treasured within the history of the Judaism.

1	In the first paragraph pair one is reminded of God raining manna from heaven so Moses could feed the chosen people. Here Jesus feeds the people directly.
2.	Secondly one is reminded of the great tradition of kingship within Judaism. But Jesus flees those who want to make him king.
3.	Salvation history placed great store on the event when God parted the waters of the Red Sea so Moses could lead the chosen people through the waters. But Jesus can walk over the top of the sea.
4.	Elijah the great prophet brought a child back to life by stretching over the top of the child.

	But Jesus could command a dead person to come out of their tomb four days after burial.
5.	Dispersed Jews (and Jewish Christians?) tried to attend both festivals of Tabernacles and Passover. But Jesus decided it was appropriate to stay away.
6.	Observance of Sabbath rest was a key law of Judaism. But Jesus was ready to cure a maimed man on that day.
7.	In Jewish law the penalty of adultery was death by stoning. But Jesus refused to apply the law's penalty.
8.	Jews (and Jewish Christians?) identified themselves as descendants of Abraham. But Jesus claimed to be greater than Abraham.
9.	Jews (and Jewish Christians?) treasured the heritage of the Temple tradition even after it had gone. But Jesus deliberately went out of the temple.
10	Jews (and Jewish Christians?) claimed a blind man had been punished for sin. But Jesus broke the cycle of apparent guilt and made him see.
11	Jews (and Jewish Christians?) put highest value on their observance of law. But Jesus put greatest value on doing the work of the Father.

Present Applications re the Church

In considering the conflict within the gospel of John a question can be raised about its relevance to the present. In a fast forward to the present who might be the "Jewish Christians"? It may be better here to stick with the Catholic Church in making analogies.

In the paragraph pairs in Section C, a point in contention was the unwillingness of Jewish/Christians to accept the teaching of Jesus on the Eucharist. But if a parallel is drawn here between Jewish Christians and conservative Catholics of the present, it is the conservative Catholics who are more loyal to teaching about the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. More liberal-minded people tend to drop out of Church organisations more easily (judging from observation of quite a few drop-outs) . Do parallels between the Jewish Christians and conservative Catholics break down here? Not necessarily. Both groups would tend to hang onto models of worship that have been proven in the past. As the Mass belongs to the past, conservative Catholics would continue to treasure it.

Despite apparent loyalty however, both Jewish Christians (at the time of John) and conservative Catholics (c/f today) could have a ritualistic and mechanistic type of approach. to religion. Perhaps with a more mechanistic approach they would feel more in control.

In terms of the history of the aftermath of Vatican 11

there was an Archbishop named Lefebvre who claimed that changes made to the Mass rendered it invalid. He broke from the church when he tried to ordain people to follow this line of teaching and retain the Tridentine Mass (from prior to Vatican II). What was really going on here? To illustrate. A book by Lefebvre written in the 1950's sets out the parts of the Mass and presents these in a way similar to a ritualistic machine. Lefebvre says if parts of the Mass are changed then the whole of this would be impaired. In this sense the model he is using for the Mass is something like a machine, for example a car. With one small part missing it may no longer work. Vatican II challenged such an approach to the Eucharist. Rather the Council presented the Eucharist as being more along the lines of an expression of the 'Authorised, Living Word' who continues on in the "living, social organism" which is the Church.

At the time of John it appears Jewish Christians wanted the security and control of outward ritual. They did not want to accept the sense of a whole community being "alive". In his gospel John presents the "Authorised, Living Word" who lives on within the group especially when they are being re-focussed during the Eucharist. In this context, the "authorised, living Word" leads into a statement made from within the group and through its' representative, the priest, c/f "This is my body. This is my blood" The statement here enacts the claim. Time and place are brought together. There is an echo of the words of Genesis here c/f "Let there be Light." The nucleus of followers re-enact the first moment of creation at, for example 9 am mass in the church down

the road.

Has Vatican II and the Church in the years to follow the Council managed to convey this sort of understanding of the Eucharist to its membership?

One wonders. With the loss of a mechanistic view one wonders how many Catholics still really believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Fortunately such a belief is apparent amongst regular church goers. But many people no longer attend church.

Sometimes total non-believers appear to understand the implications of the incarnation and 'real presence' quite keenly. There was a story for example of an Asian who knew nothing about Christianity. He was on a ship voyage with a priest and one evening he asked for an explanation of this. The next morning the priest met him on deck and commented that he was up early. "Oh no answered the man. I've sat here all night and thought about the wonder of the incarnation - that God should become man." Another comment was from someone who said "If I believed what you Catholics claim you believe I would spend my life on my knees." What about the Catholics. A negative example comes to mind here. A young man who had spent thirteen years in a Catholic school in Victoria was talking about an exchange that he had had recently with a colleague. Apparently the colleague was teasing him saying "You Catholics believe that Jesus is really present in the bread at Mass." The "Catholic Graduate" recalled the interchange with the comment. "I didn't bother to tell

him it is only a symbol." His critic knew more about correct church teaching here than the graduate did.

The Relevance of John's Debate

Some people may respond to the debate in John's gospel with the question. "What has all this got to do with me? I'm not a Christian."

An answer here as given elsewhere is that the gospels are basically about "time and place". Ultimately, time and place are all that they, as material beings have. Whatever they believe, the gospels try to tease out logically, a way of living which strikes a balance between the consciousness of time and place. Within Christianity the two are brought together. The gospel presents an awareness of the effects of either or both upon one's social consciousness. In doing this they provide a guideline towards making one's own life and one's environment safer and more secure. . Connections are multi-faceted. There is a matter of one's own mind, one's home, work place, neighbourhood and country etc. But in any case it is only in a supportive environment that one can comfortably exercise the power of one.

The gospels portray a 'primeval polemic' which goes within every type of society. This polemic continues on within the individual. In contemporary living divisions continue to exist and can be more difficult to discern than at the time of the gospel writers. One is likely for instance, to be part of a family grouping with its strong support for life, marriage and resources etc. But one can

also be part of the urban anonymity of a changing, multi-cultural and media dominated suburb. Complexity and contradictions in turn can be reflected within one's own value system.

John's attempt to come to grips with several levels of conflict, reflect what goes on at the present time.

It should be noted that *Reality Search* in its analysis and explanations does not attempt to present a definitive picture of the gospels. It is looking at only one angle of the gospels, that is, the existence of an underlying argument and structure and the implications of this. There are themes in the gospels not touched upon in *Reality Search*, for example the themes of light and darkness, or the symbolism of the Temple, the themes of meals etc. To some extent the gospels are like a mosaic. If one is looking at one colour, for example green, a particular pattern may be formed and this pattern discussed. But there are other colours and other patterns as well. Also, and more importantly, the gospels are talking about the existence of a 'social organism'. As with anything that is "alive" no one description can be given about it nor can any description do it justice.



Section D

Challenge to Identify with The Authorised, Living Word

In John's Section D Jesus passes on his presence as the Authorised, Living Word to a nucleus of disciples around him. The text that describes this handing on is surely the most complex in the gospels and *Acts*. So many themes and meanings come together here.

An attempt is made here to unravel some of the steps.

1.	<p>The first step is linked through questions and answers given. The answers to the questions show how a challenge is being made to identify with the authorised, living word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members of the group are challenged to wash (metaphorically) one another's feet (c/f the ointment woman?)• They are reminded that whoever receives them receives Jesus as well.• He urges these people to love each other as he has loved them.• He promises that where he is they also may be.
----	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He tells them that the works he does, a believing one can do as well. • He urges them to keep his word.
2.	<p>In step 2 Jesus provides a backdrop as to why he should be involved with this particular group of people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He says there is a vine/branch connection between himself and them. • He wants to provide them with a fulfilling joy. • He points to an established friendship between himself and them. • He tells them they have been chosen. • He mentions a primeval union with them.
3.	<p>In the 3rd step reasons are given for why Jesus has promised to send the on-going guidance of truth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He says this is expected. • He says there will be future announcements. • He will send the spirit of truth to these

	<p>people because they have loved him and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they have believed in Him.
4.	<p>The 4th step in Section D consists of a prayer by Jesus to his eternal Father for these people and for the kernel or nucleus of his teaching and presence which, in an historical sense he will be leaving behind. A possible way to analyse this prayer would be to consider each statement starting with "that".</p> <p>However in terms of the underlying structure of the gospel this prayer appears to parallel other texts on "the child". A different format is used and there is no further analysis of it.</p>

The central point in Section D is that somehow the presence of Jesus will continue on in a special way through the on-going presence of a community of disciples.

Section E

The Voice of Authority to set Direction

As already mentioned there are many themes in John's gospel and these overlay each other. Only the "law and order" pattern is considered here.

How does John deal with this theme in Section E? Jesus as an Authorised Living Word has claimed that he will, through a spirit of truth, guide his community into the future. How will his presence continue to exist? In Section D Jesus challenges his disciples to identify with him. His presence will continue in the hybrid, Christian community and the gospels have shown how this community can be constructed and launched.

The gospels and especially *Acts* have shown how a "living, authorised word" can exist within a cross-section of people. It can especially exist within a "living social organism" of people who focus upon the person of Jesus. At a certain time and place of unity c/f the Mass the living Authorised Word within this social organism can express itself and become present in a material way.

What sort of 'world society' can the presence of an authorised, living word, underpin? With this question in mind paragraph "hooks" in Section E have been selected in terms of persons who were told to do something in the text. When going through the paragraphs thus formed it appears echoes of a hybrid society can be discerned. Consider.

1.	Jesus asks that the legal rights of his followers be respected.
2.	Jesus tells Peter to put his sword into his sheath. Non-violence is to be a hallmark of the Christian character.
3.	Jesus tells his accusers to question those who heard

	him. The testimony of witnesses is to be respected in a justice system.
4.	Pilate states "What is truth?" The Christianity of the future will continue to consider similar philosophical questions.
5.	Pilate states to the crowd "Behold the man." Jesus stands before them whipped and bleeding as a totally vulnerable human. He still does c/f the crucifix.
6.	The mocking of soldiers is mentioned and the writer remarks that this is so Scripture may be fulfilled. Christianity should continue to try to fulfill Scripture in the best sense of this.
7.	Jesus says to his mother. "Behold the son of thee." This recalls the relationship between church leaders and church leadership.
8.	Jesus says to the disciple "Behold the mother of thee". Again a relationship between church members and their leadership is described here.
9.	Joseph of Arimathea asks to care for the body of Jesus. This could be understood to be an on-going task for the Church of Jesus - to care for his body and the reality of his on-going presence.
10.	Jesus tells Magdalene to go and tell the brothers he has risen. Here support for the leadership and others is recognised.
11.	Jesus tells his followers to receive the Holy Spirit that they may forgive the sins of others. Again a writer puts stress on the need for forgiveness.

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 12. | Finally Jesus exhorts the doubting Thomas and others like him to have faith. |
|-----|--|

Thus in a 'world society' based upon an Authorised, Living Word:

1. Legal rights are protected
2. Non-violence is stressed
3. Witnesses are heard in justice systems
4. There is a philosophical base.
5. The humanity of Jesus and all people is respected.
6. The hopes and aspirations of the Scriptures of humankind are fulfilled.
7. People are treated as loved children in the best sense.
8. People are as loyal to leadership and the wider community as possible as with filial children.
9. The body of Jesus and his special presence within the religious organisation is cared for.
10. Leadership is given support.
11. Priority is given to forgiveness.
12. People believe in a positive future.

Section F Epilogue

Some researchers claim that the last traditional chapter of John's gospel was added and its theology is different from elsewhere. With this in mind it was classed in the analysis as a possible epilogue to the gospel.

On the other hand in terms of a "water circle" of symbols it appears that the last chapter is also an intrinsic part of the structure as a whole. The end points of the water circle match the beginning points at the front of the gospel. But the last traditional chapter does appear to finish up on almost a 'chatty' note suggesting that it has parallels with "child" passages elsewhere in the gospels. An extra indication that this is the case is that the closing paragraphs are about 'the beloved disciple', who arguably is a type if not the key prototype of the "child". At the same time the last chapter provides a "summing up" of the challenge that the gospel is throwing out to both the law and order types of Christians. How so?

When the resurrected Jesus meets his disciples on the beach in the early morning he tells them to cast out their nets. Despite their better judgement they do this and pull in 153 fish. According to some writers, 153 is the number of languages that were known in the world at that time. It appears the disciples (c/f Jewish Christians) are being encouraged and challenged to "move out" beyond their tendency towards narrowness.

Then, in the text the Apostle Peter is authorised to care for those who follow Jesus. There is a lesson here for Gentile Christians in turn. They are challenged to recognise that the authority within their leadership is ultimately based on the authority of Jesus. At times they might claim that an apparently rational idea or ideal has authority. But discernment can be faulty.

Again we note that John the writer deals with a challenge relating to law then one relating to order. The law then

order sequence is yet again retained.

A 'summing up' in the epilogue is also a reminder. So often causes of social problems do not so much lie with the ill will of people but rather the limitations of the system in which they operate. At the same time both types of challenge in the Epilogue are made to the same group of people (c/f move out and respect authority). This in itself is a reminder that all people are more or less connected to the one or other view point.

John's Water Circle

As mentioned previously a first foray into an analysis of the Gospels and Acts began with a concentric circle that was discovered in the writing of an essay for a Masters degree in Theology. Amongst the water symbols presented in John's gospel there is a pattern as follows: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1.

Academically this discovery had limited success, partly because of lack of references for a bibliography. Yet the lack of references here was also considered to be a sign that there may be something exciting in the gospels that was yet to be uncovered.

In the water circle it is the symbols themselves rather than paragraphs that come to a central point. But the central point highlights the existence of a time/place structure that *Reality Search* claims to underlie the whole of the gospels.

1. The first pair of references are about immersion in water. The first of these is at the start and the other at the end of the gospel. Firstly Jesus is baptised. Finally Peter jumps into the sea.
2. The 2nd pair of references show Jesus using water - firstly to miraculously make wine and then in an apparently miraculous catch of fish.
3. The 3rd pair shows Jesus telling Nicodemus (a Pharisee coming to him at night) that he needs to be re-born through water. The other side to this pair shows water and blood coming from the side of the crucified Christ. Traditionally this is viewed as the birth of the church.
4. The 4th pair of references shows Jesus saying "I thirst" to a Samaritan woman when he asks her for water at a well. The second half of the pair shows Jesus saying "I thirst" when he is on the cross.
5. The 5th reference to water is an indirect one. It mentions the need for a pail to collect water. Its pair is a bowl being held up to Jesus on the cross.
6. The 6th water reference is that of the pool of Bethesda. Its pair is the pool of Siloam. Jesus works signs at both places.
7. The 7th reference is to the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). This sea was so-called after Tiberius

who was Emperor at the time of Jesus. Although Tiberius himself did not claim to be a god, the emperors both before and after him did make this claim. So there was a connotation of 'being alive' in relation to both the name and the sea itself. Also, geographically the sea breaks out of its confines into the river of Jordan through a narrow stone chute. A parallel reference to the sea of Tiberius is the claim of Jesus to be a River of Living Water. People familiar with both the historical situation and the geography would be more aware of the association.

8. The 8th reference does not have a pair because it is the central point of the concentric circle. Here Jesus is walking on the water towards his disciples who fear they will drown in the storm around them. Jesus uses the words "I am" which John the writer, records to show that Jesus is conscious of his identity as the Authorised, Living Word.

The picture presented at the middle of the circle shows that disciples take Jesus into the boat. The reader is told that "Immediately (c/f time) they arrive at where they are going (c/f place)". The simple statement neatly sums up the whole gospel of John and the gospels and *Acts* that go before it.

