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Light Symbolism in the Gospel of John

Light Symbolism in the Gospel of John: Christological interpretation from
Integrative Approach

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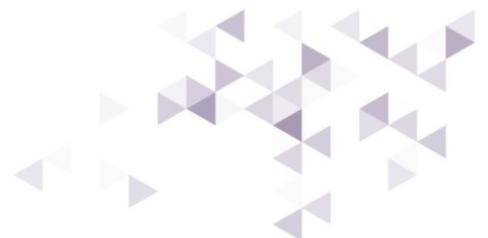
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Acknowledgment



I am pleased to present a master thesis entitled “Light Symbolism in the Gospel of John: Christological interpretation from Integrative Approach.” It has been a very enlightening journey for me, both academically and personally. I got an opportunity to learn in-depth about Johannine Light symbolism, and I have tried my best to present on master thesis. I hope readers will have more understanding of this topic through my paper.

I am deeply thankful to my supervisor Ole Jacob Filtvedt for his immense help and guidance in completing this thesis. His valuable insights, corrections, and suggestion have further enriched this thesis.

A special gratitude to my beloved wife, daughter, family and my friends;their love and motivation always inspired me to complete this thesis with total honesty and sincerity.

Abstract

The Gospel of John is considered a unique Gospel compared to the Synoptic Gospels because of its distinct literary features and structure used by the Fourth Evangelist. This Gospel comprises figurative languages with images, metaphors, symbols, and signs. The symbol is one of the significant narrative techniques clearly visible in the Gospel of John. Symbols play a vital role throughout the Gospel of John to achieve its literary and theological purpose.

A micro reader can observe the repetition of such symbolic languages in Gospel to emphasize its theological significance. Most of the Johannine Scholars identified "light," "water," and "bread" as core symbols in the Gospel of John along with the Culpepper because these symbols demonstrate the mission, the message, and the person of Christ.

Therefore, considering the incredible function of symbolism in John, this thesis aims to shed light upon critical areas. First and foremost, this thesis proposes to define and explore the development and significance of Light symbolism in the Gospel of John. Secondly, it will investigate the Light narrative of the prologue and remaining light passage (symbolic judgment in John chapter 3, symbolic statement in John chapters 7, and 8, and symbolic action of eye-opening of Blind man of Chapter 9). In conclusion, this thesis uncovers the relationship between the prologue and the rest of the narrative based on the Light symbolism from the Christological point of view.

To achieve the purposes mentioned above, this research uses an integrative approach. This method will emphasize textual studie, its literary dimension-Narrative analysis, Socio-historical and theological perspectives. Furthermore, this thesis will use the theoretical framework of the Johannine symbol presented by Akala in her book, *"The Son –Father Relationship and Christological Symbols in the Gospel of John"* to discover the answers to the research questions.

In conclusion, this research will **picture the meaning and mystery of the light symbol presented in the Gospel of John from prologue narrative to epilogue as MISSION, MESSAGE, and PERSON OF CHRIST.** Thus, this research believes that the light symbolism powerfully fulfills the evangelist's purposes, as mentioned in the Gospel of John 20:31.

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction & Methodology

1.1 Research Background

The Gospel of John is considered a unique Gospel compared to the Synoptic Gospels because of its distinct literary features and structure used by the Fourth Evangelist. This Gospel comprises figurative languages with images, metaphors, symbols, and signs. Possessing these features highlights the deeper meaning of the Gospel. Thus, Augustine said, "*John's Gospel is enough for an elephant to swim and shallow enough for a child not to drown.*"¹ Well-known biblical scholars have attempted to interpret the meaning of the gospel through various approaches. The recent studies testified that Johannine scholars had shifted interest from historical criticism to Literary criticism.

Initially, Dodd interpreted the interrelation between narratives and discourse in John from a symbolic point of view.² Still, R. A. Culpepper's groundbreaking narrative critical study, the *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel (1983)*, ignites a fire to study the function and nature of the Johannine figurative world from the narrative perspective. Such interest in Johannine studies led many scholars to interpret the text with an emerging trend called Narrative Criticism. Within Narrative criticism, various literary devices play a significant role while analyzing the text, such as symbolism, irony, misunderstanding, etc. Symbolism is one of the effective techniques visible in the Gospel of John. Consequently, Sherri Brown rightly points out that symbolism lies at the core of the theology of the Gospel. Craig R Koester argued that Symbols play a vital role throughout the Gospel of John to achieve its theological purpose because symbols are earthly image that bears witness to transcendent realities.³

In line with Koster, Dorothy Lee clarifies that "*Johannine symbolism has a crucial role in articulating the Gospel's theological purpose and meaning through its images, metaphors,*

¹ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 1.

² Engberg-Pedersen, *John and Philosophy*, 9.

³ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 8.

narrative structures, and miracles.”⁴ According to Akala, Johannine symbols “reveals an aspect of Jesus' person, mission, and message.”⁵ The micro reader can observe the repetition of such symbolic languages in Gospel to emphasize its theological significance. The most repeated symbols are “light,” “water,” and “bread.” Thus, Culpepper categorizes "light," "water," and "bread" as core symbols in the Gospel of John⁶ because these symbols demonstrate the mission, the message, and the person of Christ. Therefore, considering the incredible function of symbolism in John, this thesis explores the development and significance of Light symbolism in the Gospel of John, focusing on the Light narrative of the prologue and the symbolic action of eye-opening the Blind man in Chapter 9. This thesis will use the narrative criticism and theories of Johannine symbols to interpret the text to achieve this purpose.

1.2 Research goal and Question

The first goal of this research is to define the Johannine symbolism and its functions within the narratives, particularly the symbolism presented in the prologue. Likewise, the second goal is to read the gospel from beginning to end as unified literary work focusing on light symbolism. Such reading is to observe the continuation and correlation of the light symbolism within the gospel from a literary perspective. Lastly, this research's final goal is to explore the Christological significance of light symbolism within the Gospel of John. Thus, this research attempts to answer the following questions.

1.2.1 What is Johannine symbolism? How is light symbolism presented? How does it function to achieve the evangelist goal scripted in John 20:21?

Various scholars have defined Johannine symbolism, yet, this thesis will work according to Akala's and Koester's definitions to explore the significance and function of light symbolism from John.

⁴ Dorothy Lee, “Symbolism and Signs in the Fourth Gospel,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine studies*, ed. Judith M. Lieu et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 259

⁵ Adesola Joan Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, vol. 505, Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 9.

⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel.*, 66

1.2.2 How does the light symbolism in the prologue impact the rest of the narrative? Is there a relationship between the prologue and the rest of the gospel?

There has been a long debate on the single authorship of John. While some scholars believe that different authors wrote the prologue and the rest of the Gospel, most scholars are convinced that a single author produced the prologue and the rest of the gospel. A careful reader can observe that themes prominently present in the prologue are later elaborated by the author in the rest of the gospel. The writer of this thesis will carefully study the prologue to see the light symbolism presented in the prologue and the rest of the gospel to find the text's unity and themes. However, due to limitations, selected light symbolism text will be compared with the prologue only. Thus, this thesis will attempt to illustrate the degree of relationship between the prologue and the rest of the gospel from the light symbolism point of view.

1.2.3 What kind of Christology is presented through the light symbolism?

The main purpose of John is to present Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah so that the audience may believe and have life in him. Thus, the Evangelist attempts to portray Jesus in each discourse with the symbol and sign. The author of this Gospel uses literary devices to communicate his Christological purpose to his audiences. Christological significances will be elaborated from selected texts.

1.3 Research Methods

The Gospel of John comprises various literary devices such as discourse, dialogue, and narrative with figurative languages (metaphors, images, and symbols), which puzzle the Johannine scholars to interpret the text. In the past, most Johannine scholars have interpreted the Johannine text utilizing the history of religion approach and canonical approach, but by the end of the twentieth century, Johannine scholars began to focus on literary perspectives, especially on Narrative criticism.⁷ Focusing only on one method includes some degree of incompleteness⁸ of the text. That is the reason Raymond Brown said that the vocabulary and

⁷ R A. Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth* (1983) launched an interest in the nature and function of Johannine figurative language.

⁸ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9-12.

tools of literary criticism have come not to replace or vitiate other forms of criticism but to supplement them.⁹ So, recent studies are focusing on the integrative approach, which uses narrative criticism to account for the historical setting, literary structure, literary devices, and socio-cultural and theological perspectives.¹⁰

But little research has been done on Johannine Light symbolism using the integrative approach¹¹. Thus, this thesis aims to explore the development and significance of Light symbolism in the Gospel of John from the *Integrative approach*. This method will make use of the textual analysis, literary dimension-Narrative analysis, and Socio-historical and theological perspectives while interpreting the text. The research method chosen for this study will serve as an interpretive tool that reveals the function, pattern, and meaning of Johannine symbolism. This approach aims to search for the revelation about Jesus presented in the Gospel of John through light symbolism.

Furthermore, this thesis will make use of the theoretical framework of the Johannine symbol presented by Akala in her book, *"The Son –Father Relationship and Christological Symbols in the Gospel of John"* to discover the answers to the research questions. But his theory will be applied only on the prologue due to the limitation.

1.4 Research Structure

The research structure is carried out within two frameworks having nine chapters. The first part comprises theories and methodology with a total of three chapters. The second part will analyze the theories consisting in five chapters. The first chapter will be the introduction of the thesis along with the methodology. The second chapter will define the Johannine figurative language and Symbolism, including the relationship between the symbols and other figurative languages. The third chapter will introduce the Johannine theories of symbols, which will be followed by the background of Johannine light Symbolism Then, the third Chapter will elaborate on Johannine symbolism theories, which will be followed by a background of the light symbolism

⁹ Lee, *Symbolism and the Signs in the Fourth Gospel*, 199.

¹⁰ Lee, 189.

¹¹ Kostendberger and Petterson, *For the Love of God's Word* Köstenberger and Patterson propose integrative approach to interpret the Gospel because Gospel consist of historical setting, literary dimensions, and theological message.

in the next chapter. Chapter 5 to Chapter 7 will be the analysis of the text according to theories and method. Furthermore, Chapter 8 will work as a connecting bridge between the prologue and other light texts to observe the continuation of the light symbol. Thus, this chapter will focus on the correlation between the prologue and the light text from the Christological point of view. This itself will form the conclusion of the thesis.

1.5 Research Scope and limitation

The light symbolism can be seen explicitly in the Gospel of John from the beginning to chapter 12. But implicitly, the subordinate light symbolism can be observed till the end of the Gospel. However, for this research, due to limitations, the light symbolism will be studied and analyzed up to chapter 9, only where light symbolism is directly connected to the revelation of Jesus.

This study has been deliberately restricted to the light symbolism directly presented in the Gospel. So, this thesis will investigate the four main passages of the text: The Prologue of John from chapter 1, the discourse with Nicodemus from chapter 3, the Feast of Tabernacle from chapters 7-8, and the opening of the blind man from Chapter 9. John's light symbolism begins in the prologue; further light symbolism is developed as the narrative moves. The opening of the blind man's eye is the peak of light symbolism. In other words, light symbolism is introduced in the prologue, and it reaches its peak through symbolic action in chapter nine.

1.6 Research Material & Scholarly Review

1.6.1 Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, and Community

Koster, the well-known Johannine Scholar, reads the Gospel of John from the narrative perspective, focusing on the function of Johannine Symbolism. Though he uses symbolism to interpret the narratives of the Gospel of John, he argues that 'Johannine symbolism demands consideration of the literary and socio-historical and the theological aspects of the text.'¹² With this integrated approach, he attempts to interpret John's Gospel as a whole. He divides his book into eight chapters. The preface and chapter one, "Symbol, Meaning, and Mystery," provides a foundational framework for understanding the whole Gospel. Chapter 2 talks about the representative figures, and chapter 3 discuss signs and discourse as symbolic action. Chapters

¹² Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel.*, xiii.

4 and 5 discuss the light and water imagery of John, which is followed by the crucifixion of Jesus.

He defines a symbol as 'something that stands for something else in a general sense. However, he believes that a symbol is '*an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance.*'¹³ Because the images, actions, and representative figures convey something of transcendent significance.

He makes a distinction between core and supporting symbols. He argues that core symbols usually stand at the center of the narratives in the form of metaphors to convey the transcendent realities, whereas supporting symbols remain in the background. At its core, a symbol such as light has the image of darkness as a counterpart. In such contexts, day and night and sight and blindness play supporting roles in their relationship to light. While interpreting light imagery from the prologue, he argues that light symbolizes the manifestation of the power and presence of God, life is given to people through Christ, and enlightenment comes through Christ.¹⁴ Further, he argues that the light motif is well developed in chapters 7-8, where he connects the light imagery with the Christological titles – Teacher, Prophet, and Messiah. He argues that the symbolic structure of John is twofold. The primary level of meaning concerns Christ; the secondary level concerns discipleship.

1.6.2 Jesus is Light: The meaning of Light in the Gospel of John

Scott R David's thesis 'investigates the source and meaning of the metaphor *Jesus is light* in the Gospel of John utilizing conceptual metaphor theory.'¹⁵ He argued that though the Hellenistic language and culture influenced John, this metaphor of "Jesus is light" in John is derived from the Old Testament. After studying OT (give abbreviation) expression of light metaphor, he categorizes it into four metaphors: Firstly, *the presence of God is light*; secondly, *spiritual illumination is light from God*; thirdly, *righteous life is light from God* and Forth and Final *is light as the agent of salvation.*¹⁶ Then he analyzes these conceptual metaphors in the context of John Ch 1, 3, 8, and 9 and proves the fulfillment of these metaphors in Jesus. He

¹³ Craig R. Koester, 4.

¹⁴ Craig R. Koester, 143.

¹⁵ Davis, "JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN," 87.

¹⁶ Davis, 76.

fails to show upwards literary development of light symbolism in John, which begins in the prologue and climaxes in Chapter 12. Moreover, his thesis lacks theological and literary perspectives since he focuses much on historical-grammatical interpretation.

1.6.3 The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John

Akala believes that the Son-Father symbolism in the Fourth Gospel is at the center of the network of Christological symbols. She argues that Son Father Relationship serves to fulfill the authors' purpose stated in John 20:31 and acts as an organizing principle that integrates and structures the symbolism of the Gospel of John. The first part of the book describes the definition of symbols, focusing on Johannine symbolism along with the theories of Johannine symbolism. Secondly, it deals with the theoretical analysis and narrative analysis of prologue and prayer (John 17) to discuss the Christological symbology. Then, she concludes by bringing out the theological implication of the Son-Father symbolism and proposes Theo-symbolic reading of the Gospel of John. She proposes a new theory and methodological guide to study the Johannine symbolism to emphasize the theology and literary features of the Gospel of John. While writing this thesis, I will be using her working definitions and theory of Johannine symbolism to explore the theological and literary features of light symbolism.

Chapter 2

2 Johannine Figurative language and Symbolism: Definition, Relationship & Structure

2.1 Introduction

Johannine scholars have contributed much to the field of Johannine symbolism and narrative reading of the Gospel. However, there has been a question of uniformity while defining the Johannine symbolism. Koester believes that leading Johannine symbols convey multiple meanings. Thus, it demands consideration of the text's literary, theological, and sociohistorical aspects while interpreting the symbol.¹⁷ C H. Dodd¹⁸ and Akala also underline the importance of sociohistorical background while dealing with the symbols because symbols in the narratives reflect the belief system of an author.¹⁹ Moreover, symbols are always connected to metaphors, imagery, and narrative. Thus, this chapter attempts to define symbols and their relationship with narratives and another figure of speech, along with the structure of the Johannine symbols.

2.2 Definition of Johannine Symbol & Symbolic Language, Symbolic Cluster

2.2.1 Defining Johannine symbol

Cuddon describes the word symbol as “an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or ‘stands for something else which is derived from the Greek verb *symbollein*, ‘to throw together, and noun *symbolon*, ‘mark,’ ‘emblem.’ ‘token’ or ‘sign’”.²⁰ Culpepper defines a symbol as a ‘connecting link between two different spheres.’²¹ The symbol stands for or represents something else having a versatile character; thus, universal definition is impossible for the symbol in the literary world. In the same line, the Johannine symbol also does not have a proper

¹⁷ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 1–6.

¹⁸ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 143.

¹⁹ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:10.

²⁰ Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 699.

²¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 200.

definition within the Johannine circle because the multivalent nature of the symbol renders the symbol in the cable of being limited to one or few definitive meanings.²²

However, Johannine scholars have attempted to define the Johannine symbols from a theological point of view, considering the author's purpose. Most Johannine scholars have identified Johannine symbolism from the aspect of revelation²³ and transcendence²⁴ since symbolic representation reveals an aspect of Jesus' person, message, and mission.²⁵ Schneiders describes a symbol as a 'sensible reality which renders present to and involves a person subjectively in a transforming experience of transcendent mystery.'²⁶

According to Craig R. Koester, the symbol is "an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance."²⁷ In line with him, Dorothy Lee describes Johannine symbols as 'vehicles of revelation.'²⁸ Further, she clarifies that '*Johannine symbolism has a crucial role in articulating the Gospel's theological purpose and meaning: through its images, metaphors, narrative structures and miracles.*'²⁹ According to Akala, Johannine symbols 'reveals an aspect of Jesus' person, mission, and message.'³⁰ Culpepper describes that '*Jesus himself is the principal symbol of the Fourth Gospel, for he partakes of the being of God and reveals Him in this world.*'³¹

2.2.2 Defining Symbolology, Symbolic Cluster & Symbolic Language

Symbols have always been united with other symbols and figures of speech to reflect the transcendent meaning. Such unity is called a 'cluster' in the smaller text and a 'network' in the wider text Ruben Zimmermann.³² Akala further clarifies this unity as a symbolic cluster. But Before she defines this symbolic cluster, she defines symbolology "as an overarching network

²² Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:8.

²³ Dorothy, *Flesh and Glory*, 18.

²⁴ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 4.

²⁵ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:9–10.

²⁶ Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 66.

²⁷ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 1–6.

²⁸ Dorothy, *Flesh and Glory*, 18.

²⁹ Dorothy Lee, "Symbolism and Signs in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine studies*, ed. Judith M. Lieu et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 259

³⁰ Adesola Joan Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, vol. 505, Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 9.

³¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 189.

³² Frey et al., *Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 31–35.

comprising symbols, symbolic language, and themes connected to a common denominator that runs through a narrative.....Symbolic language is the specialized use of words, including figures of speech such as metaphors and imagery, or phrases and themes, which carry Christological significance and emphasize the transcendent realities. A symbolic cluster is a group of connected symbols or symbolic language and themes linked to the respective symbols”³³. For example, the light symbol is connected to darkness, sight, blindness, night, day, and knowledge; together, these figurations form symbolic clusters that shape Christological symbology.³⁴

2.3 Network/Relationship of Symbol with other Literary devices

2.3.1 Relationship between Symbolism, Metaphor, and Image

Johannine symbols are not separate, but their meaning comes while reading together with metaphor and images because they are interconnected.³⁵ Lee describes that their ‘interactions are intuitive rather than logical, and they weave in and out of the Johannine narrative with repetitions, echoes, ambiguities.’³⁶ Akala also confirms that Johannine symbols do not occur alone; rather, they unite with other symbols and figures of speech to reflect transcendent ideas, which facilitates symbolic meaning in the Gospel.³⁷ Along with other Johannine scholars, She believes that symbols as the primary figure of speech among metaphors and imageries. Thus, the following discussion will be on the relationship between symbols and another figure of speech.

Cuddon defines imagery as the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, and sensory or extra-sensory experiences.³⁸ The image is created in the mind after testing, seeing, or listening to the object. Akala argues that meaning can be perceived or conceived in mind easily because imagery conveys the meaning in pictorial form. Thus, she argues imagery is the base of all figurative language, including symbols. Further, she clarifies that if any image persistently reoccurs in a narrative, it becomes a symbol and becomes part of

³³ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:27–28.

³⁴ Akala, 505:27.

³⁵ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 6–9.

³⁶ Lee, “Symbolism and Signs in the Fourth Gospel” Lee, *Symbolism and the Signs in the Fourth Gospel*, 260.

³⁷ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:27.

³⁸ Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 354.

symbolic networks³⁹ because a symbol has heavier significance than the image in terms of whole narratives. Another scholar, Lee, argues that Johannine symbolism is interconnected with the images which are drawn from the senses.⁴⁰ She argues that the image of taste and touch, place and movement, and seeing and hearing as major images connected to symbols in the Gospel of John.⁴¹

Lee also records that Johannine symbolism displays itself frequently through metaphor, which is the linguistic form of symbol.⁴² Koester also divides symbols as core and supporting symbols and argues that the core symbols in John are often expressed in metaphors.⁴³ First, metaphor must be defined to understand the connection between metaphor and symbol. Cuddon defines metaphor as a ‘figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another.’⁴⁴ Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else.⁴⁵ In other words, the literal meaning of a particular object is applied to a different object without asserting a comparison. Though some scholars see metaphors and symbols together, Ricoeur argues that from the symbolic point of view, metaphor is created by the bringing together of two different elements to create new meaning, the object itself and the image.” For instance, “I am the bread of Life’ Johannine Jesus is an object of the metaphor while the bread is the image. Jesus is not literally bread but is bread in a representative sense which gives nourishment to believers just as bread gives nourishment to the body. To underline the Ricoeur, Akala distinguishes metaphor and symbol according to their basic structure. She said, “*Metaphor has two components- vehicle and tenor with both clearly represented in the text. The symbol consists only of vehicle, and its referent is outside the text, which enables the symbol to transcend the limitations of the text*”.⁴⁶ Though metaphor and symbol look similar, metaphors become symbolic when it recurs, according to Philip Wheelwright.⁴⁷

³⁹ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:49.

⁴⁰ Lee, “The Gospel of John and the Five Senses,” 115.

⁴¹ Lee, “Symbolism and Signs in the Fourth Gospel”, Lee, *Symbolism and the Signs in the Fourth Gospel*, 261–62.

⁴² Lee, 260.

⁴³ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 9–14.

⁴⁴ Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 432.

⁴⁵ Swedberg, *The Art of Social Theory*, 89.

⁴⁶ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:50.

⁴⁷ Akala, 505:50.

Ng (please specify) also underlines the Ricoer and calls the connection between metaphor and symbol metaphorical symbolism, where she argues that such metaphorical symbols are used with the “ I am saying” formula and represent Jesus' Christological Claims:⁴⁸ “ I am the bread of life” (6:35), “ I am the light of the World” (8:12), I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25), “ I am the true vine (15:1), I am the gate for the sheep” (10:7), I am the good shepherd” Other scholars call these metaphorical symbols Christological symbols and evocative symbols.⁴⁹

From the above discussion, the conclusion can be drawn that the Johannine Symbols are strongly connected with images and metaphors because this figure of speech has been reoccurring, thus turning into symbolic meaning. Anyone who interprets the images and metaphor of Johannine within the framework of metaphor and images only cannot provides sufficient meaning to the Johannine text because these must be interpreted from the symbolic point of view.

2.3.2 Relationship between Symbolism and Narrative

Scholars have identified the strong interconnection between Johannine symbolism and narrative. Therefore, before we discuss the relationship, what narrative is and how narrative functions in Johannine must be taken into consideration for better understanding.

2.3.2.1 Definition of Narrative, Narrator, Character, Plot and Structure, techniques,?

Narrative: Chatman argues that each narrative has two parts: a *story* (history) and the *discourse*. The *story* is events (action and happenings), existence (characters involved in proper setting), and *discourse* is the expression.⁵⁰ In other words, every narrative is a structured act of communication with two layers: a story layer and a discourse layer.⁵¹ The story is a chain of events stated or implied by the narrator, in chronological order, where characters act in a particular setting. The discourse is the way in which a story is told, including the arrangement of events in the plot, the type of narrator, point of view, style, and rhetorical devices.⁵² Thus to

⁴⁸ Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*, 5.

⁴⁹ Painter, “John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel,” 46.

⁵⁰ Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, 19.

⁵¹ Thatcher, *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism*, 19.

⁵² Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*,” 414.

understand the narrative, the narrator, the point of view, implied author, reader, character, and other narrative techniques must be defined.

Narrator: Culpepper defines the role of the Narrator as the significant rhetorical device, storyteller, narrative voice, speaker to the reader, sometimes as a voice of the implied author, and sometimes serves as the voice of the characters.⁵³ He defines the function of the narrator as a guide who “*guides the reader through the narrative, introduces the reader to the world of the narrative and the character which populate it, and provides perspectives from which to view the action.*”⁵⁴ Further, he defines the Johannine narrator as the one “*who speaks in the prologue, tells the story, introduces the dialogue, provides explanations, translates terms and tells us various what characters knew or did not know*”⁵⁵ Therefore, he observed that the Johannine narrator is undramatized, intrusive and Omni-communicative⁵⁶. Since the Johannine narrator is a rhetorical device, his purpose is to persuade the significance of Jesus' message, mission, and Jesus' life and death to the audience or reader. Culpepper concluded that the Johannine narrator is the voice of the author and the vocal expression of the choices and perspective of the implied author. However, it theoretically distinguishes between the implied author and the real author.⁵⁷

Characters: Characters are the actors, agents, or people in the story. The action of the plot reveals the character. Characters are known through their speech and action, sometimes known by narrator comments. In reality, a character is not *actually* a person but rather the author's *representation* of a person; it can be historical or fictional

Culpepper divides characters into two” one as a major character, some are major, and some are minor character that plays a role in the plot. Lee presents a variety of characters within a symbolic narrative which can be observed in the Gospel of John. The first type of character grasps the symbolism and achieves a distinct level of faith and understanding (E.g., Samaritan women). The second type of character that misunderstood the symbolic narrative resulted in the rejection of Jesus (Pharisee, Jews, and authorities). The third type of character is those whose

⁵³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 16–18.

⁵⁴ Culpepper, 16–17.

⁵⁵ Culpepper, 17.

⁵⁶ Culpepper, 21.

⁵⁷ Culpepper, 232.

misunderstanding turns into understanding because of the clarification. (Martha, blind man). Lastly, the last type of character remains frozen, static, and unable to choose between belief and unbelief (e.g., Nicodemus).⁵⁸

Plot and Structure: Chatman defines a plot as the designing principle, the sequence of events or incidents that make up a narrative. Such events include actions that bring about changes of state in narrative events.⁵⁹ Aristotle defined a plot as a continuous sequence of events or actions with a beginning, middle, and end. Almost all plot involves a conflict clash of action, ideas, points of view, desires, or values.⁶⁰

Narrative techniques are the literary devices used by the narrator while narrating the story, such as irony, double meaning, misunderstanding, symbolism, rhetoric, setting, metaphors, etc. This is used as an ornament in the narrative to describe the narrative. Symbolism, double meaning, irony, and metaphor are highly present in Johannine narratives. Since this thesis emphasizes light symbolism, symbolism is taken into discussion. Symbolism is an essential narrative technique to understand the Gospel of John in its fullest sense. The Fourth evangelist makes use of various symbols to communicate to his audience. Among them, light, bread, and water symbols are considered core symbols by Culpepper. The narrator has made use of such earthly symbols as a vehicle to direct the mind of the reader to divine reality. Symbols act as a connecting link between two levels of meaning in a story. Thus, Koester argues that the fundamental structure of the symbolism of the fourth Gospel is twofold. The primary meaning concerns Jesus; the secondary level concerns discipleship.⁶¹ Thus, the movement from Christology to discipleship can be seen in symbolic actions and images throughout the Gospel.

2.3.2.2 Relationship: Narrative and Symbolism

Symbolism is one of the techniques used by the Narrator or Evangelist to communicate divine truth to their implied reader. Akala points out three observations made by scholars, which are as follows: “*First, the story and discourse of Johannine narrative are bound together by symbols, second the Johannine narrative is designed to unfold symbolism, the narrative gives*

⁵⁸ Lee, *Symbolism and the Signs in the Fourth Gospel*, 262.

⁵⁹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, 44–45.

⁶⁰ Resseguie, “‘A Glossary of New Testament Narrative Criticism with Illustrations’ Religions,” 20.

⁶¹ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 13.

rise to symbolism, symbolism, in turn, creates the structure of the narrative, and the last, miraculous signs in the narrative contribute to the symbolic form of the Gospel.”⁶²

Gospel of John can be read from beginning to end as a “symbolic narrative”⁶³ because symbolism is closely connected to the narrative, and it operates on two levels. The first one is the literal level of the image, while the second level is the symbolic level where the evangelist entices the reader to grasp. In the words of Lee,

“Each narrative is created to unfold a central symbol, and the development of the symbol, in turn, draws out the narrative. The unfolding of symbol and narrative takes place in the encounter between Jesus and the leading characters, who struggle to make sense of Jesus and his offer of eternal life. In theological terms, the narratives reveal the way in which material reality becomes symbolic of the divine. The reader is drawn subjectively into the drama and challenged to make the authentic response of faith.”⁶⁴ Further elaboration will be done on the Narrative analysis of Chapter 9 by using these methods.

2.3.3 Relationship between Symbolism and Sign

Ricoeur discusses the sign and symbol, but he also makes a distinction between the two. In the Gospel of John, the symbol is a connecting link between two different spheres: character and community, above and below, heaven and earth, seen the world and the unseen world. John does not use the word symbol while describing the miracles; rather, he uses the term *semeion*, which is translated as a sign. In general understanding, we distinguish between signs and symbols because signs stand *for* or *point to* something or point us in the right direction, whereas a symbol is a vehicle that takes us there.⁶⁵ However, Schneiders and Lee believes that the Johannine signs have the capacity to communicate a transcendent reality like a symbol in the narrative of John.⁶⁶ Opening the eye of the blind narrative is a perfect example where both

⁶² Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:90.

⁶³ Dorothy Lee reads the whole Gospel as symbolic narratives by examining six long narratives of the Fourth Gospel of John, *The Symbolic Narrative of the Fourth Gospel*.

⁶⁴ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 11.

⁶⁵ Lee, 265.

⁶⁶ Lee, 266.

signs and symbols are presented. In this research, I will be dealing with this narrative as a symbolic action to illustrate the meaning of the light symbol.

2.4 Structure of Johannine Symbolism

The most of the Johannine scholars agree that the characters, action, image, message, and metaphors may differ in the narrative, but the narrator has used a similar pattern to narrate the story narrative. However, Johannine scholars have offered various classifications to provide meaning to the symbols.

Koester argues that interpreters must pay attention to the structure of their symbolic system to discover the authorial meaning in the Gospel of John. Further, he argues that ‘the structure of Johannine symbolism is twofold- the primary meaning is related to Christ, the secondary is related to discipleship. Thus, he believes that the movement from Christology to discipleship is visible in symbolic images and actions throughout the Gospel.⁶⁷ He provides various examples of such structures.

Reference	Primary level (Christological Claim)	Secondary level (Discipleship statement)
Jn 6:35	I am the bread of Life	Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty
Jn 8:12	I am the light of the World	Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life
Jn 10:9	I am the gate	Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture.
Jn 10:11,14	I am the good shepherd	The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep
Jn 11:25	I am the resurrection and	The one who believes in me will have life

⁶⁷ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 13.

Another well-known Johannine scholar Dorothy Lee observed the five stages of structure which is common in six symbolic narratives. “Stage 1: Foundational Image or Sign; Stage 2: Misunderstanding; Stage 3: Struggle for Understanding; Stage 4: Attainment of rejection of Symbolic Understanding; Stage 5: Confession of faith or statement of Rejection.”⁶⁸ Though these stages of the structure are observed within the narrative structure, it is also useful while interpreting the symbols because narratives are connected to symbols.

However, after reviewing the structure of Johannine symbolism provided by various scholars,⁶⁹ Akala concluded that Koester provides a resourceful and compressive overview of the Johannine symbolism structure from the theological point of view. But she found a lack of methodological and theoretical framework for interpreting Johannine symbols as a network in the work of Koester and proposed her theoretical framework. She believes that the Son-Father Relationship is the center of John’s symbolic world. She believes symbols as a literary construct that operates on a theoretical framework. Therefore, she provides a theoretical and methodological framework to interpret the Johannine symbols.

2.5 Conclusion

This research will use make use of all the above-mentioned structures and theories to investigate light symbolism. The reason for using this mixture methodology is to investigate text from various perspectives to draw out the meaning of light symbolism.

⁶⁸ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 12–13.

⁶⁹ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, Culpepper argues that the background, narrative function, and variableness must be considered while interpreting the symbols because it is connected to figure of speech such as metaphors, image, irony. Paul Anderson identifies four categories of symbolization-explicit, implicit, correlative and innocent. Zimmermann distinguishes two domains of symbolism- basics symbols of human life and Symbols from the Jewish tradition. Lee identifies two level of symbolic meaning; material reality and spiritual reality which is symbolizes by flesh and glory. 13-17

Chapter 3

3 Theories of Johannine Symbolism

3.1 Development of the theory of Johannine Symbolism

The Gospel of John is filled with figurative languages, mostly described as symbolic languages by many. Therefore, to interpret such literary work, the theory of symbol is a must. The guideline for symbol interpretation was first provided by Aristotle and followed by Plato, Philo, Origen, Clement, and Augustine till medieval times.⁷⁰ In the Modern period, poets and literary workers used symbols drawn from religious traditions. Contemporary symbolist scholars have published theories of symbols, but there has been a lack of theoretical unity. Some biblical scholars have applied existing symbol theories to Johannine narratives. However, all contemporary theories of symbols do not fit into the biblical narratives; thus, this led to the misinterpretation of the text. Akala has rightly pointed out that,

'Application of contemporary theories of symbol to ancient texts like the Gospel of John requires delicate skill, primary because ancient literary conventions are either unknown or different from modern literary conventions. If applied indiscriminately, the contemporary literary theory could hinder rather than advance an accurate interpretation of ancient's texts.'⁷¹

Scholars⁷² have attempted to interpret the Gospel of John using the existing theory of symbols. Still, few have provided a proper theoretical framework to interpret the text from the symbolic point of view.⁷³ Van der Watt used descriptive and deductive methods to elaborate the dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel of John. After studying John chapter 15, he proposed the theory of four metaphorical constructions; substitution, analogical interaction, comparison, and climactic description.⁷⁴ Further, he believes that the metaphor forms a semantic unity on *meso* (relate together to create a larger image) and macro level (intra-textual relationship)⁷⁵. In line with Watt, Zimmermann's imagery studies in John reveals that the imagery in John is composed

⁷⁰ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:33–34.

⁷¹ Akala, 505:32.

⁷² Frey et al., *Imagery in the Gospel of John*.

⁷³ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994; Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*; Dorothy, *Flesh and Glory*; Lee, "The Gospel of John and the Five Senses."

⁷⁴ Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 111–17.

⁷⁵ Van der Watt, 123–27.

in three different ways: clusters of images within a small text (verse), images with a motif (chapters), and image networks in the Gospel (whole Gospel).⁷⁶

Looking at the above literature review on Johannine symbolism, Akala's theory of Johannine symbolism seems to be the best fitting theory, along with Koester's contribution per the Johannine symbolism. Because Akala produced the hybrid form of a theory of symbolism which includes most of the contemporary theories of symbols, thus, this study will make use of Akala's theory of Johannine symbolism to further elaborate on the light symbolism of John from the Christological point of view. She draws her main principle from Urban⁷⁷ and Ricoeur's theory of symbol as well as she makes use of the Watt and Zimmermann theories. Their theories include '*philosophical, linguistic, and religious principles that offer deep insight into the multifaceted nature of the symbol.*'⁷⁸ Before I proceed with Akala's Johannine theory of symbol, I would prefer to summarize Urban and Ricoeur's theory of symbol. Reviewing their theory will enable readers to fully comprehend Akala's theory of symbol since her theory is based on these two scholars.

3.1.1 Urban theory of Symbol: Transcendent Symbol

The contribution of Urban cannot be ignored in the theory of symbol. He has provided a theory of symbol in his book *Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principle of Symbolism*. He defines symbols from the disciplines of art, religion, and poetry.⁷⁹ Further, he distinguishes between signs and symbols to define symbols. He defines a symbol as a '*special kind of sign*' but goes beyond the operational significance of a sign and functions as an indicative and intuitive representation.⁸⁰ Then he classifies symbols into three categories, namely, *extrinsic* symbols (act primarily as substitutes to draw attention to their referents), *intrinsic symbol* (related to referents to make an analogous prediction; gives the ability to express non-physical or spiritual realities), and *insight symbol* (gateway into something and beyond).⁸¹

⁷⁶ Frey et al., *Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 30.-2

⁷⁷ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:33–45.

⁷⁸ Akala, 505:35.

⁷⁹ Urban, *Language and Reality*, 403.

⁸⁰ Urban, 403–7.

⁸¹ Urban, 407–14.

Moreover, he provides four principles of symbols, which express the nature and functions of symbols. The first principle says that *every symbol stands for something*.⁸² This principle identifies the representational nature of a symbol. The second principle states: *Every symbol has a dual reference*. The dual reference includes the original object (the symbol) and the object for which the symbol stands (referent).⁸³ The third principle says that *every symbol contains truth* (unexpressed reality in the narrative) *and fiction* (misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the symbol).⁸⁴ Urban fourth principle states: *A symbol may be adequate as a representation of the object*.⁸⁵ He argues that total representation is not always presented in a symbol, so second clarification is required from the interpreter of the symbol to comprehend the full meaning of the symbol.⁸⁶

At final, based on the above-mentioned definition, classification, and principles of symbol, he proposed the theory of transcendent symbol by criticizing the naturalistic theory of character.⁸⁷ His transcendent theory can be traced back to Plato's classical theory of symbolism.⁸⁸ He believes that symbol not only points to but leads to its transcendental meaning.⁸⁹ Akala summarizes the Urban transcendent theory of symbol in this way,

"The transcendent theory of symbol always develops and interprets the symbol in terms of the reality meant, making interpretation perspective and progressive...the positive approach of this theory assumes that symbolic objects in space and time having significance beyond themselves.... interprets the symbol in terms of the object itself, not by the cause of the object."⁹⁰

Urban theory of transcendence symbols will be useful to elaborate on the light symbolism of John. His principle of representation, dual reference, and transcendence will be used as a theory in this research to elaborate on the light symbolism.

⁸² Urban, 422.

⁸³ Urban, 423.

⁸⁴ Urban, 424.

⁸⁵ Urban, 425.

⁸⁶ Urban, 441.

⁸⁷ Urban divides symbol theory into two categories; Naturalist theories and transcendental theories. Naturalist theories search for symbolic meaning *outside* the symbol, whereas transcendental theories discover meaning *within* the symbol.

⁸⁸ Urban, *Language and Reality*, 448.

⁸⁹ Urban, 415.

⁹⁰ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:39.

3.1.2 Ricoeur Theory of Symbol

Ricoeur's symbol theory is clearly articulated in his two books, namely, *the symbolism of Evil* and *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and surplus of meaning*, published in 1967. He talks about the dimension of symbolism and the essence of symbolism in his first book. He underlines three dimensions of symbolism: cosmic, oneiric, psychic, and poetic.⁹¹ The first dimension, cosmic symbols, takes place when the symbol gives rise to thoughts and thoughts return to the symbol. While humans reflect upon it, the meaning of the symbol is discovered in the symbol itself.⁹² The second dimension, psychic symbol, is broader sense of cosmic symbols but represents the socio-culture and consciousness of people while interpreting the symbols. The last dimension is poetic, which is described as a structure of language by Ricoeur.

Further, he identifies five essences of a symbol to describe the structure and function of the symbol, which are as follows "1. Dual intentionality of Symbol 2. Analogical bound between literal and symbolic meanings because literal meanings lead the interpreter into symbolic meanings 3. The evocative power of symbol, not allegorical power, 4. The function of Absence and Function of presence⁹³ 5. He identifies a comparison between myth and symbol as a core element because as myth evolves in narration through time, symbols are formed spontaneously."⁹⁴

In his second book, he discusses the semantic and non-semantic structure of the symbol. First, he develops the theory of metaphors and explains the theory of symbols considering metaphor theory.⁹⁵ He believes that metaphor is the result of tension between the vehicle and tenor. Through this tension, a new vision of reality springs forth and reveals new information about reality⁹⁶ which he describes as non-semantic components of the symbol.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Ricoeur, Buchanan, and Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 11.

⁹² Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:42.

⁹³ Absence in the symbol is the way the symbol signifies 'vacuously', that is the symbol signifies without direct substitution. Presence is the symbol's ability to signify something in existence but not expressed in the text, 43.

⁹⁴ Ricoeur, Buchanan, and Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 15–18.

⁹⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 47–48.

⁹⁶ Ricoeur, 68.

⁹⁷ Ricoeur, 54.

Although he made three dimensions of symbol in the beginning later, he categorizes these three dimensions into two dimensions from the linguistic perspective linguistic (poetic) and non-linguistic symbol (cosmic and psychic).⁹⁸ Furthermore, he believes that the linguistic dimension takes leads to the non-linguistic. He argues that the surplus of the meaning in the symbol is attested because the meaning of the symbol cannot be fully expressed with the conceptual language that is the linguistic dimension of the symbol.⁹⁹ Therefore the non-linguistic element of the symbol resists linguistic or semantic transcription.¹⁰⁰ Resistance occurs because symbols are drawn from the socio-cultural background, which needs an alternative method of interpretation and investigation.¹⁰¹ This is known as the principle of resistance by Ricoeur.

Then, Ricoeur presents the principle of assimilation as an alternative method to investigate the symbol's meaning. The assimilation principle shows that linguistic and non-linguistic elements of symbols are inseparable, so they must be interpreted together. As per Ricoeur, "*the symbol has a double meaning or a first and a second order meaning. The symbol brings together two universes of discourse, one linguistic and the other of a non-linguistic.*"¹⁰² Therefore interpreter of the symbol moved from the linguistic level and assimilated into the non-linguistic I, level, which he describes as a symbolic process.¹⁰³ The principle of resistance and assimilation will be used in this study to understand the light symbolism.

3.2 Akala's Theoretical definition of a symbol in John

"The symbol is a literary construct that operates on theoretical principles which facilitate meaning; therefore, Johannine symbol should be understood as theoretical and theological constructs that contain hermeneutical keys for interpreting Gospel."¹⁰⁴ Theoretical symbol definition of Akala is based on literary-narrative setting and theological purpose of John. She defines a symbol as, "*a figure of speech that embodies certain characteristics of its literal*

⁹⁸ Ricoeur, 54.

⁹⁹ Ricoeur, 57.

¹⁰⁰ Ricoeur, 55.

¹⁰¹ Ricoeur, 57–58.

¹⁰² Ricoeur, Buchanan, and Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 51.

¹⁰³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 56.

¹⁰⁴ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:18–19.

meaning and leads to a transcendent meaning that is significant within its narrative context and transformative in its theological purpose."¹⁰⁵

3.3 Akala's Theory of Johannine Symbol

Akala's theory of Johannine symbol is divided into four principles: Principle of Representation, Principle of assimilation, Principle of association, and Principle of transcendence.

3.3.1 Principle of Representation

The first principle of Johannine symbol theory proposed by Akala is the principle of representation which is divided into four sub-principles: *symbolic presentation, symbolic representation, symbolic reflection, and symbolic resemblance*.¹⁰⁶

3.3.1.1 Symbolic presentation

Symbolic presentation is the beginning of the symbol appearance or the first-time appearance of the symbol in the narrative to introduce something new about the character. 'The first appearances of most of the Gospel's Christological symbols introduce something new about Jesus. In the Gospel of John, symbolic presentation occurs in the prologue, where Jesus is presented as the Word in the first verse, which is followed by light, life, only Begotten Son, Lord, Lamb of God, Baptizer, Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah, Son of Man.'¹⁰⁷

3.3.1.2 Symbolic Representation

Symbolic representation means the reappearance of the symbol with the new dimension of the presented symbol. For example, the symbol of light is presented in John 1:4 but again represented in John 1:5-9 with a new dimension of meaning. In 1:4, light is presented as a co-creator with God, while 1:5 presents light as Jesus's power over darkness. 'Akala argues that such representation occurs in symbolic language and in the form of intertextuality when symbols are drawn from the socio-cultural and canonical traditions. Thus, representation of the symbols causes the audience to reflect on the previous use of the symbol.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Akala, 505:55.

¹⁰⁶ Akala, 505:60.

¹⁰⁷ Akala, 505:61.

¹⁰⁸ Akala, 505:61.

3.3.1.3 Symbolic Reflection

Symbolic reflection takes place when the author presents or represents a symbol. According to Ricoeur, thinking takes in the human conscience's cosmic, psychic, and poetic dimensions¹⁰⁹. Such reflective knowledge will enable the reader or audience to correlate symbols with referents based on the experience, worldview, culture, or theology.¹¹⁰ Akala argues that Johannine symbolic presentation of light, life, bread, water, etc., easily leads to reflection. Such reflection leads to the social, historical, and theological background of symbols and shows the strong connection between Johannine and Hebrew Bible symbolism.¹¹¹ Moreover, Johannine symbols are better understood when reflected from the theological and cultural background of the author and audience.

3.3.1.4 Symbolic Resemblance

Reflection leads to resemblance. Therefore, the fourth sub-principle of representation is the resemblance. According to the Cambridge dictionary, resemblance means *the fact that two people or things look like each other or are similar in some other way*.¹¹² The symbol carries or embodies a certain characteristic of literal meaning. While reflecting on the symbol, the reader or listener discovers and selects points of resemblance that evoke correspondence between the literal meaning of the symbol and its referent.¹¹³ Resemblance consists of two-level; logical or cognitive and non-literal or spiritual level. Johannine representations of symbols of Jesus have heavyweight. They must be understood in terms of spiritual level because these symbols express divine nature and origin, which is beyond the literal and cognitive realm.

3.3.2 Principle of Assimilation

Akala believes that Johannine symbols are products and agents of assimilation; therefore, she provides three levels of symbolic assimilation: pre-semantic, semantic, and interpretation¹¹⁴.

¹⁰⁹ Ricoeur, Buchanan, and Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 10.

¹¹⁰ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:62.

¹¹¹ Akala, 505:63.

¹¹² RESEMBLANCE | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary.
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/resemblance>

¹¹³ Akala, 505:63.

¹¹⁴ Akala, 505:65.

Oxford dictionary defines the word assimilation as *the process of taking in and fully understanding information or ideas*.¹¹⁵ According to this definition, the symbol cannot be understood at once; instead, there is the *process* of taking in and *understanding* which will enable the reader or listener to comprehend and accept the truth of symbol. Akala says that there are three levels of assimilation or the process of understanding.

Firstly, *Pre-semantic assimilation* assumes that the symbols result from human experiences or linguistic, cultural, and theological assimilation. Thus, exploring the origin of symbolic assimilation provides various social, cultural, and religious perspectives for interpretation. On the second level, *semantic assimilation* takes place when the symbol's referent assimilates similar characteristics at the semantic level (textual connection).¹¹⁶ Then the process of *interpretative symbolic assimilation* begins with the principle of symbolic presentation and experiencing the theological truth revealed in the symbol.¹¹⁷ For Akala, this happens in two stages. First, interpretative symbolic assimilation occurs when the interpreter comprehends the transcendent meaning of literary symbols. Second, interpretative symbolic assimilation occurs when the interpreter or reader experiences the reality conveyed in the symbol because Johannine symbols demand readers or hearers to act. After all, the aim of symbolic interpretation is transformation¹¹⁸. Jesus the living water call to quench spiritual thirst. Jesus the light calls his disciples to follow him so they will no longer walk in darkness.

3.3.3 Principle of Association

The relationship between the symbols and other figures of speech is defined as a principle of association by Akala (I have discussed the importance of the relationship between Johannine symbols and figurative language in 3.3 in detail). The association occurs on two levels: metaphorical and organizational levels. First, Johannine symbols are presented in association with a metaphor. However, according to Akal, metaphor cannot fully express the Christological purpose of John due to the limitation of the linguistics and lexicology of the text. But when

¹¹⁵ Oxford Dictionary,
<https://www.google.com/search?q=assimilation+meaning&oq=assimilation+&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0i512i9.5396j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

¹¹⁶ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:67.

¹¹⁷ Akala, 505:67.

¹¹⁸ Akala, 505:68–69.

metaphor is interpreted in association with the symbol, it produces a wholistic interpretation covering social-historical and theological realities. Therefore, she expresses that '*metaphors help portray Jesus within an earthly socio-cultural and historical context, while symbols reveal him in the context of his transcendent relationship with the father.*'¹¹⁹

Secondly, she believes that the Johannine symbol does not appear alone but reappears in the narrative with another figure of speech which she called organizational association. Johannine symbols direct, organize and communicate with other figures of speech to form networks to provide symbolic meaning. Johannine symbols are usually preceded or developed by metaphors, imagery, irony, misunderstanding, parable, proverbs, allusions, repetitions, double entendre, or rhetorical questions.¹²⁰ These metaphorical and organizational symbolic association makes the Johannine narrative symbolic by providing theological insights into the Johannine symbolism.

3.3.4 Principle of Transcendence

Johannine symbols are transcendent by nature. According to Akala, transcendence occurs on four-level: semantic, dualistic, revelatory, and transformative.¹²¹ She says that the symbol *in the text* joins the referent *outside the text* to appear transcendence which is described as semantic. The second level of symbolic interpretation is dualistic transcendence which shapes the symbolism of the Gospel of John. Thirdly, the symbol reveals by involving the person in a subject-to-subject relationship with the transcendent.¹²² In other words, the symbol leads the person into the unknown (revelatory experience) by presenting the multifaceted mystery of the transcendent. Once a person understands or is involved with the revelatory transcendent nature of the symbol, they experience transformation, known as transformative transcendence¹²³.

¹¹⁹ Akala, 505:69.

¹²⁰ Akala, 505:70.

¹²¹ Akala, 505:71.

¹²² Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 67.

¹²³ Muropa, "The Johannine Writings: Symbolism and the Symbol of 'Light' in the Gospel of John," 109.

Chapter 4

4 Background of Johannine Light Symbolism

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the meaning of light from the canonical perspectives. After doing this, the occurrence of Johannine light text is presented and summarized in the light narrative to have an overview of the Johannine light symbol. But to understand the light symbol, the background of the light symbol must be studied. Each symbol's meaning is influenced by the author's culture and religion. Sociohistorical background, so the remaining part of this chapter focuses on the background of the gospel of John in general and particularly on the background of the light symbol.

4.2 Canonical Meaning of Light in General

In general, light is considered as an absence of darkness. The literary dictionary defines lights asbut to find the canonical meaning of light, the origin of light must be traced. The creation story reveals that God created light on the first day, but during this creative process, God created the natural light such as the sun, stars, and solar system only on the fourth day. If so, what kind of light does God speak out on the first day? Scholars believe that the answer to this question is connected to the purpose and nature of God because there are many biblical references that prove that God himself is light.

Therefore, the word 'light' is divinely rich in its comprehensiveness and meaning. Thus, Dwight Pratt explains the biblical light term in four categories: 1) natural light, 2) artificial light, 3) miraculous light, and 4) mental, moral and Spiritual Light.¹²⁴ "First, *natural light*, which explains the light of the sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:14-18; Ps 74:16; 136:7; Eccles 11:7; 12:2, Rev. 22:5; Job 30:26, Ps 130:6), second *artificial light* which is discovered or invented by people such as the light of lamps, candle, torch, etc.(Ex 25:6; 35:14; Lev 24:2,). Third, *miraculous light* such as the lightpillarilar of fire (Ex 13:21; 14:20; Ps 78:14), the transfiguration of Christ -white as light (Matt 17:2), and the great light (Acts 22:6; 9:3). Fourth,

¹²⁴ Pratt, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Mental, Moral and Spiritual Light where this light term is used in figurative language to provide moral (Isaiah 5:20, Ps.119:105), intellectual (the law is my light, Pr 6:23), spiritual (The Lord is my light and salvation, Ps 27:1; John 1:9;) and illumination or Enlightenment meaning (John 1:4). Now I will look into occurrences of a light symbol in John.

4.3 Occurrences of Light symbol in John

The Light term has appeared 73 times in New Testament; out of that, it appears 23 times in the gospel of John.¹²⁵ The significant texts concerning light are the followings which will be investigated in detail in chapters 5 and chapter 6 after doing a study on the background behind the text.

- In Him was life, and that life was the **light** of humankind (1:4)
- The **light** shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it (1:5)
- He (John) came as a witness to testify concerning that **light** (1:7)
- He himself was not the **light**; he came as a witness to the **light** (1:8)
- The true light that gives **light** to everyone was coming into the world (1:9)
- but men loved darkness instead of **light** (3:19)
- Everyone who does evil hates the **light** and will not come to light for fear that deeds will be exposed (3:20)
- But whoever lives by the truth comes into the **light** (3:21)
- John was a lamp that burned and gave **light**, and you choose a time to enjoy his **light**. (5:35)
- I am the **Light** of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the **light** of life. (8:12)
- While I am in the world, I am the **light** of the world (9:5)
- Walk while you have **light** (12:35)
- I have come into the world as a **light** (12:46)

¹²⁵ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 38.

4.4 Overview of Light Symbolism in the Gospel

Thompson argues that 'from the beginning of the Gospel of John, light serves as an important image in the portrayal of reality and of the figures of Jesus.'¹²⁶ The light symbolism begins from the prologue and reaches its climax in Chapter 12. The prologue (1:4,5,7,8,9) introduces God's word as a source of life and light shining in the darkness (1:5) and not being overcome by it. Whereas in Chapter 12, Jesus invited people to believe in the light to become children of light (12:35-36,46). But in between the prologue and climax of light discourse, Jesus encounters Nicodemus, which ends with the unsettling remarks on light (3:19-21)¹²⁷. Further, Jesus declares that he is "the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5) during the feast of tabernacle discourse (7:1-10:21) and demonstrates the truth of his claim by enlightening the eyes of a born blind (9:4-7). Thompson also argues that "the reference to the light in the prologue expresses key aspects of the character and function of light in the Gospel, while the account of the healing of the born blind man and the repetition of Jesus' 'I am saying elaborates on and demonstrates them."¹²⁸

4.5 Subordinate symbol of Light

Culpepper divides the symbol into two categories as core and subordinate symbols. Evangelist uses various symbol in the gospel of John. The symbol of light has come along with the other subordinate symbols like 'light and darkness, 'day and night, and 'sight and blindness in the gospel of John. Such subordinate or coordinate symbols are effective in illustrating the use of the principal symbol of light.¹²⁹ Other subordinate symbols of lights are lamps, fires, torches, lanterns, day, sight, and dawn. Some scholars such as Dodd and Keener argue that glory, vision, seen, and knowledge as an associate symbols of light.¹³⁰ To understand the light symbolism, depth and darkness must be considered together. Thus, while studying the background of light symbols, darkness will be studied together.

¹²⁶ Marianne Meye Thompson, "Light: The Philosophical Content of the Term and the Gospel of John" in the *Prologue of the Gospel of John : Its Literary, Theological, and Philosophical Contexts : Papers Read at the Colloquium Ioanneum 2013*. Vol. 359. eds. Van Der Watt, J.G., R. Alan Culpepper, and Udo Schnelle (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 273

¹²⁷ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*.el, 141.

¹²⁸ Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Prologue of the Gospel of John*, 278.

¹²⁹ Muropa, "The Johannine Writings: Symbolism and the Symbol of 'Light' in the Gospel of John," 107.

¹³⁰ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 385.

4.6 Background of the Johannine Light symbol

4.6.1 Background of John in General

The background of the Gospel of John must be studied to understand the background of the Johannine light symbol. This research paper focus on light symbolism thus background of the Gospel of John will be studied considering the light symbolism. Unfortunately, there has been debate among Johannine scholars regarding the background due to literary characteristics, terminology, and techniques applied by the author. Various scholars have attempted to sketch the background of John. Keener believes that John's audience was mainly Jewish Christians who probably continued to maintain Jewish festivals.¹³¹ But Irenaeus and Bultmann¹³² believe that the Gospel of John was written as a polemic against Gnostics.¹³³ German critical scholars Kummel and Conzelmann argue Gnosticism is the best background for the Gospel of John.¹³⁴

But the discovery of the Dead Sea scroll shifted the Johannine studies. Scholars began to investigate John from the Jewish background. Many Johannine scholars¹³⁵ agree that the Johannine community was shaped by the tension between Jews who worshipped in the synagogue and those who appear to have been banned from synagogue worship due to their higher Christology (9:22.12:42 and 16:2). Initially, this community or group of people was formed within from Jews people later joined by some Gentile converts. Symbolism is connected to the history of community and thus interpreted as understood by that very community. According to Barret, John's symbols are drawn from the everyday human life experience but derive their significance from the rich association they have acquired in the Old Testament and apocalyptic literature.¹³⁶ In line with Barret, Charlesworth argues that the Jewish background of John is confirmed by intensive archaeological work and exegesis¹³⁷ as well as he argues that Essene (Qumran Community) had a direct influence on the Johannine

¹³¹ Keener, 150.

¹³² Bultmann interpreted Jesus as the Gnostics revealer myth who brings the light that enlightens men to understanding.

¹³³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 161.

¹³⁴ Keener, 162.

¹³⁵ L Martyna

¹³⁶ Barrett, *Essays on John*, 68.

¹³⁷ Charlesworth, *Jesus as Mirrored in John*, xiii.

community¹³⁸ because most of the Johannine vocabularies, symbolism, and refined language are parallels to Qumran community which is discovered by the Dead Sea Scroll.¹³⁹ Therefore preceding passage attempt to discover the use of light symbolism in Jewish tradition and literature.

4.6.2 Background of Johannine Light symbol

According to Anderson, “The Johannine symbolism arises from specific images that communicate theological meaning. The meaning emerges from the influence of the evangelist’s background, culture, and context, in interaction with Jewish traditions, the Greco-Roman world, the early church, and the Synoptic Gospels.¹⁴⁰ Thus the light symbolism is best understood when it is interpreted from the Jewish tradition. Richard B Hays proposes the figurative interpretation as a hermeneutical strategy to create deeper meaning and theological coherence unity within the biblical narratives.¹⁴¹ He believes that the evangelist or author uses *retrospective reading (Reading backward¹⁴²)* to reinterpret Israel’s Scripture and Israel’s worship tradition. He argues that evangelist has used the method of intertextuality to create *metalepsis¹⁴³* with the purpose of bringing meaning to their audience. He argues that the light symbolism of the Gospel must be interpreted in the light of Israel’s scripture and worship tradition, which is highlighted in the Old Testament and in the first century. Keener also argues that this light must be understood from the Jewish literature background, which portrays both Torah and Wisdom as light (Ps. 119:105, 130; Prov 6:23).¹⁴⁴

After discovering and studying the Dead Sea scroll, James H. Charlesworth also argues that the light symbolism of John is strongly influenced by the Qumran community and apocalyptic literature along with the Old Testament because John’s dualism expressions and terminologies are like the dualism in 1 QS 3.13-4:26.¹⁴⁵ But he believes that the theology and dualism of John

¹³⁸ Charlesworth, x.

¹³⁹ Charlesworth, 112.

¹⁴⁰ Lee, *Symbolism and the Signs in the Fourth Gospel*, 260.

¹⁴¹ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 3.

¹⁴² Hays, 358.

¹⁴³ Metalepsis is a literary technique of citing or echoing a small bit of precursor text in such a way that the reader can grasp the significance of the echo only by recalling or recovering the original context from which the fragmentary echo came and then reading the two texts in dialogical juxtaposition. P. 11

¹⁴⁴ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 385; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 84.

¹⁴⁵ Charlesworth, *Jesus as Mirrored in John*, 230.

are different from the Qumran Community. However, he argues that Qumran Community and apocalyptic writings are also the product of the Old Testament and early Judaism.¹⁴⁶ The symbol of light is over-emphasized in the Rule of Community by the Qumran community. The phrases, expressions, and terminology of the light symbol of John are much like the Gospel of John. Such as sons of light, sons of darkness, the angel of light, walking in the ways of light, spring of light, sons of the truth, and walking in the ways of darkness are mentioned in the *Rule of Community*.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, to understand the Johannine light symbol, one must look back to the history and theology of the Qumran community to see its influence. Some scholars even argue that the author of the Gospel was one of the Essene, a member of Quthe men CommunitThe linguistic form of the symbol must be understood to interpret the Johannine symbolism. To understand the Johannine symbol metaphor,r, image and narrative, and signs must be taken into consideration while interpreting the text.

As I mentioned above, the gospel of John is Jewishness in his vocabularies and theology. Thus I shall only suggest the Jewish and Qumran influence on the texts.

¹⁴⁶ Charlesworth, 225–26.

¹⁴⁷ Charlesworth, 89.

Chapter 5

5 Theoretical Analysis of Johannine Light: Prologue (1:1-18)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the implication of the theory of the Johannine symbol proposed by the Akala. The theory is applied in the prologue to observe the significance of light symbolism within the text. The theoretical analysis attempts to reveal the literary design of light symbolism as the narrative progression in the gospel. This light symbol is one of the key symbols in the Gospel of John. Due to the limitation theory of Johannine symbol will be applied to the light symbol of the prologue only.

5.2 The principle of Representation

The principle of representation is divided into four parts for detailed elaboration.

5.2.1 Symbolic Presentation of Light

According to Akala, “Symbolic presentation is the initial presentation of the symbols and symbolic language in the narrative”¹⁴⁸ by the narrator. When a new symbol appears in the text, such symbol introduces a new identity of Jesus to the audience, listener, and reader. The Fourth Evangelist makes use of the various symbols and symbolic languages throughout the Gospel. Most of the core symbols are directly and indirectly introduced in the prologue, which is developed as the narrative progress¹⁴⁹.

The light is a Christological symbol so counted by many scholars as a core symbol, which is directly and indirectly presented in the prologue. For the first time, the light symbol is directly presented in John 1:4, pointing to Jesus as co-creator with God¹⁵⁰. But when we investigate the narrative closely with its literary design, the light symbol is presented as equal to Logos he versversesnd 10.¹⁵¹ Therefore, we can conclude that indirectly the light symbol is presented in

¹⁴⁸ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:127.

¹⁴⁹ Akala, 505:128.

¹⁵⁰ Akala, 505:61.

¹⁵¹ The text says that the Light was coming into the world to give light to everyone. From this text we can interpret that the Light was existed from the beginning, so he was co-creator with God. The light of Genesis.

verses 1 and verse 2 as God. Presentation of the symbol only does not provide fullness of meaning for the audience to reflect as a proper symbol thus, the light symbol must be represented to provide a clear picture to the audience.

5.2.2 Symbolic Representation

Symbolic representation means the reoccurrence of the symbol with the new dimensions of the presented symbols. The light symbol is directly represented six times in the prologue, but it occurs more in the form of intertextuality and symbolic language. The symbol of light presented in verse 4 is represented in verses 5-13 with a new dimension of Jesus' mission and character. Verse 4 points out light as Co-creator and pre-existence with God, whereas verse 5 light points to Jesus' victory over darkness. Verses 6-8 reveals that John the Baptist was not the light but witness to the light, symbolically referring to bringing Jesus as Spiritual light sent from God.¹⁵² Further, verse 9 clarifies Jesus as true light because he existed (pre-existence of Jesus) before John the Baptist and was coming into the world as spiritual light and enlightenment to humankind. Thus, I believe the author was introducing the true light, who is Jesus, in verses 8-9 to elaborate further in the upcoming verse.

The light symbol is not mentioned in Verses 10-13. It does not mean that the light symbol is not represented in the following verses. The immediate context and the use of the pronoun 'he' in verse 10 refer to the light symbol of verse 9. Thus verse 10-13 speaks about the incarnation of the light (*was coming in the world, was in the world*), light role as creator, rejection and acceptance of the light, and authority of light.

Further, the light symbol is represented in the form of intertextuality and symbolic language in verses 14-18. The word glory refers to divine light.¹⁵³

5.2.3 Symbolic Reflection

Symbolic Reflection occurs when the author presents or represents symbols resulting in correlations between symbols and their referents, leading to symbolic meaning¹⁵⁴. The symbol of light is a universal symbol. The symbol of light is highly prevalent in Jewish culture,

¹⁵² Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:61.

¹⁵³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 385.

¹⁵⁴ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:129.

Hellenistic culture, and other cultures too. The light symbol can be found in Jewish Scripture, Rabbinic literature, the Qumran community, and the Greek philosophical world. The light symbol has a strong philosophical¹⁵⁵ and theological background. Therefore, some scholars suggested that the author utilizes the term because of its wide usage in his time.

C.H. Dodd argues that the light symbol has Hellenistic background,¹⁵⁶ whereas Rudolf Bultman¹⁵⁷ argues that the light symbol has Gnostic background. While reflecting on the Light symbol of the prologue, C.H. Dodd found the source of the light symbol from the Hellenistic background; he shows that Plato uses light to identify with the supreme god, which causes life on earth and enables mankind to gain knowledge of the world¹⁵⁸. He goes on to say that Philo describes light as an emanation from God. As one gains mystical knowledge, one becomes illuminated by these ideas, ultimately seeing “the Light itself (which is God).”¹⁵⁹ Further, Dodd observes the Old Testament background for the light symbol and connects with Ps. 36:9. Moreover, he explores the connection between glory and light in the prologue. To Jews, glory means the manifestation of ‘God’s being, nature, and presence, in a manner accessible to human experience; and the manifestation was conceived in the form of radiance, splendour or dazzling light.’¹⁶⁰ He believes that the glory and light refer to the manifestation of the power of God for the salvation of his people.¹⁶¹ Bultman understands that Jesus is a reveller who brings the light that enlightens men to understand themselves¹⁶² From the Gnostic point of view, coming to light means coming from ignorance to knowledge and enlightenment.

Recent scholars such as D.A. Carson, Baulkham, and Basely-Murray argue for the Jewish background approach allowing Old Testament as an important source for light symbolism¹⁶³. Many creation stories begin with the emergence of light; OT begins with the creation of Light out of the darkness. Later OT also says testify that light becomes the symbol of divine presence

¹⁵⁵ Watt, Culpepper, and Schnelle, *The Prologue of the Gospel of John*, 273–84.

¹⁵⁶ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 201–10.

¹⁵⁷ Bultman, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches.

¹⁵⁸ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 210.

¹⁵⁹ Dodd, 202.

¹⁶⁰ Dodd, 206.

¹⁶¹ Dodd, 206.

¹⁶² Bultman, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches, 40–41.

¹⁶³ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 18.

and salvation. Psalm 27.1 describes the Lord as light and my salvation. Isaiah 2.5 says that we shall see the light in of his light. For, Isaiah says that the sun and moon will no longer be the sources of light, for the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light (Isa. 60.19). While discussing the Jewish background on Light, Davis Scott argues that the presence of God is light, spiritual illumination is light from God, the agent of salvation is light and righteous life is light from God.¹⁶⁴

But the discovery of the Dead Sea scroll has opened a new source for the Gospel of John. Ernst Haenchen¹⁶⁵ and James H Charlesworth¹⁶⁶ argue from the hybrid point of view and say that the Qumran and Jewish background is the best while studying the light and darkness dualism of the Fourth Gospel. J painter argues the OT gave references regarding the light symbol, but it does not provide a dualistic framework as it is provided in Qumran literature (Rule of Community)¹⁶⁷. Many phrases used in the Gospel of John can be found in Qumran literature. Though the Akal suggests reflection from the previous background, D.A Carson suggests re-reading of the whole prologue after the entire Gospel has been read in a reflective manner to have new insight regarding the light symbol.¹⁶⁸

The above discussion proves that the audience or readers had some pre-understanding of light symbols; thus, they reflected on the light symbol from the social, historical, and theological background of light symbols to show the strong connection between Johannine and Hebrew Bible symbolism¹⁶⁹ thus leading into the process of resemblance.

5.2.4 Symbolic Resemblance

The process of symbolic reflection leads to symbolic resemblance, which happens in two-level- the first logical level and the second spiritual level. The symbol of light resembles Jesus. A reader of the gospel understands that the Logos is God in verse 1, whereas verse 4 explains that the life indwelling the logos is light for humanity. On the logical level, Jesus is literal light for humanity, but V5 says that light shines in the darkness, which shows that it must be understood

¹⁶⁴ Davis, 30.

¹⁶⁵ Haenchen, *John 1: Commentary on the Gosple of John Chapters 1-6*.

¹⁶⁶ Charlesworth, *Jesus as Mirrored in John*, 214–30.

¹⁶⁷ Charlesworth, 262.

¹⁶⁸ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 62.

¹⁶⁹ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 18.

in terms of spiritual level rather than logical level because, in v5, the light is portrayed in cosmic conflict with darkness. For further clarification of the light symbol, the reader must investigate the preceding context. Once the reader goes through the v6-9, the light is not literal light; rather reader understands it as the title for logos, a *person, divine being, co-creator of all things, who embodies divine life and enlightens everyone.*¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the author distinguishes between light and the Light. During that time, many believe John the Baptist to be the light of the Jews, but he is not the true light, but he is the witness to testify concerning the true light, Jesus.

5.3 *The Principle of Assimilation*

5.3.1 *Pre-semantic Assimilation*

Pre-semantic assimilation explains that symbols are rooted in the depth of human experience, giving them a universal nature. The symbol of light has existed in all cultures and societies. John's original audience came from Jewish, Greek, and Samaritan backgrounds. All of them had daily experience with light either at home or at the temple. Akala argues that many Johannine symbols such as light, darkness, bread, water, life, and birth are common human experiences¹⁷¹ and thus can be understood at the pre-semantic level before we interpret them. In Jewish and Greek cultures, light is lightened to remove the darkness. Therefore, spiritually the symbol of light signifies the illumination or enlightenment of the self from the ignorance of darkness.

The symbol of light is connected to the symbol of birth and life in the prologue. Birth is the human experience. The symbol of birth in the gospel signifies the spiritual birth of the believer, which can illustrate the principle of pre-semantic assimilation.¹⁷² Verses 11-13 narrate that those who accepted Light receive the "right to become children of God, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh or of human decision or a husband's will, but born from God." Three things were understood by John's audience when they heard or read this statement. According to Jewish culture and Greek culture, to become children or family, first either they must be born from the natural generation, the bloodline of both the parent, or second because of the

¹⁷⁰ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:134.

¹⁷¹ Akala, 505:66.

¹⁷² Akala, 505:134.

husband's desire to have a child showing the husband authority in the decision to have children, or because of the human decision to conceive and bear children.¹⁷³ Here I quote Akala, “ For John’s audience, the symbolic depiction of God as a Father who bears children would call to mind concepts of Mediterranean families and evoke the socio-cultural implications of belonging to the family of God. The family was the basic structure of life in the ancient Mediterranean world. Through birth, a person becomes part of a family, which implied privileges and responsibilities, acceptance into a family.”¹⁷⁴ DeSilva mentioned one more Roman practice of becoming a member of the nation, which is known as ‘fictive kinship.’ They were brought together from unrelated people into a firm empire by the Roman emperor. The nation, therefore, was viewed as a household, with the emperor as the father of the country of vast extended family¹⁷⁵. As a result, a family could exist without the bonds of the natural human bloodline.

The symbol of light has existed in all cultures and societies. The symbol of light is equally significant in Jewish, Hellenistic religions, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and among Egyptian and Mediterranean areas; therefore, precise mantic assimilation helps the reader to understand better about the light symbol. The above discussion proves that the symbol of birth and light is rooted in the human experience of Greek and Jewish cultures to shed light on the new life given through the Light, the Christ.

5.3.2 Semantic Assimilation

According to theory, semantic assimilation takes place when the referent of the symbol assimilates similar characteristics of the symbol at the semantic/textual level. The light symbol of John has various similar characteristics to symbols of the Hebrew Bible/OT. In John, the symbol of light is presented as co-creator v10, live giver v12, spiritual illuminator v9a, victorious v5, glorious v14, and v17. Hebrew Bible presents light as divine glory, a pillar of fire, and the presence of God, an agent of life and salvation.

¹⁷³ Dorothy, *Flesh and Glory*, 141.

¹⁷⁴ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:135–36.

¹⁷⁵ DeSilva, 1423.

A variety of Jewish sources employ darkness and light figuratively for evil and good, respectively, or with references to enlightenment and wisdom.¹⁷⁶ Jewish teacher applies the symbol of light to the primeval light before or from the creation, and it was also connected with OT images of eschatological light and glory.¹⁷⁷ Other Jewish teacher applies the symbol of light to prophets, righteous sages, or other persons, including Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and ultimately the Messiah, Israel, Jerusalem, the temple, or God himself.¹⁷⁸ But John's prologue is best understood from the Jewish literature, where Wisdom and Torah are portrayed as light (Ps. 119:105, 130, Prov (6:23) as noted by Dodd, Barrett, and Lightfoot.¹⁷⁹ Further interpretive assimilation clarifies the symbol of light.

5.3.3 Interpretive Assimilation

Assimilation is the process of taking in and fully understanding information¹⁸⁰ or thought.¹⁸¹ Though in the initial stage, the symbol may not be understood, through the interpretive assimilation process, the theological truth can be experienced in this stage. In the initial stage, it is natural to be misunderstood or misinterpret the meaning of a symbol since the interpreter attempts to understand the symbol in the linguistic context, which is known as resistance, according to Reiciour. Thus need to interpret the symbol from a non-linguistic context to comprehend the meaning, which is described as a symbolic process. This principle can be illustrated with the symbol of light as below.

The initial appearance of light is presented in verse 4, which states that life is the light of all humankind. John identifies 'life' with 'light' (1.4;8:12), and 'light' contextually refers to Christ (1:9-10).¹⁸² For John, "life" and "light" are not simply abstractionism: Life raises Lazarus (11:25,43-44); the Light gives light to blind eyes (9:5-7).¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 383.

¹⁷⁷ Keener, 384.

¹⁷⁸ Keener, 384.

¹⁷⁹ Keener, 385.

¹⁸⁰ Reconciliation means shared ways forward - The Centre for Independent

<https://www.cis.org.au/commentary/opinion/reconciliation-means-shared-ways-forward/>

¹⁸¹ what is assimilation? - Brainly.in. <https://brainly.in/question/50223945>

¹⁸² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 382.

¹⁸³ Keener, 382.

As the interpreter proceeds further, light and darkness dualism is introduced, and a new function of this light is presented. V5 presents the shining function of light in the darkness as well as the victory of light over the darkness. R. E. Brown interprets verses 4-5 in the light of the creation story of Genesis. ‘The light was the first gift of creation, and the life supplied by Logos was light to humans given by God to walk in. The Evangelist makes it clear that humans rejected light through sin; thus, the darkness of evil was introduced into God’s creation.’¹⁸⁴ Further author of the Gospel stresses that this darkness did not conquer the light because this light was logos himself, co-creator with God (v10), pre-existed with God, and now coming into the world to give light to all mankind (v9). A close observation into the wider context of gospel narrative presents Jesus as the light of the world (8:12). The Evangelist also makes it clear that John the Baptist is not the true light but witness to true light because people were following John the Baptist as the light of the Jews and messiah in that time. (v6-7). The author intentionally narrates about John the Baptist in verses 6-8 because there was a misunderstanding of John as a light among the audience and rejected true light.

Verses 9-11 sum up the first half of the gospel, where the rejection of Jesus by the darkness (evil forces) and “the Jew” is narrated¹⁸⁵. Verse 10 uses the pronoun ‘he’ is referring to the ‘true light,’ symbolizing that the true light is not abstract things but the second person of the Trinity. Therefore verses 10-13 are a continuation of verse 9. Light came to his own land and the people that had been prepared for his coming by Moses and the prophets but rejected the light, Jesus. Yet some believe, and those who believe in him were given authority to become children of God.

The dualism of light and darkness represents the two nature and two kingdoms. The light symbolizes life and goodness, but darkness symbolizes death and evil. The light symbolizes the Kingdom of God, and darkness symbolizes the kingdom of Satan. Thus, the coming of the ‘light’ Jesus has overcome the kingdom of darkness.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 18.

¹⁸⁵ Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 22.

5.4 The Principle of Association

5.4.1 Metaphorical Association

Symbol alone does not produce concrete meaning, it makes meaning in collaboration with other symbolic languages such as images and metaphor that is called metaphorical association by the Akala.¹⁸⁶ But in the words of Zimmermann it is called as cluster of image where images are placed by side by side in close succession.¹⁸⁷ He believes that image of Christ is presented as “logos,” “God,” “Light,” “life,” “the only begotten,” and “Flesh.”¹⁸⁸

There are other images, metaphors which will be investigated together with light symbol for the better comprehension of light symbol. Some scholar interpreted light as imagery¹⁸⁹ and metaphor¹⁹⁰ but majority of the scholars¹⁹¹ have understood light as core symbol in the gospel of John. Metaphor has meaning only in terms of earthly sociohistorical and cultural context, but symbol has transcendence meaning. But before we come to transcendence meaning, metaphorical meaning of light will be discussed.

DA Carson argues that in the OT and Jewish sources life and light metaphors were associated with the wisdom and Torah but this metaphor is transformed in Gospel of John, where light and life are instead associated with Christ, the Word.¹⁹² Davis further clarify this statement, John transform ‘wisdom is light’ and ‘torah is light’ into Christ, the Word as Light.¹⁹³ Akala argues that *monogenes* function symbolically in John, which signifies the relationship between Son and Father.¹⁹⁴ *Monogenes* means unique, only one of its kind which points to the

¹⁸⁶ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:58.

¹⁸⁷ Frey et al., *Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 30.

¹⁸⁸ Frey et al., 31.

¹⁸⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 382–87.

¹⁹⁰ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*; Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.”

¹⁹¹ Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*; Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*; Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994; Dorothy, *Flesh and Glory*; Lee, *Symbolism and the Signs in the Fourth Gospel*.

¹⁹² Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 118.

¹⁹³ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 22.

¹⁹⁴ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:139.

uniqueness of Jesus, the light of the world. This symbol also explains the mission of Jesus as reveller of the Fathers' glory on earth.¹⁹⁵

5.4.2 Organizational Association

Johannine symbols appear and reappears in the narrative with other figure of speech. Johannine symbols direct, organize and communicate with other figure of speech to form networks to provide symbolic meaning. Johannine symbols are usually preceded or developed by metaphors, imagery, irony, misunderstanding, parable, proverbs, allusions, repetitions, double entendre, or rhetorical questions.¹⁹⁶ In the prologue light, logos, life, and darkness are the image used by Evangelist. Along with these other vocabularies such as creation, and 'in the beginning' phrases echo back to creation story of Genesis. This allusion points to the creative, life-giving authority, pre-existent, of Jesus, the Logos-light.¹⁹⁷ Close observation of the text shows that among 18 verses majority of the verses are focused on the light symbolism which begins in v3 and ends in v13. The light symbol has organized other figure of speeches to bring out the meaning of Light symbol. The image of glory and allusion of temple is related the presence of God. Later this theme is connected to the Feast of Tabernacle with the Light symbol in Chapter 8.

5.5 The Principle of Transcendence

5.5.1 Semantic Transcendence

Semantic transcendence occurs when the intended meaning of a symbol or symbolic expression is discovered outside the semantic range of the text. The prologue introduces that the Logos-Light was sent into the world to give light of life to humankind, but the world did not recognize him. Sending and coming of the Light signifies His divine origin. The first mention of 'coming' symbolizes the entrance of Jesus the light into the world, within the context of his transcendent origin. The true light comes from his transcendent abode with the father and enters the temporal world to accomplish a divine mission.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Akala, 505:140.

¹⁹⁶ Akala, 505:70.

¹⁹⁷ Akala, 505:141.

¹⁹⁸ Akala, 505:142.

5.5.2 Dualistic Transcendence

The dualistic transcendence is symbolically presented in the prologue. In vv.1-3 introduces the pre-existent Logos light, who is transcendence whereas vv4-16 describes the earthly presence, ministry and, mission of Jesus as revealing God. In another word, the transcendent Father is made known and brought into the contact with people on earth through the earthly ministry of Jesus, the light.¹⁹⁹

5.5.3 Revelatory Transcendence

The purpose of the Light is to reveal the transcendence God to people on earth. Especially the purpose of the Evangelist is to reveal Jesus as the Light of the Word, Jesus as Son of God and promised Messiah. Akalas argues that the transcendent symbol of light reveals the nature and mission of the Son who brings the revelation of God to humanity. She argues that the symbolism of light and darkness described in transcendent cosmic struggle symbolizes the conflict of the narrative, leading up to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.²⁰⁰ The conflict also symbolizes Jesus, the light of the world, who, in order to reveal the Father's glory, resists the darkness of spiritual blindness and ignorance in people's hearts.²⁰¹ Thus he fulfils his mission of revealing diving light and life to his followers.

5.5.4 Transformative Transcendence

Through symbol transcendence is interpreted so that truth can be experienced. The transcendent symbolism of light reveals the spiritual realities on Jesus. The transcendent symbolism leads to the transformation of the lives of those who believe in the Son of God. The symbol of light in v4 signifies that Jesus' mission in the world is to offer transformative light to humanity. So, John the Baptist witness reader to believe in the light to be transformed. As well as Evangelist also writes that to have transformative life, one must believe on the Light who came on this earth to enlighten humanity.

¹⁹⁹ Akala, 505:143.

²⁰⁰ Akala, 505:143.

²⁰¹ Akala, 505:143.

Chapter 6

6 Logos as the True Light: Literary Analysis of the Prologue (1:1-18)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the Prologue as an introduction to the remaining Gospel. The priority is given to the light symbol, so the structure of the Prologue is divided and discussed based on the light symbol. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is first to indicate the use of the light symbol in the Prologue, secondly, to highlight the major features of the light symbol, and finally to show how the light symbol connects other major themes in the Prologue to reveal the significance of the light symbol. In Summary, this chapter will examine the identity and function of light symbols in connection to Christology.

6.2 The literary structure of the Prologue

Many Johannine scholars have proved that the Prologue follows a kind of symmetry pattern or structure known as chiasm.²⁰² Each scholar uses their criteria to construct the chiasm structure. But as per this research paper, I will investigate the structure of Borgen and Pierre Y. Albala²⁰³ to create structure because they divided the prologue text according to light symbols. Borgen divided the text into two sections; v4-5 describes primordial light, and v 6-9 describes the entry of light in o history.

- A. The Pre-existing Logos (Light) *was with God*..... v1-2
- B The Logos-Light *created and gave light* in the darkness.....v3-5
- C Baptist *Witnessed the Light*v6-8
- D The Light *Came into the World* (but rejected by own)v9-11

²⁰² Borgen, "Logos Was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John"; Keener, *The Gospel of John*; Watt, Culpepper, and Schnelle, *The Prologue of the Gospel of John*.

²⁰³ Der, G, and Pierre Y, "The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie."

E *Acceptance* of the Lightv12-13

D’ *Incarnation* of the Light..... v14

C’ Baptist *Witnessed* the Light. v15

B’ The Light gives *grace and truth* v16-17

A’ The Light (*in his bosom*) Revealed God v18

From the above prologue structure, it is visible that the Light symbol is key for interpreting the Prologue because there is no other such symbol or theme which flows from beginning to end. Moreover, most of the narratives of John (Ch 3:1-21; Ch 7, Ch 8, Ch 9, Ch 10, and Ch 12) are explicitly woven around the light symbol. Some scholars investigated the sub-ordinate symbol (glory, dark, or light) of light and studied Ch.19 and Ch.20 from the Light perspectives, but due to the limitation of this thesis focus will be only on the text, which points to Jesus as Light.

6.3 *Literary Context of the Prologue*

The Prologue is carefully crafted with the literary movement. This thesis focus on the light symbol. The literary context of the text will be considered accordingly within the context of the book. The Prologue introduces the story of Jesus from a divine perspective with a truly cosmic scope. These perspectives start even before creation with the pre-existent Word, which is described in figurative languages.²⁰⁴ As well as Prologue is rich with allusions to the Old Testament. The Prologue clearly reflects the creation account of Genesis. The opening phrase ‘in the beginning refers directly to the opening of Genesis. Then the passage speaks about the Logo's involvement with creation. According to Davis, “the divine Word was a mediator of the acts of creation described in Genesis 1. ‘In him was life”, which may be describing the source of the life that was breathed into man when he was formed out of the dust in Genesis 2. Then John says that this life was the light of men. In both Genesis and John, the Light shines in the darkness. Then Evangelist makes the shift from cosmic scope to historical events by inserting John the Baptist as a witness to the true light.

²⁰⁴ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 40.

6.4 Interpretation of the Prologue

Dodd suggests that the v 4-13 should be read on two levels of meaning. On one level, they describe the activity of the pre-incarnate Christ in the world; on the other, they summarize the historical career of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁰⁵ Though the text directly does not speak about Jesus, the title, such as Logos and Light, points to Jesus. In simple word, verse 1-3 describes the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, and vv4-13 describes the historical existence of Jesus and his mission on earth. He argues that the Logos was true light; The focus of the analysis will be on light symbols; thus, I will be dealing only up to verse 13. However, I will investigate the whole Prologue by dividing it into four sections (vv.1-5, vv.6-8, v9-13, and vv.14-18).

6.4.1 The Logos-Light Enlighten Everyone 1:1-5

Text: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him, all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Interpretation: The light symbol is introduced in the opening of the Prologue and is identified with the life that is in the Logos.²⁰⁶ These verses describe the close relationship between Jesus (the Logos, Light, and Life) with the Father God. The opening verse directly does not indicate the light, but the immediate context clarifies that the title Logos is used as a title for the true Light. Logos is the title used for Jesus in the Prologue, and 'the Light' is the title used for the Logos in the Prologue. Through this observation, an interpreter can assume that the symbol of light used in the prologue point to Jesus, and the function of light points to Jesus' mission. Thus, here we can observe the Logos-Light-life matrix used for Jesus.

Furthermore, vocabulary and phrases such as '*in the beginning,*' '*God,*' '*Word,*' '*light,*' '*life,*' '*creation,*' and '*darkness*' mention echoes the creation story of Genesis. Thus, Akala writes, "As in Genesis 1.1, which simply declares the presence of God, the Prologue gives no information about how God or logos came to be; vv1-2 simply declares they are already in existence together. This establishes the pre-existence and the divinity of the logos since Logos-

²⁰⁵ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 246.

²⁰⁶ Davis, "JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN," 46.

Light is also involved in creation event.”²⁰⁷ Here I used the phrase Logos-Light because the creation story does point to primordial light in Genesis Chapter 1. In the Genesis account, light is given twice - on the first day, light shine, without mention of a source, to separate light from the darkness; on the fourth day, the moon, sun, and stars are created to give light on earth to live.²⁰⁸

Beasley-Murray argues that the divine nature of the Logos is seen in his activity in creation (v1-5), revelation (5,9-12,18), and redemption(v12-14,16-17).²⁰⁹ They argue that Logos is presented as a Mediator of creation, not only in the act of creation but in its continuance.²¹⁰ Hence life and light include the life and light which come to mankind in both creation and new creation. Marwe and Abala investigate the light symbolism and other titles (God, life, light, only Son, logos) used for Jesus in the Prologue and conclude that the Word, Who is God is the Light.²¹¹ Torah was light offered to God’s people at Sina, n the same way, Jesus as God’s Word, Law, and Wisdom are light to enlighten God’s people.²¹² Light of all mankind of verse 4 means light for humanity (3:19, and light for “the world” (9:5).²¹³

‘life in the sense of ‘natural life’ is not characteristic of John. The identification of life with light in v4 locates this life firmly in the realm of spiritual revelation, according to Ashton²¹⁴. Ashton is right when he argues that *Zoe in* v4 is not equated with human life in the sense of mere existence because v3 speaks about the creation of all things, including life. V4 has the soteriological implication of life rather than the biological implications of life, which is the light of men.

In v4b, the verb conveys a statement of resemblance, which makes light a symbol for life (8:12), and so these two words must refer to the same thing as per this verse. Reading in the light of the creation story of theirs the best meaning of this metaphor. “Light” is presented in

²⁰⁷ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:148.

²⁰⁸ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 47.

²⁰⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 11.

²¹⁰ Beasley-Murray, 11.

²¹¹ Der, G, and Pierre Y, “The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie,” 3.

²¹² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 385.

²¹³ Keener, 385.

²¹⁴ Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John 1.41)*.

Gen 1:3 as the first act of creation, thus pushing back the darkness of the primordial chaos (Gen 1:2) and making life possible, including human and living creatures.²¹⁵ Light is the essential condition for life. Thus, light presupposes life.²¹⁶ The initial appearance of light is presented in verse statesich states that life was the light of all humankind. Bruce interprets this phrase as the natural illumination of reason which is given to the human mind and of the spiritual illumination which accompanies the new life that can be receiLight Logos Light-Logos.²¹⁷ However he emphasizes that the Evangelist meant spiritual illumination that dispels the darkness of sin and unbelief²¹⁸. John identifies ‘life’ with ‘light’ (1.4;8:12), and ‘light’ contextually refers to Christ (1:9-10).,²¹⁹ For John “life” and “light” are not abstract actions: life raises Lazarus (11:25,43-44); the Light gives light to blind eyes (9:5-7).²²⁰

V5, the light ‘shines’ in the darkness, indicates its history and the present time of the Evangelist. Thus, the light of logos shone in the primal darkness at creation and continued amidst the darkness of fallen mankind; it shone with greater brilliance in the glory of the Incarnate one, as well as *au katelamben includes* the past of the pre-incarnate logos.²²¹ The verb ‘shines’ is in the present form, so most scholar interprets that light shines in the beginning, in the time of incarnation, in the time of His ministry, or in the time of the reader of this text²²². The shining of the light is both an eternal quality and a present reality. Therefore, light and darkness in John have a deeper meaning. Darkness symbolizes evil and opposition to Christ and light for salvation and acceptance of Christ. The light of God that has shone out from the beginning of time into the hearts of mankind has perpetually refused to see and understand.²²³

²¹⁵ Paroschi, 24.

²¹⁶ Paroschi, 54.

²¹⁷ Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 33.

²¹⁸ Bruce, 33.

²¹⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 382.

²²⁰ Keener, 382.

²²¹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 11.

²²² Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 132; Der, G, and Pierre Y, “The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie,” 4.

²²³ Der, G, and Pierre Y, “The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie.”

Koester gave three meanings of the symbol of light while interpreting this text. He connects the meaning of light with God, life, and knowledge²²⁴. Firstly, “According to him, “light manifests the power and presence of God which emanates from the Logos, a term that could designate the creative and sustaining power of God, and the presence of God self.” Secondly, Light manifests the life given to people through God’s Word/Torah. But as per John, life has a physical dimension, but this text emphasizes the theological dimension of live god’s relationship to human beings. Finally, light means knowing God through faith in Christ which is implicit in the Prologue.”²²⁵

Darkness is described as an enemy to light. Light symbolizes God, and darkness symbolizes Devil. Koester interprets darkness as the power and presence of sin and evil. He believes that “In the Gospel of John, sin is human rebellion against God, which is manifested in hostility towards Jesus, the Son of God. Evil is the superhuman power that seeks to thwart God’s will, which is identified with the devil, Satan, the ruler of the world, and the evil one. Since the light means life and the darkness means death in both a physical and theological sense.”²²⁶ Finally, darkness means ignorance and unbelief, which is presented in the Gospel.

6.4.2 Baptist Witness the Light (v6-8)

Text: *There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light so that through him, all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. (v6-8)*

Interpretation: This section compares Jesus and John the Baptist. The mission of John the Baptist is explained as a witness to the light. John the Baptist can be seen in three narrative scenes as an active participant²²⁷. The text emphasizes the difference between Jesus and John.

Regarding this text, some of the reductionist scholar, along with Bultmann, argues that the references to John the Baptist in the Prologue are considered secondary addition because it does not belong to the original poetic him; it is prose.²²⁸ But some argue that it is not the

²²⁴ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 142.

²²⁵ Craig R. Koester, 142.

²²⁶ Craig R. Koester, 144.

²²⁷ Watt, Culpepper, and Schnelle, *The Prologue of the Gospel of John*, 113.

²²⁸ Borgen, “Logos Was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John,” 110.

edited version; rather, the author has *intentionally written about John the Baptist* because ‘it is possible that in the Evangelist’s time there were followers of Baptist who claimed that he was the Light, i.e., the Light of Salvation, the Deliverer of God’s people.’²²⁹ Therefore Evangelists make it clear that the Baptist appearance was in response to a commission from God to be witness to the one and only Light of the World²³⁰. Koester also believed that some people had not adequately distinguished between John the Baptist and Jesus because both were from God and practiced baptism.²³¹ Traditionally, the people of Israel called their prophets, priest, and teachers “light and ” “lamp” because they illumined people with their teaching.²³² Other Jewish teacher applies the symbol of light to prophets' righteousness or other persons, including Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and ultimately the Messiah, Israel, Jerusalem the temple, or God himself.²³³ Thus it was natural for people to assume John the Baptist as the Light of Israel, but the Evangelists distinguished that Jesus is the true light and the Baptist is the witness of the true light. The fourth Evangelist called John the Baptist a “burning and shining lamp” (5:35) rather than light because he witnessed the truth.²³⁴

John the Baptist is first mentioned in 1:6-8 as a man sent by God to witness the light so that *through him all might believe*. In verse 23, he tells the priest and Levites that he is fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40”1-9, “ A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make straight the paths of our God.’ This prophecy declares a coming day when Jerusalem’s iniquity will be pardoned, and God will draw near, revealing his glory and salvation to all people. The messenger is called in Isaiah 40:9 a ‘herald of the good news who is to proclaim to the cities of Jerusalem the coming of God himself to them, “ See your God.” Since John the Baptist is sent from God ‘to bear witness about the light’(1:7), the Evangelist is making the connection between this light and the presence, glory, and salvation of God

²²⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 12.

²³⁰ Beasley-Murray, 12.

²³¹ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 147.

²³² Moses kindled the light of the Law, and Aaron and Deborah enlightened people through instructing them in the God’s Ordinances. People called Samaritans light to the people. Baruch, Ezra, and other scribes were regarded as lamps. Johanan ben Zakkai is remembered as the lamp of Israel and the lamp of the Word for founding the academy for teaching the law after destruction of the Jerusalem. Craig R. Koester, 147.

²³³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 384.

²³⁴ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 148.

promised in Isaiah 40, which is further emphasized with the testimony of John the Baptist,²³⁵ “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

While writing a commentary on John, Augustine said that this “true light is unique, transcendent, it is God himself, who invites us to take part of his life to be blessed because human soul and the world were made by G.”²³⁶ Thus this light is a symbol for Christ who illuminated Augustine believes that light illuminates, and John the Baptist is one of the first to receive this illumination. He believes that John the Baptist can be called light, but an enlightened and illuminated Light that enlightens or illuminates.²³⁷ Therefore it is Jesus who came as a light in this world to illuminate and enlighten all humankind

6.4.3 Rejection and Reception of the Light (V9-13)

Text: *The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NIV)*

InterpretaV9 speaks of ‘the true light, which gives light to everyone. Here symbolically, Jesus is presented as “the true light.” Evangelists called Jesus the true light, but that does not mean John the Baptist was false, but he was of a different order, so Koester clarifies that Baptist witness was intended to draw people to the true source of light in Jesus.²³⁸ The text says that the light that entered the world in Jesus to enlightens everyone (1:9).

The true light ‘Coming into the world is understood as sent by Father to enlighten everyone. The four references to Jesus’ coming into the world in v9, v10, v11, and v14 culminates in v14.

²³⁵ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 42.

²³⁶ Vannier, “Light and Illumination in Augustine. Revisiting an Old Theme,” 4. Light and Illumination in Augustine: Revisiting an Old Theme. http://www.marie-anne-vannier.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Light_and_illumination_in_Augustine.pdf

²³⁷ Vannier, 5.

²³⁸ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 148.

The reference ‘coming into the world in verse 9 applies to the Light and refers to the incarnation and his pre-existence.²³⁹ D.A.Carson, *The Light was in the world as a result of special coming into it*. The Logos-light came to fallen mankind in law, prophecy, and wisdom, in deeds of deliverance, judgment, and mercy, and in sheer, brilliant theophany, but now the Light-logos comes in personal self-disclosure ‘to his own home,’ but his own people did not receive him²⁴⁰. Keener also says that the Father’s mission sent Jesus into the World (3:17;10:36;12:47;17:18); specifically, he was the prophet “coming into the world” (6:4) and came into the world as light (3:19;12:46; 8:12)²⁴¹. The ‘coming’ of the light points not only to his arrival but also to its proximity and accessibility that result from that coming and by which every person has come within reach of the light.²⁴² The verse that he was in the world signifies the presence of the light in the dwelling place of man. Coming of the light...into the world reaches its climax in the incarnation, as mentioned in v14. The first part of the Prologue emphasized the divine presence of the Word as the light of the world now. The shift to the self-identification of the Word with the man Jesus.²⁴³He is the man who enlightens everyone.

According to Jewish tradition, a person who genuinely possessed wisdom and conducted themselves with understanding were considered enlightened (2 Bar 38:1). In other words, enlightenment means to overcome the darkness of sin by bringing people into conformity with the will of God with the hope of future life in God’s endless light.²⁴⁴ For non-Jewish movement from ignorance to knowledge as a process of illumination corresponding to movement from darkness to the true light²⁴⁵, However, Fourth Evangelist speaks of enlightenment as a knowledge of God that transforms people, bringing them into harmony with the word or logos of God that is true life. Yet text also mentions that the enlightenment does not come through

²³⁹ Der, G, and Pierre Y, “The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie,” 2.

²⁴⁰ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 122.

²⁴¹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 395.

²⁴² Der, G, and Pierre Y, “The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie,” 2.

²⁴³ Der, G, and Pierre Y, 2.

²⁴⁴ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 148.

²⁴⁵ Craig R. Koester, 149.

instruction in the law or training in philosophy (as believed by Greek) but through faith in Jesus, in whom God's Word is embodied.²⁴⁶

The Prologue presents the conflict between light and darkness. Jesus is the light of the world. Thus, darkness indicates opposition among the world in general and Jews in particular (11:2). The world created through Jesus, the light of the world (1:3,10), did not know him (1:10) and even became hostile to him.²⁴⁷ This indicates the cosmic conflict between light and darkness. To know the Lord means to come to the knowledge of the light of Jesus, but they rejected light (1:11). Jesus came to his own mean; he came to enlighten Jewish people, his chosen people, God's own treasure as promised in the Torah, but they failed to recognize Jesus as the light of the Word. Consequently, Jewish people did not embrace Jesus, rejected the light of the World, and remained in darkness. Such rejection and opposition to the light are further developed by the Evangelists in the narratives.

However, there were some who positively responded to the Light and received him. To receive Jesus means to believe in him as the Logos, Life, Light, God, or God's agent of salvation²⁴⁸. To believe in Jesus's name is the same as believing in him, or to trust in him, trust in his personality and his work.²⁴⁹ According to Schnakenberg, believing 'in the name of Jesus' is found only in John and 1 John; it implies "acceptance of Jesus to the full extent of his revelation."²⁵⁰ Keener comments that art from John 2:23 'believing in his name' reference appears only in two strategic passage 3:18 and The first appears in the Prologue, and the last reference to faith is in chapter 20:31.²⁵¹ The reference in the Prologue agree with John 20:31 and states that those who accept Jesus or Light and believe in his name become children of God.²⁵² They are also identified as children of light (12:36). The phrase 'children' is typically Johannine vocabulary because he uses the same phrase for the believer in 1 John. (1 Jn.2:1,12,13,18).It is the divine action, not human action, to be children of God. Here, the

²⁴⁶ Craig R. Koester, 149.

²⁴⁷ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 395.

²⁴⁸ Der, G, and Pierre Y, "The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie," 6.

²⁴⁹ Der, G, and Pierre Y, 7.

²⁵⁰ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 12.

²⁵¹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 400.

²⁵² Der, G, and Pierre Y, "The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie," 7.

concept of adoption and regeneration is introduced in 1:13, which is further developed in chapter 3 by the Evangelist. They are a new group who can be called ‘his own people (13:1). According to 1:12, it is Jesus the Logos-authorizing the constitution of a new people or community. Their authority to become children of God emphasizes divine authorization to become what no human effort can accomplish only the revealed from above, or the Light can inaugurate them into the world above. As well as becoming children of light entails receiving the nature and character of Light.

6.4.4 Witness to the glory of the Light v14-18

Interpretation: This text witness the incarnation of the Logos-Light and the testimony of John the Baptist. Though the light symbol is not directly mentioned in this text, C.H Dodd and Keener relate light with glory as in the case of Revelation 18:1 and 21:23.²⁵³ Earlier, I have discussed Jesus as God’s word, Wisdom, and Torah is light to enlighten people of God. The same Word became humans and beings to enlighten the world. Thus, the incarnation of logos is considered the ed as the new Sinai Theophany in verses 14-18²⁵⁴. The guiding images verse 14-18 comes from Exodus 33-34 where God reveals his glory to Moses. In this context, glory alludes to the revelation of God to Moses in Exodus 33-34, which could be pictured as shining. (cf. Ex. 34:29).²⁵⁵ The noun glory is employed symbolically in verse 14 and therefore relates to ‘the light that shines in the darkness.’²⁵⁶ Moses saw incomplete God’s glory (Ex. 33:20-23, Jn 1:18), but the incomplete revelation of grace and truth was complete through Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.²⁵⁷ Therefore Keener also believes that God provided the light for all humanity in the incarnation of Jesus as he did to Israelites at Sinai through the Torah.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 384.

²⁵⁴ Der, G, and Pierre Y, “The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie,” 3.

²⁵⁵ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 412.

²⁵⁶ Der, G, and Pierre Y, “The Metaphor of Light Embedded in the Johannine Prologue, Part 1: The Light before the Incarnation/Die Metafoor van Lig Ingebed in Die Johannese Proloog, Deel 1: Die Lig Voor Die Inkarnasie,” 4.

²⁵⁷ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 417.

²⁵⁸ Keener, 394–95.

Chapter 7

7 Analysis of the Light Passages

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate the literary structure and interpretation of the major narratives related to light symbols. The purpose is to observe the revelation of Jesus as Light of the World. This chapter is divided into three sections: the first section will examine Nicodemus' Narratives (3:1-21), where Nicodemus, the light of Israel, comes to meet the light of the World; thus, Jesus is revealed to Nicodemus as the Son of Man and Son of God who came as Light for the World. Since the first deal with healing with the revelation of Jesus in private, the second part of this chapter deals with the revelation of Jesus in Public, where he declares himself as the “Light of the World” during the feast of the tabernacle. Then the final part will do an analysis of the story of the blind man in connection to light symbolism.

7.2 Symbolic Judgement: Darkness to Light (John3:16-21)

John's Gospel is unique in comparison with other gospels in its theology, presentation, narration, and characters too. The Fourth evangelist has deliberately written stories and characters that are not mentioned in Synoptics gospel, such as Nicodemus, the Samaritan Woman, the Blind man, and Lazarus. These characters and their stories are woven together to present the theology of John. Here I will be dealing with the Nicodemus narrative presented in John 3:1-21 to bring out the meaning of the light symbol presented at the end of the Nicodemus narrative. Though the light symbol is not pronounced or used either by Jesus or by Nicodemus during conversion, the Evangelists reflect whole narratives from the perspective of judgment, pointing to a light symbol that is presented in the prologue.

7.2.1 Text

16For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but

people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly what they have done has been done in the sight of God. (NIV)

7.2.2 Literary structure and overview of the text

To understand the above text John3:16-21, the structure and context must be examined. John chapter 3 is divided into two scenes (3:1-21 and 3.22-30) with vv.31-36 as a concluding summary. In addition, 2.23-25 operates as a bridge passage between chapters 2 and 3, serving as an introduction to the narrative.²⁵⁹ Lee divides the Nicodemus story into three sections. 3.1-2 as the setting of the narrative scene, then 3.3-10 as the First major truth: birth, and the second major truth: faith in the on of Man (3.11-15), 3.16-12 as a choice between light and darkness.²⁶⁰

In this narrative scene, the central character, Nicodemus, is introduced by name and title as a Pharisees and member of the Jewish ruling council. He comes to Jesus at NIGHT and begins the conversation by acknowledging Jesus as a teacher from God (illuminator or enlighten one) and doer of miraculous signs (v2). This indicates that he was also part of the crowd mentioned in 2:23, who believed in Jesus yet were inadequate in faith. Therefore, knowing his intention, Jesus might have directly introduced the image of birth to see the kingdom of God. But Nicodemus misunderstood it. So, Jesus clarifies new birth as born of water and Spirit rather than from the flesh (3.5-8). Still, he had a question about the giver of new life; thus, Jesus begins to set out himself as the “Son of Man” who will be crucified to offer new life (born of Spirit and water) to those who believe (v15). The image of the bronze serpent is an antitype of Jesus’ death (v14): believers gain life through the crucified Son of Man just as the plague-stricken Israelites found life through gazing at the serpent lifted up by Moses. (Nuw 21.4-9)²⁶¹.

To clarifies this symbolic discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus, Evangelist adds commentary (3:16-21), considered a key statement of the gospel because it makes sense of the

²⁵⁹ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 38.

²⁶⁰ Lee, 39.

²⁶¹ Lee, 40.

story which has been told iso for.²⁶² Here he develops faith as the way of coming to the new life which is given through the Son Jesus, who is sent by God in the world. Further, the verdict or judgment is given. Those who believe in Son have eternal life, and those who do not believe in him are condemned. Furthermore, the Evangelist/Narrator connect Jesus with the symbol of light and reflect the whole story from the light symbol perspective. Therefore, I believe this narrative helps us to reflect on the light symbolism.

7.2.3 Interpretation of the text: Darkness to Light (John 3:16-21)

This passage echoes the prologue. The dichotomy is presented in this passage: Acceptance and rejection of Jesus, believer, and unbeliever, saved and condemned, eternal life and eternal perishing, good and evil, truth and wickedness. All this dichotomy is summarized by the light and darkness dualism at the end.

It begins with the ode Nicodemus' to Jesus, which provides a concrete example of the dynamic of belief, unbelief, and misunderstanding presented in the narrative. He recognizes that Jesus is a teacher sent by God because of the signs, but he has no conception that Jesus is someone to be believed in for salvation. Nor is he aware of his own need for salvation to enter the kingdom of God. He struggles to understand the revelation of Jesus, the light of the World. He does not confess faith in Jesus, asks for due process under the laws, and is reluctant to confess Jesus as the Light of the World, Saviour of his life.²⁶³ Bin, in the end, comes forward to bury Jesus (19:39-42). Therefore, Culpepper concludes that his association with Joseph of Arimathea provides evidence for Nicodemus as “secret disciples” who feared the Jews (12.42 cf 9:38).

Even though the light symbol is not presented until verse 18, it is reasonable to consider it in verse 16. Because the Son who is given by the Father in verse 16 is the same light that has come into the world in verse 19.²⁶⁴ Verse 16 mentions that God sent his only begotten Son into this world and Whoever believes in his name has eternal life; whoever does not obey him is condemned. The phrase word “only begotten summon genies’ used in verse 16 reminds the

²⁶² Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 56.

²⁶³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 136.

²⁶⁴ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 58.

Jh. 1.14 and 18 . Putting these pieces together makes sense of the claim that those who believe in him have eternal life, for “in him was life, and that life was the light of men” (1:4). Eternal life exists in the eternal Word through whom all things were created, the unique Son of God sent by the Father.²⁶⁵ As Keener said that salvation is central to aspeJesus'r Jesus' mission,²⁶⁶ his coming into the world in the person of Jesus means that the light of Salvation is now present as promised in the Scriptures. One who believes in him receives eternal life through light, and one who does not is condemned, resulting in judgment (v17-18).

Therefore Keener and Carson argue that judgment appears as a central motif along with salvation.²⁶⁷ Jesus' present mission is not Jud judgment; the world apart from him stands under judgment (3:18-19)²⁶⁸. Thus, the Evangelist presents the verdict in verses 19-21 using the light and darkness dualism. The conflict between light and darkness is presented from the very beginning of John. The light symbol, which has been shining into the darkness since creation (1: 5), has now come into the world (1:9.3in the flesh yet is not received by everyone (1:10-11.3:18)).²⁶⁹ Even Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, fails to recognize the light. So, the evangelist provides a moral explanation for why some people hate light: “people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (3:19). Light symbol represents the presence of; God; thus, people hide from the presence of God because light exposes all evil acts. Jewish also believe that God can judge sins in the present time, but they emphasize that person's works would be publicly exposed in the eschatological time. But Keener argues that John Christology leads to a realized eschatology in which that judgment revelation occurs in the present.²⁷⁰ It does not mean John denies future eschatology; rather, one's future state depends on how one responds to Jesus, the light of the world, in the present.²⁷¹

²⁶⁵ Davis, 59.

²⁶⁶ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 570.

²⁶⁷ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 571; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 206.

²⁶⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 571.

²⁶⁹ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 60.

²⁷⁰ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 572.

²⁷¹ Keener, 572.

7.2.4 Symbolic Narrative: Light symbolism

Lee interpreted Nicodemus' Narrative as a Symbolic narrative structured around the d image of birth, wind, and light.²⁷² The opposite of birth and light image is death and darkness, which is also directedly and indirectly presented in the text. Nicodemus's coming at night is conceived as a symbol of fear and disbelief who meets with the light of the world.²⁷³ Though Lee describes light as an image in this thesis, light is considered a symbol because the image becomes a symbol if it is repeated in the text.²⁷⁴ The image or symbol presented in this narrative captures the central theme of 'initiation into eternal life' as entry into the new order:²⁷⁵ the kingdom of God, which is symbolized by light as the process of giving birth is fraught with pain and struggle, so the narrative of John 3 is concerned with the labor of entering life.²⁷⁶ While looking into the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, the imagery of birth, wind, and lifted serpent is used (3:3-15), but when we look into the summary of the narrative provided by Evangelist on 3:16-21, the light and darkness areas are used deliberately to connect the whole narrative.²⁷⁷ Therefore, Lee also observes that the image of birth dominates in vv.3-10 and disappears in the remaining verse; the life and light symbol comes to the forefront.²⁷⁸ The link between life and light is made in the Prologue (1.4). According to Lee, "the image of light and life are consonant with the image of birth: in physiological terms, to enter life is to move from the darkness of the womb into the light of the visible world. This birthing process is a movement that is beset with pain, danger, and difficulty. The process of receiving life set out in vv16-21 thus originates in the birth image of vv.3-10, which is the primal human experience of illumination."²⁷⁹ Therefore in this text, "Son came into the world" (v16,17) is equivalent to "the Light has come into the World" (v19).

²⁷² Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 48–58.

²⁷³ Grochowski, "Nicodemus. A Disciple Liberated by the Cross of the Christ from the Darkness of Fear and Disbelief," 663.

²⁷⁴ Difference between image, metaphor and symbol is presented in 3.2.

²⁷⁵ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 43.

²⁷⁶ Lee, 43.

²⁷⁷ There has been argument that 3:16-21 is word of Jesus or commentary of Evangelist.

²⁷⁸ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 47.

²⁷⁹ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 47.

7.2.5 Summary

The commentary in 3:16-21 provides a theological explanation of the Nicodemus discourse as well as the entire narrative flow of the Gospel. It tells of God's saving purpose in sending the Son, the Light, into the World. Whoever believes in his name has eternal life; whoever does not obey him is condemned. The divine light symbolism is used to express this concern, trying back to the prologue.²⁸⁰ Respotoi of Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, in other words, the light of Israel meets with the Light of the World in the night. Though some scholars interpret Nicodemus as secret disciples of Jesus by looking into chapter 3 only, According to Grochowski, doing an open royal burial of Jesus with Joseph of Arimathea is a tribute to Jesus as Messiah, Prophet, and His Master.²⁸¹ This is indeed genuine work done for Jesus in light, so he is calla as a genuine disciple. Therefore, Keener also said that "*the probable inclusion between "night" and "darkness" suggests that Nicodemus belonged on God's side. But the belonging was not in effect (3:3) until he believed (3.16) and was not secure until he was preserved as a disciple (19.39-42)*"²⁸² Finally, it is concluded by Keener that Nicodemus is an example which came out of darkness into light (3:2,21), moves from secret discipleship (3:1-2;7:50-52) to true, completed discipleship (3:2,21).²⁸³

7.3 Symbolic Statement: I am the Light of the World

7.3.1 Setting, Structure, and Overview

Setting: This symbolic statement, "I am the Light of the World," is made during the feast of Tabernacles by Jesus. To understand this statement reader must investigate the wider pericope and background behind the feast. The Evangelist records the journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacle (John 7-8). The context of Jesus' saying in 7:10-52 and 8:12-59 is the feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem.

Feast of Tabernacles: The feast of tabernacles was celebrated in memory of God's guidance and blessing provided to Israel when they lived in tents during the wilderness experience at the

²⁸⁰ Davis, "JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN," 57.

²⁸¹ Grochowski, "Nicodemus. A Disciple Liberated by the Cross of the Christ from the Darkness of Fear and Disbelief," 668.

²⁸² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 573.

²⁸³ Keener, 531.

time of the exodus.²⁸⁴ This feast was celebrated with a water ceremony and light ceremony in remembrance of God's provision for them in the wilderness. The feast is celebrated every year in late September or early October to the remembrance of what the Lord has done in the life of the Israelites. But the feasts of Tabernacles were also linked with the salvation God will provide on the last day (Zach 14:6-8). According to Witherington, the feast of Tabernacles or Booth was an autumn harvest festival that was celebrated for eight days. As per the water ritual, every morning, there was a procession down the hill from the temple to the Gihon stream, which supplied the sea of Siloam. Their priest filled the water and carried it back up to the hill, passing through the water gate and returning to the altar.²⁸⁵ Where he poured the water into a funnel that dispersed it into the ground.

“As per the light, every evening, worshippers crowded into the women's court, where four lampstands were erected, each with large arms that supported four bowls of oil with wicks made from the discarded undergarments of the priests. Throughout the night, a young man from the priestly family clambered up ladders to refill the lamps so that the light shone incessantly. Its rays gleamed from the temple's white stone walls and the bronze gate at the end of the courtyard. The radiance emanating from the temple illumined courtyard throughout the city until the first shafts of daylight appeared over the Mount of Olives.”²⁸⁶

Structure & Overview: As per the narrative, Jesus had already performed signs and miracles, so people were waiting for Jesus to come to Jerusalem. Some say he is good; some say he is a deceiver. In such a festive mood and divided community, Jewish authorities decided to arrest Jesus, but he continued to teach in the temple and announced his identity as the light of the world (8:12). Koester believes that this statement is the climax of Jesus revealed as the light of the World because he structures the chapter 7-8 into three sections on the basis of the light theme: Jesus as Teacher one who throws light inconsistency with the law (7:14-24), Jesus as Prophet and Messiah who is promised as the light of the nation (7:25-52) and Jesus unity with God (8:12-30).²⁸⁷ Ch 8:1-11 is missing here because the majority of the scholars do not consider

²⁸⁴ Okpakoega, *The 'I-AM' Sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John and Questions of History: Two Case Studies (John 6 and 8)*, 72.

²⁸⁵ Okpakoega, 73.

²⁸⁶ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 158.

²⁸⁷ Craig R. Koester, 152–57.

Jn 8:1-11 as the flow of the narrative due to its absence in the old Greek manuscript.²⁸⁸ Further removing this passage brings the flow of thought (Water and Light symbolism) in the narrative from chapter 7 till chapter 8, focusing on the rituals of the feast of the tabernacle.

7.3.2 Literary Analysis of the Statement

Köstenberger believes that Evangelists' aim in presenting chapters 7 and 8 is to show how Jesus fulfills the symbolism inherent in this festival and to present thinking about Jesus' identity.²⁸⁹ Richard Hays also demonstrated Jesus as the fulfillment of the temple and of the religious feasts. The rituals of Sukkoth (the festival of Booths or Tabernacles) involved the outpouring of water and the kindling of lights in the temple in symbolic anticipation of the fulfillment of Zechariah's apocalyptic vision (Zech 14:7-8).²⁹⁰ The immediate reference for Jesus' claim to provide living water was the water-drawing ceremony which pointed further back to God's multiple provisions of water in the desert.²⁹¹ In the same way, the immediate reference for Jesus's claim to be the light of the world was the lamp-lightening ceremony which pointed further back to the pillar of fire through which God rescued his people from Egyptian armies and led them through the wilderness.²⁹² Thus following the division made by Koester can help us to throw Christological insight into the light and water symbolism presented in the text.

7.3.2.1 Light of the World: As Teacher (7:14-24)

In the middle of the feast, Jesus began to teach in the temple with confidence and authority like a learned man. Jesus' teaching produced critical amazement and bewilderment among those who heard him in the temple, not astonishment over his knowledge but offense.²⁹³ Therefore, the debate is about *Jesus's authority and the origin of his teaching (7:14-24)*.²⁹⁴ According to the text, he is identified as a teacher in relation to the Law of Moses. But his teaching credibility was questioned. Jesus replied that he had studied with a recognized master-he had received his teaching from God, and he insisted that he was transmitting God's word faithfully (7:16-17).²⁹⁵

²⁸⁸ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 127; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 337.

²⁸⁹ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 91.

²⁹⁰ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 314.

²⁹¹ Davis, "JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN," 64.

²⁹² Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 334; Beasley-Murray, *John*.

²⁹³ Ridderbos, Vriend, and Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 262.

²⁹⁴ Ball, "I Am" in *John's Gospel*, 81.

²⁹⁵ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 153.

His teaching was not for the law but consistent with the law. The law and light imagery convey the same message because biblical canon spoke of the law as the imperishable light God had given to the world so that people could walk in the light of its statutes rather than in the darkness of sin²⁹⁶. According to Jewish tradition, prophets, teachers, and sage could be called “light” or “lamps” in the secondary sense. Jesus' claims to be the Light is different from that light because, in the case of Jesus, teacher and teaching come directly from God, whereas others were from the world.²⁹⁷ Thus, through his teaching and argument, Jesus proves himself as the Light of the world.

7.3.2.2 Light of the World: As Messiah (7:25-52)

A second discourse and the light symbolism cantered around Jesus' identity as Messiah. The debate is about the historical origin of the Messiah. In other words, this discourse is concerned with the origin of Jewish messianic expectations. Within the crowd, some thought the Messiah's origin would be unknown; others said that the Messiah would come from Bethlem, and still, others were looking for the prophet like Moses. Jesus fulfilled none of these expectations since He came from Galilee, but the evangelist understood that Jesus fulfilled all these expectations, and he tried to convey this insight through the narrative and its symbolism.²⁹⁸ The narrative builds towards the climax of verse 37, where Jesus, on the last and greatest day of the festival, stands up and announces in a loud voice, “ Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them (vv37-38). Köstenberger identifies this verse with Isaiah 58.11 cf Isaiah 12.3, which speaks about the salvation and blessing provided by the messiah, symbolically fulfilling the feast of the tabernacle by Jesus.²⁹⁹ Hays identified this verse 7.37-38 and 8.12 together as the fulfillment of the water and light rituals performed in the temple during the tabernacle feast and believed that this has a messianic overtone.³⁰⁰

Koester also argues that Jesus was indeed the Isiah who was expected to be the light of the nations, as well as a prophet like Moses who brought light to the world by giving the law to

²⁹⁶ Craig R. Koester, 153.

²⁹⁷ Craig R. Koester, 153.

²⁹⁸ Craig R. Koester, 153.

²⁹⁹ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 92.

³⁰⁰ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 301.

those who walked in darkness³⁰¹. Further, he says that the title “the light of the world” can relate to the idea that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and the prophet like Moses because, through Jesus, God’s rule spread to all nations; and through Jesus the prophet, the whole world would come to the knowledge of God and will walk in God’s way.³⁰²

7.3.2.3 Light of the World: *Ego Eimi*- (8:12-58, 9:5)

The discourse is the climax of previous discourses. The previous discourses clarify that he is a teacher from God, a prophet like Moses, and Messiah who brings the living water to the people. This debate is focused on Jesus' entity, authority, and existence. The main purpose of this narrative is to prove Jesus' identity as God, the light of the world, who shines from the beginning of creation (Jesus was before Abraham) and will shine in eternity. Those who follow this Light will never walk in the darkness of sin and death but will have the light of life in the present as well as in eternity. The narrative is generated by the claim “ I AM the light of the World” of Jesus.

Background of Ego Eimi: The “I AM” sayings in the Gospel of John focus on the person, the mission, and the identity of Jesus. The phrase “I AM” is used three times in Mark, four times in Luke, five times in Matthew but thirty times in John.³⁰³ Interestingly, *Ego Eimi* occurs five times on the lips of Jesus in chapter eight.³⁰⁴ There are different suggestions regarding the source of what I AM saying, but the cultural setting of the Evangelists might have played a major role. Recent biblical scholars like Morris and Ball suggest Septuagint of the Old Testament as the context or source behind Johannine usage of *ego eimi*.³⁰⁵ The symbols such as bread, water, light, life, way, vine, and truth have a long history and rich soteriological and

³⁰¹ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 156.

³⁰² Craig R. Koester, 157.

³⁰³ Okpakoega, *The 'I-AM' Sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John and Questions of History: Two Case Studies (John 6 and 8)*, 15.

³⁰⁴ Ball, *"I Am" in John's Gospel*, 80.

³⁰⁵ Okpakoega, *The 'I-AM' Sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John and Questions of History: Two Case Studies (John 6 and 8)*. 16

theological meaning in Old Testament.³⁰⁶ Usage of such symbols in John identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of the salvation expected in the Old Testament.³⁰⁷

Literary Structure of Ego Eimi: As per the narrative of chapter 8, the text begins with *ego eimi* (8:12) and ends with *ego eimi* (8:58). The first *ego eimi*, Jesus “claims to be light of the World” connected to the messianic title. His claim develops disputes among Jews; thus, through Jesus' lips, four more *egos eimi*. have been made as per the narratives. The second *ego eimi*(v18) concerns the creditability of Jesus’ testimony and his authority to make such a claim. The third (v24) and fourth (v28) create doubt concerning Jesus’ identity.³⁰⁸ The final *ego, eimi* clarifies their doubt in such a way that Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus, so he had to hide.

Interpretation of the Text: Jesus as the Light of the World, who is from God, from above, and his opponents are from below, from the evil who loves to dwell in darkness.³⁰⁹ Jesus' claim “I am the light of the world” takes the reader back to the prologue where the light of men shines from the creation but now has come down from heaven to earth. According to Koester, implicitly, Jesus introducing the light imagery with “I AM” (*ego eimi*) recalls the name of God.³¹⁰ Though Jesus did not explicitly call himself God, he made a connection with Abraham to claim his origin and authority further when he was challenged by his opponent to validate his witness. He says, “Before Abraham was, I AM. (8:58)” His opponents understand that Jesus makes use of God’s name for himself; thus, opponent attempts to stone Jesus. It is possible that Jesus makes use of the expression found in Isaiah, where God called upon himself, “know and believe me and understand that I AM” (Isaiah 43.10). By using the such expression, Jesus identifies himself as the one in whom God is revealed.³¹¹ The phrase “I AM” is used in an absolute manner without predicate in these verses(8:24,28, 58.). Scholars like Dodd and Brown emphasized that the absolute usage of “Ego Eimi” stands for Yahweh’s claim to be the only God and only savior of Israel as found in Isaiah 43:10³¹². And they also argue the absolute

³⁰⁶ BURZ-TROPPER, Veronika, “Isaiah as a Background of the Metaphorical ‘I Am’ Sayings in John’s Gospel,” 231.

³⁰⁷ Ball, “I Am” in John’s Gospel, 204.

³⁰⁸ Ball, 82.

³⁰⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 738.

³¹⁰ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 156.

³¹¹ Craig R. Koester, 156.

³¹² Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 94; Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 536.

usage of “ I AM” confirms the ‘mystery of Jesus own eternal being, in unity with the Father.’ By using this ego, eimi Jesus identified himself with God.³¹³

As I mentioned above, the festival of the tabernacle, which is also known as *Sukkoth* qualifies the divine character of Jesus' claim- I am the Light of the World. This festival celebration carries on for a week in remembrance of the presence, and the provision of God experienced by Israelites in the wilderness for forty years. When they came out of Egypt, first they encamped at a place called Succoth where they experienced Yahweh’s presence as a pillar of cloud in the day and by night in a pillar of fire “to give them light” (Exod 12:37;13:20-22). They drink water from the rock in the desert. When Jews gather in the temple, they observe the light and water ceremony for a week to remember God’s presence and providence, as well as hope for the eschatological light promised by prophets. According to Hays, by claiming to be the living water and the light of the world during the Feast of Tabernacle, Jesus is taking onto himself the symbolism of the occasion, implicitly claiming both to fulfill and to supplant it according to Zechariah's vision. Further, he claims that the festivals’ burning torches that symbolize the “continuous day” of god’s glorious presence point to Jesus, who is “the true light.....coming into the world (1.9). And the abundant water pinpointed in the festival points to the living water that only Jesus can offer (Zec 14:8).³¹⁴

Moreover, the imagery of light emphasizes the divinity of Jesus. Davis argues that in Jesus, the coming age promised in Isaiah 60:19-22 and Zechariah 14:5-7 was dawning.³¹⁵ The prophet Isaiah assured them that “the Lord will be your everlasting light” (Isa. 60:19-20) and called them to “walk in the light of the Lord (Isa 2:5).³¹⁶ Zechariah 14:5-7 similarly proclaims the coming day when the Lord himself will come to Jerusalem to become king over all the earth. As a sign of his coming, living water will flow forth from Jerusalem, and his light will shine in the evening, ending a day of darkness.³¹⁷ His advent as the light of the world also recalls Isaiah 49:6, where the Servant is called a light to Gentiles. Jesus claims to bring all these Old

³¹³ Okpakoega, *The ‘I-AM’ Sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John and Questions of History: Two Case Studies (John 6 and 8)*, 91.

³¹⁴ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 314.

³¹⁵ Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 67.

³¹⁶ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 158.

³¹⁷

Davis, “JESUS IS LIGHT: THE MEANING OF LIGHT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,” 67.

Testament divine imageries and metaphors into fulfillment. According to Koester, “Jesus was the one in whom the hopes of the festival of Tabernacles were experienced and realized. He was the light that manifested the presence of God and the one in whom the nations of the world would come to know God.”³¹⁸

7.3.2.4 Light of the World: Invitation to follow the Light

I have discussed the structure of symbolism in 2.,4, where Koester argues that ‘the structure of Johannine symbolism structure is twofold. The primary meaning is related to Christ; the secondary meaning is related to discipleship. Thus, he believes that the movement from Christology to discipleship is visible in symbolic images and actions throughout the Gospel.’³¹⁹

The identity of Jesus as the Teacher, Prophet Messiah, is discussed above, which is the primary meaning related to Christology. But as a teacher who brings the light of the law demands listeners to act according to the words of Jesus; as Messiah who came to save must respond to Jesus as savior. Above all, the light symbol combines all titles of Jesus together as unity with God who shines from creation, now demanding the hearer to respond with faith as a follower. The Christological claim “I am the light of the World” demands movement to the discipleship: “Whoever follows me will not walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” (8:12). The one who truly follows him is characterized as the one who continues to abide in Jesus’ word (v31), has been set free by the truth,(vv.31-32), and has a life who will never see death (v51).³²⁰ The call to follow light alludes to the pillar of fire that guides the Israelites in the wilderness. In other words, Jesus is calling people to follow him so that he will guide people from the darkness of sin, death, wickedness, and unbelief to the light of life, faith, and enlightenment. Because Walking in darkness meant acting sinfully, and that walking in the light meant living in accordance with the will of God.³²¹ Getting light of life in Jesus means having the right relationship with God, which begins in faith and continues eternally. Those who walk in the darkness face the prospect of death in sin.

³¹⁸ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 159.

³¹⁹ Craig R. Koester, 13.

³²⁰ Ball, “*I Am*” in *John’s Gospel*, 83–85.

³²¹ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 159.

7.4 Symbolic Action: Opening the Eye of the Blind

John Chapter 9 is considered as best example of symbolic narrative in the Fourth Gospel.³²² Symbolism, irony, metaphors, characterisation, and misunderstanding and other narrative elements are presented in this story thus Painter called it dramatic masterpiece.³²³ Ball makes connection between chapter eight and nine. He links these two chapters (8 and 9) with chapter six. Both narratives have physical signs performed by Jesus showing the validity of his revelation. Jesus claims to be the Light of the World is shown to be valid by the sign which follows in the same way that the feeding of the five thousand was a sign to indicate Jesus identity (cf.6.26,27) Johannine “ I am” function as an integral part of the unfolding narratives.³²⁴ “I am the light of the World, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness” is first presented in 8:12. The first part deal with the identity of Jesus “Self-revelation” and the second part speaks about the mission of Jesus “sign”. The identity of Jesus is elaborated in chapter 8:12-58, and the remaining mission or action of Jesus is narrated by Evangelist in chapter 9. Thus, here I attempt to interpret the opening of the eye of the blind man as symbolic action because this narrative carry on the theme of light symbol with action rather than on discourse, debate and statement only. To do this investigation, mostly I will be using sources from Dorthey Lee³²⁵ and Painter.³²⁶

7.4.1 Overview of the Narrative

This is story of blind man who set in darkness from his birth, physically and spiritually but Jesus healed him from his physical and spiritual blindness. Interestingly the story is set up in such way that it starts with blindness of blindman and ends with Pharisee becoming spiritually blind (v41). Theologically, the themes of blindness and sin are central to the beginning and ending of this passage.³²⁷ As we read the narrative, the blind man is healed by Jesus. He got healed from his physical blindness as well as get enlighten from his spiritual blindness.

³²² Painter, “John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.”

³²³ Painter, 36.

³²⁴ Ball, “I Am” in *John’s Gospel*, 147.

³²⁵ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994.

³²⁶ Painter, “John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.”

³²⁷ Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, 164.

The evangelist does not mention who is this blind man, but after getting physical healing he came back home. His neighbor enquired on his healing, so he witnessed that the man called Jesus put mud on his eyes and commanded him to go and wash at Siloam. He did according to Jesus' command thus got physical healing. This news went on everywhere, so Pharisees called blind man and his parents for the investigation of his healing. After interrogating with blind man Pharisees were divided. Even his parents were afraid of telling the truth because of the expulsion from the Synagogue. But the blind man confesses three times that Jesus, the prophet, send by God healed him. Pharisees did not accept Jesus as Christ rather they threw him out of the synagogue because he accepted Jesus as the Prophet, sent by God. Second time, Jesus met with the Blindman and revealed himself as the Son of Man, thus blindman made his confession and worshipped Jesus. While the former blind man is gradually having his eyes opened to the truth about Jesus, the Pharisees or "the Jews" are becoming more obdurate in their failure to see the truth. At the end of the story Pharisees who sat in judgement on the miracle are judged guilty by Jesus.(39,41).³²⁸

7.4.2 Narrative Structure and Development

Dorothy Lee divided narrative into three Acts with five different stages beginning with the opening of the eye of the blind man and ending with the joyful confession of the blind man and rejection of Pharisees.³²⁹ She divided 9:1-7 as Act 1, 8-34 as Act 2 and 9.35-41 as Act 3. Jones also divided the narrative into three units but with different structure: Healing of the Born blind(9.1-14), community responds to the healing (9.15-34) and Jesus responds to the born blind and the community (9.35-41).³³⁰ There are two major characters in the narratives: the blind man and the Pharisees. John 9 is built with series of interrogations. where the blind man is taken from misunderstanding to understanding in dialogue with Jesus whereas authorities become increasingly alienated. Jesus appears only in the opening and closing sections of the narrative, where, towards the end, it is his presence that brings the narrative to climax both for the man

³²⁸ Brown and Johannes, *The Gospel According to John. I-XII*, 687.

³²⁹ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 162.

³³⁰ Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, 163.

and his opponents.³³¹ The blind man progress from blindness to sight while the Pharisees move in the opposite direction.³³²

Jesus reveals himself as the light of the World while healing the blind man. His revelation and miracles are performed on the Tabernacle feast. During the tabernacle light and water ceremonies were conducted. Each morning of the feast, water was drawn from Silom and taken in procession to the Temple, and each evening's lamps were lit in the Court of the Women to illuminate Jerusalem.³³³ It is in this context that Jesus reveals himself to be the giver of living water (7.37-39) and light of the world (8:12). Hostility towards Jesus arises out of the transferral of the images of Tabernacles to Jesus himself.³³⁴ This narrative has metaphor, images, symbols, allusions, and misunderstandings, all are presented. In the words of Akala such association is called the metaphorical association and the organizational association of symbols.³³⁵

Here is the narrative structure provided by Dorothy Lee.³³⁶

Act 1 Healing and the Question of Judgment (9.1-7)

Scene 1: Jesus and the disciples discuss the question of sin and judgment, introducing the basic polarities of the narrative: blindness/sight, darkness/light, vv. 1-5

Scene 2: Jesus heals the blind man's sight, vv. 6-7

Act 2 Interrogations and Escalating Conflict (9.8-34)

Scene 1: Questioning of the man by his neighbours, vv. 8-12

Scene 2: Questioning of the man by the Pharisees and the beginning of conflict, vv. 13-17

Scene 3: Hostile interrogation of the man's parents by the Jews', vv. 18-23

Scene 4: Hostile interrogation of the man by the Pharisees and rejection of him, vv. 24-34

³³¹ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 162.

³³² Lee, 162.

³³³ Lee, 162.

³³⁴ Lee, 163.

³³⁵ Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, 505:92.

³³⁶ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 165.

Act 3 Illumination of the Man and Judgment on the 'Jews' (9.35-41)

Scene 1: The man is given 'sight' by Jesus, vv. 35-38

Scene 2: Jesus and the Pharisees discuss sin and judgment, using the polarities of blindness/sight, darkness/ light; they are condemned by Jesus and accused of sin, vv. 39-41 .

7.4.3 Symbolic Interpretation of the narrative

Painter and Lee both interpret this narrative as symbolic narrative. Lee believes that a common narratives structure is discernible which revolves around a central symbol within five narrative stages: *Foundational Image or sign, Misunderstanding, Struggle for understanding, Attainment or Rejection of Symbolic Understanding, and Confession of Faith or Statement of Rejection.*³³⁷ She believes that the “sign” in John function as symbol because they reveal identity of Christ and leads readers of the Gospel to a faith response.³³⁸ To interpret the narrative as symbolic either symbol or sign is necessary.

7.4.3.1 Act 1: Opening the Eye of the Blind Man-Stage 1 (vv. 1-7)

This act establishes the foundational sing and symbol of the narrative. Within the Act 1 we can observe two scenes. First scene presents image of Jesus as light of the World (v4-5) and scene 2 narrates the procedure of healing. Jesus anoints his eyes with mixture of clay and spittle and commands him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. Even though the washing in pool was normal procedure, the narrator used the feast of Tabernacle as the specific time reference in the narrative making it noteworthy.³³⁹ During the feast it is the same pool from where water was drawn. Just as Jesus invited worshippers at Tabernacles to come to him and drink so that they might find living water, so now he intends to use the water poured during the festival to bring light to a man born blind.³⁴⁰ To emphasise the water symbolism and Christology, Evangelist makes clear that the meaning of Siloam as “sent.” The narrator wants to connect this water symbol and light symbol with Messiah who was sent from God.³⁴¹ The symbol of light and its supporting symbols such as darkness, blindness, and sight control the whole narrative. This point out and lead the listener to Jesus as the one who gives light to human

³³⁷ Lee, 12.

³³⁸ Lee, 14.

³³⁹ Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, 166.

³⁴⁰ Jones, 166.

³⁴¹ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 172.

being. Therefore, Lee believes that the metaphor in Act 1 gives the reader an implicit sense of the illuminating presence of Jesus throughout the narrative.³⁴²

7.4.3.2 Act 2: Investigation and Dispute -Stage 2-4 (vv. 8-34)

Act 2 begins with the second stage which is called misunderstanding and ends with fourth stage which is described as Attainment or Rejection of Symbolic understanding. In Act 2 of the scene 1 represents the stage of *misunderstanding* where the blindman is being enquired by the neighbor on his healing and his response proves that he understood the healing purely in physiological terms.³⁴³ The blindman has not yet understood the gift of illumination that Jesus claimed in v5 (light of the World).

The news of the healing circulates in community. Thus, the stage 3 begins with the entry of Pharisees in the narrative. Here both the blind man and Pharisee struggle to understand the symbolic meaning of healing. The *struggle for understating* begins in the way the Pharisees raises the question of Jesus' identity in relation to the breaking of the Sabbath³⁴⁴. The blindman describes Jesus as Man while enquire by his neighbor but now he describe Jesus the prophet which proves his struggle for understating. Within the narrative, Pharisees are also struggling to understand who this Jesus is. They did not believe on healing, so they called his parents. But his parents confirmed blindman as their son, once who was blind but now see. Here the Evangelist wants to reemphasize on the identity of Jesus thus he makes comments that blind man parents speaks nothing on identity of Jesus because of fear from Jew. Rather requested Pharisees to re-investigate with his son. This proves that Pharisees struggling *to understand* who this Jesus is and how he can perform such miracle.

Therefore, on the last scene Pharisees called Blindman second time for investigation. This scene begins with the acceptance of healing by the Pharisees so commanded Blind man to give glory to God and narrate Jesus as sinner. But the response of the blind man reveals mature understanding. He begins to debate and defend his faith and healing. Ironically, he begins to teach the Pharisees and to bear witness to Jesus and called them to be disciples of Jesus.³⁴⁵His

³⁴² Lee, 173.

³⁴³ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 173.

³⁴⁴ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 173.

³⁴⁵ Lee, 176.

defends is centered on the identity of Jesus which shows that blind man has move from stage 1 of misunderstanding to stage 4 of symbolic understanding. Because he perceived Jesus as the one “Sent” form God v33.... most probably he might have understood Jesus as the promised Messiah of Isaiah who will open the eye of blind in his coming. This proves that he has attained the symbolic understanding of Jesus. But on the other side, Pharisees rejected Jesus, the light of the World and expelled out the followers of Jesus from the synagogue, including the blind man. (v22,34).³⁴⁶

7.4.3.3 Act 1: Confession of Faith and rejection – Illumination Stage 5 (vv. 35-47)

This act represents the stage of confession or rejection. As per the narrative, both, the blind man and Pharisees makes the statement. For the first time blind man sees Jesus. Jesus revealed himself as Son of Man and invites him to response with faith. Now he sees Jesus not only in literal sense but symbolically he sees Jesus as the light of the world. Thus the man ‘articulate his experience of illumination by making the statement confession of the believing community and committing himself to discipleship (v38).’³⁴⁷ But the other hand, Pharisees symbolically rejected Jesus.

In summary, As per John 9 both sign and symbol function together to reveal and communicate a symbolic meaning of narrative. There are three Act mention in the structure. The First and third Act are the two scene where theme of blindness/sight and the related images of light /darkness appears. The first Acts represents the “*Foundational symbol and sign*” which is the first stage of the narrative and the last Act represent “*Confession of faith of blindman*” which is the fifth stage (35-41).

Here we can observe that between Act 1 and Act 3 significance shift takes place in the experience of the man born blind. The simple healing miracle transformed itself into something different: an illuminating insight into the identity and significance of Jesus.³⁴⁸ According to verse 39 ‘sight’ has now taken on symbolic value rather than the literal sense of the opening scene. Act 2 takes narrative through stage 2(misunderstanding, struggle) to 4(attainment of symbolic understanding). As narratives moves from one stage to another, the literal healing is

³⁴⁶ Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, 175.

³⁴⁷ Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 1994, 179.

³⁴⁸ Lee, 170.

transformed, through the five stages, into an experience of eschatological illumination thus it becomes symbolic narrative.³⁴⁹

7.4.4 Function of Light symbolism in the narrative

Painter proposes three purposes of symbol as per the John 9. Firstly, Evangelist usage of light symbol was intended to attack the root of unbelief. Secondly, they are intended to deal with the problem of unbelief, reminded that all men are blind, in the darkness, including those who imagine that they can see, that they have light.³⁵⁰ Those who do not believe in Jesus are confronted with the symbols by which they interpret their own life. Finally, symbols bring new understanding to those who believe.³⁵¹

Painter argues that the healing of the blind man has become the basis of a symbolic interpretation though the symbolic discourse or monologue are found less in John 9. The evangelist's interpretation of the miracle brings out the universal significance of the sign as a parable or narrative symbol on the theme of spiritual perception. Evangelist also does not present this story just to show the miracle working power of Jesus like in synoptics. Rather this sign relates to the light symbol presented in the narrative. The blind man is unknown, so he represents people who are spiritually blind from the birth. Painter argues that "blindness mentioned in this sign is equated with the darkness of human existence in the world (9:4-5,39-41), and it is evident that all men are blind from the birth and everyman is in the darkness until Jesus gives him light."³⁵² The dualism of light and darkness, which is equated with sight and blindness, symbolizes the dual possibilities of human existence. The Evangelist uses the normal physical sight as a symbol of the life-giving perception of the revelation³⁵³. Painter argues that Johannine symbols deal with the problem of perception-light and sight. According to him symbol refers to the source of life, which is God. Jews thought that the law possessed life and the knowledge of God but the Evangelist present that Jesus is the true light, not the law without him all people are blind. The sight and blindness is linked with the light and darkness.

³⁴⁹ Lee, 70–71.

³⁵⁰ Painter, "John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," 52.

³⁵¹ Painter, 52.

³⁵² Painter, 42.

³⁵³ Painter, 42–43.

Chapter 8

8 Conclusion: Co-relationship between Prologue and the Light symbolism

8.1 Introduction

The prologue describes the identity and function of light, whereas light text reveals the way of functioning. In other words, the Prologue is theoretical parts, and the remaining narratives are the practical implication of ‘who the Logos-Light’ is or ‘Jesus is. The prologue reveals who is light, but the narrative reveals Jesus as the light of the World. The prologue reveals the shining nature of light in the darkness; narratives demonstrate how he gives sight to the blind and enlightenment to the whole world. Jesus’ personal and public ministry is revealed through these light narratives. Therefore, to investigate the co-relationship between the prologue and the remaining light texts; first, my attempt is to clarify the prologue as the part of the gospel written by the same author. Then I will compare the prologue and narratives to observe the flow of light symbols and their significance within narratives. Then in the final, I will relate the Prologue and other texts from a Christological perspective, considering the light symbolism on the mind.

8.2 Prologue: Post-Script or Prelude?

John chapter 1:1-18 is the most studied text of early Christian writings.³⁵⁴ The Johannine Prologue is one of the most important passages in the NT but also one of the most controversial.³⁵⁵ The Johannine Prologue is widely discussed by scholars as an introduction to Johannine theological themes to the Johannine narrative. R.E. Brown says that ‘the prologue is a hymn, a poetic summary of whole theology and narrative of the Gospel, as well as introduction to the majority of the theme.’³⁵⁶ The theological truth revealed in the prologue is

³⁵⁴ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*; Bultman, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*; Watt, Culpepper, and Schnelle, *The Prologue of the Gospel of John*; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*; Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*.

³⁵⁵ Morna D., “John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue,” NTS. 354.

³⁵⁶ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 21.

further defined and narrated through narrative in chapter seven, thus maintaining the relationship between the prologue and the remaining gospel story. Many academic articles and books have been published in recent years discussing the relationship of the prologue to the remainder of the Fourth Gospel.³⁵⁷ But there has been debate among scholars regarding the “prologue as prelude” or “prologue as post-script” added by a redactor. Harnack argues that the prologue was post-script. As well as, there have been two poles among Johannine scholars regarding the source and structure of the prologue. Some say John made use of the hymns borrowed from wisdom tradition; others believe that it is from the Hellenistic background. As per the light symbol, Borgen did an analysis of the prologue considering Jewish traditions as background and concluded the prologue as purely a composition of the Evangelist himself, thus rejecting the hypothesis of sources.³⁵⁸ He argues that the prologue was solemnly composed by the evangelist himself, where elements from different traditions are woven together; therefore, he argued that the Logos was the true Light.

Valentine mentioned that the first eighteen verses provide the key to the right understanding of the entire book³⁵⁹. Similarly, Grill maintained that the themes set forth in the prologue are to be found throughout the rest of the gospel. Scholars argued that John might have used previously existing hymns, but Sanders and Martin suggest that the author has made it an integral and organic part of his own work.³⁶⁰ Eltester also maintains that John 1:1-18 is a single entity.³⁶¹ The above discussion and debate highlight that there is a relationship between the prologue and the remaining narratives.

The aim of this research is to see how the light symbol presented in the prologue is carried on in other narratives to show the relationship between the prologue and the rest of the gospel. Thus I argue that the first eighteen verses of the Johannine Gospel as introduction are used by the author as part of the first edition of his work rather than the work of the ecclesiastical redactor. Valentine also concludes that the prologue is a theological matrix from which the

³⁵⁷ Valentine, “The Johannine Prologue-a Microcosm of the Gospel,” 291.

³⁵⁸ Borgen, “Logos Was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John,” 115–30.

³⁵⁹ Valentine, “The Johannine Prologue-a Microcosm of the Gospel,” 293.

³⁶⁰ Valentine, 293.

³⁶¹ Borgen, “Logos Was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John,” 116.

themes of the Gospel arise.³⁶² I also argue that the Prologue is the theological matrix of Logos-life-light-God.

8.3 Correlation between Prologue and the Light symbolism from Narrative Perspective

8.3.1 The prologue and the Nicodemus Narrative

The Prologue describes the light and darkness dualism from the beginning. The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness could not overcome the light because the Light exists along with the logos, the Lord God, which existed from the beginning. To give the light of life to humankind, the Light came into the world. But the world did not recognize him. He came to his own, but his own did not receive him. But those who believe in him, he gave the right to become children of God.

Above narration is further developed in between the Jesus and Nicodemus discourse. Nicodemus, the teacher of the law from a Pharisee background, came to Jesus at night. He did recognize Jesus as a washer sent by God, but he fails to perceive Jesus as the light of the World in the initial stage. Thus, Jesus had to correct him by saying that he came from God to enlighten the people with the light of life.

Thus, Both the Prologue and the Nicodemus discourse present the light and darkness dualism, acceptance and rejection of Jesus, believer, and unbeliever, saved and condemned, good and evil, truth and goodness. This dualism is centered on Jesus as the light of the word, which was sent by God. The theme of light, eternal life, witness, and judgment can be observed in both texts. Thus I believe that the theme which was introduced in the prologue is further developed in this narrative from the light symbolism perspective.

8.3.2 The prologue and the Symbolic Statement: I am the Light of World (8:12)

The prologue presents the incarnation of Jesus and his presence with glory. Jesus declares himself as the light of the world in the context of the feast of the tabernacle. The majority of scholars describe the “ I am the light of world” claim of Jesus as a metaphor, but I would

³⁶² Valentine, “The Johannine Prologue-a Microcosm of the Gospel,” 293.

rather describe his claim as a Symbolic Statement because of the occurrence of his statement during the feast of the Tabernacle. I have described the background behind his statement in Chapter 7.3. in detail. Jews celebrated Tabernacle Feasts in remembrance of God's presence as a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud in the day while Israelites were in the wilderness. My observation and investigation prove that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacle, where we can experience God's presence and provision. During this feast, people remember Moses, the prophet, who received the law from God and delivered it to people, and guided people into God's way. Therefore, some people even called Jesus the Prophet. But Jesus is more than the prophet; he is sent one from God, the Messiah, the light of the world, the giver of life.

8.3.3 The Prologue and the Symbolic Action (9:1-41)

The prologue introduces the symbol of light, logos, life, darkness, glory, witness, law, etc. and narratives unfolded in a progressive manner. Painter and Lee believe that opening the eye of the blind manifolds the light symbolism. Jesus reveals himself as an illuminator and life-giver to Nicodemus (individual) in a private place, but he reveals himself as the light of the world in a public place (temple) during the feast of the tabernacle. But when we come to the narrative in chapter 9, Jesus is involved personally and publicly. Engages with the blind man as well as with Pharisees and Jews.

8.4 Co-relationship between Prologue and the Light symbolism from a Christological Point of view

The relationship between the Prologue and the light symbolism can be traced from the Christological point of view. The symbol of Light is the title used for Jesus. The Christological title such as logos, Light, and Son of God, is revealed in the Prologue and further developed as the narrative moves.

The main purpose of writing John's Gospel is to present the identity of Jesus, the Christ so that people may believe him as the Son of God and Messiah. In another word, Christology is John's central focus, in the Prologue (1:1-18) and a summary statement (20:30-31).³⁶³ The purpose

³⁶³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 281.

statement of Evangelists illustrates that the main purpose of the Gospel of John is to describe Jesus as the Son of God, the promised Messiah. The evangelist presents both the human and divine nature of Jesus in the gospel. The Light symbol conveys both the humanity and divinity of Jesus.

As Narratives move in the Gospel, Jesus' human identity is revealed as teacher and prophet in the light narratives. People identify Jesus as a teacher and prophet because he speaks on behalf of God and performs miracles like other prophets mentioned in Old Testament.³⁶⁴ But Gospel presents Jesus as the greater than Moses and greater than Abraham who existed from the beginning, thus Jesus is presented as Messiah, the living water and Light. Some called him Messiah, the King who reigns in righteousness. According to Koester, the symbol of Light defines Jesus as teacher, prophet, and Messiah. God's law was a light for the nations and those who instructed people in God's Way brought Light to the world (7:14-24; Isa 51.4). And *Messiah* is light for the nations, bringing Light of justice, peace, and salvation (John 7" 25; Isa 9" 1-7; 42:6). Finally, Jesus revealed himself as oneness with God and Son of God. He is also identified as Son of Man in whom God has shown thus the blind man worshipped him.

The Prologue affirms Jesus' deity, relationship with the Father (1,18), and humanity of Jesus. The Prologue affirms that Jesus is the Logos-Light, who became flesh. He is like the Torah or Wisdom, an agent of creation in the beginning (1:1-3) and is life and Light (1:4-9; 8:12; 9:5;12:35-36. 46). He is the Word, the Son of God who reveals the glory of God. The Word who became flesh. In other words, the Light came into the world and dwelt among people to give the Light of life. The phrase "the word became flesh and dwelt among us" and "we beheld his glory" reminds God's presence and power. Koester invites readers to read this phrase to Jesus as God's presence and power in connection with this phrase because in Jesus one encounters God's glory: God's presence, and God's power.³⁶⁵ This prologue imagery is clearly explained in the tabernacle feast discourse with the use of "I Am". God revealed to Moses at the burning bush as "I Am who I am." Jesus makes use of this formula to present his identity.

³⁶⁴ Koester, *The Word of Life*, 83.

³⁶⁵ Koester, 99.

He claims his pre-existence (before Abraham was, I am). Further, he connects "I Am" to the image of Light.

8.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research attempted to describes the meaning and mystery of light symbol presented in the Gospel of John form the prologue, from the Nicodemus discourse and the Feast of tabernacles. The prologue introduces the symbol of light and further, it is developed in detail by the Evangelist. The light symbol reveals the identity of Jesus as Son of God, the Messiah presented and promised in the Old Testament. The light symbol fulfils the Christological as well as soteriological purpose of John as mentioned in the purpose statement of John. Because light is the Light of the world who enlightens those who believe in him. The light symbol presents the transcendental realities of Jesus, his divine origin and his mission on earth. Jesus as the light symbolizes the presence of God and power of God in this world. Thus, According to John, those who follow light will have life and will experienced God's presence and his power in this life and life in eternity.

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