The Gift of the Spirit in John 19:30?
A Reconsideration of παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα

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Abstract: Based on insights from the history of interpretation, a Synoptic comparison, linguistic considerations, and narrative observations, I argue that the unusual expression παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα in John 19:30 indicates primarily that Jesus has completely died on the cross; it does not refer mainly to the gift of the Holy Spirit. For intratextual reasons, the reference to the spirit may also point prophetically to what unfolds in the last two chapters of the Gospel of John, but this should not be seen as the primary meaning of the expression found in John 19:30.

Key Words: Gospel of John • spirit • death of Jesus • pneumatology • history of interpretation

Ever since Edwyn Clement Hoskyns (and, less influentially, G. H. C. MacGregor twelve years earlier) introduced the interpretation of John 19:30 that Jesus does not just die and breathe his last but that he, in fact, bestows the Holy Spirit on the church, represented in the people at the foot of the cross (Hoskyns),

1 Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel (2nd rev. ed.; ed. Francis Noel Davey; London: Faber & Faber, 1947) 532 (also already in the first edition, 1940). He supports his view with an argument based on the expression used by John and on the broader context: “This is no fantastic exegesis, since vv. 28-30 record the solemn fulfillment of v. 37-39. The thirst of the believers is assuaged by the rivers of living water which flow from the belly of the Lord, the author having already noted that this referred to the giving of the Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit here recorded must be understood in close connection with the outpouring of the water and the blood (v. 34). The similar association of Spirit and Water and Blood in 1 John v. 8 . . . seems to make this interpretation not only possible, but necessary.” See also David Crump, “Who Gets What? God or Disciples,
the debate concerning the merits of this interpretation has been ongoing and has recently been surveyed by David Crump. Crump notes that the interpretation has been governed by two key questions, provoked by the unique and grammatically curious (lack of indirect object) expression παρέδωκεν τῷ πνεύματι: (1) "To whom does Jesus ‘hand over’ the Spirit? John does not say." (2) "[I]t is unclear how to interpret the πνεύματι. Is John referring to Jesus’ surrender of his human spirit or to his giving up the Holy Spirit?" Crump also proposed a further interpretation of the phrase παρέδωκεν τῷ πνεύματι—that Jesus deposited the His S/Spirit with the Father, in order to be instrumental in its subsequent distribution in chap. 20. Crump presents his interpretation as an alternative to that of the pre-Hoskins era (Jesus expires, often with the association, analogous to Luke, that Jesus entrusts his spirit, i.e., his life, to God), that of the post-Hoskins era (Jesus gives the

Human Spirit or Holy Spirit in John 19:30," NovTS 51 (2009) 78-89; esp. 80; and G. H. C. MacGregor, The Gospel of John (MNTC; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928) 349: "[A]t Jesus’ death his spirit was set free from the limitations of the body that it might be bestowed upon the church (7:39; 26:22)."


3 Crump, "Who Gets What?" 78. See also, e.g., Ludger Schenke, Johannes: Kommentar (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1998) 307: "In vollkommener Freiwilligkeit und Selbsthingabe übergibt er, indem er den Kopf neigt, den Geist, Wemm?" Schenke does not answer the question, however.

4 Crump, "Who Gets What?" 79: "In John 19:30 Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to his heavenly Father in preparation for the future sending of the Spirit to the church."

5 A good example of what would have been current in pre-Hoskins exegesis of John 19:30 is provided by John Bernard in his 1929 commentary (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John [2 vols.; ICC: Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1929] 2.641). Regarding John 19:30, he notes that the term παρέδωκεν denotes a voluntary giving up and recalls John 10:18: "[A] person who is not content with the functions of the Holy Spirit (πνευμάτος) but also desires to take over its function (παρέδωκεν τῷ πνεύματι)."


I. Observations from the History of Interpretation and Reception

Because the interpretation of John 19:30 that is at stake here is almost allegorical in character and constitutes a strongly theological interpretation in the most literal sense of the word, one may suspect that it has its roots in premodern forms...
of exegesis, such as those practiced by early Christian authors, medieval exegetes, and the scholars of the era of the Protestant and Catholic reformations. This is worth testing—and of relevance for the remainder of this contribution—even if Hoskyns and MacGregor were already identified as the originators of this particular exegesis of John 19:30.

A survey of the extant early Christian, medieval, and other precritical exegeses of the Gospel of John shows a surprising unanimity on the subject of the meaning of παρέδωκεν το πνεῦμα, which, in fact, continues into the critical era.8 The authors of the early church and of the medieval church—in fact, scholars up to the early twentieth century—consistently interpreted the phrase as referring to Jesus’ death and not to his giving of the Spirit.9 This is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it shows how novel Hoskyns’s and MacGregor’s exegesis really was. Second, this contrast between the exegesis of the first 1,850 years and the last 75 is especially striking because it may well be assumed that the unusual phrase παρέδωκεν το πνεῦμα must also have been noticed as odd by the native speakers of Greek that are part of this tradition. Even if this happened, however—which does not seem to be the case and therefore gives reason to doubt the emphasis that was placed in twentieth-century exegesis on its odd character—it did not produce an exegesis of the phrase in terms of Jesus’ gift of the Spirit from the cross. For obvious reasons, the exegesis of the past cannot be the measuring rod for the exegesis of the present. Yet it is at the very least a reason for interpretative caution, especially when the interpretation has to do with oddities in the Greek, to which ancient ears may have been better attuned than ours today. Moreover, such oddities must have been assumed never to have been noticed before, even by those who were native speakers and by those who were interested so much in theological, especially Trinitarian, forms of exegesis. The case concerning John 19:30 can, of course, not be judged on the basis of its earlier history of interpretation only; but it is striking, nonetheless, when modern interpreters find more theology in a text than earlier exegese, even if precisely these are often suspected of finding things in texts that are not there. Maybe in this case the silence of the early exegese points toward something about which, indeed, nothing can or needs to be said, because it is not there: Jesus’ gift of the Spirit from the cross.


9 For critical interpretations, see the impressive list of commentaries provided in Crump, “Who Gets What?” 79 n. 2.

In the formulations used by the four evangelists, the Marcian and Lucan verses, both of which use the form ἐξέπνευσεν, are the least striking. Originally meaning “to breathe out,” the verb ἐκπνέει had already taken on the meaning of “expiring” long before these two Gospels were composed. Notably, the verb can also have an object, for example, βίος (“life”), θυμός (“anger,” “passion”), or φραγμός (“life,” “soul”), which may be of some importance for the interpretation of John 19:30. Apparently there were expressions having to do with “blowing away” one’s life that did not clearly indicate its transfer to another person. With regard to the Lucan text, the quotation from Ps 30:6 LXX is striking; it indicates Jesus’ handing over of his spirit to the Father (τοποθετεῖ στὸ πνεῦμα, which, as the context indicates [τοῦτο δὲ εἶπεν ἐξέπνευσεν], can be seen as a commentary on a word of dying that entailed entrusting one’s spirit—that is, oneself—to God, before breathing out that last spirit, in the sense of dying. Compared to this, John depicts the death of Jesus as rather more lonely: Jesus states that things have come to their end (τετέλεσται), and he hands over the spirit, but not to the Father—or at least not explicitly so, and also not with any other indication that he entrusts himself to the Father. At the same time, however, the expression παραδίδοναι denotes a voluntary giving up and is reminiscent of John 10:18 (“I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up”), in contrast to the

10 See, e.g., the eloquent commentary of Hartwig Thoen, “Niemand hat größere Liebe als die, daß er sein Leben hingibt für seine Freunde (Joh 15,13),” in idem, Studien zum Corpus Johannae (WUNT 214; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) 97-110, esp. 110: “Nach der Szene mit der Mutter
Marcan expression, while Luke’s account of Jesus’ last words (παραδόσει το βλέμα μου) also suggests Jesus’ own handing over of his spirit, even if this action is described with ἔξπεμπτον.11

Different from the rather common formulation in Mark and Luke, Matthew uses a somewhat unusual expression (ἀφίκε κεν το βλέμα; cf. Gen 35:18 LXX: 1 Esdr 4:21), as has been duly noted by scholars.12 The most straightforward interpretation of the verse is to understand it to mean “dying” in a rather forceful way, that is, by literally sending his spirit away or, if a gentler meaning of ἀφίκε is to be preferred, by letting the spirit go. The first option may be appealing because of the preceding κράσας φωνή μεγάλη. No noteworthy attempts have been made to interpret this verse in terms of Jesus’ gift of the Spirit, even if the connotation of “sending,” which ἀφίκε is capable of conveying, could well have given rise to that.

For the purposes of this article, the insights gained by this brief Synoptic comparison are the following. First, the Johannine description of Jesus’ expiring is the only one that has given rise to an interpretation in terms of giving the Spirit, rather than Jesus’ simply breathing his last. Second, though Mark and Luke use rather common expressions as far as the Greek is concerned, Luke’s reference to Ps 30:6 LXX might be taken to suggest that Jesus enthrusts his spirit to the Father.13 Still, this does not have to bear any relation to the gift of the Spirit in Luke-Acts, at least not according to most scholars. Third, the Johannine account of Jesus’ expiring and its odd choice of words, compared to both the Lucan (common expression and reference to Ps 30:6 LXX) and Matthean (curious expression) accounts, do not necessitate an interpretation that goes any further than that of the Matthean and Lucan accounts. The curious expression in Matthew could be construed as Jesus’ sending of the spirit, and the Lucan text, with its accompanying quotation, could be construed as Jesus’ entrusting his spirit to, or depositing his spirit with, the Father. In other words, even though a Synoptic comparison cannot determine what the Johannine expression must mean, it can give reason for some caution regarding very “theological” interpretations concerning the gift of the spirit rather than “just” Jesus’ death.

IV. Linguistic Observations

As has been firmly established, παραδόσει το βλέμα is an unusual expression, likely coined by John. It stands in obvious analogy with Mark 15:37 (ἐξπέμπτον), Luke 23:46 (παραδέψει το βλέμα μου) and Matt 27:50 (ἀφίκε το βλέμα) and—whatever else it may indicate—points to Jesus’ expiring. This, in fact, was the mainline interpretation from the early church onward until the beginning of the twentieth century. When Horslyns introduced the interpretation that Jesus did, in fact, also bestow the Spirit on those assembled at the foot of the cross (the two Marys, the mother of Jesus, and the Beloved Disciple—these, at least, would be the obvious candidates—no other disciples are mentioned here; only after Jesus’ death do Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus appear on the stage), he assumed that the verb παραδέψει requires an indirect object.14 This is the case, quite in spite of the fact that the absence of an indirect object from a sentence does not usually point to an interpretation of that same sentence that hinges on filling in this absence. Even on the assumption that παραδέψει would technically require an indirect object—a view contradicted by a dictionary such as Bauer-Aland—15 it is by no means clear that the indirect object always needs to be clearly specified. In fact, in John παραδέψει is often used without an indirect object; it occurs with an indirect object only twice (18:30, 35), for obvious reasons of emphasis and identification of all parties.16 The point of the use of forms of

14 Crump’s recent interpretation also hinges on this assumption (“Who Gets What?”).
16 See, e.g., 6:64 (identification of one of the disciples as ο παραδέψειν αὐτὸν, “who would betray him”); 6:71 (the same expression: οποίπος γὰρ ἂν μᾶλλον παραδέψει αὐτόν, “for he was going to betray him”); 12:24 (mention of Judas Iscariot as ο ο παραδέψει αὐτόν, “the one who was about to betray him”); 13:2 (reference to the devil’s suggestion to Judas ὃν ἀπείρησας αὐτὸν, “to betray him”); 13:11 (Jesus’ foreknowledge of Judas’ upcoming betrayal: ἤδη γὰρ τοῦ παραδέψει αὐτόν, “For he knew who was to betray him”); 13:21 (Jesus’ announcement to his disciples ὅτι εἰς ζημίαν παραδέψεται, “one of you will betray me”); 18:2 (reference to Ἰοάννης ὁ παραδέψει αὐτόν, “Judas, who betrayed him”; see also 18:5 Ιωάννης ὁ παραδέψει αὐτόν, “18:30 (answer of the group around the high priest, etc., to Pilate [the first time with an indirect object, notable because of its early position in the sentence]): οδηγοῦ ἰδοὺς καί τούτον, οὖν δεν σου παραδέψει αὐτόν, “If this man was not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you”); 18:35 (address of Pilate to Jesus, with explicit identification of subject, object, and indirect object: ἐλέησον τούτῳ τῷ Ἰησοῦ καί τῷ Ἰοάννῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις καί τοῖς παραδέψοντοι τῷ Κυρίῳ, “If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me
Finally, a word should be said about the occurrence of the definite article in 19:30, that is, τὸ πνεῦμα. This could be interpreted as referring back to a known entity, which could be the Holy Spirit, but this spirit is identified explicitly as holy in John 14:26 (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιόν). John speaks of τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἁληθείας (the spirit of truth”) in 14:17; 15:26 and 16:13, and of πνεῦμα ἁγιόν (a holy spirit”) in 20:22. The last reference to an “unqualified” spirit is in 13:21 (also with the article), and it is possible to argue that this spirit of Jesus, apparently also assumed to be known, is the one at stake in 19:30 as well. Of course, one could argue that John should have added αὐτοῦ in 19:30, but its absence does not mean that Jesus’ human spirit was not intended.

V. Narrative Observations

One question that has been raised with regard to the interpretation of John 19:30 along the lines proposed by Hoskyns is how the gift of the Spirit in 19:30 is related to the same gift to the disciples in 20:22. The proposal that in 19:30 the gift is to an inner circle and in 20:22 to the entire group of the disciples fails to convince, because of the lack of any clear indications in the text that such a subdivision among the disciples is operative in these verses. One would have expected a clearer indication of the indirect object in 19:30, for instance, or a hint that in 20:22 a broader group was intended as recipients of the Spirit. As both (supposed) instances of the gift of the Spirit stand now, there is little to indicate any relationship between them regarding the recipients of the Spirit. In fact, in chap. 19, it is unlikely that the mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple, whom Jesus has just entrusted to each other, are still in view from v. 28 onwards, given that μιᾷ τοῖς ἀντικείμενοι ὑπὸ τούτου (after this) indicates the start of something new. Moreover, the protagonists change: Jesus’ mother and the Beloved Disciple are no longer mentioned, but only anonymous figures who occupy themselves with giving Jesus something to drink. These observations argue against the idea that the text speaks of the giving of the Spirit by Jesus to his mother and the Beloved Disciple. In addition, the gift of the Spirit in 20:22 occurs with a clear indirect object (καθὲ κατὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἁγιοτὸν γαρ, λέγεται ἀντικείμενοι ὑπὸ τούτου ἁγιόν; then he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” [NRSV]) and does not give the impression that

Although emphasizing that he only argues that there might be an ambiguous reference to the gift of the Spirit in John 19:30, Kysar nonetheless argues the following: “Still, there are theologically significant and slightly different meanings to the possibility of two bestowals of the Spirit in the Gospel narrative. Read as a giving of the Spirit/Paraclete, 19:30 suggests that the new family of God...—formed around the foot of the cross and represented in the new association of Jesus’ mother and the Beloved Disciple—is empowered with the presence of the divine. The empowered ‘disciples’ on whom Jesus breathes the Spirit in 20:22 are given peace and a mission (20:21) as well as authority (20:23) through that Paraclete.”
the Beloved Disciple (and Jesus’ mother) are excluded from this (alleged) second gift of the Spirit. In fact, there is only one person who is said to be absent, and that is Thomas (see v. 24).  

There are also other problems. The verb that is used in 20:22 (ἐπομενεύναι) for the breathing of the Spirit on the disciples differs from the one used in 19:30 (here, ἐφομενεύναι would have provided a better counterpart than παραδόθησα). Furthermore, in 20:22, the Spirit is indeed identified as the Holy Spirit, rather than simply as πνεύμα. At the same time, the gift of the Holy Spirit in 20:22 echoes the promise of the Holy Spirit in 14:26 (there is a difference between this verse and 20:22 in that the latter Jesus acts as the giver/sender of the Spirit, rather than the Father, as 14:26 suggests: ὁ δὲ παραδόθησα τὸ πνεύμα τὸ ἄγιον, ἐφομενεύναι δὲ πνεύμα ἐπὶ ἑν ἑν̄̂̂άντων μου), so “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” [NRSV]. Even if one argues that 15:26 plays a kind of mediating role—here the spirit is not called “holy,” though Jesus is identified as its sender—this qualification is that πνεύμα τῆς ἀληθείας (“the spirit of truth”) and is not identified with Jesus’ (dying) breath. This applies also to the appearance of the same spirit in 16:13. If one takes into account the interpretation of Crump—that Jesus deposited the Spirit with the Father in 19:30—it remains a striking oddity that in 20:22 Jesus sends the Spirit himself; the Father hardly plays a role. Why, in view of John 14:15-17, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-11, 13-15, the readers “have no reason to expect the later narrative of the risen Christ as the bestowal of the gift [i.e., the spirit],” as Robert Kysar argues, remains unclear. These texts are hard to harmonize with either 19:30 or 20:22; the point seems to be the sending of the spirit as such, not in relation to a specific chronology of Jesus’ death and vindication.  

Still, it is obvious that, in the broader context of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus and the Spirit are closely connected. Jesus is emphatically identified as the one who receives the Spirit at his baptism and as the one who will himself baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:32-33), a notion that is discussed further in chap. 3 (esp. vv. 5-8). John 3:34 indicates once more that Jesus had received a substantial share of the Spirit from the Father, an impression that is confirmed by his words in 6:63. In addition, Jesus is twice moved in his spirit (to empathy and anger), in 11:33 and 13:21, and in 4:23-24 the way of relating to God that Jesus offers the Samaritan woman is identified as worshiping God in spirit and truth. These texts, however, do not indicate the precise process of the distribution of the Spirit by Jesus or through Jesus in the later chapters of the Gospel. Nonetheless, it remains striking that, in at least one instance (7:39), the giving of the Spirit is related to the moment of Jesus’ glorification, that is, his crucifixion. John 7:39 reads, ὁ θεὸς ἀνεψείων ἐδόθη τῷ πνεύματι, ἢ τὸ πνεύμα ἐδόθη τῷ ἄνθρωπῳ γινθεῖ, “for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified” [NRSV]. This text, however, does not cohere with the expression παραδόθησα τὸ πνεύμα in 19:30. The verb ἐπομενεύναι, which is used in 7:39 to indicate the reception of the Spirit, neatly returns in 20:22 but is absent from 19:30 and its context. This leaves one, on the one hand, with a close interrelation between Jesus and the Spirit and, on the other hand, with a certain connection between Jesus’ death and the gift of the Spirit. Furthermore, it gives rise to the question, which particular πνεύμα does Jesus “hand over” in John 19:30? It could be argued that it must be Jesus’ “human spirit” (so also for 11:33 and 13:21), or the πνεύμα that Jesus is said by John the Baptist to have received (1:32-33); notably, in John, Jesus does not receive the πνεύμα at his baptism but only in the context of John’s baptismal ministry, or both.  

Crump is right in highlighting this question in his essay, even if his solution has been rejected above for the reasons stated. Indeed, as he argues, the reception of the Spirit (or, rather, John’s acknowledgment that Jesus has received the Spirit) inaugurates Jesus’ ministry, and his handing over of the Spirit concludes it (see 1:32-33 and 19:30). Crump is also right in demonstrating that Jesus often refers to giving his life using the word φυσικὸν (10:11, 15, 17, 24; 12:25, 27; 13:37, 38; 15:13) and not πνεύμα. The majority of references to the πνεύμα in the Gospel of John have to do with the divine Spirit in one way or another, even though something happening to Jesus’ πνεύμα can also refer to Jesus’ being troubled or angered (11:33 and 13:21). For Crump, this is reason enough to argue that the πνεύμα


25 See Crump, “Who Gets What?” 83, referring to Lindars, who “fails to note that deciding whether God or the disciples receive the spirit from Jesus first depends on the meaning attributed to τὸ πνεύμα. If τὸ πνεύμα refers to Jesus’ loss of life, then the indirect object, the recipient of that life, can only be God. But if τὸ πνεύμα is the Holy Spirit, then the indirect object remains uncertain. In this latter case, deciding between God and the disciples, either of which is grammatically possible, finally depends on which action is most likely within John’s theological thought world.”  


27 Cf. Strabo, who notes that only in 1:32-33 and 19:30 is the spirit directly related to Jesus (Kritische Theologie ohne ein Wort vom Kreuz, 172).
that Jesus hands over in 19:30 must be the divine Spirit. It overlooks two things, however. First, in order to establish the meaning of πνεῦμα in 19:30, the question is not, what is the most common meaning of πνεῦμα in John? but rather, what is the most fitting meaning? Second, given that there are two options—that is, a clear reference to the divine Spirit or a term of phrase, however unusual, that refers to Jesus’ expiring—both should be considered in terms of their content, not just their frequency. This is to say, because of 11:53 and 13:21, it may well be that the spirit that Jesus hands over is the breath of life that he gives up.28 Semantically, this is difficult to decide, given the two meanings that πνεῦμα can have in John’s Gospel. This difficulty opens up another interpretative option—that indeed no decision needs to be made. If the πνεῦμα is that which makes one alive (John 6:63)—as Jas 2:26 has it, τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεῦματος νεκρὸν ἐστὶν (“the body without the spirit is dead”)—and if Jesus is depicted as the one who is full of the divine Spirit, then Jesus’ expiring means that he hands over everything that makes him alive, whether human or divine πνεῦμα.29 In other words, John’s choice to use πνεῦμα here makes clear that Jesus is completely dead after his handing over of it. According to this interpretation, hardly matters to whom Jesus gives the spirit (to no one), or whether he hands over a divine or human πνεῦμα. He hands over what makes him alive, and the result is a completely dead Jesus. Neither human πνεῦμα nor its divine counterpart could resist the violence of Rome, it seems—until the surprise and shock of Jesus’ resurrection and his distribution of the life-giving Spirit in the remainder of the Gospel. Thus, in view of John’s penchant for double entendre30 and the fact that at least in 7:39 the gift of the Spirit and Jesus’ glorification are connected, a link may well be indicated. This is, both spirits are intended; Jesus gives up (not gives away) both of them.31 To be sure, the Spirit (of truth), the Paraclete, is also connected with Jesus’ glorification in John (see 14:17; 26; 15:26; 16:13), but never in such a way that a gift of this spirit from the cross is mentioned. Its giving is connected with the Father, not with Jesus, and the references to it in John refer primarily to the postresurrection life of the community of believers, rather than to the intern in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The result is that John 19:30 indicates that Jesus is completely and utterly dead—in fact, actively dies.32 This view is well expressed by the interpretation of Jesus’ death on the cross in Clement of Alexandria’s Excerpta ex Theodo et. The departure of the πνεῦμα is understood there as the mode of Jesus’ dying: Jesus “died at the departure of the Spirit which had descended upon him in the Jordan, not that it became separate but was withdrawn in order that death might also operate on him, since how did the body die when life was present in him?33 The bottom line, therefore, is that Jesus is totally dead because he performs the act of handing over the πνεῦμα. John’s account of Jesus’ passion underlines this by continuing in 19:31-37 with a rendition of the crucifragium, establishing that Jesus is dead indeed—not a word is said in these verses about anyone having received a life-giving spirit.34 This interpretation of the ambiguous noun πνεῦμα in John 19:30 does not require deducing from the narrative an indirect object for παραδέδον (as would be the case if one suggests that the πνεῦμα is received by disciples at the foot of the cross), and it also stays close to the predominant Johannine usage of παραδέδον, that is, handing over in a destructive sense. Methodologically, it is best to stop the immediate interpretative explorations here, since no large exegetical or theological theories ought to be based on a possible ambiguity. Therefore, one may agree with Kysar’s statement that “the expression [i.e., πνεῦμα] refers to both Jesus’ human spirit and the divine Spirit/Paraclete,”35 but not with his discovery of all sorts of pneumatological and christological hints behind the expression found in John 19:30.36

Nonetheless, in the flow of the Johannine narrative, this total death of Jesus in 19:30, his complete dying, giving up any spirit imaginable, sets further events.

28 Which would be a perfect match with common Hellenistic anthropological models; for this and the following, see Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, Der Tod Jesu im Johanneswesensgut: Die erste Abschiedsrede als Schlüsselthema für den Passions- und Ostertext (BDZev 122, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004) 387-90.

29 In this sense, the expression in 19:30 indeed constitutes a double entendre—not an ironic one but one in which the two meanings complement each other to make an even more forceful statement. See also James L. Resseguie, The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design and Point of View in John (BJS 56; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 58 n. 144, referring to the expression as a double entendre indicating that Jesus both expresses and hands over the Spirit.


31 See ibid. He argues rightly that “[i]n handing over the spirit,” Jesus handed over not only his own human spirit but the Holy Spirit of God” (Blood and Water, 102).
in motion that depend on his death/glorification, including the gift of the Holy Spirit in 20:22-23. These events might be prefigured in the water from Jesus’ side in 19:34, but the point of Jesus’ handing over of the πνεῦμα in 19:30 is primarily that Jesus completely dies—a death, however, that will bring forth fruits (cf. 12:24). Moreover, these fruits are not just “of the spirit” but are the Spirit itself. In this way, Jesus’ remark, τεθέντα, indicates fulfillment, the nature of which will unfold in the remainder of the Johannine narrative, that is, the gift of new life. The reference to the πνεῦμα in 19:30 likely serves as an intertextual and proleptic link with what is to come in the narrative. It is not a description of these events, which unfold only in chap. 20, that is, post factum.

In these chapters, then, John recounts

37 See, e.g., Hartwig Thyen, “Überlegungen zum Prozeß und Kreuzigung Jesu nach Johannes 19,” in idem, Studien zum Corpus Johanneum, 323-50, here 347. “Die Wendung ‘er gab den Geist hin’ ist fraglos absichtswéll doppeldeutig. Sie besiegelt nicht nur das Sterben Jesu, sondern eröffnet auch das neue Leben des Getöteten in den Sei nen durch den Geist, ist als sein Geben die Bedingung der Möglichkeit für das Kommene jenes Geistes.” In another contribution in the same volume, however, Thyen indicates that the Spirit is given directly in 19:30: see “Noch einmal: Johannes 21 und der Junger; der Jesus Hebiont, 250-92, here 284-85. See also Schemke, Johannes, 308. “Woran sollen die Leser glauben? Sicher nicht an die Tatsache des Todes Jesu, wohl aber an seine Bedeutung und Wirkung. Sie wird im Bunt- und Wasserfluss aus Jesu Brust erkennbar. Im Blut wird sichtbar, dass Jesus’ Fleisch für das Leben der Welt’ gegeben hat (6,51). In der euchristischen Gabe des Weines wird es zum Heil getrunken (6,53). So dürfte denn in dieser Stunde aus Jesu Brust der wahre Wein fließen, auf dem der Weinbogen fiel, dienten die beiden Gänge in Kana als Zeichen hinweis (vgl. 24).” In the water, Jesus, with his eyes open, reveals to the disciples that he is the Christ, the Son of God. He is the one who has received the Spirit. And in this way, the Spirit is given直接ly to the disciples, not through the act of giving the water from his side, but through his resurrection and ascension. This is a clear indication of the proleptic nature of the reference to the πνεῦμα in 19:30, which serves as a foreshadowing of the gift of the Holy Spirit in 20:22.


39 In this sense, a reference to a “proleptic” gift of the Spirit does make sense; see, however, Kysar, “He Gave Up the Spirit,” 168.

40 For an eloquent argument that considers the death of Jesus to be the start of his exaltation, which in fact is an ongoing event including the resurrection, the gift of the Spirit, and Jesus’ ascension, see Tricia Gates Brown, Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective (JSNT Sup 253; London: T&T Clark, 2003) 101-5. She comes close to, but also corrects, Ashton’s observations (Understanding the Fourth Gospel, 424-25), in which the farewell discourse in John 19:30 is not further mention of the Spirit until the scene of Jesus’ death. The word πνεῦμα has now acquired such a resonance that on being told that Jesus ‘gave up the ghost’ (παρέδωκεν τό πνεῦμα), the reader will not stop at the obvious meaning but is sure to make an allusion to the gift of the Spirit. Not only the noun but also the verb (παρέδωκεν) is a notable instance of that fruitful ambiguity which makes it possible for two different meanings to be conveyed in a single phrase. In the first half of the Gospel John had used the word πνεύμα to suggest that Jesus’ exaltation is conditional upon and contained in his death, so that passion and resurrection must be viewed as a single happening. Now the simple expression παρέδωκεν τό πνεῦμα allows him to fuse Easter and Pentecost as well, in that there is no need to think of the latter as a distinct and separate event.” Gates Brown improves on this position insofar as she emphasizes the extended narration of Jesus’ exaltation in chaps. 19-20 as including both “Easter” and “Pentecost.” See also R. E. Brown, Gospel according to John (iii-xiii), 931: “In vii 39 John affirmed that those who believed in Jesus were to receive the Spirit once Jesus had been glorified, and so it would not be inappropriate that at this climactic moment in the hour of glorification there would be a symbolic reference to the giving of the Spirit... It is symbolic reference to the giving of the Spirit...” (italics in the original).
in 19:30 and to the connection of Jesus with this πνεῦμα throughout the Gospel of John. At the same time, certainly in the light of the promises of the gift of the divine πνεῦμα earlier in John and its actualization in chap. 20, John 19:30 can also be seen as constituting an intertextual link with these other texts. In fact, in combination with Jesus’ last word, τετέλεσθα, the remark παρέδωκαν τὸ πνεῦμα can be seen asproleptically pointing toward what will unfold in the remainder of the narrative. Now Jesus has completed his mission by dying completely and surrendering his spirit for others (see, e.g., 15:13; 12:24), which constitutes the gift of new life in Jesus’ resurrection and the gift of the Spirit to the disciples. Still, Jesus’ death and handing over of the πνεῦμα remain distinct events, however closely they are related in terms of being part of the same process.