

SAJAN GEORGE PEREPPARAMBIL

Jesus as the
Way to the Father
in the Gospel of John

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Sajan George Perepparambil

Jesus as the Way to the Father in the Gospel of John

A Study of the Way Motif and John 14,6 in Its Context

Mohr Siebeck

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*In Loving Memory of My Parents
Perepparambil George and Annamkutty*

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	D. N. Freedman et al. (ed.), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (New York 1992) I–VI.
ACJD	Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	W. Bauer et al. (ed.), <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago ³ 2000).
BDB	F. Brown et al., <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic</i> (Boston 1906, Peabody 2005).
BDF	F. Blass et al., <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago 1961).
BDS	La Bible du Semeur
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BFC	Bible en français courant
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BInterp</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BLit</i>	<i>Bibel und Liturgie</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BThZ</i>	<i>Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CIET	Collection Institut d'Études Théologiques
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>DCH</i>	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
<i>DTh</i>	<i>Deutsche Theologie</i>
<i>EDNT</i>	H. Balz and G. Schneider (ed.), <i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (Grand Rapids 1990–1992) I–III.
<i>EThL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis</i>
EÜ	Einheitsübersetzung
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>

<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>FzB</i>	<i>Forschung zur Bibel</i>
<i>GNT</i> ⁵	B. Aland et al. (ed.), <i>The Greek New Testament</i> (Stuttgart ⁵ 2014).
<i>HALOT</i> W.	Baumgartner et al. (ed.), <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (tr. M. E. J. Richardson) (Leiden 1994–2000) I–V; trans. <i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament</i> (Leiden 1967–1996) I–V.
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
Hfa	Hoffnung für Alle
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HThKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
JTISup	Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplementary
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LS</i>	<i>Louvain Studies</i>
LSJ	H. G. Liddel and R. Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon. Revised and Augmented throughout by H. S. Jones. With New Supplement</i> (Oxford 1996).
<i>m.Sukk</i>	<i>Mishnah Sukkah</i>
MNT	Münchener Neues Testament
MThS	Münchener Theologische Studien
N-A ²⁸	Nestle-Aland, <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> (Stuttgart ²⁸ 2012).
NAB	New American Bible
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NGÜ	Neue Genfer Übersetzung
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	C. Brown (ed.), <i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> (Grand Rapids 1975–1978) I–III; trans. L. Coenen et al. (ed.), <i>Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament</i> (Wuppertal 1967, 1969, 1971) I–III.
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	W. A. VanGemeren (ed.), <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (Grand Rapids 1997) I–IV.

NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJ	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NRT</i>	<i>La Nouvelle Revue théologique</i>
NSK.AT	Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar. Altes Testament
NTA.NF	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen. Neue Folge
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
ÖBS	Österreichische Biblische Studien
OBT	Overtures in Biblical Theology
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar
OTL	Old Testament Library
PHeid	Heidelberg Coptic Papyrus
<i>PzB</i>	<i>Protokolle zur Bibel</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RBL</i>	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RivBib</i>	<i>Rivista Biblica</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SBAB	Stuttgarter Biblische Aufsatzbände
SBB	Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature, Monograph Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series
<i>SNTU</i>	<i>Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt</i>
SPIB	Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
StAns	Studia Anselmiana
StANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
Str-B	H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> (Munich ² 1956) II.
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TB	Theologische Bücherei
TBT	Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann
<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (tr. G. Bromiley) (Grand Rapids 1964–1976) I–IX; trans. <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> (Stuttgart 1933–1979) I–IX.
<i>TDOT</i>	J. Botterweck et al. (ed.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> (tr. D. E. Green and D. W. Stott) (Grand Rapids 1975–2015) I–XV; trans. <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> (Stuttgart 1973–2015) I–X.
TENT	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study

ThHKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThPh	<i>Theologie und Philosophie</i>
ThR	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TLNT	C. Spicq, <i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i> (tr. J. D. Ernest) (Peabody 1994) I–III; trans. <i>Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire</i> (OBO 22.1–3; Fribourg 1978, 1982) I–III.
TLOT	E. Jenni and C. Westermann (ed.), <i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (tr. M. E. Biddle) (PEABODY 1997) I–III; trans. <i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> (Munich/Zurich 1971, 1976) I–II.
tr.	translator(s)
trans.	translation of
TWNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> (Stuttgart 1933–1979) I–IX.
TWOT	R. L. Harris et al. (ed.), <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> (Chicago 1980) I–II.
TynB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNT	<i>Zeitschrift für Neues Testament</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

General Introduction

1. Relevance of the Subject

This monograph is an attempt to study John 14,6 in its context with a special focus on the way motif. John 14,6 is one of the most impressive statements in the Bible and one of the most important claims of Christianity.¹ This claim is among the most memorable and the most disputed texts of the New Testament. Hence, it is always “a hot potato” in scholarly and academic circles as well as in theological discussions. In the context of today’s religiously pluralistic culture and inter-religious dialogue, the exclusive claim in John 14,6 is for many exegetes a “hard nut to crack” and for many theologians “a stumbling block” to dialogue.² A proper interpretation of the text is, therefore, a desideratum today.

¹ J. Zumstein, *L’Evangile selon Saint Jean 13–21* (CNT 4b; Geneva 2007), 68, considers John 14,6 as “la quintessence de la théologie joh” and says, “Dans cette déclaration se trouvent concentrés les fondements de la théologie, de la christologie et de la sotériologie joh”. In the words of H. Gollwitzer, “Außer Christus kein Heil? (Johannes 14,6)”, *Anti-Judaismus im Neuen Testament. Exegetische und Systematische Beiträge*, ed. W. P. Eckert et al. (ACJD 2; München 1967), 171, “Der Vers stellt die konzentrierteste Formel und damit zugleich den Höhepunkt aller christologischen Formulierung des Johannes-Evangeliums dar, ja darüber hinaus: in seiner Position und seiner Negation gibt er die zugespitzteste Formel für die ganze Christusbotschaft des Neuen Testaments”. According to D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus. An Exposition of John 14–17* (Grand Rapids 1980), 27, John 14,6 is “one of the greatest utterances in Holy Scripture”. H. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John. A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids 1997), 493, calls John 14,6 “the core statement of this entire Gospel”. R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York 1982) III, 65, regards John 14,6b as “a culminating point in Johannine theology” and “a classical summary of the Johannine doctrine of salvation that is based entirely on Jesus Christ”.

² For interpreters like James H. Charlesworth and Laura Tack, John 14,6b is an insurmountable problem. The seriousness of the problem is deducible from Charlesworth’s provoking and rash comment, “John 14,6b is a relic of the past. It is not the Word of God for our time”. See J. H. Charlesworth, “The Gospel of John: Exclusivism Caused by a Social Setting Different from that of Jesus (John 11,54 and 14,6)”, *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel. Papers of the Leuven Colloquium, 2000*, ed. R. Bieringer et al. (Assen 2001), 510. For Laura Tack, John 14,6 is a stumbling block to her project of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Laura’s interpretation sounds even childish when she accuses Jesus of

2. Status Quaestionis

The following survey of scholarship on John 14,6 will present the important available literature on John 14,6 (from 1920 onwards) and discuss their relevant contents.³ In his article on ὁδός in *TDNT* (originally in *TWNT*, V), Wilhelm Michaelis has paid some attention to the meaning of ὁδός in John 14,6.⁴ In his view, the πρὸς τὸν πατέρα of 14,6b corresponds to the πρὸς ἑμαυτόν of 14,3.⁵ Michaelis does not consider the exclusivism of 14,6b as a polemic directed against outsiders. He states, “If the saying polemically excludes other attempts to reach God, it is primarily directed, not against the attempts of others, but against other attempts by the disciples”.⁶ He believes that the negative side of the statement (v. 6b) is less important than the positive side (v. 6a), and that v. 6b is simply designed to support the claim of v. 6a.⁷ “Coming to the Father”, which could be understood as attaining fellowship with God, is equivalent to knowing and seeing the Father (cf. 14,7–9).⁸ He admits that ὁδός takes precedence over ἀλήθεια and ζωή, which are explanatory concepts.⁹ Both terms, ἀλήθεια and ζωή, carry an eschatological reference and might be regarded here as descriptions of the goal of salvation.¹⁰ He suggests that in 14,6 there is an antithesis to the Torah since the Torah is called way, truth and life, and the statements about the Torah are transferred to Jesus elsewhere in the Gospel, but he does not think that 14,6 is as a whole

his forgetfulness, “*For a moment he seems to have forgotten that the way, the truth and the life to which he refers are given to him from his relationship with the Father*”. The emphasis is mine. Tack also finds problems with the text and even accuses the evangelist of his shortcomings: “In John 14,6, the balance is out of balance. Perhaps under the influence of a perceived external threat, the evangelist has overemphasized the person of Christ. In this respect, John allowed himself to be more guided by the human shortcomings associated with his own socio-historical situation, rather than opening the way to divine revelation”. See L. Tack, *John 14,6 in Light of Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Sharing Truth on the Way to Life* (WUNT II 557; Tübingen 2021) 355, 423. But my work will show that the problem and the shortcomings are not with Jesus or the text or the evangelist but with the interpreter.

³ Only the important and original contributions to the study of John 14,6 will be mentioned here. The views of various commentators are not exposed here but will be dealt with in the course of this study. The literature is presented here in chronological order.

⁴ W. Michaelis, “ὁδός”, *TDNT*, V, 78–84.

⁵ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 80.

⁶ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 80. But it is difficult to accept Michaelis’ view. See my criticism of such views on p. 13, n. 126.

⁷ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 80.

⁸ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 80.

⁹ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 81–82.

¹⁰ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 81.

directed against the Torah.¹¹ Furthermore, he rejects the gnostic conception of the heavenly journey of the soul as the background behind 14,2–6, since the context does not support this view and the term ὁδός is not used elsewhere in the Gospel in a gnostic sense (cf. 1,23; Isa 40,3).¹² Neither does he believe that the ἐγὼ εἶμι of 14,6 is a conscious anti-thesis to the corresponding claims of other entities in the world around the evangelist.¹³

In his book *Je suis la route. Le thème de la route dans la Bible*, André Gros comprehensively discusses the theology and spirituality of the way in the Bible.¹⁴ However, he does not pay considerable attention to the study of John 14,6. He believes that in the Gospel of John Christ is truly the new Moses who leads the new exodus of the people of God.¹⁵ About John 14,6 Gros remarks, “C’est là une affirmation lapidaire qui enserme tout le mystère pascal du Christ”.¹⁶ He believes that among the three concepts of way, truth and life, the concept of way takes precedence over the other two, which explicate and qualify the way.¹⁷ He considers the nouns “truth” and “life” in accordance with Hebrew grammar as adjectives, which qualify the noun “way”.¹⁸ Hence, he translates 14,6a as “I am the true and the living way”.¹⁹

Most of the commentators and interpreters today rely on the work of Ignace de la Potterie in their interpretation of John 14,6.²⁰ At the very outset, it should be noted that the focus of Potterie’s work is on truth, even though he examines John 14,6 in its context. In the status quaestionis, he examines the relationship among the concepts of way, truth and life in the past studies. In this regard, he pays special attention to the interpretation by the church fa-

¹¹ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 82.

¹² Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 82–84.

¹³ Michaelis, “ὁδός”, 84.

¹⁴ A. Gros, *Je suis la route. Le thème de la route dans la Bible* (Bruges 1961). This work includes five chapters. In the first chapter, Gros presents the important vocabularies for way and their various usages. The second chapter is concerned with the historical road of the people of God, including the route and journey of the patriarchs and the exodus. In the third chapter, the focus is on the progressive spiritualization of the way by paying attention to the prophetic literature (Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah) and Psalms and on the ritualization of the way by considering the feasts of Israel. The attention of the fourth chapter is on the completion of the way in the person of Christ. Gros sees in Christ the new Moses and the new Israel. According to him, the paschal mystery of Christ is the exodus of Christ, and in the exodus of Christ our exodus is realized. The final chapter discusses the new way of the Church in the light of the New Testament.

¹⁵ Gros, *Je suis la route*, 99.

¹⁶ Gros, *Je suis la route*, 103.

¹⁷ Gros, *Je suis la route*, 103–104.

¹⁸ Gros, *Je suis la route*, 104.

¹⁹ Gros, *Je suis la route*, 104.

²⁰ I. De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie, la vérité et la vie (Jn 14,6)”, *NRTh* 88 (1966), 907–942. This study can be found as a part of his monumental work *La vérité dans Saint Jean. Le Christ et la vérité, L’Esprit et la vérité* (AnBib 73; Rome 1977) I, 241–278.

thers, who are often influenced by Greek philosophy. Potterie thinks that John 14,2–3 is inspired by the exodus event, where God goes ahead to seek a place for his people for camping (Deut 1,29–33).²¹ He believes that the focus in 14,6 is on the metaphor of way and that the other two terms (truth and life) explain the way and, therefore, he regards the first *καί* as exegetical.²² He rejects gnostic or Greek parallels as the literary background of John 14,6 and insists that this verse should be understood in the sense present in the Jewish tradition.²³ For him, 14,6 is an instance of the originality and novelty of Johannine formulation.²⁴ Truth and life are not considered as the goal of the way.²⁵ Jesus is the way because he is the truth and the life.²⁶ Jesus is the way to the Father because he gives the life of the Father by means of truth or in the truth revealed by him and gives access to the knowledge of and communion with the Father.²⁷

According to Helmut Gollwitzer, the three concepts of way, truth and life refer to the direction, meaning and purpose of human life respectively.²⁸ Christ is the way because he is one with the Father (10,30).²⁹ Our “coming” to God is made possible because of God’s coming to us.³⁰ Gollwitzer beautifully explains how Jesus becomes the way to the Father as follows:

die Wahrheit Gottes und das Leben Gottes gehören in den geschlossenen Kreis des Lebens zwischen dem Vater und dem Sohn; hier gibt es keinen Zugang von außen für einen in diesen Kreis einbrechen wollenden Menschen. Die Öffnung dieses Kreises geht nicht von außen nach innen, sondern nur von innen nach außen. Nur dadurch, dass der geschlossene Kreis des göttlichen Lebens zwischen Vater und Sohn sich nach außen öffnet und ein Ausbruch nach außen geschieht, gibt es dann auch den ‘Weg’ zu dem Vater.³¹

For John, the coming to the Father is identical with the coming of the Father to us in Jesus Christ.³² Gollwitzer holds that the exclusivism of the New Testament is inherited from Judaism.³³

Frank Charles Fensham points out that there are two problems with regard to the interpretation of John 14,6: a semantic problem in which we have to discover the precise sphere of the meaning of way, truth and life and a gram-

²¹ De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie”, 915.

²² De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie”, 915–917.

²³ De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie”, 917–926.

²⁴ De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie”, 926.

²⁵ De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie”, 927.

²⁶ De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie”, 929.

²⁷ De la Potterie, “Je suis la voie”, 929, 933, 937.

²⁸ Gollwitzer, “Außer Christus”, 172.

²⁹ Gollwitzer, “Außer Christus”, 172.

³⁰ Gollwitzer, “Außer Christus”, 180.

³¹ Gollwitzer, “Außer Christus”, 180.

³² Gollwitzer, “Außer Christus”, 180.

³³ Gollwitzer, “Außer Christus”, 181–182.

mathematical problem in which we have to ascertain the precise function of the three words and their relation to each other.³⁴ When Jesus says, “I am the way”, he implies, “I am the way of God, I am the way which leads to God; I am not a human way, but a way which is not understood by mankind”.³⁵ Fensham remarks, “The three concepts appear as predicate independently, but are also connected as a unity. They are bound into a close unity by the subject ἐγὼ εἶμι without either sacrificing their sphere of meaning or giving up their unity. It is thus impossible to fix the meaning of one concept, say way, without considering truth and life”.³⁶ The saying in 14,6 implies that in Jesus Christ there is “a way of life, a genuineness and truthfulness as well as real life, everlasting life, which gives all Christians an eschatological hope”.³⁷

Margaret Pamment tries to examine the apparently contradictory metaphors of path and residence in the Gospel and shows how they are related to each other, nevertheless.³⁸ Since the sheep follow the shepherd through the door to find the pasture, Jesus’ way of life makes him both a door and a shepherd.³⁹ The daily experience of walking along a path makes the metaphor, “Jesus’ life is the way” readily comprehensible.⁴⁰ Since Jesus’ life is the way, his disciples are those who follow his way of life (1,37–44; 8,12; 12,19.26; 18,15; 21,20.22) or draw back from it (6,66; 16,32).⁴¹ “I am the way” can imply, “My life shows the way to God”.⁴² In the light of 14,2–3, it is possible to suppose that the way in which Jesus directs his disciples leads to a permanent dwelling with God.⁴³

In the article “The Gospel of John as a Document of Faith in a Pluralistic Culture”, one of the three concerns of Alan Culpepper is the issue of interpreting the exclusive claims of the Gospel like 14,6 in a pluralistic culture.⁴⁴ He finds in John 1,9 the basis for the notion of “cosmic Christ” and believes that John’s Logos allows Christians to affirm that the adherents of other religious traditions may come to know God through the work of the cosmic

³⁴ F. C. Fensham, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”, *Neot* 2 (1968), 81.

³⁵ Fensham, “I am the Way”, 84.

³⁶ Fensham, “I am the Way”, 86.

³⁷ Fensham, “I am the Way”, 87.

³⁸ M. Pamment, “Path and Residence Metaphors in the Fourth Gospel”, *Theology* 88 (1985), 118–124. Pamment misses the point when she thinks that path and residence are contradictory metaphors because John uses a lot of metaphors and it is not his concern to maintain the logical consistency between various elements of different metaphors.

³⁹ Pamment, “Path and Residence”, 120.

⁴⁰ Pamment, “Path and Residence”, 120.

⁴¹ Pamment, “Path and Residence”, 119.

⁴² Pamment, “Path and Residence”, 120.

⁴³ Pamment, “Path and Residence”, 123.

⁴⁴ R. A. Culpepper, “The Gospel of John as a Document of Faith in a Pluralistic Culture”, *What is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. F. Segovia (Atlanta 1996), 121–127.

Christ.⁴⁵ However, Culpepper goes beyond the boundaries of the Gospel when he thinks that its exclusivist claims must be understood “in the context of the opening claim that the revelation that came through Jesus Christ is the same as that which is universally present in the Logos”.⁴⁶ The Gospel may allow us to think that the Logos can enlighten anyone at any time without boundaries. But it does not hold a perspective that the revelation that came through the historical Jesus is “the same” as that which is universally present in the Logos. Moreover, it is difficult to explain in what respects the cosmic Christ and the historical Jesus are both the same and different. But later, in the article “Inclusivism and Exclusivism in the Fourth Gospel”, Culpepper becomes aware of the inclusivism of the Gospel of John.⁴⁷ He categorizes both the inclusivism and the exclusivism of the Gospel into social and theological. Theological exclusivism is further divided into soteriological determinism, Christological exclusivism and fideistic exclusivism. Theological inclusivism is further divided into universal election and Logos Christology. He considers 14,6 as the clearest expression of John’s Christological exclusivism. He points out that the exclusivism of the Gospel should be balanced by its inclusivism.

In the monograph *‘I Am’ in John’s Gospel*, David Mark Ball examines systematically all forms of ἐγὼ εἶμι-sayings in the Gospel and discusses their literary function, background and theological implications.⁴⁸ He analyses the immediate literary context of 14,6 and follows Ignace de la Potterie in his understanding of the relationship among the three concepts in 14,6.⁴⁹ Jesus’ declaration to be the way, the truth and the life should be understood in the light of where he is going and the way to get there.⁵⁰ Truth and life are to be regarded as another explanation of how Jesus is the way.⁵¹ Ball suggests that the meaning of the phrase “the way of the Lord” in 1,23 may have a bearing on the meaning of ὁδός in John 14.⁵² He detects various links between the context of Isa 40,3 and that of John 1,23 and 14,6 and also makes allusions to many way passages from Isa 42,16; 43,19; 48,17; 57,15; 62,10; Mal 2,8; 3,1.⁵³ He believes that the uses of the term “way” in Isaiah provide a sufficient basis to think that Jesus’ claim to be the way to the Father at least al-

⁴⁵ Culpepper, “The Gospel of John as a Document of Faith”, 124.

⁴⁶ Culpepper, “The Gospel of John as a Document of Faith”, 123.

⁴⁷ A. Culpepper, “Inclusivism and Exclusivism in the Fourth Gospel”, *Word, Theology and Community in John*, ed. J. Painter et al. (St. Louis 2002), 85–108.

⁴⁸ D. M. Ball, *‘I Am’ in John’s Gospel. Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* (JSNTSS 124; Sheffield 1996).

⁴⁹ Ball, *I Am*, 119–126.

⁵⁰ Ball, *I Am*, 126.

⁵¹ Ball, *I Am*, 126.

⁵² Ball, *I Am*, 232, n. 4.

⁵³ Ball, *I Am*, 233–240.

ludes in part to Isaianic usage.⁵⁴ According to Ball, the possibility of basing Jesus' self-identification as the way on Isaiah's concept of "the way of the Lord" is strengthened by the fact that the Qumran community was called "the Way".⁵⁵ Finally, Ball also considers the possibility that the way, the truth and the life may refer to the Torah in the Old Testament (cf. Deut 8,6; Ps 119,15.30.37).⁵⁶ The weakness of Ball's positions is that he points out too many texts as the background for the designation of Jesus as the way in 14,6a. It seems that the addition, "the truth and the life" confounds him and he is not able to stick to one view. Moreover, he keeps silent about the background of 14,6b.

In his article, Reinhold Mayer considers the expulsion from the synagogue as the historical context for the Gospel of John as a whole.⁵⁷ He does not examine 14,6 in its context but notices that the concepts of way, truth and life in the Old Testament are identified with the Torah.⁵⁸ He believes that the Johannine Jesus can claim to be the way, the truth and the life because he is the personified Word of God.⁵⁹

In the monograph *Ich bin es*, Christian Cebulj examines John 14,6 in the immediate context of 14,1–11, which he divides into three units, vv. 1–4, vv. 5–7, vv. 7–11.⁶⁰ It is not made clear whether he regards v. 7 as a transition. He considers vv. 4–11 as "eine Art Kompendium johanneischer Theologie".⁶¹ He thinks that the concepts of truth and life explain the way metaphor and believes that vv. 7–11 form an exposition of v. 6.⁶² In his view, the troubling of the hearts of the disciples should be understood as the troubling of the faith identity of the Johannine circle.⁶³ Cebulj considers 14,6 as an expression that originated in the context of "the stigmatized situation" of the Johannine circle as a result of their conflict with the Jews and their expulsion from the synagogue.⁶⁴ He writes, "Mit dem ἐγὼ εἶμι-Word vom Weg zeigt E, daß der joh

⁵⁴ Ball, *I Am*, 237.

⁵⁵ Ball, *I Am*, 237.

⁵⁶ Ball, *I Am*, 240.

⁵⁷ R. Mayer, "'Ich bin der Weg, die Wahrheit und das Leben'. Ein Versuch über das Johannes-Evangelium aus Anlass der neu erwachten Debatte zur Judenmission", *Johannes Aenigmaticus. Studien zum Johannesevangelium für Herbert Leroy*, ed. S. Schreiber and A. Stimpfle (Regensburg 2000), 184–185.

⁵⁸ Mayer, "Ich bin der Weg", 190–192.

⁵⁹ Mayer, "Ich bin der Weg", 192–194.

⁶⁰ C. Cebulj, *Ich bin es. Studien zur Identitätsbildung im Johannesevangelium* (SBB 44; Stuttgart 2000), 219–234.

⁶¹ Cebulj, *Ich bin es*, 221.

⁶² Cebulj, *Ich bin es*, 221.

⁶³ Cebulj, *Ich bin es*, 227.

⁶⁴ Cebulj, *Ich bin es*, 229.

Kreis nicht in seiner stigmatisierten Lage verharren muß, sondern in Jesus einen Weg hat, auf dem ἀλήθεια und ζωή zu finden sind”.⁶⁵

For James Hamilton Charlesworth, John 14,6 is an embarrassment.⁶⁶ As his introductory words suggest, this is due to his intense desire to please the persons of other religions, especially the Jews. He thinks that the exclusive claim in 14,6 is to initiate or to inflame hatred against Jews and misrepresentative of the fundamental message of Jesus.⁶⁷ He thinks that 14,6a is directed to those in the community and 14,6b to those outside the community.⁶⁸ He believes that 14,6b is an anti-Jewish and sectarian statement and argues that 14,6b is a redactional expansion to 14,6a.⁶⁹ Therefore, for him, John 14,6b is a relic of the past and not the Word of God for our time.⁷⁰ It is, in fact, his desires that dictate to him what is to be found in the text. I will later critically evaluate Charlesworth’s arguments and make a response to them.⁷¹

The main concern of John Ashton in his article “Riddles and Mysteries. The Way, the Truth and the Life” is to examine the riddles in the Gospel in the light of Jesus’ return to the Father, exposed in John 8,21–24 and 13,31–14,6.⁷² Ashton believes that the Johannine motif of the way originates in the Jewish wisdom tradition.⁷³

Michael Theobald thinks that the saying in John 14,6 originally had an independent existence of its own.⁷⁴ He notices that it is shaped by an *inclusio* and has a chiasmic structure.⁷⁵ In his view, the semantic emphasis in 14,6a is on the term δόξ and in 14,6b on “through me”.⁷⁶ He believes that the saying in 14,6 in “the original form” (Urgestalt) was like this, “I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through me”.⁷⁷ If Jesus were only the way and not the truth and the life, i.e., the destination, he would become “superfluous” (überflüssig) when the destination (the Father) was reached.⁷⁸ Since this original form did not satisfactorily represent the evangelist’s Christological per-

⁶⁵ Cebulj, *Ich bin es*, 233.

⁶⁶ Charlesworth, “The Gospel of John: Exclusivism”, 493–513.

⁶⁷ Charlesworth, “The Gospel of John: Exclusivism”, 493.

⁶⁸ Charlesworth, “The Gospel of John: Exclusivism”, 494.

⁶⁹ Charlesworth, “The Gospel of John: Exclusivism”, 494–513.

⁷⁰ Charlesworth, “The Gospel of John: Exclusivism”, 510.

⁷¹ See pp. 185–193, 352–353.

⁷² J. Ashton, “Riddles and Mysteries. The Way, the Truth and the Life”, *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. R. T. Fortna and T. Thatcher (Louisville 2001), 333–342.

⁷³ Ashton, “Riddles and Mysteries”, 340. For a critical review of Ashton’s positions, see Tack, *John 14,6 in Light of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, 109–110.

⁷⁴ M. Theobald, *Herrenworte im Johannevangelium* (HBS 34; Freiburg 2002), 305.

⁷⁵ Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 307.

⁷⁶ Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 308.

⁷⁷ Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 311–312.

⁷⁸ Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 311.

spective, he had to add “truth and life”.⁷⁹ Theobald also examines the background of the way motif in the Old Testament, the writings of Philo and in the New Testament and its reception by the evangelist.⁸⁰ He writes, “Jesus und der Weg sind derart *identisch*, dass die Begegnung mit dem gegenwärtigen Christus im Glauben jetzt schon die Begegnung jenes mit ihm eröffneten Weges bedeutet”.⁸¹ In his view, the conception of Jesus as the way cannot be understood in the future-oriented eschatological sense apart from the concepts of truth and life.⁸²

Reginald Ernest Oscar White believes that Jesus’ claim in 14,6 should be interpreted in the light of Christ’s universal and eternal mediation in creation (1,1–5) and in revelation (1,18; 5,19; 7,16; 8,28; 9,4; 12,49; 14,10.24.31, etc.).⁸³ Behind 14,6 there lies John’s dominant thought that Jesus stands between God and the human being (1,18).⁸⁴ He believes that the universal Christ may mediate divine light and power wherever people seek in sincerity and truth (cf. 4,23–24).⁸⁵ He thinks that John understood Jesus’ words in 14,6 “not as denying there could be any valid religious experience outside the Christian creed, church and commitment, but as affirming the far larger, more wonderful truth that all glimpses of divine reality come only through Christ, the way to God, the truth of God, and the life of God, the light that lighteneth every soul that is willing to learn”.⁸⁶

Angelo Colacrai notices the antecedents of “the way and the truth and the life” in the Old Testament usage, especially in “the way of truth” and “the way of life”.⁸⁷ According to him, “Gv 14,6 è un insieme descrittivo di Gesù come salvatore del mondo in quanto Maestro e Signore”.⁸⁸ Jesus is true because he is the image and the resemblance of the Father in his words and works.⁸⁹ Being God-man, Jesus presents himself as a synthesis of heaven and earth.⁹⁰ In John 14,6b, Jesus draws attention to the Father as an eschatological point of arrival but contemporarily presents himself as a unique way for the disciples to reach God.⁹¹

⁷⁹ Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 311–312.

⁸⁰ Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 312–322.

⁸¹ Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 321.

⁸² Theobald, *Herrenworte*, 321.

⁸³ R. E. O. White, “No One Comes to the Father but by Me”, *ExpTim* 113 (2002), 117.

⁸⁴ White, “No One Comes to the Father”, 117.

⁸⁵ White, “No One Comes to the Father”, 117.

⁸⁶ White, “No One Comes to the Father”, 117.

⁸⁷ A. Colacrai, “Gesù Cristo Salvatore e Signore Via Verità e Vita, Secondo Gv 14,6”, *Studia Missionalia* 52 (2003), 117–168.

⁸⁸ Colacrai, “Gesù Cristo Salvatore e Signore”, 137.

⁸⁹ Colacrai, “Gesù Cristo Salvatore e Signore”, 157.

⁹⁰ Colacrai, “Gesù Cristo Salvatore e Signore”, 164.

⁹¹ Colacrai, “Gesù Cristo Salvatore e Signore”, 165.

Craig R. Koester has made a good attempt to deal with the problem of exclusivism associated with 14,6.⁹² He presupposes humanity's separation from God and thinks that the primary concern of the evangelist is to show how people can come to know God.⁹³ The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world is that people come to God, know him and believe in him.⁹⁴ The claim "No one comes to the Father" assumes humanity's estrangement from God through sin.⁹⁵ Since this is a fundamental human problem, not only the Jews who oppose him, but also his inner circle of disciples are unable to go where Jesus goes (7,34; 13,33).⁹⁶ The phrase "except through me" introduces the possibility of relationship with God in spite of human estrangement from God.⁹⁷ Before Jesus speaks of being the way, he speaks of going the way through his death and resurrection.⁹⁸

Koester says, "To call Jesus 'the way' is to call him 'the Crucified and Risen One'".⁹⁹ He believes that "the promise of the way, which is mentioned in Isaiah, finds its realization in Jesus' death for the sake of others".¹⁰⁰ The statement "I am the way" implies that Jesus reveals God through his death and resurrection.¹⁰¹ Jesus is the way because he went the way of the cross and resurrection to reveal God's love for a world that was separated from him.¹⁰² Therefore, "it would be exclusivistic to say that Jesus is the way for some but not all, for it would mean that Jesus reveals God's love only for some but not for all".¹⁰³ He rejects the view of some scholars that Johannine Christianity is a kind of introverted sect on the basis of the Gospel's persistent emphasis on sending (cf. 17,18; 20,21–22) and the community's openness to include the Jews, the Samaritans and the Greeks alike.¹⁰⁴

⁹² C. R. Koester, "Jesus as the Way to the Father in Johannine Theology (John 14,6)", *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel. Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar*, ed. G. Van Belle et al. (BETL 184; Leuven 2005), 117–133. Cf. idem, "Jesus the Way, the Cross and the World According to the Gospel of John", *Word & World* 21 (2001), 360–369; idem, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel. Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis 2003), 287–299; idem, *The Word of Life. A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids 2008), 209–214.

⁹³ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 117.

⁹⁴ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 120.

⁹⁵ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 122–123.

⁹⁶ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 123–125.

⁹⁷ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 125.

⁹⁸ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 127.

⁹⁹ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 128.

¹⁰⁰ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 129.

¹⁰¹ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 130.

¹⁰² Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 133.

¹⁰³ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 133.

¹⁰⁴ Koester, "Jesus as the Way", 118–119.

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