


The Tenth Hour in John 1:39: From Narrative Detail to Eschatological Symbol

Adam Kubiś

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
adamkubis@kul.pl

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4961-2254>

ABSTRACT: This article offers a comprehensive analysis of the reference to ‘the tenth hour’ in John 1:39, a detail frequently dismissed as minor or incidental. The study identifies three principal interpretative approaches: (1) literary or narrative readings, which view the hour as a marker of eyewitness memory, narrative precision, or structural closure; (2) temporal-pragmatic interpretations, which link the hour to historical chronology, social customs (e.g., hospitality, Sabbath observance), or practical details of the disciples’ encounter with Jesus; and (3) symbolic-theological interpretations, which understand the tenth hour as a signal of eschatological or theological significance. The central argument affirms a dual-layered Johannine narrative strategy: the tenth hour functions both as a literal temporal detail and as a symbolic expression of divine revelation, discipleship, and eschatological fulfilment. Drawing from early Jewish texts – including *Testament of Adam*, *2 Enoch*, and the works of Philo – the article offers a new proposal that situates the tenth hour within broader traditions of visionary ascent, divine encounter, and symbolic numerology. The study concludes that the ‘tenth hour’ is not merely a temporal detail, but a deeply theological marker that inaugurates a new era of divine revelation and discipleship.

KEYWORDS: Gospel of John, John 1:39, tenth hour, Johannine symbolism, vision of God, *2 Enoch*, Targumic tradition, Philo of Alexandria, discipleship

1. Introducing the Exegetical Problem

Time and again, while reflecting on the text of the Gospel of John, I am surprised to discover that some inconspicuous detail, some seemingly innocent point, suddenly reveals its previously hidden meaning. Does the tenth, or the sixteenth hour, mentioned almost in passing, likewise conceal such a deeper, less-than-obvious sense? Would changing the translation from the original ‘tenth’ to the modern ‘four’ or ‘sixteenth’ hour hide the author’s intended meaning associated with the number ten? If Andrew and the other disciple of John the Baptist met Jesus at the tenth hour, what implications does this have for understanding the significance of this encounter? What message does the Evangelist want to convey to the reader by mentioning the specific time of this encounter?

Reviewing even a small number of commentaries on the Gospel of John allows us to see that their authors do not agree on the meaning of the Johannine mention of the tenth hour in 1:39. The reason for this is obvious, as Martinus de Boer soberly noted: ‘there is no explanation of the given time, and the reader is left guessing.’¹ No wonder, as Ernst Haenchen writes, ‘The “tenth hour” has given exegetes trouble.’² In turn, William Hendriksen supposes that ‘[c]ommentators will probably never agree on the meaning of the expression *the tenth hour*.’³ Robert H. Lightfoot remarks almost with resignation that the significance of this information ‘is lost to us.’⁴ Similarly, Christian Dietzfelbinger states that to modern readers ‘the original meaning of the note is no longer accessible to us.’⁵ Yet, these very difficulties and unknowns make the mention of this hour intriguing, and have long provoked the search for explanations.⁶ Some commentators ignore the mention of the tenth hour, thus suggesting its negligible value for understanding the Johannine narrative.⁷ Others justify their lack of comments by regarding this note as marginal or secondary.⁸

Indeed, the Evangelist’s use of the expression ὥς (‘about’) may allow us to suppose that precision in telling the time is not the essence of his message. The Evangelist might only have wanted to point to the afternoon hour, which was not yet evening. Moreover, as Martinus de Boer noted, ‘It is not clear why a punctiliar moment is mentioned in view of the expression τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην that precedes, which indicated an extended period of time.’⁹ In fact, it is difficult to grasp the sense of the whole, namely the information that the two disciples remained with Jesus ‘on this day’, which suggests the whole day, followed by the additional note that there were only two hours left of this day. This double chronological information suggests that there is a specific rationale for the mention of the tenth hour. This intuition is corroborated by the placement of the ordinal δέκατος (‘tenth’) at the end

1 M. de Boer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to John*. I. *Introduction and Commentary on John 1–6* (ICC; London: Clark 2025) 332.

2 E. Haenchen, *John 1. A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 1–6* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1984) 159.

3 W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John* (NTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1953; reprint 2002) I, 104.

4 R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel. A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon 1956) 103.

5 C. Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*. I. *Johannes 1–12* (Züricher Bibelkommentare 4; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 2004) 55 (‘der ursprüngliche Sinn der Notiz ist uns nicht mehr zugänglich’).

6 B. Byrne, *Life Abounding. A Reading of John’s Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2014) 46, note 16 (‘The intriguing time marker [...] has defied explanation’).

7 G.L. Borchert, *John 1–11* (NAC 25A; Nashville, TN: B&H 1996) 141–142; R.A. Whitacre, *John* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series 4; Downers Grove, IL – Leicester: InterVarsity 1999) 69–72; A.T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (BNTC; London: Continuum 2005) 117; J.H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007) 54–61.

8 L. Stachowiak, *Ewangelia według św. Jana. Wstęp, przekład, komentarz* (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu 4; Poznań – Warszawa: Pallottinum 1975) 138 (‘Inne szczegóły są drugorzędne, np. godzina dziesiąta [szesnasta] [Other details are secondary, e.g. the tenth hour (sixteenth)]’).

9 Boer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, 332.

of the account, in an emphatic, climactic position.¹⁰ This fact alone may suggest to the reader the importance of the chronological information, and therefore of the number ten. Moreover, the mention of ‘the tenth hour’ is the first reference to a specific hour in the Gospel of John. This is one of four places in the Johannine Gospel in which the Evangelist refers to an exact hour of the day: 1:39 (tenth hour); 4:6 (sixth hour); 4:52 (seventh hour); and 19:14 (sixth hour). As Rinaldo Fabris notes, in the first two cases the hours describe the time of transformative personal encounters with Jesus, whereas the last two mark decisive salvific moments.¹¹ Thus, is there a deeper theological message behind the expression ‘the tenth hour’?

The difficulties that exegetes encounter while trying to determine the meaning of the mention of the tenth hour hinge on at least two issues. The first one is chronological, the other pragmatic. In the first place, some commentators on the Gospel of John believe that there were two ancient systems of reckoning hours: the first one called Roman or Egyptian, in which the hours of the day were counted from midnight, and the other one termed Jewish or Babylonian, in which the twelve hours of the night were counted from evening (6:00 p.m.) till morning (6:00 a.m.), and the twelve hours of the day from morning (6:00 a.m.) till evening (6:00 p.m.). If the Evangelist had the Roman system in mind, they say, then the tenth hour meant 10:00 a.m. However, if he was following the Jewish reckoning of hours, the tenth hour would refer to 4:00 p.m.¹² Unfortunately, the supposed distinction between these two systems of counting the hours of the day is baseless and unconfirmed in ancient sources. In actuality, there were two systems of setting the beginning of a day (understood as a 24-hour day), but there was only one system of reckoning the hours of the day. The Romans counted the beginning of a civil day (*dies civilis, dies legitimus*) from midnight, but the hours of the day (*dies naturalis, dies verus*) were always counted from sunrise. Even though the Jews counted the beginning of the day from the evening,¹³ the hours

10 T.L. Brodie, *The Gospel according to John. A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993) 160.

11 R. Fabris, *Giovanni. Traduzione e commento. Seconda edizione riveduta e ampliata*, 2 ed. (Commenti biblici; Roma: Borla 2003) 162.

12 The basis for this conviction that John 1:39 refers to 10 p.m. is not entirely clear. See Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, I, 104 (‘the expression “the tenth hour” can mean 4 P.M. or 10 A.M. or even 10 P.M. However, the context makes it quite impossible to think of 10 P.M.’).

13 How the beginning of a day is demarcated in Jewish time is debated as well. However, it seems that a consensus has evolved that ancient Jews treated sunset as the beginning of a new day. See P.J. Heawood, “The Beginning of the Jewish Day,” *JQR* 36/4 (1946) 393–401 (according to Heawood, morning was indicated as the beginning of the Jewish day); S. Zeitlin, “The Beginning of the Jewish Day during the Second Commonwealth,” *JQR* 36/4 (1946) 403–414 (before the Babylonian exile – morning, and after the exile – evening); H.R. Stroes, “Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning? Some Biblical Observations,” *VT* 16 (1966) 460–475 (evening was the beginning of the Jewish day); J.A. McGuire, “Evening or Morning: When Does the Biblical Day Begin?,” *AUSS* 46/2 (2008) 201–214 (preferring ‘evening theory’).

of the day were likewise counted from sunrise. Therefore, in using ‘about the tenth hour,’ the Evangelist must have meant the afternoon hours.¹⁴

The second, pragmatic issue concerns the meaning that the Evangelist wanted to convey to his readers by so precisely specifying the time when Andrew and the unknown disciple followed Jesus. Attempts to clarify this issue have given rise to a whole range of more or less hypothetical interpretations. They can be grouped into three categories: (1) Interpretations referring only to the very presence of the mention of the hour, wherein the specific indication of the tenth hour as the tenth is of only secondary or incidental importance. As Hendriksen states, ‘[t]he really important point in this connection is not, “What is meant by the tenth hour?” but, “Why does the author mention the hour at all?”’¹⁵ (2) Interpretations referring to the temporal significance of the tenth hour, i.e. afternoon, early evening or even evening, in which view the precise indication of the tenth hour is actually crucial. (3) Interpretations referring to the symbolic meaning of the number ten.

This article undertakes an examination of all three categories of interpretation, with particular attention given, where appropriate, to the respective strengths and limitations of each approach. In each instance, representative scholars advocating for a given interpretation will be referenced. The discussion concludes with the presentation of our own interpretative proposal.

2. Interpretations Focusing on the Mention of the Hour Itself

2.1. Narrative Explanations

According to Ernst Haenchen, ‘[t]he temporal designation [...] marks the end of the narrative unit, not the end of the visit’ and describes another day of Jesus’ activity.¹⁶ In a similar vein, Xavier Léon-Dufour suggests that the mention of the tenth hour constitutes a narrative pause, a kind of pause in the plot.¹⁷ Thus the reader can reflect on the meaning and importance of the events described.¹⁸ In turn, Barnabas Lindars states that the mention ‘is simply a narrative device to get the disciples into Jesus’ entourage, so that they are with him when he goes to Galilee’ (1:43).¹⁹ The tenth hour is therefore intended to complement, confirm or emphasise the information that John’s two disciples remained with Jesus that day.

14 For an extensive review of this issue, see A. Kubiś, “Roman versus Jewish Reckoning of Hours in the Gospel of John. An Exegetical Misconception that Refuses to Die,” *BA* 11/2 (2021) 247–280.

15 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, I, 104.

16 Haenchen, *John 1. A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 1–6*, 159 (“The temporal designation [...] marks the end of the narrative unit, not the end of the visit”).

17 X. Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l’Évangile selon Jean. I. Chapitres 1–4* (Parole de Dieu; Paris: Seuil 1988) 190 (‘la notule offre aussi une pause dans le récit’).

18 J. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie. II. Das johanneische Zeitverständnis* (WUNT 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1998) 190–191.

19 B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott 1972) 114.

2.2. Credibility and Earthliness

Hartwig Thyen interprets the mention of the tenth hour as an almost protocol-like note ('nahezu protokollarische Notiz'), functioning as a literary device employed by the Evangelist to enhance the credibility ('Verisimile') of the narrated event.²⁰ In this sense, the reference to the tenth hour serves to underscore the reliability of the account. In a similar vein, Michael Theobald observes: 'What is striking is the role that numbers play overall in the *Zeichenquelle* ('Signs Source'), although this may have served merely to suggest the precision (*Genauigkeit*) of what it narrates.' He further cites other Johannine passages in which such numerical references appear: 2,1.6; 4,6.18.52.54; 5,5; 6,7.9.13.²¹ Frederick Dale Bruner argues that '[t]he prosaic character of the reference (what difference does it make what time it was?) at least gives a certain earthliness, a certain "it happened in time and space" character, to this very modestly described creation of the first Church.'²²

2.3. Eyewitness and Authorship

As a considerable number of commentators assert, this precise temporal designation supports the view that the Evangelist was an eyewitness of the events described (see 4:6.52; 18:28; 19:4; 20:19). As Brooke F. Westcott already noted, 'the mention of the time is one of the small traits which mark St John,' allowing the reader to perceive the Gospel's author as an eyewitness.²³

As a corollary to the above thesis, one may posit an additional hypothesis, namely that the unnamed disciple who remained with Jesus that day was, in fact, the author of the Fourth Gospel.²⁴ Regardless of the question of the Beloved Disciple's authorship of John's Gospel,

²⁰ H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2 ed. (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2015) 128.

²¹ M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet 2009) 181.

²² F.D. Bruner, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2012) 104.

²³ B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John. The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes* (London: Murray 1882) 24; F. Tillmann, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 9 ed. (Die Heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments; Bonn: Hanstein 1916) 56 ('der Pulsschlag persönlicher Erinnerung des Schriftstellers'); J.H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 1928) I, 57; R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Lenski's Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg 1961) 149 ('evidence that he himself wrote this Gospel'); H. van den Bussche, *Giovanni. Commento del Vangelo spirituale*, 3 ed. (Assisi: Cittadella 1974) 139; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John. Revised Edition* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995) 139 ('John's habit of noticing the time of day is one of the small touches that point to an eyewitness [see 4:6, 52; 18:28; 19:14; 20:19]'); S.A. Panimolle, *Lettura pastorale del Vangelo di Giovanni. I. Gv 1–4, 5 ed.* (Lettura pastorale della Bibbia; Bologna: EDB 1999) 174 (as a possibility: 'probabilmente è un indice che l'evangelista fu testimone degli eventi'); G.M. Burge, *John* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2000) 76; C.L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2001) 81 ('a seemingly unmotivated detail that could reflect eyewitness recollection'); A.J. Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2004) 75 ('Clearly, by mentioning the time, the evangelist gives evidence of eyewitness testimony'); Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 104; M. Grilli, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni. Elementi di introduzione e teologia* (Bologna: EDB 2016) 67–68 (as a possibility: 'forse un ricordo personale').

²⁴ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, I, 104; L. Bouyer, *Il quarto Vangelo* (Le idee e la vita 14; Torino: Borla 1964) 80; E. Bosetti, *Vangelo secondo Giovanni (Capitoli 1–11). I segni dell'Amore* (Dabar – Logos – Parola. Lectio divina popolare; Padova: Messaggero di Sant'Antonio 2013) 42.

which is, indeed, a long-debated point within Johannine scholarship, there is one interesting fact associated with the presence of this disciple in the narrative. According to Derek Tovey, 'at every point where the beloved disciple appears [...] the narrative includes items of close detail which suggest "on the spot," eyewitness report.'²⁵ This view is also supported by Richard Bauckham: 'The occasions on which the Beloved Disciple appears in the narrative are marked by observational detail.'²⁶ However, this thesis has been challenged by Andrew Lincoln: '[v]ivid details are part and parcel of an omniscient narrator's perspective in good storytelling and in this narrative are also found at points where the Beloved Disciple does not appear.'²⁷ Indeed, as Bauckham himself notes, the presence of narrative detail does not, in itself, prove that the Gospel's author was an eyewitness. Nevertheless, Tovey's point is more nuanced. As Bauckham explains in defence of Tovey's argument, the Fourth Gospel

portrays the Beloved Disciple as one qualified to give eyewitness reports of the occasions on which he was present. Although there is observational detail in other passages of the Gospel, what is notable is how consistently the appearances of the Beloved Disciple are accompanied by such detail.²⁸

Bauckham continues: 'On the one hand, in many cases the detail is, of course, *significant* detail, with a clear role in the narrative, while, on the other hand, vivid detail is the stock-in-trade of a skilled storyteller, such as the author of this Gospel most certainly was.'²⁹ Bauckham provides the following list of such details: (1) In 1:39, referring to the unnamed disciple (possibly the Beloved Disciple), there is the specific mention of the tenth hour. (2) In 13:26, the Beloved Disciple observes Jesus dipping a morsel of bread and handing it to Judas. (3) In 18:18 – assuming the 'other disciple' mentioned in 18:15–16 is to be identified with the Beloved Disciple – the detail about the fire is 'considerably more vivid'³⁰ than the corresponding element in Mark's parallel account (14:54). (4) In 19:33–35, the Beloved Disciple witnesses that Jesus' legs were not broken, but that his side was pierced, resulting in the outflow of blood and water. (5) In 20:6–8, the Beloved Disciple sees the linen wrappings in the tomb and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head rolled up separately. In the following two instances, the Beloved Disciple is likewise present: (6) in 21:9, the narrative records that Jesus had prepared breakfast; and (7) in 21:11, the precise number of fish is noted.³¹ (8) To Bauckham's list, one may add an additional detail: in 20:4 and 20:8, the Beloved Disciple is described as running ahead of Peter and arriving first at the tomb. Richard Bauckham concludes his argument, '[a]ll the same, these details do help to

25 D. Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 151; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 140.

26 R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2 ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2017) 398.

27 A.T. Lincoln, "The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness," *JSNT* 24/3 (2002) 5.

28 Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 398.

29 Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 399.

30 Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 398.

31 Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 398–399.

give readers the impression that the Gospel portrays the Beloved Disciple as an observant witness of what happened.³²

Naturally, there are sceptical views regarding the thesis presented above.³³ It should be noted that the entire argument linking the mention of the tenth hour with the eyewitness testimony of the Beloved Disciple depends on the identification of the ‘unnamed disciple’ as the Beloved Disciple – an issue that remains a matter of debate within Johannine scholarship.³⁴

2.4. The Unforgettable Hour and Day

The precise designation of the hour of the encounter with Jesus suggests that this event – and the entire day – was truly ‘unforgettable’ for both disciples.³⁵ As Michael Theobald noted, ‘the note – like those in 4:6 and 19:14 – preserves the significance of the encounter: it is the kind of hour one does not forget.’³⁶ As several commentators have noted, this moment left such a lasting impression that it is believed to have remained vivid in the Evangelist’s memory until the end of his life.³⁷

³² Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 399.

³³ G. MacGregor, *The Gospel of John* (MNTC; New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company 1929) 36 (‘it is unlikely that “the Witness” was so early a member of Jesus’ company’).

³⁴ This issue of the identity of the unnamed disciple is discussed in depth by B.F. Neirynck, “The Anonymous Disciple in John 1,” *ETL* 66 (1990) 5–37, reprint in *Evangelica. Gospel Studies – Études d’évangile. Collected Essays. II. 1982–1991* (ed. F. van Segbroeck) (BETL 99; Leuven: Peeters 1991) 617–649; U. Schnelle, “Der ungenannte Jünger in Joh 1:40,” *The Opening of John’s Narrative (John 1:19–2:22). Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings from the Colloquium Ioanneum 2015 in Ephesus* (eds. R.A. Culpepper – J. Frey) (WUNT 385; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2017) 97–117. There is a compelling theory that identifies the Beloved Disciple with the ‘unnamed disciple’ mentioned in John 1:40, based on the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony in the Fourth Gospel. The Beloved Disciple is portrayed as the ideal witness, upon whose testimony the Gospel is founded (John 21:24), while the qualification of a true witness is defined as being with Jesus ‘from the beginning’ (15:27). At both the beginning and end of the narrative, Peter (1:40–42; 21:15–22) and the Beloved Disciple (1:37–40; 21:20–24) are juxtaposed through lexical parallels, notably the verbs ‘follow’ (1:37–38; 21:20) and ‘stay’ (1:38–39; 21:22). Richard Bauckham (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 129) observes, ‘The proximity of the two ends of the *inclusio* of the Beloved Disciple to the two ends of the Petrine *inclusio* functions to indicate that this Gospel’s distinctive contribution derives not from Peter’s testimony but from the Beloved Disciple’s witness.’

³⁵ MacGregor, *The Gospel of John*, 36 (‘the unforgettable moment’); Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, I, 104 (‘That day with Jesus changed his whole life! It made such a deep impression upon him that he never forgot the exact hour when the invitation had been received and the decision to accept it had been taken’); H.N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John. A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 1997) 82 (‘The unforgettable beginning for Jesus’ first followers is precisely dated – down to the hour’); Bosetti, *Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 42 (‘giornata indimenticabile’).

³⁶ Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 181.

³⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament. V. The Fourth Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman 1932) *ad locum* (‘To his latest [sic] day John never forgot the hour when first he met Jesus’); Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 149 (‘That hour shone bright in his memory until his dying day’).

2.5. The Hour of Becoming a Disciple

Numerous commentators interpret the mention of the specific hour as the moment when John, the author of the Gospel, became a disciple of Jesus³⁸ – a moment marking the beginning of his Christian life,³⁹ the start of a new life,⁴⁰ and his spiritual birth.⁴¹ As John Peter Lange states: ‘The first hour of his Christian life was indelibly fixed upon the memory of John, as a great and glorious turning point, as a transition from darkness to light.’⁴²

2.6. The Importance of the Event

The information about the specific hour of the encounter with Jesus – perhaps given even unconsciously and spontaneously by the Evangelist⁴³ – points to the importance of this event in the disciples’ lives. In Pierre Moulin’s opinion, ‘[w]hat happened was so important that they remember all the details.’⁴⁴ According to Hermann Strathmann, the mention of the tenth hour is ‘psychological realism’, because important experiences are inextricably linked to external realities that have no meaning in themselves.⁴⁵ Santi Grasso, looking for a common meaning behind all four indications of specific hours in the Gospel of John (1:39; 4:6, 52; 19:4), notes their common function in emphasising the importance of a given moment.⁴⁶

The intensity of the encounter and the quality of the experience. Udo Schnelle believes that the indication of the time, as well as of the place where the disciples were to stay, emphasises the intensity of their first encounter with Jesus.⁴⁷ According to Jean Zumstein, the mention of the tenth hour implies ‘the quality of the experience’ (*la qualité de cette expérience*) – the disciples meet Jesus.⁴⁸

38 R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John. I. Introduction and Commentary on Chapters 1–4* (New York: Crossroad 1990) 309 (‘It also suggests the importance of the hour for the disciples – the hour in which they enter into fellowship with Jesus’).

39 M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament. II. The Writings of John, the Gospel, the Epistles, the Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1887) 72 (‘the marking of the specific hour of accompanying Jesus as the first hour of his Christian life’).

40 G.R. O’Day, ‘The Gospel of John. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,’ *The New Interpreter’s Bible. General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 1995) 531 (‘a decisive beginning point for the disciples’ new life’).

41 Westcott, *The Gospel according to St John*, 24 (‘He [John] is here looking back upon the date of his own spiritual birth’).

42 J.P. Lange, *The Gospel according to John* (A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. New Testament 3; New York: Scribner 1871) 92.

43 van den Bussche, *Giovanni*, 139–140 (‘importanza che sembra dare incoscientemente e spontaneamente’).

44 P. Dumoulin, *Giovanni. Il vangelo dei segni. Il vangelo dell’ora* (Lettura pastorale della Bibbia; Bologna: EDB 2016) 20 (‘Ciò che è avvenuto era così importante che essi ricordano tutti i dettagli’).

45 H. Strathmann, *Il vangelo secondo Giovanni* (Nuovo Testamento 4; Brescia: Paideia 1973) 92.

46 S. Grasso, *Il Vangelo di Giovanni. Commento esegetico e teologico* (Roma: Città Nuova 2008) 90 (‘sottolineare l’importanza’).

47 U. Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 4 ed. (THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2009) 63 (‘Zeitangabe unterstreichen die Intensität der Begegnung’).

48 J. Zumstein, *L’Évangile selon saint Jean (1–12)* (CNT IVa. Deuxième série; Genève: Labor et Fides 2014) 87.

3. Interpretations Referring to the Temporal Significance of the Tenth Hour

3.1. Passover

Karl Hanhart asserts that the Johannine mention of the tenth hour specifically refers to the day of the calendar year when the disciples encountered Jesus. In his opinion, it took place on Nisan 14. The meeting between the two disciples and Jesus would allude to the celebration of the Passover liturgy by John the Baptist's community in accordance with Old Testament law, on the evening of Nisan 14 (a new day was counted from sunset, thus it was Nisan 15). John's text would reflect the practices of the Quartodecimians described by Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. eccl.* V, 23, 1), who began celebrating the Passover on the evening of Nisan 14.⁴⁹ According to Hanhart, the whole pericope of 1:35–40 would be 'a cryptic reference to the Easter experience' of the community of the Johannine Church.⁵⁰ The Johannine 'about the tenth hour' would indicate the end of a three-day fast and the beginning of the Eucharistic Easter liturgy. Therefore, the Evangelist would contrast 'Jewish Passover' (2:13) with the Christian Passover, the Passover of Jesus, 'the Lamb of God' (1:29, 37), slaughtered on the afternoon of Nisan 14. The chronological references to the first week of Jesus' ministry, described in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, would refer to the chronology of Holy Week: Thursday is Nisan 14 (1:29), Friday is Nisan 15 (1:35), followed by Saturday (1:43), and Easter Sunday (2:1). Thus, the encounter between Andrew and the second disciple and Jesus, and their 'staying' with Jesus, took place on Good Friday, the day of Jesus' death. Moreover, the expression 'about the tenth hour' would exactly reflect the chronology in the Gospel of Mark, in which between the sixth and ninth hour darkness came over the whole land, and after the ninth hour Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last (Mark 15:22–37).⁵¹

Karl Hanhart makes yet another assumption about the meaning of the tenth hour, this time drawing inspiration from the content of the letter of Irenaeus of Lyon (d. 202) cited by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* V, 24,12), speaking about four groups of believers fasting in the Asian Churches before Passover: some fasted one day, others two days, others longer than two days, and still others fasted for 40 hours, day and night. Hanhart presumes that this last, fourth group referred to Christians who fasted from the sixth hour on the morning of Nisan 14 till the sixteenth hour of Nisan 15, which would correspond to the tenth hour in John 1:39. As above, the tenth hour is the hour of Jesus' death/exaltation and as such marks the beginning of the Easter celebration of the Eucharist.⁵² Karl Hanhart argues,

49 K. Hanhart, "About the tenth hour... on Nisan 15 (Jn 1,35–40)," *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, rédaction, théologie* (ed. M. de Jonge) (BETL 44; Leuven: Leuven University Press – Peeters 1987) 335–346.

50 K. Hanhart, "The Structure of John 1:35 – IV:54," *Studies in John. Presented to Professor Dr. J. N. Sevenster on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (NovTSup 24; Leiden: Brill 1970) 28.

51 Hanhart, "About the tenth hour," 338.

52 Hanhart, "About the tenth hour," 340.

[t]o the Johannine community 'about the tenth hour' on Nisan 15 was the hinge of time leading from fasting to rejoicing and from death to life. It was at that time that the celebration of agape and eucharist began and from then on the unknown disciple and Andrew were bidden to abide with Jesus.⁵³

At another place Hanhart adds, 'Jn 1,29–41 refers to Nisan 15 as the day of the crucifixion/exaltation of Jesus.'⁵⁴

The aforementioned proposals have elicited a mix of both favourable reception and decided scepticism from later commentators. Stanisław Mędała, for example, does not exclude this hypothesis.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Rinaldo Fabris argues that the mention of the tenth hour is so discreet (*tanto discreto*) that it does not allow for formulation of hypotheses regarding the religious calendar of the Fourth Gospel.⁵⁶

3.2. Remaining with Jesus Throughout the Day

Many authors believe that the mention of the tenth hour indicates the length of time the disciples spent with Jesus. Robert Kysar speculates that the reference to the tenth hour may have a symbolic meaning. However, 'more likely it simply indicates the fact that they spent some time with their new master.'⁵⁷ According to Gary M. Burge, the mention of the afternoon hour 'signals something of Jesus' intention. This is the end of the day and may refer to the fact that here Jesus has invited them to spend the entire day with him.'⁵⁸ In turn, some commentators suggest that the mention emphasises the disciples' staying with Jesus for the entirety of the short time they had: between 16:00 and dark, there remained only two hours. According to Brendan Byrne, the disciples were 'fascinated with their newly discovered Master and reluctant to leave, [so] the disciples remained with Jesus as long as they could throughout the day right up till when they had to leave so as to be home before dark.'⁵⁹ J. Ramsey Michaels noted that the reference to the tenth hour 'qualifies or even subverts the notice that "they stayed with him that day"'. In Michaels's opinion, '[i]t is possible to read the subversion as deliberate, as if to say, "Yes, they stayed with him that day, but the day was practically over!"'⁶⁰ Hermann Strathmann likewise believes that in the evening the dis-

⁵³ Hanhart, "About the tenth hour," 340–341.

⁵⁴ Hanhart, "About the tenth hour," 345.

⁵⁵ S. Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 1–12. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (Nowy komentarz biblijny. Nowy Testament 4/1; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2010) 326.

⁵⁶ Fabris, *Giovanni*, 162.

⁵⁷ R. Kysar, *John* (ACNT; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg 1986) 39. The same conclusion is reached by Jean-Pierre Lémonon, *Pour lire l'Évangile selon saint Jean* (Paris: Cerf 2020) 95 ('L'indication de l'heure [...] laisse entendre que les deux disciples ont passé un certain temps avec Jésus').

⁵⁸ Burge, *John*, 76.

⁵⁹ Byrne, *Life Abounding*, 46.

⁶⁰ J.R. Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2010) 121. Michaels (*ibidem*, 121, note 15) adds, 'Yet there is no hint that the writer wants to minimize or make light of the disciples' faith [...]. At most it could be argued that he is simply being careful not to overstate his case for the disciples' status as eyewitnesses. Such honesty gains him credibility with his readers.'

ciples returned to their homes in order to – which is obvious – come back to Jesus the next morning, and remained with him forever.⁶¹

3.3. Staying Overnight

The late afternoon hour of the meeting, practically early evening, suggests to some that staying with Jesus that day – so short, because it was limited to two hours – was not the Evangelist's intended emphasis. Charles Kingsley Barrett rightly observes that 'the incident took place at 4 p.m. – not a natural point for the beginning of a day's stay'⁶² of the disciples with Jesus. This difficulty may be solved by proposing that the disciples remained with Jesus throughout the evening hours and through the night. In fact, the tenth hour, a time when many daily activities start to wind down, may indeed suggest that the disciples stayed with Jesus overnight. This suggestion, that the late afternoon tenth hour implies the disciples remained with Jesus overnight, can already be found in commentary by Hugo Grotius (1583–1645): *Eo die inde non discesserunt, ac proinde ibidem pernoctarunt, quia iam serum erat*.⁶³ Some modern commentators have also eagerly followed this interpretation. For instance, Leon Morris expressed this view stating, '[c]oming to Jesus in the late afternoon and then having the kind of conversation that the circumstances indicate almost requires us to understand "spent that day" as "remained overnight"'.⁶⁴ Another contemporary commentator, Colin G. Kruse, believes that the mention of the hour indicates a late time of day, too late for the two disciples to return to their homes. Consequently, both were invited to stay overnight at Jesus' dwelling, with the conversation between them and Jesus probably lasting until late night.⁶⁵ In his recent commentary on the Gospel of John, Martinus de Boer argued similarly that the whole point of introducing the mention of the tenth hour was that 'there was by this time of the day no turning back [...]'. The two new followers of Jesus had passed the point of no return.⁶⁶

The famous hospitality of the ancient, biblical world would even have obligated Jesus to offer accommodation to John's disciples, especially taking into account a late afternoon hour for the beginning of their encounter.⁶⁷ As Craig S. Keener noted: 'This would prob-

⁶¹ Strathmann, *Il vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 92.

⁶² C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John. An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2 ed. (London: SPCK 1978) 181.

⁶³ H. Grotius, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (Groningae: Zuidema 1828) IV, 27.

⁶⁴ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 139. See also G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2 ed. (WBC 36; Waco, TX: Word Books 1999) 26 ('The hour suggests a time of conversation, perhaps even that the disciples stayed overnight with Jesus'); Fabris, *Giovanni*, 162 ('tutta la notte').

⁶⁵ C.G. Kruse, *John. An Introduction and Commentary*, 2 ed. (TNTC 4; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2017) 85.

⁶⁶ Boer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, 332.

⁶⁷ M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon saint Jean*, 5 ed. (Études Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda 1936) 36; C.S. Keener, *Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2003) 470 ('ancient hospitality would have required him to have offered for them to spend the night').

ably be too late in the afternoon to walk a long way home before dark; a hospitable person would invite them to spend the night.⁶⁸

Edgar Bruns, however, refutes this interpretation about the overnight stay of the disciples. In his opinion, if the Evangelist wanted to convey such information, he would have done it explicitly, just as he talks about the night hours in other passages (see John 13:30; 21:3).⁶⁹

3.4. Staying the Next Day, the Sabbath

In his most famous work, *Horae hebraicae et talmudicae*, edited in 1671, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, John Lightfoot (1602–1675) suggested that in asking Jesus about his dwelling, the disciples were asking him also where he intended to keep the Sabbath:

Ποῦ μένεις; Where dwellest thou? The proper and most immediate sense of this is, Where dwellest, or, Where lodgest thou? But I could willingly render it as if it had been said, 'Where dost thou keep thy sabbath?' and from thence conjecture that day was the evening of the sabbath. For whereas it is said, "and they abode with him that day," it would be a little hard to understand it of the day that was now almost gone; and therefore we may suppose it meant of the following day, for it is added, ὥρα ἤν δεκάτη, it was now the tenth hour. It was about the middle of our November when these things fell out in Bethabara, as will easily appear to any one that will be accurate in calculating the times, and that little that was left of that day was then the tenth hour. It was then about sunset, and, as it were, the entrance of a new day: so that it might more properly have been said, "They abode with him that night," rather than that day; only the evangelist seems to point out that they remained with him the next day; which that it was the sabbath I will not so much contend, as (not without some reason) suppose.⁷⁰

Raymond E. Brown (1928–1998), one of the most esteemed Johannine scholars of the 20th century, also suggests that the day the disciples met Jesus was 'a Friday, hence Sabbath eve; thus, the disciples had to stay on with Jesus from 4 p.m. on Friday until Saturday evening when Sabbath was over, for they could not move any distance once Sabbath had begun on Friday evening.'⁷¹ In putting forward his hypothesis, Brown refers to a passage in the Mishnah (*Ketuboth* 1) which states that virgins' weddings were held on Wednesdays. Therefore, the wedding at Cana of Galilee would have taken place on a Wednesday (John 2:1). This assumption allows for a chronological reconstruction of the preceding days: Andrew and the unnamed disciple, described in 1:39, encounter Jesus on Friday. The events depicted in 1:40–42 (including the calling of Peter) take place the following day – that is, from Saturday evening to Sunday inclusive. Then the events of 1:43–50 (the calling of Philip and Nathanael) occur from Sunday evening to Monday. Following in the

68 C.S. Keener, *John* (ZIBBC 2A; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2019) 17.

69 J.E. Bruns, "The Use of Time in the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 13/3 (1967) 286.

70 J. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae. Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon the Gospels, the Acts, some Chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and the First Epistle to the Corinthians. A New Edition by R. Gandell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1859) III, 244–245.

71 R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i-xii). Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1966) 75.

same vein, from Monday evening till Tuesday Jesus is on his way to Cana, where he arrives on Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning.⁷²

Brown's view met with sympathetic reactions from some quarters.⁷³ The interpretations proposed by both Lightfoot and Brown are indeed noteworthy, as they align with the Sabbath theology and creation theology present in John's Gospel. However, Hartwig Thyen, considering the above proposal to be a manifestation of exegetical fantasy ('phantasienvoll'), notes that the only reason for the disciples' remaining with Jesus 'in this highly symbolic scene is Jesus himself, and not the commandment of the Sabbath.'⁷⁴ In a similar vein, Andreas Köstenberger remarks that the reason for the disciples' intention to remain with Jesus was motivated by the nature of their 'desired conversation' with him. Consequently, their day with Jesus could have been any day of the week.⁷⁵

3.5. Conversation with Jesus

Many commentators emphasize the significance of the mention of the hour as drawing the reader's attention to the element of the disciples' ongoing conversation with Jesus. On that day, the disciples engaged in their first encounter and dialogue with him. The specific reference to the tenth hour also 'serves to indicate the length and fruitfulness of the conversation, which went on all the evening.'⁷⁶

3.6. Moment of the Disciples' Staying with Jesus or Leaving Him

Thomas L. Brodie notes that the Greek text of John 1:39, despite the use of the numeral δέκατος in the final, climactic position, does not clearly articulate whether the tenth hour refers to the moment of the disciples' remaining with Jesus or to the assumed moment when the disciples left the place Jesus was staying.⁷⁷ In the first case, the tenth hour suggests the early evening hour, giving a reason for the disciples to remain with Jesus: 'and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.'⁷⁸ In the other case, the disciples remained with Jesus for a short part of that day and then returned to their homes, since

⁷² Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (i-xii), 98

⁷³ R. Teed, *The Gospel of John* (Wheaton, IL: Teed 2010) 20 ('Since Jewish weddings were usually on Wednesdays, it would make this third day [Jn 1:39] the Sabbath. So on this Sabbath Day Jesus began selecting His disciples'); A. Marchadour, *Venite e vedrete. Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni* (Lettura pastorale della Bibbia; Bologna: EDB 2013) 35 (as a possibility); Grilli, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 68.

⁷⁴ Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 128–129.

⁷⁵ Köstenberger, *John*, 76, note 68.

⁷⁶ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John*, I, 309. See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 26 ('time of conversation'); Köstenberger, *John*, 76 ('the disciples stayed overnight because of the nature of the desired conversation').

⁷⁷ Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 160 ('What happened at the tenth hour – did they come or did they leave?').

⁷⁸ This understanding can be found in many contemporary English versions of the Bible which add the word 'for', which does not occur in the Greek version – *English Standard Version* (2016), *The New American Standard Bible* (1977, 1995), *Revised Standard Version* (1952, 1971), *English Revised 1833 Webster Update* (1995).

it was growing dark, because they met him at the late tenth hour.⁷⁹ The second option can also be understood to mean that the disciples met Jesus quite early that day and stayed with him for a long time during the same day, until the tenth hour. This latter understanding of the tenth hour has been preferred by several authors.⁸⁰ Interestingly, the Ethiopic version of John 1:39 renders it: ‘they remained with him that day unto the tenth hour.’⁸¹

3.7. End of Work and Beginning of Rest

George MacGregor recognises the symbolic significance of the tenth hour as a time of fullness and perfection, marking the beginning of the new Christian era. However, in the literal sense it was ‘just the time when men would leave their work. This is the only interpretation of “the tenth hour” admissible in the NT.’⁸² His interpretation has been shared by others. According to Silvano Fausti, it was the fourth hour in the afternoon when the hard work ended and rest began.⁸³

3.8. The Hour of Table Fellowship

The tenth hour was the time of supper, many times the only meal eaten that day (see Luke 17:7–8). Joachim Jeremias, followed by other exegetes, regards the mention of the tenth hour as the hour when ‘Jesus admits the two disciples of John the Baptist to his table fellowship.’⁸⁴ In turn, John McHugh, who reads the entire text of John 1:38–40 as an allusion to the Old Testament images of seeking wisdom and descriptions of its dwelling places, understands taking note of the tenth hour as an allusion to the feast prepared by wisdom (Prov 9:5–6). Just as the first day of Jesus’ public ministry ends with an evening

79 According to B.M. Newman and E.A. Nida, the reference to the tenth hour ‘refers to the time when Jesus invited the two men to visit him, and therefore it is appropriate to introduce it earlier in the verse. Otherwise it could be misunderstood to refer to the time when the two men left Jesus after their visit.’ Consequently, the authors propose the following translation of the entire verse Jn 1:39: “Come and see,” he answered. (It was then about four o’clock in the afternoon.) So they went with him and saw where he lived, and spent the rest of that day with him.’ B.M. Newman – E.A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of John* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies 1980) 43. This translational suggestion was adopted in the *New Living Translation* (1996, 2004, 2007), which renders the verse as follows: ‘It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.’

80 F. Martin – W.M. Wright IV, *The Gospel of John* (CCSS; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2015) 48 (“The two disciples stayed with Jesus all that day, until four in the afternoon”); F.J. Moloney, “The First Days of Jesus and the Role of the Disciples: A Study of John 1:19–51,” *ABR* 65 (2017) 72 (“They spend the day with him, leaving late in the afternoon, “about the tenth hour,” matching our 4 pm”).

81 J. Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament* (London: Mathews and Leigh 1809) I, 752.

82 MacGregor, *The Gospel of John*, 36.

83 S. Fausti, *Rozważaj i głos Ewangelii. Wspólnota czyta Ewangelii według św. Jana* (Kraków: Bratni Zew 2015) 45.

84 J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1977) 45, note 1; J. Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–10* (Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 4/1 – Gütersloher Taschenbücher. Siebenstern 505; Gütersloh – Würzburg: Gütersloher Verlagshaus– Echter 1979) 102 (‘hinreichend Zeit zum gemeinsamen Gespräch und zur Abendmahlzeit’); Boer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, 332 (‘presumably the tenth hour was the time when the final meal of the day was taken’).

meal, Jesus' last day on earth will end with a meal. Just as during the Last Supper Jesus reveals the fullness of his love for his disciples, so for the disciples 'remaining' with Jesus on that evening in 1:39, which brings their first experience of his revelation.⁸⁵

3.9. The Hour of the Lamb Sacrifice

In light of the Mishnah (*Pesah.* 5:1), the evening hour of bringing and slaughtering a lamb – *tāmīd* (תמיד), the daily burnt offering – at the Jerusalem Temple was approximately eighty-three (2:30 p.m.). The lamb was then sacrificed around nine-thirty (3:30 p.m.), meaning that the burnt offering was completed between the ninth and tenth hours. The Johannine reference to the tenth hour may be, according to John Gill, an allusion to the death of Jesus, Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36), an anti-type of the daily Temple sacrifice.⁸⁶ If this interpretation is combined with the timing of the evening meal, it would suggest that Jesus ate supper with his disciples in a context imbued with sacramental meaning, serving as a prefiguration of the Eucharist.⁸⁷ However, other commentators regard this explanation as speculative, or even as a figment of exegetical fantasy.⁸⁸

3.10. Eagerness of Jesus

Thomas Aquinas interprets the mention of the tenth hour in John 1:39 as a reference to Jesus being *studiosus* ('eager', 'zealous', 'keen', 'diligent').

The time is given when he says, it was about the tenth hour. The Evangelist mentions this in order that, considering the literal sense, he might give credit to Christ and the disciples. For the tenth hour is near the end of the day. And this praises Christ who was so eager (*studiosus*) to teach that not even the lateness of the hour induced him to postpone teaching them; but he taught them at the tenth hour. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not let your hands be idle (Eccl 11:6).⁸⁹

Aquinas' interpretation might have been inspired by the image of John the Baptist as described by John Chrysostom in his *Homily 18* on John 1:35–41. Referring to this passage in John's Gospel, Chrysostom comments on the zeal of John the Baptist in the following way:

Now, the tenth hour may seem to someone too late a time of day to be adapted to a discussion of this kind (and I say this, for that was then the time, since 'It was about the tenth hour,' the Evangelist says). Such a man seems to me to be very much in error. In the case of most men, to be sure, and especially those

⁸⁵ J.F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4* (International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; London – New York: Clark 2009) 153.

⁸⁶ Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, I, 752.

⁸⁷ H.H. Huber, *Der Begriff der Offenbarung im Johannes-Evangelium. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Eigenart des vierten Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1934) 49; J. Jeremias, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Eine urchristliche Erklärung für die Gegenwart* (Chemnitz – Leipzig: Müller 1931) 90.

⁸⁸ R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster 1971) 101, note 9 ('Fantastic!'); Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 128 ('phantastisch').

⁸⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John. Chapters 1–21. English Text* (Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas of Aquinas 35 & 36; Green Bay, WI – Steubenville, OH: Aquinas Institute – Emmaus Academic 2018) I, 119.

enslaved to the flesh, probably the time after dining is not very suitable for any serious matters because of the heart's being weighted down by food. But here was a man who partook not even of common food, but spent the evening with as much sobriety as we do the morning, or, rather, with much more (for in our case, whatever of the evening's food is still left within us often distracts our soul with imaginations, but he weighed down his vessel with none of these). And so, it was likely that he might speak about such matters in the late afternoon (*Hom. in Jo.* 18.2).⁹⁰

3.11. Eagerness of the Disciples

In the same homily, John Chrysostom speaks about the zeal of John the Baptist's disciples in the following way:

They did not desert their master, but, rather, desired to learn what Christ had to offer more than he [John the Baptist]. Further, notice that their eagerness was accompanied by reverence. When they had approached Jesus, they did not at once question Him about essential and important matters, and they did not converse with Him publicly, in front of everybody, openly and casually, but they made haste to have a talk with Him in private. They knew that the words of their teacher proceeded not from false modesty, but from truth.⁹¹

A bit further Chrysostom continues:

As I have said before, they wished to say something quietly to Him and to hear something from Him, and thus to learn. Therefore, they did not delay, nor did they say: 'By all means we shall come tomorrow, and we shall listen to you speaking in public', but they proved how eager they were to hear Him by not being deterred even by the time of day. And I say this for, as it happened, it was near sunset, since 'It was about the tenth hour,' the Evangelist said. This was also the reason why Christ did not tell them the appearance of His dwelling, or its location, but drew them on to follow Him by showing that He had accepted them. And for this reason, likewise, He did not say any such thing as: 'It is not a good time now for you to come to my dwelling. Be among my listeners tomorrow if you wish something, but now go home.' On the contrary, He spoke as if to friends and those who had been acquainted with Him for a long time (*Hom. in Jo.* 18.3).⁹²

According to Chrysostom, Jesus rewards the disciples' zeal by not sending them away, but rather accepting them, inviting them to follow him, and speaking to them as if they were friends.

This interpretation may also have inspired Thomas Aquinas, who, in continuing his commentary on John 1:39, gives the same rationale behind the mention of the tenth hour:

The moderation (*temperantia*) of the disciples is also praised, because even at the tenth hour, when men usually have eaten and are less self-possessed for receiving wisdom, they were both self-possessed and prepared (*sobrii et apti*) to hear wisdom and were not hindered because of food or wine. But this is not

⁹⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist. Homilies 1–47* (trans. T.A. Goggin) (FC 33; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press 1957; reprint 2017) 178.

⁹¹ St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist. Homilies 1–47*, 180.

⁹² St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist. Homilies 1–47*, 181–182.

unexpected, for they had been disciples of John, whose drink was water and whose food was the locust and wild honey.⁹³

4. Symbolic Interpretations

4.1. Critics and Advocates of the Symbolic Interpretation, and the Via Media

A significant number of commentators have attributed symbolic value to the mention of the tenth hour in John 1:39. Before examining the arguments in support of this symbolic interpretation, and exploring the various symbolic explanations, it is worth considering several dissenting perspectives. Hartwig Thyen argues that the entire scene of the calling of Jesus' first two disciples is highly symbolic, and that the nearly formal mention of the tenth hour functions as a signal of this symbolic mode. At the same time, he also notes that, in contrast to allegory or metaphor, there exists no hermeneutical key or code by which the symbolic meaning of the tenth hour might be definitively decoded. In other words, while the symbolic character of the passage is apparent, the specific meaning of the symbol remains indeterminate.⁹⁴ In a similar vein, John Lightfoot argued: 'If, as is likely, the notes of time in this gospel sometimes carry a significance beyond their surface meaning, in this case it is lost to us.'⁹⁵ Also Alexandra R. Brown observes that the tenth hour in John 1:39 represents 'a time of no obvious symbolic significance.'⁹⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg, one of the foremost German interpreters of the Gospel of John, likewise concludes: 'The time mentioned (the tenth hour, four in the afternoon) can hardly have a symbolic meaning.'⁹⁷ Jörg Frey, another leading figure in contemporary Johannine scholarship, also rejects the symbolic reading of the tenth hour, describing such interpretations as *wenig überzeugend* ('not very convincing').⁹⁸ Similarly, Michael Theobald maintains that we simply do not know whether the reference to the tenth hour is intended to bear any symbolic significance at all.⁹⁹

One of the most highly regarded English-speaking commentators on the Fourth Gospel, Francis Moloney, argues that 'there is no evidence for symbolic reading,'¹⁰⁰ and therefore the mention of the tenth hour has 'no symbolic value.'¹⁰¹ Similarly, Prosper Grech states

⁹³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John. Chapters 1–21*, I, 119.

⁹⁴ Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 128–129.

⁹⁵ Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 103.

⁹⁶ A.R. Brown, "John 1:35–42. Exegetical Perspective," *Feasting on the Gospels. John. I. Chapters 1–9* (eds. C.A. Jarvis – E.E. Johnson) (A Feasting on the Word Commentary; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2015) 35.

⁹⁷ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John*, I, 309.

⁹⁸ J. Frey, *Vom Ende zum Anfang. Studien zum Johannesevangelium. Kleine Schriften IV* (WUNT 492; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2022) 90. Cf. also Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, II, 189–191.

⁹⁹ Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 181 ('Ob sich damit ein symbolischer Sinn verbindet? [...] wir wissen es nicht').

¹⁰⁰ F.J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1998) 54.

¹⁰¹ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 60.

unequivocally: 'there is no mention of such numerical symbolism in the Gospel.'¹⁰² The esteemed American exegete Leon Morris likewise contends that interpreting John's temporal references symbolically 'seems to be going beyond the evidence and the probabilities. It is preferable to regard this and other such passages as straightforward notes of time.'¹⁰³ A comparable perspective is expressed by yet another respected American biblical scholar, Donald A. Carson. In his view, symbolic interpretations cannot be verified in any meaningful way, as they elude the basic methods of evaluation and critical assessment.¹⁰⁴

Rinaldo Fabris categorically excludes the possibility that the symbolism in question could be derived from the allegorical exegetical methods of Philo of Alexandria. According to Fabris, the use of the adverbial conjunction ὥς ('about') with the tenth hour indicates, in sober and descriptive terms, an approximate time.¹⁰⁵ However, Fabris's objection concerning the use of ὥς is unconvincing. First, the very use of the numeral 'ten' suggests that the Evangelist intended to draw the reader's attention to this specific hour, the tenth, rather than to some generic or vague notion of time. Second, the Evangelist John employs the same phrase ὥρα ἡν ὥς ('it was about the hour') in each of the three instances where he provides a precise time reference (1:39; 4:6; 19:14). Only in 4:52 is the seventh hour mentioned without the adverbial conjunction ὥς. It is possible that the use of ὥς indicates a certain continuity or duration of the event being described. In 1:39, the disciples remain with Jesus; the process of abiding with Jesus (of faith, of discipleship) is initiated but not concluded. In 4:6, the conversation with the Samaritan woman likewise unfolds over a period of time. In 19:14, Jesus' trial before Pilate also spans a certain temporal duration and is not a momentary event. By contrast, in 4:52 the fever leaves the official's son immediately – this is a punctiliar, instantaneous event.

On the other side of the debate are many exegetes who indeed discern, or at least allow for, symbolic meaning in John's specific reference to the tenth hour. Ulrich Wilckens, for example, judges the mention of the tenth hour a chronological note that is, without doubt, symbolic.¹⁰⁶ Antoni Paciorek states: 'Most probably, the reference has a symbolic character.'¹⁰⁷ A similarly affirmative appraisal of the symbolic interpretation can be found in one of the leading Polish commentaries on the Gospel of John: 'In general, not only patristic exegesis but also contemporary scholarship tends to find symbolic meaning in the number ten.'¹⁰⁸

102 P. Grech, "Una giornata presso Gesù: l'orario giovanneo," *StPat* 50/3 (2003) 780 ('non si trova nessun cenno a un tale simbolismo numerico nel Vangelo').

103 Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 138.

104 D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 1990) 157 ('Symbolic interpretations [...] lack rudimentary controls').

105 Fabris, *Giovanni* 162, note 12 ('La sobria indicazione di Gv 1,39 «era circa l'ora decima», esclude ogni speculazione sul valore simbolico del numero «dieci» secondo il modello dell'esegesi allegorica di Filone').

106 U. Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 18 ed. (NTD 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2000) 47.

107 A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według św. Jana. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz* (Biblia Lubelska; Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego 2000) 67. In the same vein, Salvatore A. Panimolle (*Lettura pastorale*, 174) argues: 'potrebbe [...] avere anche un significato simbolico'.

108 Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 1–12*, 326.

Commentators on the Gospel of John often present both literal and symbolic approaches to interpretation, but typically prioritising one over the other, or showing greater sympathy toward a particular reading. One illustrative example of such a dual approach is provided by Adam Sikora in his commentary on the tenth hour in John 1:39. He writes:

Exegetes of the patristic period, as well as many contemporary commentators, interpret it symbolically – as a perfect number pointing to the ‘hour of fulfillments,’ the moment of definitively finding the Messiah. Without denying the validity of such an interpretation, it seems that the primary emphasis here is on highlighting the actual time – ‘the hour’ – from which the disciples’ association with Jesus began.¹⁰⁹

An alternative approach, however, is also worth considering. Given the two-layered character of the Gospel itself – where literal and symbolic (or spiritual) levels of meaning often coexist within the same text – it may be assumed that both meanings were intended by the Evangelist. Accordingly, the reader or audience is not required to choose between them, but may instead appreciate the theological richness offered by their interplay.

4.2. Arguments Supporting a Symbolic Interpretation

While acknowledging the legitimacy of the objections outlined above, there remain several reasons why the symbolic reading of the tenth hour in John 1:39 should still be taken seriously. Taken together, these form a persuasive case suggesting, at minimum, the plausibility of a symbolic dimension to this temporal reference.

4.2.1. Patristic and Contemporary Tradition

Symbolic interpretations of temporal references in the Fourth Gospel have a long tradition, reaching back to the patristic era. In conducting biblical scholarship in the spirit of rigorous exegesis – which includes attention to the history of interpretation and reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*, *histoire de la réception*) – such a longstanding interpretative tradition ought neither to be ignored nor dismissed.

4.2.2. The Symbolic Character of the Fourth Gospel

Justification for a symbolic reading of the hour might be sought in the symbolic character of the Gospel itself. Already in antiquity, the Fourth Gospel was described as ‘spiritual’ – a characterisation attributed to Clement of Alexandria (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7). The symbolic nature of John has been thoroughly studied in contemporary exegesis and is rarely called into question.¹¹⁰

109 A.R. Sikora, “Zobaczyl i uwierzył” (J 20,8). *Droga wiary umiłowanego ucznia Jezusa w ujęciu egzegezy teologicznej* (Studia i Materiały – Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Wydział Teologiczny 120; Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu 2012) 32–33.

110 M.F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel. The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1960) 22–40 (chapter ‘Historicity and Symbolism’); G. Stemberger, *La symbolique du bien et du mal selon Saint Jean* (Parole de Dieu 5; Paris: Seuil 1970); J. Mateos – J. Barreto, *El Evangelio de Juan. Análisis lingüístico y comentario exegético*, 2 ed. (Lectura del Nuevo Testamento 4; Madrid: Cristiandad 1982);

4.2.3. Symbolic Context of John 1:39

Hartwig Thyen argues that the entire scene of the calling of Jesus' first two disciples is highly symbolic ('hochsymbolischen Szene').¹¹¹ For this reason, the mention of the tenth hour within this narrative may also carry symbolic meaning. A symbolic context invites symbolic readings of its constituent narrative elements. Thyen earlier observed that it is the mention of the tenth hour that signals the symbolic mode of the entire scene ('deren symbolischen Modus signalisiert').¹¹² Thus, in his view, the tenth hour is what renders the scene symbolic. This may seem circular: the hour is symbolic because the scene is symbolic, and the scene is symbolic because it includes a symbolic hour. However, as we will argue below, additional considerations support viewing the entire passage as symbolically charged. Hence, a symbolic context may encourage the symbolic reading of a particular narrative detail.

William C. Weinrich argues that the reference to the tenth hour may not, in isolation, carry symbolic weight. However, its placement in a theologically dense context in 1:39 – marked by key terms such as ἔλθαν ('they went'), εἶδαν ('they saw'), τοῦ μένει ('where he stays'), and ἡμέρα ('day') – suggests otherwise.¹¹³ The verb μένω ('to remain') appears three times in 1:38–39. Weinrich concludes: 'It is doubtful, then, that "the tenth hour" is without symbolic meaning.'¹¹⁴ Martinus C. de Boer, however, offers a critique, denying a theological use of μένω in this passage, arguing that it lacks the theological depth seen when the verb is paired with the preposition ἐν ('in'), as in 'abide in' Jesus:

Many interpreters would also attribute a deeper meaning to the verb μένω ("stay"), which occurs three times in 1:38–39. There are another thirty-seven instances in GJohn, often with a deeper theological meaning ("abide"). In most of those cases, however, the verb is accompanied by the preposition ἐν ("in"), e. g., to "abide in" Jesus or his word (cf. 5:38; 6:56; 15:4–6, 10). But that is not the case in 1:38–39. Two instances concern Jesus himself staying (lodging) somewhere in an evidently mundane way (for similar usage, cf. 2:12; 11:6). The third instance, which concerns Andrew and his companion "staying with (σύν)" (rather than "in") Jesus, has a temporal limitation ("that day"), and that is unlike the notion of "abiding in" elsewhere in GJohn, where the idea is ongoing union between the believer and Christ.¹¹⁵

P. Diel – J. Solotareff, *Le symbolisme dans l'évangile de Jean* (Petite Bibliothèque Payot 200; Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages 1983); D.A. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel. The Interplay of Form and Meaning* (JSNTSup 95; Sheffield: JSOT 1994); C.R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel. Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2 ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2003); R.A. Culpepper, "Symbolism and History in John's Account of Jesus' Death," *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (eds. T. Thatcher – S.D. Moore) (Society of Biblical Literature, Resources for Biblical Study 55; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2008) 39–54; E.W. Mburu, *Qumran and the Origins of Johannine Language and Symbolism* (Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies 8; London: Clark 2010); J.G. van der Watt, "Symbolism in John's Gospel. An Evaluation of Dodd's Contribution," *Engaging with C.H. Dodd on the Gospel of John. Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation* (eds. T. Thatcher – C.H. Williams) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013) 66–85.

¹¹¹ Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 129.

¹¹² Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 128.

¹¹³ W.C. Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1* (ConcC; Saint Louis, MO: Concordia 2015) 259.

¹¹⁴ Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 259.

¹¹⁵ M.C. de Boer, "Andrew. The First Link in the Chain," *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel. Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (eds. S.A. Hunt – D.F. Tolmie – R. Zimmermann) (Grand Rapids, MI:

For accuracy, it must be noted that the preposition used in 1:39 is *παρά*, not *σύν*. De Boer's critique does not consider the redactional development of the Gospel. Consequently, the theological use of a term elsewhere in John invites the reader to consider its theological significance when it appears again, even if the immediate context differs.

4.2.4. The Gospel's Dual-Layered Text

One must consider the dual-layered nature of the Johannine text, in which literal and symbolic interpretations are not mutually exclusive. A compelling example is found in Thomas Aquinas' commentary: he first offers two literal readings of the tenth hour – as a sign of Jesus' zeal in teaching and of the disciples' eagerness to listen, based on its being a late afternoon hour. He then presents a third, symbolic interpretation drawn from Augustine.¹¹⁶ A similar pattern is seen in Hartwig Thyen, who views the tenth hour as a narrative device that lends verisimilitude, while simultaneously acknowledging its symbolic dimension.¹¹⁷ John's Gospel invites this dual approach: it is to be read both literally and spiritually (i.e., symbolically). For example, when Jesus speaks of his 'lifting up' (3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34), he refers both to his physical crucifixion and to the revelation of his glory, victory over the ruler of this world, the arrival of his hour, his enthronement, and his messianic marriage with his people. The tenth hour, in the same way, need not be understood in a one-dimensional fashion. Literal and symbolic readings are not exclusive alternatives, but can be mutually enriching.¹¹⁸

4.2.5. The Function of 'that day' (John 1:39)

Thomas L. Brodie argues that the phrase 'that day', which immediately precedes the mention of the tenth hour, undermines the function of the reference as a precise time of day. He writes:

The phrase ('that day') which precedes the references to the tenth hour is such that it subverts its possible function as a reference to a particular hour of the day. The implication is that that is not its function. To insist that it is means implying that the Evangelist could not tell the time of day. [...] the reference is primarily symbolic.¹¹⁹

4.2.6. Narrative Excess and Symbolic Mode

In a similar vein, Hartwig Thyen considers the chronological note of the tenth hour – especially following the phrase 'that day' – as something superfluous. Such narrative excess, or

Eerdmans 2016) 141, note 27.

¹¹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John. Chapters 1–21*, I, 119.

¹¹⁷ Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 127–129.

¹¹⁸ R. Infante, *Giovanni. Introduzione, traduzione e commento* (Nuova versione della Bibbia dai testi antichi 40; Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo 2015) 68 ('Risulta difficile dire se le indicazioni dell'ora di alcuni eventi (cfr. 4,6) abbiano un significato simbolico o puramente cronologico. Le due possibilità, come è evidente in 19,14, non si autoescludono').

¹¹⁹ Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 160.

what Umberto Eco terms a ‘waste of words’ (*Wortverschwendung*), serves as a narratological signal that the narrative has entered a symbolic mode (*symbolischen Modus*).¹²⁰

4.2.7. Narrative Redundancy as a Criterion of Symbolism

The detail of the tenth hour serves no clear narrative purpose, nor would its removal disrupt the narrative logic. This fact corresponds to one criterion for detecting symbolic meaning in a text.¹²¹ Juan Leal proposes four such criteria for identifying symbolic and historical meaning in narrative: (1) the presence of seemingly irrelevant details, (2) discourse embedded in a narrative in such a way that both illuminate each other, (3) emphasis on a figure who otherwise plays no significant role in the context, and (4) the use of later liturgical or Christian expressions.¹²² The reference to the tenth hour in John 1:39 fulfils the first of these criteria.

4.2.8. The Broader Symbolism of ‘hour’ in John

In support of a symbolic meaning for the tenth hour, Brodie points to the clearly symbolic use of the term ‘hour’ elsewhere in the Gospel, particularly in 13:1 and 17:1.¹²³ In the same vein, Ramsey J. Michaels noted, ‘Yet while “tenth” is not symbolic, “hour” may very well be, for Jesus will soon begin to speak of another decisive “hour” (2:4).’¹²⁴ In fact, symbolic references to the hour appear as early as 2:4 and 4:23, where the hour is said to be both coming and already present – a reference to the saving work of Jesus (cf. 5:25; 12:23, 27). Bernadeta Jojko argued:

There is only one ‘hour’ of Jesus, in the fullest theological sense of the word, which sums up all other temporal terminologies by looking towards the supreme act of Jesus’ self-revelation on the cross. It is the hour of fulfillment; his hour par excellence: the hour of his exaltation on the cross when he fulfills all the prophesies of the Scriptures and accomplishes the salvation of the world.¹²⁵

4.2.9. Symbolism of Other Time References in John

Edgar Burns has argued that virtually all four of the Johannine time references (1:39; 4:6; 4:52; 19:14) carry symbolic significance.¹²⁶ The symbolic value of the sixth hour in John 4:6

¹²⁰ Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 127.

¹²¹ M.L. Coloe, *John 1–10* (Wisdom Commentary 44A; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2021) 49 (‘The time detail, which seems to have no other purpose in the narrative, is one indicator to the reader that the evangelist may be working with symbolism; that is, the meaning of this detail is to be found beyond the narrative’).

¹²² J. Leal, ‘El simbolismo histórico del IV Evangelio,’ *EstBib* 19/4 (1960) 344–346. The above summary of Leal’s view after Coloe, *John 1–10*, 49.

¹²³ Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 160.

¹²⁴ Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 121.

¹²⁵ B. Jojko, ‘The Hour of Jesus and the Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1–11),’ *IV* 38/1 (2020) 144. See also P.J. Creevey, ‘God’s δικαιοσύνη and Jesus’ ‘Hour’ in John’s Gospel. Divine Love in Action,’ *Bib* 104/1 (2023) 93–109; S.C. Amador, *The Hour of Justification in the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT II/622; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2025).

¹²⁶ Burns, ‘The Use of Time in the Fourth Gospel,’ 285–290.

and 19:14 has already been noted by several scholars, and their arguments appear compelling to a certain degree.¹²⁷ Interestingly enough, *Codex Alexandrinus* (5th c.) changes δεκάτη ('tenth') into ἑκτα ('sixth') in John 1:39. The symbolic import of the seventh hour in 4:52 is less obvious, but Burns explains:

The 'seventh hour' of iv. 52 would, merely as seventh, appeal to this evangelist who selects only seven miracles for his gospel and otherwise shows himself disposed to make use of this number. Moreover it may be that the seventh hour is noted here because it was believed to be the hour of crisis in an illness, or because seven, the perfect number, is appropriate for a miracle of healing. But perhaps we may go beyond these significations to see in the first hour after noon the beginning of a decline, a decline which progresses until it reaches its climax at xiii. 30.¹²⁸

If three of the four explicit time references in John are plausibly symbolic, it is difficult to regard the fourth (1:39) as purely literal.

4.2.10. The Symbolism of the Number Ten

The number ten itself may point to symbolic significance, as it (1) carries considerable weight in the Old Testament, and (2) was regarded as a perfect number in Pythagorean philosophy and by Philo of Alexandria.¹²⁹ In the Old Testament, one finds ten patriarchs from Adam to Noah (Gen 5), Abraham's negotiation over ten righteous men (Gen 18:32), the tithe (Gen 28:22), the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:2–17; Deut 5:6–21), the ten plagues of Egypt (Exod 7–11), ten curtains of the Tabernacle (Exod 26:1), ten tests in the wilderness (Num 14:22), ten basins in Solomon's temple (2 Chr 4:6), ten lampstands (4:7), ten tables (4:8), the ten servants of Gideon (Judg 6:27), and the ten elders summoned by Boaz (Ruth 4:2). In the New Testament, ten appears in parables of Jesus: ten virgins (Matt 25:1), ten coins (Luke 15:8), ten talents (Matt 25:28), and ten servants who receive ten minas (Luke 19:13). In Rev 2:10, ten designates a period of tribulation.

Given the prominence of the number ten in both Scripture and Hellenistic thought, it is unsurprising that Origen comments on the tenth hour in John 1:39 in the following way:

Now it was reserved for those who asked where Jesus was staying, who followed the teacher, and saw, to remain with Jesus and to spend that day with the Son of God. And since the tenth number has been observed to be holy, no few mysteries being recorded to have occurred in the number ten, we must think that it is not without reason that in the gospel too the tenth hour is recorded as the time when John's disciples went down with Jesus. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these. After

¹²⁷ For an extensive study of the sixth hour in Jn see S. Witetschek, "Die Stunde des Lammes? Christologie und Chronologie in Joh 19,14," *ETL* 87/1 (2011) 127–187; S. Witetschek, "The Hour of the Lamb? Some Remarks on John 19,14 and the Hour of Jesus's Condemnation and/or Crucifixion," *Jesus, John, and History. III. Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens* (eds. P.N. Anderson – F. Just – T. Thatcher) (ECL 18; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2016) 95–107.

¹²⁸ Burns, "The Use of Time in the Fourth Gospel," 288.

¹²⁹ This argument is invoked by Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i-xii)*, 75. This exegete, one of the foremost authorities in modern Johannine studies, does not explicitly advocate any symbolic interpretation of the tenth hour in John 1:39.

he had been benefitted because he remained with Jesus, he found his own brother Simon (for perhaps he had not found him before) and says that he has found the Messiah, which is, translated, 'Christ' (*Comm. in Jo.* 2.220).¹³⁰

Origen does not specify what deeper meaning he believed the Evangelist intended in referencing the tenth hour, leaving that question open to the reader's discernment. His commentary on John 1:39 has not survived.

4.3. Examples of the Symbolic Interpretation of the Tenth Hour

The following section presents various symbolic interpretations of the tenth hour in John 1:39. We will begin with those attested in patristic literature and then proceed to contemporary explanations.

4.3.1. The Torah and the Decalogue

According to Augustine, the tenth hour in John 1:39 symbolises the Torah, as the Torah contains the Ten Commandments. The Bishop of Hippo writes:

Do we reckon that the evangelist had no reason to tell us what the time was? Can it be that he did not want us to notice anything, to ask ourselves what it might mean? It was the tenth hour. This number stands for the law, because the law was given in ten commandments. But the time had come for the law to be fulfilled through love, seeing that the Jews were unable to fulfill it through fear. That is why the Lord says, I have not come to undo the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17). So it was entirely suitable that it was the tenth hour when these two followed him, on hearing the testimony of the bridegroom's friend, and that it was the tenth hour when he heard "rabbi," which is translated "teacher." If the Lord heard "rabbi" at the tenth hour, and the number ten belongs to the law, the master of the law is nobody else but the law-giver. Let nobody say that one gave the law, and someone else teaches the law; the one who gave it teaches it; he is the master of his own law and teaches it. Mercy is on his tongue, and that is why he teaches the law mercifully, as it says about Wisdom, She carries the law and mercy on her tongue (Pr 31:26). Do not be afraid that you are unable to keep the law, take refuge in mercy. If keeping the law is too much for you, make use of that agreement, make use of that signed document, make use of the prayers which the heavenly jurist has set out and composed for you.¹³¹

Augustine's interpretation is adopted by Bede the Venerable (*In sanctum Johannem evangelistam expositio* 1,39, PL 92, 652), who wrote: *Ex lege veniebant ad Evangelium, ad fidem Christi mittebat illos legis Decalogus* ('From the Law they came to the Gospel; the Decalogue of the Law sent them to faith in Christ'). The same explanation was also embraced by Thomas Aquinas, who states:

¹³⁰ Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John. Books 1–10* (trans. R.E. Heine) (FC 80; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press 1989) 154.

¹³¹ Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40* (trans. E. Hill) (Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century III/12; Hyde Park, NY: New City Press 2009) 153–154.

According to Augustine, however, the tenth hour signifies the law, which was given in ten precepts. And so the disciples came to Christ at the tenth hour and remained with him to be taught so that the law might be fulfilled by Christ, since it could not be fulfilled by the Jews. And so at that hour he is called Rabbi, that is, Teacher.¹³²

This interpretation of the tenth hour, based on the ten words of the Decalogue, is echoed by some contemporary commentators, who consider it a plausible symbolic explanation.¹³³

4.3.2. Lateness of Christ's Coming

For Cyril of Alexandria the tenth hour in John 1:39 is 'a symbol of the lateness of Christ's coming.'¹³⁴ In all probability, he was alluding to the idea that the twelve hours of the day reflect twelve ages of human history, or the world's history. Cyril comments:

When it says, "It was about the tenth hour," on this very point we make an application that is beneficial and appropriate to everyone. We say that the one who compiles the divine sayings subtly teaches us again that the great mystery of our Savior was not made known at the beginning of the present age but now, as the time draws to a close. As it is written, in the last days, we are all shown to be "taught by God" [Is 54:13]. Take as another image of what I am saying about the tenth hour the disciples who are at the Savior's side. The Evangelist says that once they stayed with him, they clung to him so that those who enter God's house by faith and run to Christ may learn that they must remain with him and not desire to be estranged again either by departing to sin or by rushing back to unbelief.¹³⁵

It is worth noting that while commenting on John 7:30, Cyril gives a long excursus attacking heretical notions of the power of hours. He offers one particularly pointed example, in which in the very same hour one person is prospering and someone else dies miserably. He concludes: 'Will not this teaching about the hours, then, be exposed as an ignorant myth and an invention of demonic madness? I think that everyone will agree to this without hesitation and will condemn those who think this way.'¹³⁶

4.3.3. The Time of Salvation, the Time of the Church, the Christian Era

Based on the information found in John 11:9, where a day is described as consisting of twelve hours, some have proposed the thesis that these twelve hours symbolize the span of all history – the entire course of the world's events. Within this framework, the tenth hour would represent the moment of Christ's entry into history and the beginning of the Christian era. In this vein, George H.C. MacGregor argues:

¹³² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John. Chapters 1–21*, I, 119.

¹³³ Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 128.

¹³⁴ Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel*, 33.

¹³⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John* (trans. D.R. Maxwell) (Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2013) I, 87.

¹³⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, I, 298.

if any particular significance is to be attached to 'the tenth hour' it is probably symbolical; thus in 11:9 the twelve hours of the day perhaps represent the duration of the universe, 'the last hour' (1 Jn. 2:18) would be the Evangelist's own day, while 'the tenth hour,' the number of perfection, would mark the beginning of the Christian era.¹³⁷

However, Rudolf Bultmann rejects such an interpretation, emphasising the actual meaning of the 'day' and its 'twelve hours' in John 11:9. In that context, they refer specifically to the period of Jesus' earthly ministry (cf. John 9:4–5; 12:35).¹³⁸

4.3.4. The Hour of Fulfilment

Philo of Alexandria argued that the sin of the Egyptians, brought to its full measure, corresponded to the 'perfect number' (τέλειος ἀριθμός) of punishments inflicted in the form of the ten plagues: Δέκα δὲ ἐπάγονται τῇ χώρᾳ τιμωρίαι, κατὰ τῶν τέλεια ἡμαρτηκότων τέλειος ἀριθμὸς κολάσεως – 'The punishments inflicted on the land were ten – a perfect number for the chastisement of those who brought sin to perfection' (*Mos.* 1.96).¹³⁹ For Philo, therefore, the number ten represents perfection.¹⁴⁰ This same meaning was attributed to the number by both Pythagoreans and Gnostics. These considerations led Rudolf Bultmann, and subsequently other commentators, to regard this symbolic value of the number ten as the proper key for understanding the Johannine reference to the tenth hour in John 1:39. In this reading, the tenth hour becomes the hour of fulfilment,¹⁴¹ an hour of completion and perfection.¹⁴² When reading the previously cited commentary by St. Augustine, we also encounter this theme of fulfilment – specifically, the fulfilment of the Law and the Decalogue.

Among some commentators, however, Bultmann's interpretation has been met with scepticism.¹⁴³ Craig Koester, for example, observes that other hours could also signify completion or perfection. A notable case is the seventh hour, the time at which Jesus heals the royal official's son (John 4:52). Koester speculates that had Jesus met his disciples at

¹³⁷ MacGregor, *The Gospel of John*, 36.

¹³⁸ R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 21 ed. (KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1986) 70.

¹³⁹ Philo, *On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses* (trans. F.H. Colson) (LCL 289; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1935) 324 (Greek text), 325 (English text).

¹⁴⁰ F. Hauck, "δέκα," *TDNT* II, 37. See also other works of Philo, *Spec.* 2.201; 4.105; *Congr.* 109.

¹⁴¹ Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 70 ('die zehnte Stunde ist die Stunde der Erfüllung').

¹⁴² J. Gnllka, *Johannesevangelium* (NEchtB 4; Würzburg: Echter 1983) 21 ('Die zehne Stunde has als Studne der Erfüllung symbolischen Sinn'); Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Évangile selon Jean*, 190 ('elle évoque une heure particulière, celle de l'accomplissement'); Panimolle, *Lettura pastorale*, 174 (as a possibility: 'Ora il numero dieci potrebbe indicare la pienzaa, il compimento e la perfezione, come presso Filone alessandrino. Quindi l'ora decima sarebbe il tempo di compimento'); G. Zevini, *Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 8 ed. (Commenti spirituali del Nuovo Testamento; Roma: Città Nuova 2009) 96 ('l'ora del compimento in cui si conclude la ricerca dei discepoli: l'incontro con Gesù'); W. Kleiber, *Das Johannesevangelium. I. Joh 1,1 – 10,42* (Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2017) 59 (as one possible explanation).

¹⁴³ Köstenberger, *John*, 76, note 68 ('very questionable').

the seventh hour and healed the boy at the tenth hour, the meaning of these Johannine texts would remain essentially unchanged.¹⁴⁴

4.3.5. The Ten Creative Words of God

Hartwig Thyen has noted the possibility of a symbolic interpretation of the tenth hour as an allusion to the tenfold occurrence of the phrase 'And God said (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים)' in Gen 1:3, 6–7, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28–29.¹⁴⁵ According to later Jewish tradition, 'the world is created by ten divine words' (*b. Meg.* 21b).¹⁴⁶ Thus, the Evangelist may be making a subtle reference to the idea of new creation, a concept synonymous with salvation, into which the two disciples enter as they remain with Jesus.¹⁴⁷

4.3.6. The Most Perfect Hour in the History of the World

Marie-Émile Boismard, the French exegete from the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem, argued that the tenth hour mentioned in John 1:39 should be understood symbolically, much like the sixth hour in John 4:6 and 19:14. Drawing on the ancient understanding of the number ten as a symbol of perfection, Boismard maintained that it represents the perfect hour in the history of the world. This hour is the moment of the coming of the Kingdom of God, when Jesus calls his disciples and allows them to remain with him. The fulfilment of this tenth hour is the act of dwelling with Jesus in the Father's house, where there are many dwelling places (John 14:2–3).¹⁴⁸

4.3.7. The Twelve Hours of the Day: The Time of Jesus' and the Disciples' Activity

Rinaldo Fabris suggests that the tenth hour may be read symbolically within the framework of the Johannine symbolism of the twelve hours of the day, which represent the period of Jesus' activity (cf. John 9:4; 11:9–10; 12:35–36). The mission of Jesus, 'the light of the world' (8:12), is also the mission of the disciples, 'the children of light' (12:36). Thus, the twelve hours of the day signify not only the time of Jesus' activity, but also that of his disciples.¹⁴⁹

4.3.8. Messianic Wedding

According to Mary L. Coloe, the mention of the tenth hour is also symbolic, as the late afternoon and the approach of sunset were traditionally associated with the time of wedding celebrations. At the very moment when the disciples – identified with the bride – encounter

¹⁴⁴ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 314.

¹⁴⁵ Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 128.

¹⁴⁶ Hauck, "δέκα," *TDNT* II, 36.

¹⁴⁷ A. Kubiś, "The Creation Theme in the Gospel of John," *ColT* 90/5 (2020) 375–414.

¹⁴⁸ M.-É. Boismard – A. Lamouille, *L'évangile de Jean. Commentaire*, 2 ed. (Synopse des quatre Évangiles en français 3; Paris: Cerf 1987) 98.

¹⁴⁹ Fabris, *Giovanni*, 162.

Jesus, the bridegroom, John the Baptist exits the scene.¹⁵⁰ The Australian exegete interprets the first three chapters of John as thoroughly structured around allusions to nuptial imagery.¹⁵¹

In the context of nuptial symbolism, one textual issue concerning the tenth hour in John 1:39 merits attention. A single manuscript, *Codex Alexandrinus* (5th c.), currently held at the British Library, reads ἕκτη ('sixth') in John 1:39. However, this reading is difficult to accept, especially in the absence of broader textual support. The alteration from the original δέκατη ('tenth') to ἕκτη ('sixth') may plausibly be explained as a copyist's intentional change – a harmonisation with two other Johannine passages (4:6 and 19:14), both of which feature the phrase ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη ('it was about the sixth hour'). *Codex Alexandrinus* preserves identical phrasing in all three cases: ΩΡΑΗΝΩΣΕΚΤΗ (1:39; 4:6; 19:14). If this was in fact a deliberate emendation, it may reflect a scribal theological agenda: to associate the calling of the first disciples (1:39) explicitly with the hour of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman (4:6) and the moment of Pilate's pronouncement of the death sentence (19:14). In this case, the sixth hour would frame each of these events as a revelatory moment in the messianic mission. Jesus would thus be portrayed as the Messianic Bridegroom who meets his bride – symbolised by the nascent messianic community, represented by Andrew and the unnamed disciple – at a significant eschatological hour.

Edgar Bruns also links these three occurrences of the sixth hour in *Codex Alexandrinus*, arguing for the presence of 'a clearly discernible symbolism.' In an interpretation largely consistent with the one presented here, he writes:

Jesus has won his first disciples, the work of forming the Christian community has begun; the Incarnate Word has, for the first time, given 'to those who received him, power to become children of God' (i. 12). For this reason it is noon, with the sun in the high heavens. Moreover, if John wrote 'sixth hour' here, we can detect a real progression in his three uses of this hour in the gospel. At this point it symbolizes the light which breaks upon the small group of disciples; at iv. 6 it symbolizes the light breaking upon a much larger group of believers; at ix. 14 it symbolizes the light breaking upon a much larger group of believers outside the circle of disciples, a group itself symbolic of the masses to be enlightened by the gospel; and at xix. 14 it symbolizes the light which shines over the entire world, over all men for whom the true light is made available by the Lord's saying death: 'and I, if I am lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men to myself' (xii. 32).¹⁵²

4.3.9. The Beginning of the New Humanity

Two Spanish commentators, Juan Mateos and Juan Barreto, observe that the tenth hour is close to the beginning of a new day, which, for the Jews of antiquity, commenced in the evening with the setting of the sun – at the twelfth hour, or 6:00 p.m. This new day

¹⁵⁰ M.L. Coloe, "Witness and Friend. Symbolism Associated with John the Baptizer," *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (eds. J. Frey et al.) (WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2006) 327; Coloe, *John 1–10*, 49.

¹⁵¹ Coloe, "Witness and Friend," 330.

¹⁵² Bruns, "The Use of Time in the Fourth Gospel," 290.

signifies the emergence of a new people and simultaneously the end of the old one: the old Israel, once the people of God, is to be replaced by a new humanity. In a symbolic reading of the chronology of the entire Johannine Gospel, the end of this day corresponds to the ‘great sabbath’ mentioned in John 19:31 (ἡν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου), which marks the conclusion of one era and the beginning of another. This transition is further symbolised by the first day of the week (20:1), inaugurated by the Paschal event of Jesus. The tenth hour thus signifies the beginning of the end of the epoch of the old people. Jesus initiates a community of believers that constitutes the foundation of a new humanity. As it turns out, the Savior arrives precisely on time – to redeem and rescue his people, Israel, from total ruin.¹⁵³

4.3.10. Dwelling in God

Thomas L. Brodie affirmed Rudolf Bultmann’s interpretation of the number ‘ten’ as symbolically significant. At the same time, he observed that the use of the term ‘hour’ in the Gospel of John is also symbolic (cf. 13:1; 17:1). As Brodie notes, the ‘hour’ refers, among other things, to a time of intimacy between Jesus and the disciples, and between Jesus and the Father. It is used in the context of the foot-washing and the final prayer (chaps. 13 and 17). Thus “ten” and “hour” both have symbolic meaning in themselves. Placed together, as they are here, they connote a perfect indwelling of the disciples with Jesus.¹⁵⁴

The phrase ‘that day’ (τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην – 1:39), which shifts the expression ‘the tenth hour’ from a strictly chronological to a symbolic meaning, is used in the Farewell Discourses to refer to the time of shared dwelling – ‘abiding with’ and ‘being in’ – among Jesus, the Father, and the disciples: ‘On that day [ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ] you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you’ (14:20); ‘On that day [ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ] you will ask nothing of me [...] whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you’ (16:23); ‘On that day [ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ] you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father’ (16:26–27). Thus, ‘that day’ becomes a symbolic expression of deep communion and mutual indwelling between God and the community of believers, anticipated already in the symbolic meaning of the ‘tenth hour’.

4.3.11. Disobedience

Martin Hengel drew attention to rabbinic texts in which Adam is portrayed as having been created on the sixth day and breaking God’s commandment on that same day at the tenth hour. For instance, according to the *Babylonian Talmud* (*Sanh.* 38b), the day of Adam’s creation is divided into twelve hours, each marking a significant event. In the tenth hour, both Adam and Eve transgressed the divine commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. In *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:6, one reads, ‘in the ninth hour, God commanded him: Eat of

¹⁵³ J. Mateos – J. Barreto, *Il vangelo di Giovanni. Analisi linguistica e commento esegetico*, 5 ed. (Commenti e studi biblici; Asisi: Cittadella 2016) 111.

¹⁵⁴ Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 160.

this tree, but do not eat of that one; in the tenth hour, [Adam] sinned; in the eleventh hour, he was judged; in the twelfth hour, the verdict was pronounced against him.¹⁵⁵ As the dating of these sources is relatively late (e.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* was compiled in the ninth century), the conclusions drawn from them should be approached with caution. The calling of Jesus' first two disciples – one of whom remains unnamed and may, as some scholars suggest, be the anonymous Beloved Disciple mentioned in John 19:26 – takes place precisely at the tenth hour (John 1:39). This narrative detail may therefore be interpreted as a deliberate reversal of the situation in the Garden of Eden, effected through the person and work of Jesus. A striking contrast emerges between the obedience of Jesus, the new Adam, and that of his disciples, who choose to remain with him, and the disobedience of the first Adam, who was banished from Eden.¹⁵⁶

4.3.12. The Apocalyptic Hour of the End Times

Some commentators interpret the Johannine 'tenth hour' in light of Jewish apocalyptic literature. In the Ethiopic *First Book of Enoch*, we read that during the tenth week (or Sabbath), the angels will carry out a great and eternal judgement (91:15). The first heaven will pass away, and a new one will appear (91:16). This will usher in an unending era of goodness and righteousness, in which sin will no longer exist (91:17).¹⁵⁷

In the *Sibylline Oracles*, the history of the world is divided into ten periods, referred to as generations (see 2:15; 4:20–21; 4:86; 7:97; 8:199) or kingdoms. As we read in the Fourth Oracle, in the tenth generation (4:47), judgement will come upon the world (4:41). God Himself will carry out this judgement upon both the wicked and the righteous (4:42). The wicked will be cast into fiery darkness (4:43), where they will become fully aware of their acts of impiety (4:44). The righteous, by contrast, will remain upon a fertile land (4:45), and God will grant them spirit, life, and grace (4:46). Similar signs – catastrophic for the wicked but filled with peace and prosperity for the righteous – are found in the description of the final, tenth generation in *Sibylline Oracles* 2:6–38. In the Eighth Oracle, the era of the tenth generation (8:199) is marked by the resurrection of the dead and the healing of the infirm: the lame will walk, the deaf will hear, the blind will see, and the mute will speak (8:205–207). All will receive life, wealth, and land (8:208–209).

155 R. Ulmer, *A Bilingual Edition of Pesiqta Rabbati. II. Chapters 23–52* (Studia Judaica. Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums 105; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2022) 570. See also *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:2 ('Adam sinned [on Friday towards the end of the day] and was expelled [from the Garden of Eden] during the day' – *ibidem*, 567). The idea of Adam's sin being committed in the tenth hour, within a narrative framework that describes his creation in twelve stages marked by twelve hours, is also found in *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 23:1 ('in the tenth, he [Adam] transgressed the command'); *Midr. Ps.* 92 §2 ('In the tenth hour, he sinned'); and *Lev. Rab.* 29:1 ('in the tenth he transgressed'). Cf. M. Hengel, "Die Schriftauslegung des 4. Evangeliums auf dem Hintergrund der urchristlichen Exegese," *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 4 (1989) 249–288.

156 For more on the theme of the new creation in John, see Kubiś, "The Creation Theme in the Gospel of John," 375–414.

157 Walter Klaiber (*Das Johannevangelium*, I, 59) identifies the concept of the 'ten weeks' found in *1 Enoch* 93 and 91:12–17 as a possible interpretative framework for understanding John 1:39.

Our own analysis would also adduce here *Targum Shenī* to Esther 1:1, which lists ten kings/kingdoms:

Now these are the ten kings. The first kingdom that ruled is that of the Lord of Hosts – may it be speedily revealed to us. The second kingdom is that of Nimrod, the third is that of the Pharaoh, the fourth kingdom is that of Israel, the fifth that of Nebukhadnezzar, king of Babylonia, the sixth that of Xerxes, the seventh that of Rome, the eighth that of Greece, the ninth that of the son of David, the Messiah, the tenth that of the Lord of Hosts again, may it be speedily revealed to all the inhabitants of the earth.¹⁵⁸

A fifteenth-century manuscript of this Targum (Heb. 110, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1455–56) expands the notice concerning the tenth kingdom: ‘Finally the tenth kingdom, that of the King of Kings, the Lord of Hosts, may His name be blessed, and His kingdom be speedily revealed to all inhabitants of the earth.’¹⁵⁹

Then in the *Fourth Book of Ezra* (4 Ezra 4:12), in the Ethiopic version, the course of world history is likewise divided into ten parts. At the time the book was written (at the turn of the first and second centuries CE), the final, tenth period was said to have just reached its midpoint: ‘For the world is divided into ten parts, and has come to the tenth, and half of the tenth remains.’¹⁶⁰

Ulrich Wilckens has noted that, from the perspective of such apocalyptic writings – he refers specifically to *1 Enoch* 91:15–17; *Sibylline Oracles* 4:47; and *4 Ezra* 14:11–12 – the Johannine ‘tenth hour’ signifies a universal hour (*Weltstunde*) marking the beginning of the final events associated with the advent of the messianic age. In other words, with the moment of discovering Jesus’ dwelling place, the beginning of the end of world history is set in motion (see John 4:23–26; 5:25).¹⁶¹ For Wilckens, the phrase τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκεῖνην (‘on that day’, John 1:39) is symbolic: it is the ‘day of Jesus’ (*der Tag Jesu*), the day which Abraham already anticipated with joy and which he indeed saw, rejoicing because of the salvation it signified (John 8:56).¹⁶² Building on the same apocalyptic background, Jean Zumstein argues that seeing the place where Jesus dwells marks the beginning of eschatological fulfilment (‘l’accomplissement eschatologique’).¹⁶³ Yves Simoens likewise notes that the apocalyptic connotation of the tenth hour is positively confirmed by the use of the term ‘hour’

158 B. Grossfeld, *The Two Targums to Esther: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 18; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1991) 96–97. A late rabbinic work, *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer* 11 – generally dated between the seventh and ninth centuries CE – lists the following ten kings of ten kingdoms: God, Nimrod, Joseph, Solomon, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, Messiah, and God.

159 Grossfeld, *The Two Targums to Esther*, 97.

160 B.M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. I. *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) 553.

161 Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 47.

162 William C. Weinrich (*John 1:1–7:1*, 280) asserts that Abraham saw the sacrifice of his son Isaac (cf. Gen 22).

163 Zumstein, *L’Évangile selon saint Jean* (1–12), 87, footnote 89.

in the broader Johannine narrative.¹⁶⁴ Clearly, the Johannine meaning of the term ‘hour’ is connected to its apocalyptic usage in the Book of Daniel (8:17–19; 11:35, 40, 45; 12:1).¹⁶⁵

4.3.13. The Hour of Truth, the Cross, and the Revelation of the Disciple’s Destiny

William Weinrich agrees with the symbolic readings of Rudolf Bultmann (the hour of perfection) and Ulrich Wilckens (the hour initiating the messianic era), yet offers his own interpretation. He sees the ‘tenth hour’ as ‘the hour of truth, of consummation, of the revelation of the destiny of discipleship.’¹⁶⁶ Since Weinrich interprets the phrase ‘that day’ in light of the day Abraham saw (Jn 8:56) – understood as the moment of the sacrifice of his son Isaac (Gen 22) – the phrase ‘they remained with him that day’ (Jn 1:39) signifies the cross as the place where the disciple abides with Jesus. As he explains: ‘the cross, the perfecting act of divine love, is the place where the true disciple remains with Jesus.’¹⁶⁷

5. Broadening the Interpretative Horizons: Toward New Proposals

To the wide range of interpretive proposals discussed above regarding the mention of the ‘tenth hour’ in John 1:39, I would like to add a further line of inquiry by drawing attention to several apocryphal texts and the works of Philo. These texts may offer new perspectives and open additional avenues for exploring the meaning of this cryptic Johannine detail, potentially providing an even deeper understanding than those interpretations presented thus far.

5.1. The Healing by the Descent of the Spirit

In *Testament of Adam* (2:10), one reads:

The tenth hour is the visitation of the waters when the spirit descends and broods upon the waters and upon the fountains. And if the spirit of the Lord did not descend and brood upon the waters and upon the fountains, human beings would be injured, and everyone the demons saw they would injure. And at that hour the waters (are) taken up and the priest of God mixes them with consecrated oil and anoints those who are afflicted and they are restored and healed.¹⁶⁸

In light of this passage, the Johannine ‘tenth hour’ may symbolise the hour of the Spirit’s descent and restoration of human health. Within the broader literary context of

164 Y. Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni. Una traduzione e un’interpretazione* (Testi e commenti; Bologna: EDB 2000) 189.

165 S. Mihalios, *The Danielic Eschatological Hour in the Johannine Literature* (LNTS 436; London – New York: Clark 2011).

166 Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 280.

167 Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 280.

168 S.E. Robinson, “Testament of Adam,” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. I. Apocalyptic, Literature and Testaments* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) 993.

John's Gospel, the descent of the Spirit (John 7:37–39) is associated with the image of 'rivers of living water,' which in turn recalls Ezek 47 and Zech 14:8. In Ezekiel's vision, the river flowing from the temple nourishes trees on both banks whose leaves bring healing (47:12), and its waters flow into the Dead Sea, transforming it into a source of life teeming with creatures: 'everything will live where the river goes' (47:9). This imagery reappears in Rev 22:1–2, where on either side of 'the river of the water of life' stands 'the tree of life,' whose leaves are 'for the healing of the nations.' In the Gospel of John, water – associated with the gift of the Spirit – also plays a crucial role in the healing of the man born blind (John 9), a paradigmatic figure of one who comes to faith through healing.

One concern about drawing upon the *Testament of Adam* is its relatively late dating, traditionally placed between the second and fifth centuries AD. Nevertheless, this is not so far removed from the composition of the Gospel of John (late first century AD) that the text's ideas must be dismissed outright. It is plausible that some of the traditions and themes reflected in the *Testament of Adam* were already circulating among Jewish and Christian communities in the first century and may have influenced, or at least paralleled, elements within the Johannine narrative.

5.2. Seeing the Face of God

A particularly promising parallel for interpreting the 'tenth hour' is found in 2 *Enoch* 22:1, an apocalyptic text that, according to F.I. Andersen, may date to the late first century AD. Chapter 22 opens with a striking scene: 'In the 10th heaven the archangel Michael brought Enoch in front of the face of the Lord.' The passage continues:

¹ And on the 10th heaven, Aravoth, I saw the view of the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot in a fire and brought out, and it emits sparks and is incandescent. Thus even I saw the face of the Lord. But the face of the Lord is not to be talked about, it is so very marvelous and supremely awesome and supremely frightening. ² And who am I to give an account of the incomprehensible being of the Lord, and of his face, so extremely strange and indescribable?¹⁶⁹

Already in the seventh heaven, Enoch had been granted a distant vision of the Lord seated on His exalted throne in the tenth heaven:

And they showed (me) the Lord, from a distance, sitting on his exceedingly high throne. For what is on the 10th heaven, since the Lord is present there? And on the 10th heaven is God, and it is called in the Hebrew language Aravoth. And all the heavenly armies came and stood on the ten steps, corresponding to their ranks, and they did obeisance to the Lord (2 *En* 20:3).¹⁷⁰

169 F.I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. I. *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) 136. According to Andersen (*ibidem*, 95), scholarly proposals for dating this work range from pre-Christian times to the late Middle Ages. For example, R.H. Charles argued that 2 *Enoch* was written by a Hellenized Jew in Alexandria in the first century BCE, whereas J.T. Milik maintained that it was composed by a Christian monk in Byzantium in the ninth century CE.

170 Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 134.

In 2 *Enoch*, the tenth heaven is the locus of God's direct presence and the place where Enoch is granted a vision of His face. Similarly, in the Gospel of John, Jesus' disciples are granted the opportunity to behold God's face. Philip requests: 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us' (14:8), to which Jesus replies: 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?' (14:9). The very first encounter with Jesus, when the disciples saw his face, took place 'about the tenth hour' (1:39).

The surrounding context in John further reinforces the theme of seeing God. Jesus promises the disciples that they will see 'heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man' (John 1:51), echoing Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching to heaven with angels ascending and descending (Gen 28:12). Nathanael – 'an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile (δόλος)' (John 1:47; see the description of Jacob as acting with δόλος in Gen 27:35) – will witness something greater than Jacob did: not angels on a ladder, but angels surrounding the Son of Man. In Jewish tradition, Jacob is portrayed as one who has seen God: 'I have seen God face to face' (εἶδον γὰρ θεὸν πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον – Gen 32:31 LXX). According to the apocryphal work *The Ladder of Jacob* (1:1–6), Jacob saw in a dream the fiery face of God at the top of the ladder, while angels of God were ascending and descending upon it.¹⁷¹ Similarly, in John's Gospel, it is Nathanael and the other disciples who behold the divine face in the person of Jesus. It is also significant that, even in the etymology of the name 'Israel' popular in the first century AD, the new name of Jacob (and by extension 'Israelite', as applied to Nathanael) reflects the idea of divine vision: אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – 'the one who sees God'.¹⁷²

Another point of contact between Jacob's narrative and John's Gospel is the expression 'come and see', which appears in John 1:39 ('ἐρχεσθε καὶ ὁψεσθε') and in the rendition in *Tg. Neof.* of Gen 28:12 (יִתְּנֵנִי אֵלַי). The targumic passage elaborates:

And behold, the angels that had accompanied him from the house of his father ascended to bear good tidings to the angels on high, saying: 'Come, see the pious man whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory, whom you desired to see.' And behold, the angels before the Lord ascended and descended and observed him.¹⁷³

This invitation to 'come and see' refers to the face of Jacob, whose image is believed to be engraved upon the heavenly throne. The angels, familiar with Jacob's heavenly image,

171 According to H.G. Lunt, the date and provenance of the document are unknown, although he tentatively places it in the first century CE. Cf. H.G. Lunt, "Ladder of Jacob. A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. II. Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1985) 404, 407.

172 See Philo, *Congr.* 51 (Ἰσραὴλ γὰρ ὁρῶν θεὸν ἐρμηνεύεται – for [the name] Israel is interpreted [as] 'the one seeing God'); *Mut.* 81 (ὁ δὲ Ἰσραὴλ ὁρῶν τὸν θεὸν καλεῖται – for Israel is called 'the one seeing God'); *Fug.* 208; *Somn.* 2,173; *Abr.* 57; *Praem.* 44; *Legat.* 4.

173 M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis. Translated, with Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 1A; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1992) 139.

desire to compare it with his earthly appearance. This concept is richly attested in rabbinic literature, which often represents Jacob's likeness as engraved on the throne of glory.¹⁷⁴ Let us remember that Jacob was synonymous with Israel (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 68:12). According to *Hekhalot Rabbati*, God lovingly embraces and kisses Jacob's countenance upon hearing the Israelites chant the *Kedushah*.¹⁷⁵ Tomasz Mazurek explains that this exalted portrayal of Jacob in the Targums stems from an emphasis on divine election: despite Jacob's deceitfulness, he is God's chosen patriarch.¹⁷⁶ In this light, Jesus' invitation to the disciples to 'come and see' may echo the angelic invitation in the *Targum*: Jesus, like the heavenly messengers, invites the disciples – representatives of Israel – to enter into communion with God. Their abiding with him marks the beginning of their transformation into God's chosen people. The term 'true Israelite', as applied to Nathanael, thus signifies the disciples' identity as a renewed Israel – new Jacobs who behold the face of God.

Is also worth noting that Jacob received a promise of divine presence: 'I in my Memra am with you' (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:15), a rendering of the Masoretic 'I am with you.' In John's Gospel, Jesus, identified with the divine Word (*Memra*), is present with his people, as he took up residence among them (Jn 1:14).

Further, just as Jacob's vision took place at Bethel, 'the house of God' and 'the gate of heaven' (Gen 28:17.19), so too in John Jesus becomes the new Bethel – the dwelling place of divine glory and the true temple (John 1:14; 2:19–21; 4:21–24). Early Jewish sources likewise shift Bethel-traditions to the Jerusalem temple (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 28:11; 28:16–17; *Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:17; *Gen. Rab.* 69:7; *Pirqe R. El.* § 35). In John's Gospel, however, is it Jesus himself who becomes the locus of divine glory (see John 2:11): to see Jesus is to see God.¹⁷⁷

A serious weakness in the hypothesis linking the 'tenth hour' to 2 *Enoch* is the possibility that the entire passage about seeing God's face in the tenth heaven is a later interpolation. Andersen notes that 2 *Enoch* 20:3 and 22:1 are absent from manuscript R, and that

174 Cf. *Tg.* 1 Chron 21:15; *Gen. Rab.* 78:3; 82:2; *Num. Rabba* 43; *Lam. Rabba* 2:2; Targumic Tosefta to Ezek 1:16, *Hekhalot Rabbati*. Broad rabbinic tradition concerning the motif of Jacob's image engraved on the divine throne is presented by A. Damsma, *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel* (Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture 13; Leiden: Brill 2012) 125–128. Cf. also E.R. Wolfson, "The Image of Jacob Engraved Upon the Throne: Further Reflection on the Esoteric Doctrine of the German Pietists," *Along the Path. Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (ed. E.R. Wolfson) (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1995) 1–62.

175 Damsma, *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel*, 127.

176 T. Mazurek, "The Formula 'come, see' in the Palestinian Targums," *VV* 42/4 (2024) 1030–1031 ('From the narrative point of view, the targumic revelation provided by the angels aims to change the not entirely positive image of Jacob. The one who will become the founder of twelve tribes of Israel has to be not only a man accepted by God, but even more, he has to be the chosen one. Thus, the invitation to observe the patriarch encourages the reader to see Jacob in a new light – in the light of the God's choice. The angels who used to reveal the mysteries of the Lord now disclose this one: that despite Jacob's dishonesty, God chooses him, gives him a blessing even greater than those give to Abraham and Isaac, and keeps his image engraved on his divine throne. [...] It is not the deceit and the stolen blessing of Isaac which make from Jacob one of the greatest patriarchs of Israel. What makes him great is the free will of God to choose him despite his complicated life story.')

177 J.H. Neyrey, "The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51," *CBQ* 44/4 (1983) 586–605; M. Morgen, "La promesse de Jésus à Nathanaël (Jn 1,51) éclairée par la hagaddah de Jacob-Israël," *RevScRel* 67/3 (1993) 3–22.

several shorter manuscripts omit both the Hebrew term *Aravoth* and any reference to the tenth heaven. He concludes that these passages are ‘clearly interpolations’.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the presence of Hebrew terminology such as *Aravoth* suggest an origin much earlier than the Middle Ages – possibly compatible with a first-century Jewish apocalyptic context.

5.3. Philo of Alexandria

The third new avenue of research into the meaning of the mysterious mention of the tenth hour in John 1:39 is the symbolism of the number ten found in the works of Philo. As already mentioned, following the insights of Greek philosophy, he sees ten as the number of perfection.¹⁷⁹ Most importantly, however, Philo applies this meaning for the number ten to his theological and allegorical expositions of the Scriptures. For instance, referring to Gen 14, Abraham is seen as the tenth king, who made an end of all nine previous governments (*Congr.* 92). The figure of Moses is entirely read by Philo through this number:

Now the lore of the decad has been carefully discussed in detail in the schools of the musicians, and is extolled in no ordinary degree by the holiest of men, Moses, who connects with it things of special excellence, governments, the first-fruits, the recurrent gifts of the priests, the observation of the pasover, the atonement, the liberation and return to the old possessions in the fiftieth year, the furnishing of the permanent tabernacle, and others without number (*Congr.* 89,503; LCL 261).¹⁸⁰

The priests ‘are commanded to offer always the tenth of the ephah of fine flour, for they have learned to rise above the ninth, the seeming deity, the world of sense, and to worship Him who is in very truth God, who stands alone as the tenth’ (*Congr.* 103,509; LCL 261). The Greek phrase here θεὸν τὸν δέκατον καὶ μόνον ὄντα ἀψευδῶς can also be translated as ‘Him who is tenth and alone truly exists’ or ‘Him who is truly tenth and alone’ (*Congr.* 103,508–509; LCL 261). The idea of God being the tenth is repeated in the same work a few more times: ‘maker God, who is the tenth’, ‘the priest offers recurrently a tenth to Him who is tenth and alone and eternal (τῷ δεκάτῳ καὶ μόνῳ καὶ αἰωνίῳ)’ (*Congr.* 105,511; LCL 261), ‘beginning with the tenth day we shall sanctify to Him that is tenth,’ and ‘the soul is suppliant to God the tenth’ (*Congr.* 107,511; LCL 261). Philo, following Solon, divided the span of the human life into ten stages: ‘during the tenth comes the desirable end of life’ (*Opif.* 103,85; LCL 226).¹⁸¹

In conclusion, interpreting the Johannine ‘tenth hour’ through Philo’s numerology suggests a transformative moment marking the disciples’ spiritual rebirth as true children of

¹⁷⁸ Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 135, 137.

¹⁷⁹ *Abr.* 244; *Congr.* 89, *Decal.* 20 (‘the supremely perfect, Ten. Ten contains all different kinds of numbers’ – Philo, *On the Decalogue. On the Special Laws, Books 1–3* [trans. F.H. Colson] [LCL 320; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1937] 15).

¹⁸⁰ Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues. On the Migration of Abraham. Who Is the Heir of Divine Things? On Mat-ing with the Preliminary Studies* (trans. F.H. Colson – G.H. Whitaker) (LCL 261; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1932) 503.

¹⁸¹ Philo, *On the Creation. Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3* (trans. F.H. Colson – G.H. Whitaker) (LCL 226; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1929) 85.

Abraham (cf. John 8:33–57), embodying the tenth generation – the faithful of the messianic era. If Jesus represents the tenth, then abiding with him transforms disciples into representatives of this eschatological tenth generation, fully participating in the fulfilment initiated at that hour.

Conclusions

This article has offered a thorough, multi-layered exegetical analysis of the reference to the ‘tenth hour’ in John 1:39. The lack of scholarly consensus on this detail – ranging from historical to theological to symbolic interpretations – reflects the complexity and richness of the text. The study identified three major interpretative approaches:

- (1) Narrative/Descriptive: this approach views the mention of the hour as a narrative device that adds realism, signals narrative progression, enhances credibility, or serves as a memory cue possibly linked to eyewitness testimony.
- (2) Temporal/Practical: the tenth hour is understood in its literal temporal context – as late afternoon or early evening – potentially implying an overnight stay, a Sabbath setting, or a setting for shared meal or conversation.
- (3) Symbolic: the number ten and the hour itself are interpreted as bearing theological significance, symbolising, for instance, the fulfilment of the Law, the inauguration of the eschatological age, or the birth of a new humanity.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly supports the symbolic character of the Fourth Gospel, encouraging interpretations that transcend merely literal readings. Apocalyptic and eschatological motifs drawn from *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, and the *Sibylline Oracles* reinforce the view of the tenth hour as an ‘eschatological hinge’, a pivotal moment in salvation history. Thus, the ‘tenth hour’ emerges as a theologically charged moment that initiates the disciples’ intimate fellowship with Jesus – the one who embodies the divine presence and glory. It marks the beginning of a transformative process: the dawn of a new creation, the vision of God’s face in Christ, and the inauguration of the messianic age.

The symbolism of the number ten – rich with connotations of completeness, divine order, and perfection, in both biblical and Hellenistic traditions – amplifies this theological reading. Parallels with *Testament of Adam*, *2 Enoch*, and the writings of Philo further align this moment with a broader apocalyptic and mystical tradition in which the tenth hour signifies access to divine mysteries, visionary encounter, and covenantal communion.

In conclusion, the most compelling interpretation recognises that the reference to the tenth hour functions both literally (as a chronological marker) and symbolically (as a theological signal). The Evangelist likely intended both levels to be appreciated, inviting the reader to enter into a layered experience of narrative, memory, and revelation.

Bibliography

- Amador, S.C., *The Hour of Justification in the Fourth Gospel* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II/622; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2025).
- Andersen, F.I., “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. I. Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) 91–221.
- Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40* (trans. E. Hill) (Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century III/12; Hyde Park, NY: New City Press 2009).
- Barrett, C.K., *The Gospel according to St John. An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2 ed. (London: SPCK 1978).
- Bauckham, R., *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2 ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2017).
- Beasley-Murray, G.R., *John*, 2 ed. (Word Biblical Commentary 36; Waco, TX: Word Books 1999).
- Becker, J., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–10* (Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 4/1 – Gütersloher Taschenbücher. Siebenstern 505; Gütersloh – Würzburg: Gütersloher Verlagshaus – Echter 1979).
- Bernard, J.H., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; Edinburgh: Clark 1928).
- Blomberg, C.L., *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2001).
- de Boer, M.C., “Andrew. The First Link in the Chain,” *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel. Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (eds. S.A. Hunt – D.F. Tolmie – R. Zimmermann) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2016) 137–150.
- de Boer, M.C., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to John. I. Introduction and Commentary on John 1–6* (International Critical Commentary; London: Clark 2025).
- Boismard, M.-É. – Lamouille, A., *L'évangile de Jean. Commentaire*, 2 ed. (Synopse des quatre Évangiles en français 3; Paris: Cerf 1987).
- Borchert, G.L., *John 1–11* (New American Commentary 25A; Nashville, TN: B&H 1996).
- Bosetti, E., *Vangelo secondo Giovanni (Capitoli 1–11). I segni dell'Amore* (Dabar – Logos – Parola. Lectio divina popolare; Padova: Messaggero di Sant'Antonio 2013).
- Bouyer, L., *Il quarto Vangelo* (Le idee e la vita 14; Torino: Borla 1964).
- Brodie, T.L., *The Gospel according to John. A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993).
- Brown, A.R., “John 1:35–42. Exegetical Perspective,” *Feasting on the Gospels. John. I. Chapters 1–9* (eds. C.A. Jarvis – E.E. Johnson) (A Feasting on the Word Commentary; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2015) 33–37.
- Brown, R.E., *The Gospel according to John (i-xii). Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1966).
- Bruner, F.D., *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2012).
- Bruns, J.E., “The Use of Time in the Fourth Gospel,” *New Testament Studies* 13/3 (1967) 285–290.
- Bultmann, R., *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster 1971).
- Bultmann, R., *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 21 ed. (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1986).
- Burge, G.M., *John* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2000).
- van den Bussche, H., *Giovanni. Commento del Vangelo spirituale*, 3 ed. (Assisi: Cittadella 1974).

- Byrne, B., *Life Abounding. A Reading of John's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2014).
- Carson, D.A., *The Gospel according to John* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 1990).
- Coloe, M.L., "Witness and Friend. Symbolism Associated with John the Baptizer," *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (eds. J. Frey et al.) (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2006) 319–332.
- Coloe, M.L., *John 1–10* (Wisdom Commentary 44A; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2021).
- Creevey, P.J., "God's δικαιοσύνη and Jesus' 'Hour' in John's Gospel. Divine Love in Action," *Biblica* 104/1 (2023) 93–109.
- Culpepper, R.A., "Symbolism and History in John's Account of Jesus' Death," *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism. The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (eds. T. Thatcher – S.D. Moore) (Society of Biblical Literature. Resources for Biblical Study 55; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2008) 39–54.
- Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John* (trans. D.R. Maxwell) (Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2013) I.
- Damsma, A., *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel* (Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture 13; Leiden: Brill 2012).
- Diel, P. – Solotareff, J., *Le symbolisme dans l'évangile de Jean* (Petite Bibliothèque Payot 200; Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages 1983).
- Dietzfelbinger, C., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. I. Johannes 1–12* (Zürcher Bibelkommentare 4; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 2004).
- Dumoulin, P., *Giovanni. Il vangelo dei segni. Il vangelo dell'ora* (Lettura pastorale della Bibbia; Bologna: EDB 2016).
- Fabris, R., *Giovanni. Traduzione e commento. Seconda edizione riveduta e ampliata*, 2 ed. (Commenti biblici; Roma: Borla 2003).
- Fausti, S., *Rozważaj i głos Ewangelii. Wspólnota czyta Ewangelii według św. Jana* (Kraków: Bratni Zew 2015).
- Frey, J., *Die johanneische Eschatologie. II. Das johanneische Zeitverständnis* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1998).
- Frey, J., *Vom Ende zum Anfang. Studien zum Johannesevangelium. Kleine Schriften IV* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 492; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2022).
- Gill, J., *An Exposition of the New Testament* (London: Mathews and Leigh 1809).
- Gnilka, J., *Johannesevangelium* (Die Neue Echter Bibel. Kommentar zum Neuen Testament mit der Einheitsübersetzung 4; Würzburg: Echter 1983).
- Grasso, S., *Il Vangelo di Giovanni. Commento esegetico e teologico* (Roma: Città Nuova 2008).
- Grech, P., "Una giornata presso Gesù: l'orario giovanneo," *Studia Patavina* 50/3 (2003) 777–785.
- Grilli, M., *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni. Elementi di introduzione e teologia* (Biblica; Bologna: EDB 2016).
- Grossfeld, B., *The Two Targums to Esther. Translated, with Apparatus and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible 18; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1991).
- Grotius, H., *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (Groningae: Zuidema 1828).
- Haenchen, E., *John 1. A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 1–6* (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1984).
- Hanhart, K., "The Structure of John I.35 – IV.54," *Studies in John. Presented to Professor Dr. J. N. Sevenster on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 24; Leiden: Brill 1970) 22–46.

- Hanhart, K., “‘About the tenth hour’... on Nisan 15 (Jn 1,35–40),” *L’Évangile de Jean. Sources, rédaction, théologie* (ed. M. de Jonge) (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 44; Leuven: Leuven University Press – Peeters 1987) 335–346.
- Hauck, F., “δὲκα,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (eds. G. Kittel – G.W. Bromley) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1964) II, 36–37.
- Heawood, P.J., “The Beginning of the Jewish Day,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review. New Series* 36/4 (1946) 393–401.
- Hendriksen, W., *Exposition of the Gospel according to John. Two Volumes Complete in One* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House 1953; reprint 2002).
- Hengel, M., “Die Schriftauslegung des 4. Evangeliums auf dem Hintergrund der urchristlichen Exegese,” *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 4 (1989) 249–288.
- Huber, H.H., *Der Begriff der Offenbarung im Johannes-Evangelium. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Eigenart des vierten Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1934).
- Infante, R., *Giovanni. Introduzione, traduzione e commento* (Nuova versione della Bibbia dai testi antichi 40; Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo 2015).
- Jeremias, J., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Eine urchristliche Erklärung für die Gegenwart* (Chemnitz – Leipzig: Müller 1931).
- Jeremias, J., *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1977).
- John Chrysostom, St., *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist. Homilies 1–47* (trans. T.A. Goggin) (The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation 33; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press 1957; reprint 2017).
- Jojko, B., “The Hour of Jesus and the Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1–11),” *Verbum Vitae* 38/1 (2020) 125–147.
- Keener, C.S., *Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2003).
- Keener, C.S., *John* (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary 2A; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2019).
- Kleiber, W., *Das Johannesevangelium. I. Joh 1,1 – 10,42* (Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2017).
- Koester, C.R., *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel. Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2 ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2003).
- Köstenberger, A.J., *John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2004).
- Kruse, C.G., *John. An Introduction and Commentary*, 2 ed. (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 4; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2017).
- Kubiś, A., “The Creation Theme in the Gospel of John,” *Collectanea Theologica* 90/5 (2020) 375–414.
- Kubiś, A., “Roman versus Jewish Reckoning of Hours in the Gospel of John. An Exegetical Misconception that Refuses to Die,” *The Biblical Annals* 11/2 (2021) 247–280.
- Kysar, R., *John* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg 1986).
- Lagrange, M.-J., *Évangile selon saint Jean*, 5 ed. (Études Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda 1936).
- Lange, J.P., *The Gospel according to John* (A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. New Testament 3; New York: Scribner 1871).
- Leal, J., “El simbolismo histórico del IV Evangelio,” *Estudios Bíblicos* 19/4 (1960) 344–346.
- Lee, D.A., *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel. The Interplay of Form and Meaning* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 95; Sheffield: JSOT 1994).
- Lémonon J.-P., *Pour lire l’Évangile selon saint Jean* (Paris: Cerf 2020).

- Lenski, R.C.H., *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Lenski's Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg 1961).
- Léon-Dufour, X., *Lecture de l'Évangile selon Jean. I. Chapitres 1–4* (Parole de Dieu; Paris: Seuil 1988).
- Lightfoot, J., *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae. Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon the Gospels, the Acts, some Chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and the First Epistle to the Corinthians. A New Edition by R. Gandell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1859) I–IV.
- Lightfoot, R.H., *St. John's Gospel. A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon 1956).
- Lincoln, A.T., "The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 24/3 (2002) 3–26.
- Lincoln, A.T., *The Gospel according to Saint John* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Continuum 2005).
- Lindars, B., *The Gospel of John* (New Century Bible; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott 1972).
- Lunt, H.G., "Ladder of Jacob. A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. II. Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1985) 401–411.
- MacGregor, G., *The Gospel of John* (Moffatt New Testament Commentary; New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company 1929).
- Marchadour, A., *Venite e vedrete. Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni* (Lettura pastorale della Bibbia; Bologna: EDB 2013).
- Martin, F. – Wright IV, W.M., *The Gospel of John* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2015).
- Mateos, J. – Barreto, J., *El Evangelio de Juan. Análisis lingüístico y comentario exegetico*, 2 ed. (Lectura del Nuevo Testamento 4; Madrid: Cristiandad 1982).
- Mateos, J. – Barreto, J., *Il vangelo di Giovanni. Analisi linguistica e commento esegetico*, 5 ed. (Commenti e studi biblici; Asisi: Cittadella 2016).
- Mazurek, T., "The Formula 'come, see' in the Palestinian Targums," *Verbum Vitae* 42/4 (2024) 1017–1038.
- Mburu, E.W., *Qumran and the Origins of Johannine Language and Symbolism* (Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies 8; London: Clark 2010).
- McGuire, J.A., "Evening or Morning: When Does the Biblical Day Begin?," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 46/2 (2008) 201–214.
- McHugh, J.F., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4* (International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; London – New York: Clark 2009).
- McNamara, M., *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis. Translated, with Apparatus and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible 1A; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1992).
- Mędala, S., *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 1–12. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 4/1; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2010).
- Metzger, B.M., "The Fourth Book of Ezra," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. I. Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) 517–560.
- Michaels, R.J., *The Gospel of John* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2010).
- Mihalios, S., *The Danielic Eschatological Hour in the Johannine Literature* (Library of the New Testament Studies 436; London – New York: Clark 2011).
- Moloney, F.J., *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1998).

- Moloney, F.J., "The First Days of Jesus and the Role of the Disciples: A Study of John 1:19–51," *Australian Biblical Review* 65 (2017) 61–77.
- Morgen, M., "La promesse de Jésus à Nathanaël (Jn 1,51) éclairée par la hagaddah de Jacob-Israël," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 67/3 (1993) 3–22.
- Morris, L., *The Gospel according to John. Revised Edition* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995).
- Neiryneck, B.F. "The Anonymous Disciple in John 1," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 66 (1990) 5–37.
- Neiryneck, B.F., "The Anonymous Disciple of John 1," *Evangelica. Gospel Studies – Études d'évangile. Collected Essays. II. 1982–1991* (ed. F. van Segbroeck) (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 99; Leuven: Peeters 1991) 617–649.
- Newman, B.M. – Nida, E.A., *A Handbook on the Gospel of John* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies 1980).
- Neyrey, J.H., "The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44/4 (1983) 586–605.
- Neyrey, J.H., *The Gospel of John* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007).
- O'Day, G.R., "The Gospel of John. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *The New Interpreter's Bible. General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 1995) 491–865.
- Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John. Books 1–10* (trans. R.E. Heine) (Fathers of the Church 80; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press 1989).
- Paciorek, A., *Ewangelia według św. Jana. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz* (Biblia Lubelska; Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego 2000).
- Panimolle S.A., *Lettura pastorale del Vangelo di Giovanni. I. Gv 1–4*, 5 ed. (Lettura pastorale della Bibbia; Bologna: EDB 1999).
- Philo, *On the Creation. Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3* (trans. F.H. Colson – G.H. Whitaker) (Loeb Classical Library 226; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1929).
- Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues. On the Migration of Abraham. Who Is the Heir of Divine Things? On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* (trans. F.H. Colson – G.H. Whitaker) (Loeb Classical Library 261; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1932).
- Philo, *On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses* (trans. F.H. Colson) (Loeb Classical Library 289; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1935).
- Philo, *On the Decalogue. On the Special Laws, Books 1–3* (trans. F.H. Colson) (Loeb Classical Library 320; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1937).
- Ridderbos, H.N., *The Gospel according to John. A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 1997).
- Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament. V. The Fourth Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman 1932).
- Robinson, S.E., "Testament of Adam," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. I. Apocalyptic, Literature & Testaments* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) 989–995.
- Schnackenburg, R., *The Gospel according to St John. I. Introduction and Commentary on Chapters 1–4* (New York: Crossroad 1990).
- Schnelle, U., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 4 ed. (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2009).
- Schnelle, U., "Der ungenannte Jünger in Joh 1:40," *The Opening of John's Narrative (John 1:19–2:22). Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings from the Colloquium Ioaenneum 2015 in Ephesus*

- (eds. R.A. Culpepper – J. Frey) (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 385; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2017) 97–117.
- Sikora, A.R., “Zobaczył i uwierzył” (J 20,8). *Droga wiary umiłowanego ucznia Jezusa w ujęciu egzegezy teologicznej* (Studia i Materiały – Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Wydział Teologiczny 120; Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu 2012).
- Simoens, Y., *Secondo Giovanni. Una traduzione e un'interpretazione* (Testi e commenti; Bologna: EDB 2000).
- Stachowiak, L., *Ewangelia według św. Jana. Wstęp, przekład, komentarz* (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu 4; Poznań – Warszawa: Pallottinum 1975).
- Stemberger, G., *La symbolique du bien et du mal selon Saint Jean* (Parole de Dieu 5; Paris: Seuil 1970).
- Strathmann, H., *Il vangelo secondo Giovanni* (Nuovo Testamento 4; Brescia: Paideia 1973).
- Stroes, H.R., “Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning? Some Biblical Observations,” *Vetus Testamentum* 16 (1966) 460–475.
- Teed, R., *The Gospel of John* (Wheaton, IL: Teed 2010).
- Theobald, M., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–12* (Regensburger Neues Testament; Regensburg: Pustet 2009).
- Thomas Aquinas, St., *Commentary on the Gospel of John. Chapters 1–21. English Text* (Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas of Aquinas 35 & 36; Green Bay, WI – Steubenville, OH: Aquinas Institute – Emmaus Academic 2018).
- Thyen, H., *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2 ed. (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2015).
- Tillmann, F., *Das Johannesevangelium*, 9 ed. (Die Heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments; Bonn: Hanstein 1916).
- Tovey, D., *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 151; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997).
- Ulmer, R., *A Bilingual Edition of Pesiqta Rabbati. II. Chapters 23–52* (Studia Judaica. Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums 105; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2022).
- Vincent, M.R., *Word Studies in the New Testament. II. The Writings of John, the Gospel, the Epistles, the Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1887).
- van der Watt, J.G., “Symbolism in John’s Gospel. An Evaluation of Dodd’s Contribution,” *Engaging with C.H. Dodd on the Gospel of John. Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation* (eds. T. Thatcher – C.H. Williams) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013) 66–85.
- Weinrich, W.C., *John 1:1–7:1* (Concordia Commentary. A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture; Saint Louis, MO: Concordia 2015).
- Westcott, B.F., *The Gospel according to St John. The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes* (London: Murray 1882).
- Whitacre, R.A., *John* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series 4; Downers Grove, IL – Leicester: InterVarsity 1999).
- Wilckens, U., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 18 ed. (Das Neue Testament Deutsch 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2000).
- Wiles, M.F., *The Spiritual Gospel. The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1960).
- Witetschek, S., “Die Stunde des Lammes? Christologie und Chronologie in Joh 19,14,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 87/1 (2011) 127–187.
- Witetschek, S., “The Hour of the Lamb? Some Remarks on John 19,14 and the Hour of Jesus’s Condemnation and/or Crucifixion,” *Jesus, John, and History. III. Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens* (eds. P.N. Anderson – F. Just – T. Thatcher) (Early Christianity and Its Literature 18; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2016) 95–107.

- Wolfson, E.R., "The Image of Jacob Engraved Upon the Throne: Further Reflection on the Esoteric Doctrine of the German Pietists," *Along the Path. Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (ed. E.R. Wolfson) (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1995) 1–62.
- Zeitlin S., "The Beginning of the Jewish Day during the Second Commonwealth," *The Jewish Quarterly Review. New Series* 36/4 (1946) 403–414.
- Zevini, G., *Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 8 ed. (Commenti spirituali del Nuovo Testamento; Roma: Città Nuova 2009).
- Zumstein, J., *L'Évangile selon saint Jean (1–12)* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament IVa. Deuxième série; Genève: Labor et Fides 2014).