Johannine Studies in the Australia-Pacific Region

Francis J. Moloney, SDB
Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Abstract: Leon Morris began a long history of significant Johannine scholarship in the Australia-Pacific region with his commentary on John, published in 1971. An early period is marked by the internationally significant work of John Painter, William Loader, Francis Moloney and Brendan Byrne. Johannine scholarship in New Zealand has been well represented by Godfrey Nickolson and Derek Tovey. Significant contributions have continued from a more recent generation: Dorothy Lee and Mary Coloe. The tradition continues in the published work of a group of contemporary Johannine scholars, Margaret Beirne, Ian Mackay, Alexander Jensen, Stephen Voorwinde and Ruth Sheridan. Although not published, there are signs that good work is also emerging from a small group of Pacificans (Frank Smith, Jacob Xavier and Michael Rupulga). The following study presents a critical appreciation of this scholarship and an up-to-date indication of all major publications.


New Testament scholarship in the Australia-Pacific Region has, until very recent times, been generated by seminaries and institutions of advanced education sponsored by several Christian denominations. In the past twenty years, as the result of a decision on the part of the Australian Federal Government, theological studies have entered the curriculum of a number of federally funded universities. Although not dependent upon Australian Government decisions, theological studies are also a part of major universities in New Zealand, especially in Auckland and Otago. The major theological institutes in the Pacific, located at Suva in the Fiji Islands, remain under the direction of Church leadership of both Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches, the Pacific Regional Seminary (Catholic) and the Pacific Theological Seminary (Protestant).

Given that history and background, the richness of Johannine scholarship in the Australia-Pacific Region is impressive. In the paper that follows, I will plot a loosely historical passage through the past two decades, although consideration must be given to the earlier work of some scholars whose most mature work has appeared in the 1990's and the first decade of the third millennium. These scholars, although in their seventies, first appeared on the scene in the 1970's and they continue to study, teach and publish. Johannine scholarship in the Australia-Pacific region reflects trends elsewhere in the western world. The earliest work reflects the dominant paradigm of the historical-critical method, but recent scholarship moves away from this paradigm. Generally speaking, however, Australian and Pacific scholars have not entirely abandoned the objective
safeguards that historical criticism claims to provide. Nevertheless, they have “moved with the times.”

**AN EARLY PERIOD (1970-)**

Three figures emerged in this period, although they did not come into a vacuum in the Australian Johannine scene. Leon Morris (1914-2006) had made a major international contribution to Johannine scholarship for several decades, and a second edition of his major commentary on John was published in 1995. The original appeared in 1971. By 1995 he was in retirement from his vigorous teaching and writing ministry at Ridley College, Melbourne, and also at Tyndale College, Cambridge.1 It was into that scene that John Painter stepped with his valuable and widely used *John: Witness and Theologian* in 1975.2 Painter completed his doctoral studies at the University of Durham, under the direction of Charles Kingsley Barrett (1968), and spent his early academic life at the University of Capetown (1971-76). After a distinguished career at Latrobe University, Victoria, Australia (1977-96), he became the Foundation Professor of Theology at Charles Sturt University, New South Wales, in an association between the University and Saint Mark’s National Seminary in Canberra (1997-).

William Loader and Francis Moloney came on the scene a little later. Loader completed his doctoral studies, under the direction of Ferdinand Hahn, in Mainz in 1972, and Moloney completed his, under the direction of Morna D. Hooker, at the University of Oxford in 1975.3 Loader’s early work had been dedicated to the Letter to the Hebrews,4 while from the start Moloney’s interest had been in the Gospel of John.5 Loader spent his early teaching years in the Perth Theological Hall of the Uniting Church (1978-85), and Moloney at the Catholic Theological College in Melbourne (1976-94). As the Universities opened their doors to theological study, Loader became a Professor at Murdoch University, Perth (1986-), and Moloney the Foundation Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University (1994-98), and later the Katharine Drexel Professor at the Catholic University of America, in Washington, DC (1999-2005). Since 2006 he has served as the Provincial Superior of the Salesians of Don Bosco, a Catholic religious order working for the young, in Australia and the Pacific. He is a Fellow of Catholic Theological College, and a Professorial Fellow of Australian Catholic University.

John Painter has made a major contribution to international Johannine studies through his active role in the *Societas Novi Testamenti Studiorum*, his teaching in England,

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3 To avoid cumbersome switching from third to first person in the text, I will refer to myself in the third person at all times, even though I am the author of the article.


South Africa and Australia. Now in his seventies, he continues to publish outstanding work on the Gospel through significant books and articles. Years of teaching, research and the direction of research have made him the most perceptive Johannine scholar working in Australia. Painter has always paid close attention to the development of the Johannine tradition within a first-century Jewish-Christian setting in which a separation from the Synagogue played a major part. Throughout the Gospel he traces the literary form and theological theme of a “quest,” and maintains that “questing” is a key to much of the interpretation of the Gospel as we now have it. However, merely scanning the titles of his most recent publications indicates a well-honed theological mind. He is not primarily interested in history or literary forms (although he is very interested in them), but he is now writing on such themes as creation, sacrifice and atonement, monotheism and dualism, the interface of history and theology. One of his little-known early works indicated this concern: a study of the hermeneutics of Rudolf Bultmann. A significant indication of Painter's ongoing importance in contemporary Johannine scholarship is his current contract to produce a third edition of the Greek text commentary of the lately lamented Kingsley Barrett’s *The Gospel According to St John.*

William Loader has resided, taught and done his Australian research and writing in Perth, Western Australia. However, he is more "pacifican" than many reviewed here, as he came to work in Perth, via his doctoral studies in Germany, from origins in Auckland, New Zealand. He has shown an interest in theological issues throughout his career, and his first major publication on the Gospel of John dealt with Johannine Christology. He has argued here and elsewhere that the Johannean corpus contains a core theological structure, and that the shape of the story, and other themes or "issues" must be interpreted in the light of that theological core. This early study has been very influential, but of recent times Loader has become more involved in what one might term “applied” issues: Jesus’ attitude to the Law, fundamentalism, sexuality, the poor, and the broad area of New Testament

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8 The second edition was published in London by SPCK in 1978.


ethics. He is currently working as an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellow on *Attitudes towards Sexuality in Judaism and Christianity in the Hellenistic Greco-Roman Era*. Despite this focus, his interest in Johannine issues, as can be seen from his recent publications, has not waned. He continues to make a contribution to Johannine scholarship, nationally and internationally, from Perth, Western Australia.

Francis Moloney began his international career with the publication of his doctoral thesis, *The Johannine Son of Man* in 1976. It was reprinted by the same publishers with an appendix responding to the widespread critical reception of the first edition in 1978. He returned to this theme in 2005 with his long essay “The Johannine Son of Man Revisited.” A so-called “second edition” of *The Johannine Son of Man*, containing the original dissertation, the update of 1978, and the “revisiting” of the question, assessing the period from 1978-2005, appeared in 2007. The early careers of Painter, Loader and Moloney were marked by an attention to the historical-critical approach to the text, although Moloney was influenced by Professor Morna Hooker’s insistence that the best interpreter of any text is the text itself, i.e., the best interpreter of John - is John. In later years, Moloney has been further influenced by the emergence of narrative criticism, and from 1993-1998 published a three volume narrative critical commentary on the Fourth Gospel. This work eventually produced a more traditional commentary on the Gospel of John in which all narrative critical apparatus was ignored, but which insisted that the Gospel of John, no matter how troublesome the *Aporien* might be, must be read as a unified literary and narrative utterance. Moloney’s work since then, including a full-scale commentary on the Gospel of Mark, has been marked by this methodological approach.

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12 See above, note 5.


These three scholars of an earlier generation have made major contributions to Australian biblical studies and to international Johannine research. Each of them has published a commentary on the Johannine Letters, although directed at differing readerships. They have enjoyed a close working relationship and mutually supported one another, despite the distances between Perth, Melbourne and Canberra. An indication of the robust discussion that they enjoy can be briefly recorded here. Moloney has long argued that there is a distinct Johannine Son of Man Christology. In essence, he argues, the expression is used consistently to refer to the human Jesus as a locus of God's revelation, especially in the eminently human event of the Cross. Eschatology and judgment, associated with the expression "the Son of Man" in the tradition, is "realised" in the Johannine Christology. Painter argues that the Son of Man material in the Fourth Gospel is the product of an assembly of fragmentary passages that were originally attached to other contexts. There is no distinctive or unified Son of Man Christology. While Moloney attempts to disassociate the "lifting up" on the Cross with Jesus' return to the Father, as he wants to limit the use of "the Son of Man" to Jesus' human experience, Loader insists that Jesus' being lifted up and glorified indicates both his crucifixion and ascension into glory. He argues that this is shown by the fact that the Son of Man "cluster" of sayings has been adopted by the "central structure" of the Johannine Christology in the second half of the Gospel. These Australian/New Zealand Johannine scholars, all three Fellows of the prestigious Australian Academy for the Humanities, trust that they have indicated to a more recent generation that we learn a great deal from one another when we agree, but we learn even more when we disagree, and are called to argue why.


19 See Moloney, Son of Man (2007), 276-82.


21 Loader, Christology, 107-21, 206-209.

22 An important player in these scholarly interactions in Australia has been the significant Pauline scholar, Brendan J. Byrne, SJ, although he has not published widely on John. To this point he has made two significant contributions: Brendan Byrne, "The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 23 (1985): 83-97, and Lazarus: A Contemporary Reading of John 11:1-46 Zacchaeus Studies (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991). He is at the moment working on a commentary on the Gospel of John, aimed at an interested Christian reader. He has already produced such commentaries on Matthew, Mark and Luke. The commentary on John is expected to be completed in 2012.
A NEW ZEALAND INTERLUDE

Before a consideration of recent Australia-Pacific Johannine scholarship, two important contributions from New Zealand need to be noted. A significant monograph, the published version of a 1980 doctoral dissertation on the Johannine descent-ascent scheme, completed at Vanderbilt University under the direction of John R. Donahue, was published by Godfrey C. Nicholson in 1983.23 Nicholson only continued his scholarly life for a brief time, teaching at St John’s College, Auckland. However, this detailed analysis of a theological and literary scheme that lies at the heart of Johannine Christology made a major contribution to Johannine scholarship across the final two decades of the twentieth century. He was one of the first to challenge Moloney’s identification of the Johannine Son of Man as a locus of revelation limited to the human experience of Jesus, insisting that the Son of Man theme is subordinated to the descending and ascending motif, and not just a crucified, figure. For Nicholson, as with Loader (and others) shortly after him, the theme of the Son of Man is part of the larger scheme of Jesus’ descending, and ascending through the departure of his death, his “lifting up” on and through the Cross.24

More recently, Derek Tovey, currently lecturer in New Testament at St John’s Auckland and Auckland University, published his 1994 Durham dissertation on the narrative art of the Fourth Gospel in 1997.25 This is an important study for a number of reasons, not all of which can be listed here. It is a significant early attempt to use emerging narrative critical and other literary techniques to read the Johannine story as a whole.26 Also, unlike some of the early narrative and literary readings of the Gospel of John, Tovey attempts to show that narrative art and act influence meaning, but that this does not disconnect the story from history. As he writes, “A Christian view of reality which admits theological truths (the activity of God in the world, for example) which intersect with the real historical world, immediately opens up a form of history which moves beyond that for which a merely empirical approach is adequate.”27 He rightly insists that we can no longer approach the history recorded in the Fourth Gospel in the von Rankian sense, but that “The Fourth Gospel might be described as a theological display text, that is, theological elaboration upon history. It is a believer’s ‘display’ of the true significance of an historical person.”28

Although Tovey’s major contribution to Johannine studies to this point was written and published in the 1990’s, he belongs to a generation after Painter, Loader and Moloney. As such, he will continue to make an important contribution to contemporary Johannine


24 Moloney continues to insist (especially on the basis of 3:14 and 12:32-33) that “lifting up” refers only to the physical event of the cross, and not to ascension. See Moloney, Son of Man (2007), 266-70.


26 Tovey has broadened the reference points for narrative theory (in which the work of Seymour Chatman has played a key role) by introducing F. K. Stanzel’s the typological circle of narrative situations into the discussion.

27 Ibid., 255.

28 Ibid., 226. See the review of this study by Francis J. Moloney in Pacifica 11 (1998): 333-35.
studies in the Australia-Pacific region, and beyond. He has published a volume that locates the theory of his dissertation within Jesus-research, *Jesus, Story of God: John's Story of Jesus*, and three perceptive studies of significant Johannine texts: 1:1-18; 1:35-51 and 11:1-44. In each of these studies his interest in literary theory and the unexpected connections that can be traced across the Johannine narrative, as well as the close link between the theological and the historical in the Johannine narrative and its rhetoric, is further developed. His current declared interest in the Gospel of John is the slippery theme of its use of doxa considering issues of honour and the status of Jesus in the Gospel.

**THE MORE RECENT PERIOD (1990-)**

More recent decades in Australia have been marked by the emergence of significant women Johannine scholars, notably Dorothy Lee and Mary Coloe. Dorothy Lee's first major contribution to Johannine studies was the publication of her 1991 Sydney University doctoral dissertation, directed by Brendan Byrne in 1994. The uniqueness of her approach to the Johannine text was immediately apparent in this first publication. Dedicated to a close reading of the long narratives in the Gospel, 4:1-42, 5:1-47, 6:1-71, 9:1-41 and 11:1-12:11, she demonstrated a mastery of the exegetical issues in these fundamental passages along with a nuanced symbolic reading of them (with the help of Paul Ricoeur). She traces five stages in the unfolding of the symbol in each of these long narratives: the foundational image, or "sign"; misunderstanding; struggle for understanding; attainment or rejection of understanding; and finally, confession of faith or statement of rejection. She opened a rich vein of "symbolic" readings that has given her a place in major Johannine scholarship. Her readings throw new light on the symbolic value of water, light, birth, bread, etc. Some reviewers complained of the imposition of the interpretative "grid" upon the text, but Lee's ongoing work along these lines has shown that her "reading of the Gospel shows a deep sensitivity to the truth that there is no context which can ever exhaust all the possibilities of any text."

This has been shown in her recent mature study, that I regard as one of the most significant books on the Fourth Gospel in the past two decades, *Flesh and Glory*. Now unconditionally committed to a more nuanced reading of the narrative in a symbolic fashion, and fully immersed in all exegetical traditions and practices, Lee has provided a book that demonstrates the unity and profundity of the symbolic use of flesh, water, love

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29 Derek Tovey, *Jesus, Story of God: John's Story of Jesus* (Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum Press, 2007).
32 See especially ibid., 27-35.
and friendship, God as Father, motherhood, walking in darkness, resurrection and life. Written in lucid prose that reminds me of the beauty of the writing of such scholars as Charles Harold Dodd, this book – too little read and cited – should be a watershed in Johannine scholarship. She has continued to publish regularly on Johannine subjects and texts,35 and has become an important figure in international Johannine scholarship. I eagerly await the publication of her completed manuscript, Hallowed in Truth and Love: Spirituality in the Johannine Literature.36 Dorothy Lee shows that an attentive reading of the Johannine text as a unified literary and theological narrative utterance, with the eyes, the heart, the mind and the imagination wide open, contributes to a deep and life-giving theological affirmation of all that is human-divine, the richest and best in the Christian tradition.

Mary Coloe’s first major scholarly contribution to Johannine studies was also her dissertation, defended in 1998 at the Melbourne College of Divinity, and written under the direction of Francis Moloney, published in 2001. It is dedicated to the issue of Temple symbolism in the Fourth Gospel.37 This perceptive and important publication took on what to many may have appeared a well-trodden area of research to produce some surprising and well-founded conclusions.38 Coloe approaches the Johannine text in this study as a narrative whole, following the principles of narrative criticism, but shows herself well-versed in historical-critical methods, and does some very good work on the structure of the Johannine text, as a whole and in its parts. A study of the Prologue (1:1-18), the Temple as God’s dwelling place, and then the Christological transferal of that presence into the Temple who is Jesus (2:13-25; 4:1-45; 7:1-8:59 and 10:22-42), Coloe shows that the “absence of Jesus” from the community in the post-Jesus era of the Johannine experience, lived in the trauma of the post-destruction of Jerusalem Temple, led to the further transfer of the symbol of God’s presence within the Christian community, indicating its identity and role in the world (14:1-31; 18:1-19:42). The believing community is constituted as a “new Temple raised up in Jesus’ hour.”39


38 As the supervisor of this doctoral dissertation I had my misgivings with the choice of the theme, strongly influenced by Coloe’s membership of the Sister of the Presentation Congregation. However, once the research began to emerge, all such misgivings disappeared.

39 Coloe, God Dwells With Us, 189. For a summary and a review of the study, see pp. 213-221.
This study, in which many well-worked Johannine passages received fresh and surprising interpretations, especially John 14 and the passion narrative, was well-reviewed, and introduced Coloe to the broader international world of Johannine scholarship almost immediately. She had made use of Sandra M. Schneiders’ work on symbolism in the Fourth Gospel, even though they had never met. Over subsequent years these two scholars have become close friends, and Coloe has taught in the United States of America on a number of occasions. She has become a significant participant on various Johannine sessions run by the Society of Biblical Literature and the Catholic Biblical Association. She has also been involved in several major European conferences, and in 2007 presented papers in the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium. Coloe’s work was recognised by a large grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC) and she was thus able to spend time, between 2002-2005, researching a further study which developed her book on Temple symbolism further. The second study appeared in 2007 and shows an increasing interest in Schneiders’ more hermeneutical approach to the text and its symbols. It develops the theme of the community as the household of God as a Johannine key for an understanding of Johannine ecclesiology and spirituality. Coloe returns to the theme of her earlier study, and engages in a “second reading” (Ricoeur), to attempt a deeper and progressive interpretation. She likens this to the hermeneutical circle which, though circular in process, is progressive in understanding as a consequence of the continuous negotiation of meaning as the understanding of parts illuminates the whole and a vision of the whole transforms the understanding of the parts.

In ten chapters Coloe revisits some Johannine passages that she had examined in her first study, and attends to others: John 1 (the invitation to the disciples to come and stay), 2:1-11 (the wedding feast at Cana), John 3 (birth), the household of Lazarus, Mary and Martha (John 11-12), the last discourse where Jesus gathers “his own” (John 13-17), and the Jerusalem household where the disciples first experience the Risen Lord (John 20). Not all will be convinced, as some of the conclusions depend heavily on later literary and liturgical traditions. But Coloe argues cogently that the Gospel is an expression of a theology that arose from the spiritual experience of the presence of God in and through the presence of Jesus and the Spirit. This should not be questioned. Rich “household” themes emerge: the place of the household, friend and friendship, weddings, first fruits, eschatology, footwashing, banquet, and the symposium in the ancient world. Behind the Gospel of John, claims Coloe, lies a profound mysticism of the mutual indwelling of God and believers. She is aware that this reading of the symbols in John may be sometimes hard to accept, but argues that this is always the case with symbols, which resist

\[40\] Ibid., 7-9.
\[41\] Her book was the subject of a special study at the British Biblical Scholars Society annual meeting in 2003. For Germany, see her 2007 contribution on the “afterlife” and her further 2007 contribution on the symbolism associated with the Baptist, listen below in note 46. On her presence in Belgium, see, in the same note, her 2007 essay on Pilate’s title for the Cross. Her associations with the Society of Biblical Literature and the Catholic Biblical Association in the United States are also indicated by publications in that note.
\[42\] This period, dedicated to full-time research and scholarly activity, explains the large number of publications, indicated in note 46, in 2007.
\[44\] See especially Coloe, Dwelling, 3-9.
interpretation. The ultimate criterion, for Coloe, is whether or not this reading of the Gospel of John is coherent with the entire Gospel, and helps to make sense of the text. As with Dorothy Lee, Mary Coloe’s work is maturing as time passes, as she develops her unique “symbolic” reading of the Johannine text, and interacts with scholars both locally and internationally, and as she continues to raise her increasingly expert voice in her published works.

**MOST RECENT STUDIES (2000-)**

Interest in the Gospel of John continues, as a group of more recent scholars have appeared on the scene. Under the direction of Dorothy Lee, Margaret Beirne defended her dissertation on women and men in the Fourth Gospel at the Melbourne College of Divinity in 2001. It was published in 2003. Through this rich study, Beirne shows a deliberate literary and theological “pairing” of genders: the Mother of Jesus and the Royal Official (2:1-11 and 4:46-54), Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman (3:1-21 and 4:1-42), The man born blind and Martha (9:1-41 and 11:1-54), Mary of Bethany and Judas (12:1-18), the Mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple (19:25-27) and Mary Magdalene and Thomas (20:11-18 and 20:24-29). She argues convincingly that this gender pairing, in literary and narrative contexts where faith decisions have to be made, real fresh-and-blood characters are used to convey a Johannine message of what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has called “a discipleship of equals.” A close examination of the response of each component character in the gender balanced “pair” shows that they are not always the same. They may be parallel, or they may even be contrasting. John has deliberately constructed this literary

45 On the difficulty of the task she has set herself, see ibid., 194-200. On her conviction that it does make sense, see 200-201.


48 See, among many places, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *A Discipleship of Equals. A Critical Feminist Ekklesiology of Liberation* (London: SCM, 1993). As Schüssler-Fiorenza and Beirne make clear, this does not mean “we are all in this together.”
element in his narrative to indicate that the discipleship of women and men may not always be the same, but they are of equal value.

Ian Donald Mackay defended his dissertation at Murdoch University, Western Australia, under the direction of William Loader, in 2003. Mackay is not a young scholar. He has been a missionary Priest in the Society of the White Fathers in Malawi and South Africa. He taught for a brief period at Notre Dame University in Fremantle, Western Australia while writing his doctorate at Murdoch University. He has now retired from active ministry. His work on the relationship between Mark and John was published in 2004. His work is a fine blend of well-researched traditional source criticism and a hermeneutic that does not rule any possibility out of court. It is an outstanding presentation of the debate over John’s relationship with the Synoptics and with Mark in particular. He is firm in his commitment to both Mark and John as literary pieces that stand on their own, but argues for the Johannine use of Mark, exemplified by the literary relationships he traces between John 6 and Mark 6 and 8. He concludes: “Since none of the differences between John 6 and the relevant passages in Mark has resisted explanation in terms of Johannine interest, and almost all the material between Mark’s first feeding and his version of Peter’s confession reverberates in tune with that between John’s feeding and confession, it seems plausible to suggest that John 6 was put together with an eye on Mark 6:30-9:1 in particular.” This study makes a substantial and balanced contribution to an as yet unresolved debate.

A 2002 dissertation, directed at the University of Durham by Stephen Barton and Loren Stuckenbruck, is a study by Alexander Jensen on the Johannine contribution to the early Christian development of a language of faith, appeared in 2004. Jensen’s main concern is not exegetical. On the basis of an analysis of key Johannine theological and Christological themes, through a study of the key passages of John 1:1-18, 3:1-21, 17:1-26, he traces the unique contribution that the Johannine language made through the inbreak of a unique Johannine logos into the ongoing logos of early Christian thought and expression. Ultimately a work of hermeneutics, Jensen shows the dynamic nature of language, an essential but never stable vehicle for most for the articulation of statements on God and on Jesus Christ that remain at the heart of Christian language. His subsequent career has thus been dedicated to Systematic Theology, publishing in the area of the history of interpretation, hermeneutics, and teaching at Murdoch University in Western Australia.

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50 Ibid., 298.
Another dissertation, written under the direction of Mark Harding at the Australian College of Theology in 2003, is Stephen Voorwinde’s study the Johannine presentation of Jesus’ emotions, published in 2005.53 This careful work, dedicated to the analysis of Jesus’ expression of the emotions of zeal, love, joy, anger, distress and weeping, rightly insists that the overlap between the emotions of God and the emotions of Jesus provides an entry into the question that stands at the heart of Johannine Christology: the humanity and divinity of Jesus. Voorwinde devotes attention to both the broader religious, and cultural background of Judaism in its various manifestations, and to the narrower Johannine contexts of the passages under scrutiny (2:17 [zeal]; 12:27; 13:21 [distress]; 13:1, 34 [love] 14:21, 31; 15:9-13; 13:23; 19:26; 20:20; 21:7, 20 [love for others, especially the Beloved Disciple], 15:11; 17:13 [joy]). He argues that these emotions reflect both the human and divine dimensions on the Johannine presentation of Jesus, with the possible exception of the weeping in 11:35, which may be a purely human response.54 Voorwinde sets his presentation of Jesus within the context of the Old Testament notion of covenant: “Jesus is presented in strongly covental terms that permeate the Gospel from beginning to end ... Jesus answers to both the role of Covenant Lord and covenant sacrifice”.55 Bultmann (purely human) and Käsemann (a God striding over the earth) have set up a false dichotomy. Voorwinde has made a valuable initial contribution to Johannine scholarship.56

Defended at Australian Catholic University in November 2010, the recent dissertation of Ruth Sheridan, directed by Mary Coloe, on the rhetorical function of Old Testament citations in John 1:19-12:15, is set for publication in the near future.57 As Sheridan’s literature survey indicates, she is not the first to draw attention to the uniquely Johannine introductory formulae found in all Old Testament citations in John 1:19-12:15. First highlighted (for very different hermeneutical reasons) by Alexander Faure in 1922, it has been recently thoroughly examined by Andreas Obermann and, to a lesser extent, by

54 I have argued at length that the deep emotional turmoil reported in 11:33-38 are certainly the human expression of frustration and anger, and that the weeping is a reflection of the enērimēsato tōi pneumati in v. 33. See Francis J. Moloney, “Can Everyone Be Wrong? A Reading of John 11:1-12:8,” New Testament Studies 49 (2003): 505-27, esp. 515-21. There is nothing “divine” about this emotion.
55 Voorwinde, Jesus’ Emotions, 269. There is gathering interest in the Johannine use of covenant images and even the covenant theme as fundamental to his theology and narrative structure. See, for example, Rekha M. Chennattu, Johannine Discipleship as Covenant Relationship (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), and Sherri Brown, Gift Upon Gift: Covenant through Word in the Gospel of John Princeton Theological Monograph Series 144, Foreword by Francis J. Moloney (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010). Despite the fact that both of these studies result from dissertations completed under my direction at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, I remain unconvinced of the importance currently being given to Covenant themes and theology in John.
57 Ruth Sheridan, Retelling Scripture. The Rhetorical Function of the Old Testament Citations vis-à-vis the Jews in John 1:19-12:15 (Melbourne: St Patrick’s Campus, 2010), unpublished typescript. The script has been accepted for publication by Brill (Boston and Leiden). The title of the published version will be Retelling Scripture: The Jews and the Scriptural Citations in John 1:19-12:50.
Francis Moloney. Sheridan is clear about her reliance upon such work, but never simply applies the conclusions of these scholars to her reading of the Gospel of John. The feature of this study is its focus upon “the Jews.”

The role of “the Jews” in debate with Jesus in the citations from Scripture in 1:19-12:15 has also been noted by other scholars, especially Obermann and Moloney, but Sheridan is interested in the rhetorical function of the literary interplay between the author and the reader (the various authors and readers that produce or are produced by a narrative text: real author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied reader, ideal reader, historical real reader, contemporary real reader, to mention only the major categories). In this process she has been guided by the work of Adele Reinhartz, but has again developed her own use of the different “readers” identified by Reinhartz.

It has long been pointed out that the Fourth Gospel at the one and the same time appears to be the most Jewish and the most anti-Jewish of the Gospels. Sheridan highlights the fact that the use of Old Testament citations across the first half of the Gospel, introduced by an almost identical formula, sweeps the audience of “the Jews” in the narrative (either actively present, or always intended as the object of the citation) into a process of “othering.” They are consistently presented, via synchronic and diachronic readings of both the Johannine context and the Old Testament citation. The broader theological context of the Old Testament background is also regularly painted in with skill. It is all potential “intertext” for the Johannine citation. The various “readers” are able to locate the characterisation of “the Jews” as a group that moves steadily into a position of a rejection of Jesus, and who thus become the “others” in the narrative, precisely because of the way the Old Testament citations are used against them (the “rhetoric”) in contexts where they are major players.

Especially interesting is Sheridan’s use of the Old Testament passages to show the positive Johannine message of Jesus as the incarnation of God’s Word, ultimately heading for a death in which the glory of God will be seen by those who believe. Her skilful analysis of the Old Testament passages themselves, and their “intertextuality” with the Johannine narrative brings this most interesting feature of the Johannine rhetoric to light. Too often the unique theological insights of the Fourth Gospel are lost in literary studies. This is not the case with this dissertation. Sheridan has produced a rich and original study that opens the door to many other possible areas of research. She promises to delve more deeply into these exegetical, literary and theological issues as her career unfolds.


CONCLUSION

This survey of Johannine scholarship from the Australia-Pacific region has only presented the work of Australians and New Zealanders from the Pacific. I have been unable to uncover published work from scholars in the island nations of the Pacific. Dr Frank Smith, a native Samoan, completed an as yet unpublished doctoral dissertation at the University of Auckland, under the direction of Derek Tovey in 2004, *The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan Perspective: Towards an Intercultural reading of the Fourth Gospel*. The thesis studies John 5:1-47; 13:1-20; 15:1-17, bringing Samoan concepts and terms into dialogue with the text and its first century socio-cultural, economic-political contexts. The result is an enriched understanding of what is meant by “mutuality” (*va-fealofani*) and “belonging” that constitutes the Father-Son relationship. Higher degrees have been awarded at the Pacific Theological College to other Islanders (New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji) on the basis of research done on the Fourth Gospel. All four studies show a desire to link central elements in traditional indigenous cultures to major Johannine Christological and Christian themes. One hopes that they are evidence of a promising development of interest in Johannine scholarship in the island nations of the Pacific.

Johannine scholarship in the Australia-Pacific region parallels work in other parts of the world in two immediately obvious ways. In the first place, as this survey has shown, across three generations, doctor fathers and mothers have generated doctor children: Loader, Painter, Moloney and Byrne have generated Lee, Coloe and Mackay; Lee and Coloe have generated Beirne and Sheridan; Tovey has generated Smith. Secondly, the methodological focus has shifted across these three “generations” in a way that parallels the shifts of direction in Johannine studies as a whole. Initially governed by historical-critical principles, Painter, Loader and Moloney have become more interested in cultural issues and narrative approaches, without abandoning their attachment to historical criticism. Tovey, Lee and Coloe have established themselves as astute readers of symbolism and the many hermeneutical possibilities of the Johannine text, building upon narrative criticism and taking it further. The few examples we have from the Pacific Islands tend to re-read the Johannine Gospel through their own cultural eyes.

As different approaches to the text multiply in worldwide Johannine scholarship, important traditional work persists in this part of the world, exemplified by the work of older scholars, and in Mackay’s rich study of the relationship between Mark 6 and 8 and John 6. But an inevitable shift of interest and approach towards a more audience oriented readings, with an increased focus upon the symbolic world of the Gospel of John, has emerged in Australia and the Pacific in recent decades. It has been said that the Fourth Gospel is like a magic pool in which a child can paddle and an elephant can swim. Despite its distance from the great academic centres of Europe and North America, Johannine scholarship in Australia and the Pacific indicates that this saying retains its value.

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62 On this, see the useful volume of Tom Thatcher (ed.), *What We Have Heard from the Beginning*.

Author: Francis J. Moloney, SDB, is currently Professorial Fellow at Australian Catholic University. He has been Head of the Biblical Studies Department at Catholic Theological College, Melbourne (1984-93), Foundation Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University (1994-1998), Professor of New Testament, Katharine Drexel Chair of Religious Studies, and Dean of the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC (1999-2005), and the Provincial of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Australia and the Pacific (2006-2011).

Email: Francis.Moloney@acu.edu.au