

W. ELLIOT LUO

Eschatology and Dualism in the Johannine Epistles

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zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
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W. ELLIOT LUO, 1973; 2023 PhD (University of Otago); Lay Reader, Diocese of Saskatoon, Anglican Church of Canada.
orcid.org/0009-0005-7238-6736

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On the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
June, 2024

Wei Elliot Luo

Ave, Maria!

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Eschatology, the study of the end of times or the last things, is a key field of research in the theology presented in Johannine literature.¹ The study of Johannine theology typically involves analysing both the Gospel and the Epistles of John and making comparisons between them since there are numerous connections between the two. Theoretically, the study of eschatology is deemed equally important to both the Gospel and the Epistles. However, closer examination reveals that the study of eschatology in the Epistles has been neglected and insufficiently investigated.

Most academic studies of Johannine eschatology have focused on the Gospel, and the body of discussion on eschatology in the Epistles is brief and lacks systematic analysis. For instance, Section 12.6 *Johannine Eschatology* of A. Köstenberger's *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* only devotes a short paragraph to the eschatology in 1 John.² Jörg Frey's three-volume *Die johanneische Eschatologie* is a thorough and comprehensive work in this field. However, only a few short chapters are on the Epistles, and Frey does not discuss some epistolary passages with eschatological connotations.³

¹ In this book, the term “the Johannine literature” refers to the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John when they are mentioned together. Though the book of Revelation is sometimes also attributed to the same author as the Gospel and the Epistles, it will not be included in the definition of Johannine literature because of its particular genre and style. For a discussion on this issue, see Jörg Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie III: Die eschatologische Verkündigung in den johanneischen Texten*, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, WUNT 117 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 2–3. Also see Martin Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, WUNT 67 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993), 311.

² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 295–98.

³ Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie* 3. For example, “§3 Eschatologische Schultraditionen in den Johannesbriefen” (pp 23–29, on 1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 7), “§ 6 Elemente eschatologischer Verkündigung im zweiten Johannesbrief” (pp 61–69, on 1 John 2:7; 4:2), and “§ 7 Die eschatologische Verkündigung im ersten Johannesbrief” (pp 71–97, on 1 John 2:8, 15–17, 18–27; 4:17), while there are 600 pages in *Die johanneische*

Even monographs and commentaries on the Epistles often overlook the topic of eschatology. In her work, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, Judith Lieu integrates eschatology into the discussions of other themes without dedicating an individual chapter or section to it.⁴ Similarly, Rudolf Schnackenburg's commentary on the Epistles lacks explicit discussion of eschatology, unlike his commentary on the Gospel, which contains in-depth analyses of eschatology in the Introduction and in Excursus Fourteen.⁵ Raymond Brown's commentary on the Gospel also features a sub-section on eschatology in the Introduction, but in his commentary on the Epistles, the discussion of eschatology is only a bullet point in the comparison between the Gospel and the Epistles.⁶ For sure, all the commentaries on the Epistles do contain discussion of eschatology, but their focus is primarily on interpreting individual passages with eschatological significance. As a result, these discussions are confined to the context of the related passages and lack a systematic discussion considering all three epistles.

It is possible that the shorter length of the Epistles is responsible for the lack of attention given to the study of eschatology in them. However, the importance of this theological theme in the Epistles must not be underestimated. Therefore, it is crucial to give more attention to the study of eschatology in the Epistles to demonstrate its significance, which is as crucial, if not more so, than in the Gospel of John.

The discussion of eschatology in the Epistles also reveals ambiguity and inconsistency compared with that in the Gospel. Most discussions on eschatology in the Gospel argue that it is primarily a realised or present eschatology because the majority of prophecies concerning the eschaton or the end age in Judaism have been realised or brought to fulfilment in the present age in the Gospel of John (e.g., John 3:18; 14:20).⁷ In contrast, discussions on

Eschatologie 3. Notably, 1 John 1:5–7; 2:29–23; 2:28; 3:2; 3:14–16 as eschatological passages are not included in Frey's discussion.

⁴ Judith M. Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 130.

⁵ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John: Introduction and Commentary on Chapters 1–4*, ed. Serafin de Ausejo et al., trans. Kevin Smyth, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1968), 159–60, and Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John: Commentary on Chapters 5–12*, ed. Serafin de Ausejo et al., trans. Cecily Hastings et al., Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1980), 426–38.

⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, AB 30 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 27–28.

⁷ For example: Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I–XII)*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), cxvii, Schnackenburg, *Gospel of John 1–4*, 159, and also Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 320–21.

eschatology in the Epistles present a different picture. Some suggest that the Epistles adopt the view of the futuristic or apocalyptic eschatology mainly because of expectations such as the Parousia (e.g., 1 John 3:2) and the coming of the Antichrist (1 John 2:18).⁸ Others prefer not to define whether eschatology is futuristic or realised because certain realised elements also appear in the Epistles (e.g., 1 John 5:13).⁹

These contradictory views mean that most scholars do not present a clear and appropriate understanding of the eschatology in the Epistles. Given the close connections between the Gospel and the Epistles, particularly the common authorship, as I will argue below, continuity or coherence in the eschatological views between the two might be expected. It is possible that the author further developed his realised eschatological view in the Epistles or shifted from a realised view to a futuristic view due to changing circumstances. However, only a clear view of eschatology can provide a good answer. It would be unusual for the author to avoid taking a clear stand in the Epistles, which I will argue were written after the Gospel, after explicitly presenting a primarily realised eschatology in the Gospel. Such views even lead to C. H. Dodd's question about the common authorship between the Epistles and the Gospel.¹⁰

Moreover, evidence for the argument of a futuristic eschatology in the Epistles is usually given as the coming of the Antichrist (1 John 2:18) and the Parousia (1 John 3:2), which are expected to happen in the future, either imminent or remote.¹¹ However, it is oversimplified to classify the eschatology in the Epistles as "futuristic" merely because of the presence of some futuristic elements. While futuristic events such as the Parousia appears in the Gospel (e.g., John 21:22), its eschatology is still primarily regarded as "realised." As noted already, the coming of the Antichrist (e.g., 1 John 2:18) is another element often cited as evidence for futuristic eschatology. However, it remains controversial whether this event is yet to happen or has already been realised.¹² Thus,

⁸ For example, Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 298, also Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 27, Kenneth Grayston, *The Johannine Epistles*, ed. Matthew Black, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 12–13, and Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, NAC 38 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 35.

⁹ For example, Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 136–37, and Judith M. Lieu, *The Second and Third Epistles of John: History and Background*, ed. John Riches, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 192–93, and D. Moody Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, ed. James L. Mays, Interpretation (Louisville, TN: John Knox, 1991), 13.

¹⁰ C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles*, MNTC (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), liv.

¹¹ For example, Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 336–37. Brown rendered the verb ἔρχεται in the future tense as "will come."

¹² For example, David Rensberger prefers to describe it as a realised event, see, David K. Rensberger, *1 John, 2 John, 3 John*, ed. Victor Paul Furnish, ANTC (Nashville, TN:

only when the nature of the Antichrist event is clarified, can it be considered a factor in the classification of the eschatology of the Epistles.

Another point worth noting is the discussion on dualism presented in the Epistles of John. Scholars have long argued that Johannine theology was strongly influenced by dualistic religions such as Gnosticism.¹³ As a result, many commentaries on the Epistles include discussions on the Gnostic influences on dualistic characteristics. However, there are not many discussions on the influence of dualism on eschatology, and the origin of dualism remains obscure.¹⁴ With closer examination, it becomes evident that nearly all the dualistic motifs in the Epistles are also eschatological motifs, such as light and darkness (e.g., 1 John 2:8). While many scholars treat the dualistic expressions in the Johannine literature as a form of “dualism,” some recent studies argue that they are better understood as eschatological motifs with dualistic features, rather than genuine dualism.¹⁵ Apart from this recent controversy, almost no studies have fully explored eschatology and the dualistic expressions in the Johannine literature together.¹⁶

1.2 Literature Review

Most of the discussions of eschatology in the Epistles of John are found in commentaries. While some mention it in the introductory section, the majority of these commentaries discuss eschatology in the textual analysis, resulting in a lack of systematic discussions. Furthermore, since the study of eschatology is a related topic in the development of modern theology, early commentaries to the Epistles of John also do not show much interest in this topic and thus it was barely discussed. For example, Wescott’s commentary almost has no mention of eschatology.

Abingdon, 1997), 42, and Daniel Akin suggests that it will happen in the future, see Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 35.

¹³ Gnosticism is a complicated issue and it will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁴ For example, Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 59–65, and Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles: Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 90–95.

¹⁵ For example, Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 65–67. Dualism as another complicated issue will also be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁶ For example, John Painter and Schnackenburg have rather specific discussions on dualism in the Epistles. However, Painter’s discussion focuses more on the images of light and darkness and Schnackenburg emphasised that the dualistic language in 1 John has an ethical focus. Neither of them associate dualism with eschatology. See John Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., SP 18 (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2002), 382–85, and Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles*, 74–76.

A. E. Brooke, an early Johannine scholar and commentator, has suggested that the epistolary author expressed an imminent expectation of the Parousia in his works. According to Brooke, such an expectation reflected the general attitude of Christians at time the Epistles were written and was also a modification of that in the Gospel of John. In the Epistles, signs like the advent of the Antichrist indicated that the expectation of the Parousia was closer than that in the Gospel. However, Brooke also suggested that concepts such as the coming of the Antichrist and the Parousia need to be understood as symbolical expressions of spiritual presence as eschatology in the Gospel and the Epistles has been spiritualised.¹⁷ Brooke's argument is supported by his comments on the passages concerned. For instance, he suggested that the spiritualisation of eschatology and the concept of a final day of judgment actually do not exclude each other (1 John 4:18).¹⁸

Plummer and C. H. Dodd are among the earlier commentators who did not conduct particular discussions on eschatology in their commentaries of the Epistles. However, they expressed their opinions in their discussions of other topics and textual comments and analyses. They also did not express their opinions in an explicit way. However, they suggested that eschatology in the Epistles is in a more primitive form compared to realised eschatology presented in the Gospel of John.¹⁹

According to his commentary on the Epistles, Bultmann did not consider eschatology to be a crucial aspect and therefore did not extensively discuss it. Nevertheless, Bultmann suggested that, in the Gospel, events such as the coming and going of Jesus are eschatological events and convey the connotation of realised eschatology.²⁰ In the Epistles, according to Bultmann, these eschatological events are proclaimed in a further realised way. For example, the Word

¹⁷ A. E. Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), xxi.

¹⁸ Brooke, *The Johannine Epistles*, 124, cf. 37, 51–52, 75–76.

¹⁹ Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles*, liii–liv, 51, cf. A. Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916), 95–96. In the early studies of eschatology, “the primitive form” refers to the expectation of the imminent future in the early Church, “its view of the nearness of the end, the immediate coming of the Messiah (Jesus) on the clouds of heaven to establish the Kingdom of God; the resurrection of the dead, in the flesh, before the impending judgment; the reward of ‘life’ or condemnation to follow; the extermination or annihilation of evil, or of its power over the world; and the final consummation.” See Frederick C. Grant, “The Permanent Value of the Primitive Christian Eschatology,” *The Biblical World* 49, no. 3 (1917): 157, also see E. C. Dewick, *Primitive Christian Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 232–43.

²⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 9. Also see Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. George R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 157, 431. For example, in his comments to John 3:19 and 12:31, Bultmann suggested that eschatology in these verses is realised because eschatological judgment has happened.

(λόγος) is proclaimed as “from the beginning” (ἐν ἀρχῇ) in John 1:1 to emphasise its pre-existence. In 1 John 1:1, it is also said to be “from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς). Therefore, it is the *manifestation* of the Word that is emphasised in the Epistles.²¹ In addition, Bultmann only regarded the Antichrist as a historicised figure and his appearance did not carry eschatological significance.²² Although Bultmann recognised that the Christian faith includes the hope of an eschatological future, he believed that this hope has been historicised because it is based on the historical event of Jesus’ coming to the world.²³

Howard Marshall’s view on eschatology is that it is not necessary to distinguish between the present age and the coming or future age as there is no such differentiation of time, given that Jesus Christ is the central figure of eschatology. For believers, however, their primary concern needs to be the present age. According to Marshall, there is no need to demythologise the figure of the Antichrist as Bultmann did because the epistolary author focuses more on what the false teachers were doing at present.²⁴ While the Parousia is an event expected in the future, as suggested by Marshall, its time is not a cause for concern because its significance lies in encouraging believers of the present age to remain steadfast in their faith in God.²⁵

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Schnackenburg in his discussion suggested that eschatology in the Gospel is characterised by realised aspects. However, futuristic elements are still retained, and they should not be attributed to the later redaction as suggested by Bultmann.²⁶ For the Epistles, the stance Schnackenburg adopted was unclear. For passages such as the presence of the last hour (1 John 2:18), Schnackenburg agreed that its eschatology is coherent with that in the Gospel.²⁷ For other passages involving the Parousia (e.g., 1 John 2:28) and the day of judgment in the future (e.g., 1 John 4:17), he suggested that they are closer to futuristic eschatology.²⁸ However,

²¹ Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles*, 9. For Bultmann, “beginning” (ἀρχή) does not refer to creation but “to the origin of the historical event ‘made manifest’ (φανερωθῆναι), and not the temporal ἀρχή or given time at which the Christian message encountered the readers (or the believers).” Thus, by saying “from the beginning” the epistolary author indicates “the historic fulfilment of the proclamation.” Note 10.

²² Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles*, 35–36. Also see Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 34. In this book, Bultmann suggested that the false teachers played the role of the Antichrist and this event was mythologised.

²³ Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles*, 47.

²⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, ed. F. F. Bruce, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 149–51.

²⁵ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 164–75.

²⁶ Schnackenburg, *Gospel of John 1–4*, 159–60, and Schnackenburg, *Gospel of John 5–12*, 426–38.

²⁷ Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles*, 133–34.

²⁸ Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles*, 222–23.

Schnackenburg did not state explicitly whether the eschatology in the Epistles could be regarded as “realised” or “futuristic,” leaving it up to the readers to decide.

Raymond Brown straightforwardly pointed out that the eschatology of the Epistles differs from that in the Gospel. According to Brown, the reason for such a difference is that the Epistles historicise the eschatology in the Gospel. For example, the “last hour” in the Gospel refers to the whole revelatory event embodied in Jesus. In the Epistles, according to Brown, it is indicated that there could be a series of “hours” and the “hour” of Jesus was only an initial one with more to follow.²⁹ Also, judgment and eternal life as eschatological events have come upon believers through Jesus Christ. In the Epistles, however, judgment in the future is still important and should not be neglected because it is part of the teaching believers have learned from the beginning.³⁰ Though the epistolary author also admitted that believers have possessed eternal life at present, he indicated that it could not be a static possession and must manifest itself in the way one “walks” (1 John 2:6).³¹ Thus, the epistolary author included the realised eschatological elements in the Epistles but only regarded them as a foundation of confidence for the hope in the future (e.g., 1 John 2:28).³² Therefore, according to Brown, the author intends to make a balance between realised and futuristic eschatology as indicated in 1 John 3:2–3.³³ In addition, Brown also suggested that there is a negative side to the author’s reviving of futuristic eschatology, which “is the use of Jewish apocalyptic language to characterise the secessionists as Antichrists and false prophets (e.g., 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:1–3),”³⁴ because that makes the interpretation more complicated.³⁵

D. Moody Smith also suggested that the Epistles “revive the primitive Christian belief in the imminent return of Jesus and the last judgment (1 John 2:8; 2:28; 3:2).”³⁶ At the same time, realised eschatology is also a significant part in the Epistles as true light has been shining (1 John 2:8), and the apocalyptic figure of the Antichrist has also arrived (1 John 2:18; 2 John 7). According to Moody Smith, both realised and apocalyptic eschatology are prominent in the Epistles of John.³⁷

David Rensberger held a similar view to Moody Smith because he suggested that the realised pattern of eschatology in the Gospel also appears in the

²⁹ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 28.

³⁰ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 99.

³¹ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 99.

³² Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 100.

³³ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 100.

³⁴ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 100.

³⁵ For example. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 332–37. The note for 1 John 2:18b.

³⁶ Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 13.

³⁷ Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 13.

Epistles (e.g., 1 John 2:8; 3:14; 5:12) and the orientation toward futuristic events such as the Parousia and the last judgment is also common in these letters (e.g., 1 John 2:28–3:3; 4:17–18). In addition, Rensberger suggested that there is no conflict between these two views as the prominent eschatological concepts such as eternal life could be regarded as both a promise in the future (1 John 2:25) and a present possession (1 John 3:14–15; 5:11–13). Rensberger’s overall perspective, however, still emphasises the present aspect.³⁸

This view is also shared by Daniel Akin but he places more emphasis on the tension between “already” and “not yet.” For Akin, the tension exists between the present realisation of salvation including possessing eternal life and the future consummation such as the coming of the Antichrist, the Parousia, the resurrection, and judgment. In other words, “the world is passing, indicating that the victory of Christ won at the cross is already underway, and yet he awaits a final and climactic resolution.”³⁹

In his commentary to the Epistles, Colin Kruse does not specifically talk about eschatology. Nonetheless, Kruse notices the tension between realised and futuristic eschatology in his interpretation of 1 John 4:3.⁴⁰

Urban von Wahlde’s view is slightly different. He suggests that eschatology in the Gospel’s final version is different from the original one. The original version emphasises realised or non-apocalyptic eschatology including issues such as the present possession of eternal life. The final version, in contrast, shifts to more futuristic or apocalyptic eschatology emphasising future aspects such as judgment.⁴¹ In fact, von Wahlde suggests that the addition of futuristic elements to the Gospel is under the influence of the Epistles.⁴² According to von Wahlde, the epistolary author integrated both realised and futuristic views of eschatology but emphasised the latter following the final version of the Gospel.⁴³ Von Wahlde also suggests that in the Epistles, the ability not to commit sin (e.g., 1 John 3:6–9; 5:16), the possession of eternal life (e.g., 1 John 3:14), and the anointment of the Spirit (e.g., 1 John 2:20, 27) are non-apocalyptic elements nuanced by the author with apocalyptic views.⁴⁴ Moreover, von

³⁸ Rensberger, *1 John, 2 John, 3 John*, 42.

³⁹ Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 35.

⁴⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, ed. D. A. Carson, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 147–48.

⁴¹ Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John Volume 1: Introduction, Analysis, and Reference*, ed. David Noel Freedman, ECC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 207, 490–91. Also see Urban C. von Wahlde, “C. H. Dodd, the Historical Jesus, and Realised Eschatology,” in *Engaging with C. H. Dodd on the Gospel of John*, ed. Tom Thatcher and Catrin H. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 155.

⁴² von Wahlde, “C. H. Dodd, the Historical Jesus, and Realised Eschatology,” 155.

⁴³ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John 1*, 486, also von Wahlde, “C. H. Dodd, the Historical Jesus, and Realised Eschatology,” 156–57.

⁴⁴ von Wahlde, “C. H. Dodd, the Historical Jesus, and Realised Eschatology,” 157–58.

Wahlde suggests that “the last hour” could also be taken as a sign of futuristic eschatology because events such as the physical resurrection and the judgment are part of the last hour but have not happened.⁴⁵ In addition, the present possession of eternal life does not ensure the escapement of judgment in the future because believers are not free from sin (e.g., 1 John 4:17).⁴⁶ The futuristic aspects of eschatology in the Epistles, as suggested by von Wahlde, are influenced by documents such as the Qumran literature and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.⁴⁷

In her monograph on the theology of the Epistles, Judith Lieu does not offer a particular discussion on eschatology. In her other works, Lieu suggests that eschatology in the Epistles focuses more on the present aspect such as the possession of eternal life but the epistolary author demonstrates little interest in the apocalyptic themes such as the Parousia and the final judgment.⁴⁸ In addition, Lieu points out that the dualism in the Epistles suggests a degree of realised eschatology such as “passing from death to life” (1 John 3:14).⁴⁹

Though Jörg Frey does not provide a specific discussion on eschatology in the Epistles of John in his three-volume *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, he nevertheless suggests that there is no contradiction between present and futuristic eschatology in 1 John as suggested by Bultmann and others.⁵⁰ Rather, there is a connection between the two,⁵¹ and the epistolary author used this connection as a way of admonishing his readers in the community.⁵² In his other works, Frey also suggests that in the Epistles the present situation does not rule out the expectation of the day of judgment or the Parousia.⁵³

Ruben Zimmermann further develops Frey’s view. First of all, because of the explicit apocalyptic motifs such as the Parousia (1 John 2:28), the Antichrist (1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 7), and the day of judgment (1 John 3:2), Zimmermann suggests that there is strong futuristic eschatology in the Epistles.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John 1*, 486–87.

⁴⁶ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John 1*, 487–88.

⁴⁷ von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John 1*, 488–90.

⁴⁸ Lieu, *2 and 3 John*, 192–93. Also see Judith M. Lieu, *I, II, & III John: A Commentary*, ed. C. Clifton Black, M. Eugene Boring, and John T. Carroll, 1st ed., NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 8, 17.

⁴⁹ Lieu, *I, II, & III John*, 19.

⁵⁰ Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie 3*, 73.

⁵¹ Jörg Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie I: Ihre Probleme im Spiegel der Forschung seit Reimarus*, WUNT 96 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997), 452.

⁵² Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie 3*, 97.

⁵³ Jörg Frey, “Eschatology in the Gospel of John and in the Johannine Epistles,” in *Eschatology in Antiquity: Forms and Functions*, ed. Hilary Marlow, Karla Pollmann, and Helen van Noord (London: Routledge, 2021), 401.

⁵⁴ Ruben Zimmermann, “Remembering the Future-Eschatology in the Letters of John,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. J. G. Van der Watt, WUNT 315 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 529–30.

Then, Zimmermann also admits that present eschatology in the Epistles is equally significant because apocalyptic events such as passing from death to life (1 John 3:14; 5:12) and victory over evil and the world (1 John 2:13; 5:4) have been realised at present.⁵⁵ However, according to Zimmermann, though present and futuristic eschatology have equal status in the Epistles, they “are not simply placed alongside each other but are expressly related to and mediated with each other.”⁵⁶ As suggested by Zimmermann, the epistolary author used the connection between present and realised eschatology to fulfil a function of appeal. By talking about apocalyptic expectations, the author encouraged his audience to focus on the present, and the admonishment for the present is related to future expectations.⁵⁷

1.3 The Outline of This Study

Based on the views presented above, it is evident that the study of eschatology in the Epistles of John has not been as comprehensive and thorough as it is in the Gospel of John. Thus, this book aims to demonstrate that eschatology is just as significant a part of the theology in the Epistles as it is in the Gospel. Additionally, it will argue that there are more passages in the Epistles carrying eschatological connotations than those usually referred to, and that most of these passages present a realised eschatology, with certain futuristic elements. Finally, the discussion of eschatology in the Epistles will be combined with the discussion of dualism since realised eschatology in the Epistles is conveyed through dualistic expressions, such as light and darkness or life and death.

Chapter Two begins with a survey of eschatology to establish a framework for subsequent discussions. The survey includes a discussion of eschatology in general terms, as well as the eschatology presented in the Old Testament. Furthermore, it covers eschatology in early Judaism, as reflected in the intertestamental literature, as this forms the foundation for the development of eschatology in the later period. This chapter also delves into eschatology in the New Testament, particularly in the Synoptic Gospels. Finally, this chapter concludes by providing an analysis of eschatology in the Gospel of John, with the views of major theologians taken into account. This analysis is important because a good understanding of eschatology in the Gospel of John is necessary to understand the eschatology in the Epistles.

Chapter Three provides a comprehensive background discussion of the Epistles, covering authorship, and the place and date of composition. The relationships between the Epistles and the Gospel are also discussed, including

⁵⁵ Zimmermann, “Eschatology in the Letters of John,” 529–30.

⁵⁶ Zimmermann, “Eschatology in the Letters of John,” 530.

⁵⁷ Zimmermann, “Eschatology in the Letters of John,” 532.

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