


An alternative look at John 14:6

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This article takes an alternative look at John 14:6 in its pericope John 14:1–14 as part of Jesus' Farewell Discourse to his disciples (Jn 13–17). This verse forms part of the seven 'I am' sayings in the Gospel of John. Traditionally the two *καί* terms in John 14:6 are translated with 'and' *I am the way and the truth and the life*. However, this article opts for the exegetical or explicative (also called explanatory) way to translate *καί*. The reason is that the focus of this pericope and specifically this verse is on *ὁδός*, and not like the traditional translations treat all three terms, *ὁδός*, *ἀλήθεια* and *ζωή* on an equal basis.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This is a New Testament piece of research that interacts and intersects with Dogmatic and Practical Theology, and the traditional interpretation of the text of John 14:6. It is therefore more intradisciplinary than interdisciplinary by nature.

Keywords: exegetical *καί*; explicative *καί*; explanatory *καί*; John 14:6; John 14:1–14; *ὁδός*; Jesus.

[T]here is only one way, and Jesus is that way. (Doctor 2023)

Introduction

One of the verses that Christian children are taught next to John 3:16, Psalm 23 and Psalm 121, is John 14:6: Jesus said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'. Especially John 14:6a has already become a slogan, the words on a billboard on the highway, an easy sermon filled with much information being concluded from this verse (and not the surrounding text or pericope) – a 'statement central to Christian theology'. However, if one takes a deeper look at the structure and content of the pericope, it seems as if the translation that we currently have, does not really do justice to the pericope. This article investigates the possibility of a different translation – that the two *καί* terms in verse 6 should not be translated with 'and' but rather be translated exegetically (also called explicatively or explanatory). The Free Dictionary (Farlex n.d.), with reference to the Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary (2010), gives a definition for the term 'epexegetis':

- the addition of a word or words to explain a preceding word or sentence
- the word or words so added.

When applied to John 14:6, the two *καί* terms in this verse would then not be translated with 'and', but it would be depicting an addition to or description of the term *ὁδός*.¹

John 14:6 forms part of the seven 'I am' saying in John.² These are John 6:35: εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς; John 8:12: Πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων, Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου; John 10:7, 9: Εἶπεν οὖν πάλιν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ... ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ θύρα; John 10:11, 14: Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός; John 11:25: Εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ; John 14:6: λέγει αὐτῷ [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ; John 15:1, 5: Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή ... ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος. By using the term 'I am', Jesus revealed himself to his disciples, almost in the same known way that Yahweh revealed himself to Moses, when the latter asked him who he was, and he stated, 'I am who I am' (Ex 3:14 – cf. Koester 2005:120; Wallis 2021:359–360).

Cursory background

Whereas the author, the dating of the Gospel, the origin and the possible audience are highly debatable, for John 14:6 we have the content of the Gospel to work with. John 13–17 is categorised

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1.For an elaborative discussion of the background of *ὁδός* with application in the Gospel of John, please refer to Perepparambil (2024).

2.The translations are as follows: John 6:35: Then Jesus told them, 'I am the bread of life'; John 8:12: Again Jesus spoke to them, 'I am the light of the world'; John 10:7, 9: Jesus stated again ... 'I am the door'; John 10:11, 14: 'I am the good shepherd'; John 11:25: Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life'; John 14:6 (traditional translation): Jesus told him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life'; John 15:1, 5: 'I am the true vine ... I am the vine'.

as a Farewell Discourse that Jesus had with his disciples before he was arrested and crucified. The Farewell Discourse was common to Jewish antiquity, delivered by a leader who encouraged his people or audience or students to stand firm against forthcoming trials and tribulations, assuring them that they will be established as God's chosen people (O'Day & Hylen 2006:142). It also included instructions on how to treat one another, and mostly concluded with a prayer or a hymn (Heitzman 2014). In the Old Testament, we find, *inter alia*, the extended Farewell Discourse of Moses to the Israelites filling the biggest part of Deuteronomy – up to his death. In Deuteronomy 30:16, Moses commanded the Israelites to (1) love the Lord; (2) walk in obedience to him; and (3) keep his commands, decrees and laws.

In line with the above, the Farewell Discourse in John 13–17 depicts Jesus who is encouraging his disciples with the words, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled' (Jn 14:1), assuring them that he will prepare rooms for them at his Father's house (Jn 14:3), telling them to keep his commandment (Jn 15:12) and closes with his high priestly prayer (Jn 17). In his Farewell Discourse, Jesus 'adapted' Moses' discourse by telling his disciples that he (and not the Law anymore) is the (only) way to God.

The epexegetical or explicative καί

The Blue Letter Bible (n.d.) refers to Strong's G2532 term being καί (Strong 1890) and Winer (1825), supplying possible meanings for καί:

- I. καί serves as a copulative
 1. connecting single words or terms – *and*;
 2. connecting clauses or sentences – *and*;
 3. annexing epexegetically both words and sentences – *and*, *indeed*, *namely*;
 4. connecting whole narratives and expositions – *and*;
 5. καί ... καί: the repetition can be translated with both ... *and*, as well ... *as*, and not only ... *but also*;
- II. It marks something added to what has already been said, or that of which something already said holds good; accordingly it takes on the nature of an adverb – *also*.

Point I(3) has application in this article. Here καί 'annexes epexegetically both words and sentences', called the epexegetical or explicative καί which, according to the Blue Letter Bible (n.d.), can be translated with [and] [indeed] or [namely]. Mounce also refers to this use of καί as the explicative use of the term, where a 'word or clause is connected by means of καί with another word or clause, for the purpose of explaining what goes before it' and that it can be translated with *that is* or *namely* (Mounce 2014). Aryanto and Kurniawan (2023:184–185) shortly refer to the epexegetical or explanatory meaning of καί, where a word that follows καί 'explains the word that precedes it'. This article will investigate if these definitions can be applied to John 14:6.

Possible epexegetical καί usages in the New Testament

The Blue Letter Bible (n.d.) elaboratively supplies New Testament (NT) examples of the epexegetical or explicative use of καί (without translations), which will be noted beneath with possible translations. In (most of) the cases below καί can be translated with *namely*, implying that it does not really need to be translated:

- Romans 1:5: χάριν καί ἀποστολήν [grace namely being an apostle – the grace of apostleship]; Acts 23:6: περί ἐλπίδος καί ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν [because of the hope {namely} of the resurrection of the dead]; Luke 3:18: πολλά ... καί ἑτέρα [many {namely} other things]; John 20:30: πολλά ... καί ἄλλα σημεῖα [many {namely} other signs]; Acts 25:7: πολλά καί βαρέα αἰτιώματα [many {namely} serious charges]; Titus 1:10: πολλοί καί ἀνυπότακτοι [many {namely} disobedient people]; John 1:16: ἐλάβομεν, καί χάριν, ἀντὶ χάριτος [we have received {namely} grace for grace]; John 10:10: ἐγὼ ἦλθον ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχωσιν καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν [I have come that they may have life {namely} that they have it to the full]; John 10:33: ἀλλὰ περὶ βλασφημίας, καὶ ὅτι σὺ ἄνθρωπος ὢν ποιεῖς σεαυτὸν θεόν [but for blasphemy, {namely} because you, a mere man, claim to be God]; Acts 5:21: Παραγενόμενος δὲ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ συνεκάλεσαν τὸ συνέδριον καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γερουσίαν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ [When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin {namely} the full assembly of the elders of Israel]; Romans 2:15: συμμαρτυροῦσιν αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων [their consciences are bearing witness {namely} that their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them]; 1 Corinthians 3:5: διάκονοι δι' ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε [they are servants, {namely} through whom you came to believe]; 1 Corinthians 15:38: ὁ δὲ θεὸς δίδωσιν αὐτῷ σῶμα καθὼς ἠθέλησεν, καὶ ἐκάστῳ τῶν σπερμάτων ἴδιον σῶμα [but God gives it a body as he has determined, {namely} to each kind of seed he gives its own body].

In (most of) the following cases, καί can be translated with [and] *indeed* 'to make a climax, for and besides' (Blue Letter Bible n.d.):

- Acts 22:25: Εἰ ἄνθρωπον Ῥωμαῖον καὶ ἀκατάκριτον ἔξεστιν ὑμῖν μαστίζειν; [Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who *indeed* has not even been found guilty?]; 1 Corinthians 2:2: Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον [Jesus Christ *and indeed* him crucified]; Romans 13:11: Καὶ τοῦτο εἰδότες τὸν καιρὸν [*Indeed* this, understanding the present time]; 1 Corinthians 6:6: καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ ἀπίστων; [*and indeed* this, in front of unbelievers?]; 1 Corinthians 6:8: ἀλλὰ ὑμεῖς ἀδικεῖτε καὶ ἀποστερεῖτε, καὶ τοῦτο ἀδελφοὺς [instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong *and indeed* you do this to your brothers]; Hebrews 11:12: διὸ καὶ ἅψ' ἐνὸς ἐγεννήθησαν, καὶ ταῦτα νεκρωμένου [and for this reason from this one man *and indeed* he {is} as good as dead].

In the NT, there are at least seven cases where the phrase *καὶ λέγων* is used, preceded by verbs indicating that the person or persons is or are stating (or are about to state) something. In all these cases, *καὶ λέγων* could be translated with *namely saying*, or it could just be translated with a colon. These are:

- Matthew 3:1–2: κηρύσσων ... καὶ λέγων [preaching ... namely saying].
- Matthew 8:5–6: παρακαλῶν ... καὶ λέγων [asking ... namely saying].
- Matthew 26:39: προσευχόμενος καὶ λέγων [praying namely saying].
- Mark 1:14–15: κηρύσσων ... καὶ λέγων [proclaiming ... namely saying].
- Mark 1:40: παρακαλῶν ... καὶ λέγων [begging ... namely saying].
- John 7:28: ἔκραξεν ... καὶ λέγων [he cried out ... namely saying].
- Acts 16:9: παρακαλῶν ... καὶ λέγων [begging ... namely saying].

Interestingly, neither the Blue Letter Bible nor Strong refers to Ephesians 1:1 or John 14:6 with reference to a possible epexegetical or explicative use of *καί*. In Ephesians 1:1, we read: Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. [Lit. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the holy people who are in Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus.]. At first sight, it looks as if Paul is addressing two groups of people here, but immediately one detects a problem: What is the difference between ‘holy people’ and ‘faithful people’? Should it not be the same group? This is where the epexegetical *καί* is most probably used which should then *not* be translated with ‘and’. Therefore, a better translation would be: *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the holy people in Ephesus, i.e., (namely or who are) the faithful in Christ Jesus.*

John 14:6, more specifically 14:6a will be discussed next.

Analysis of John 14:1–14³

John 14:6 resorts within the pericope John 14:1–14, which finds itself within the Farewell Discourse (Jn 13–17) of Jesus to his disciples before he was arrested (Jn 18) (cf. Lombard & Oliver 1991). This pericope is divided into four parts, each with a significant relevance to the pericope.

Part 1: Introduction to this part of the Farewell Discourse: John 14:1

After the events in which Judas Iscariot (Jn 13:18–30, specifically vs. 21) and Peter (Jn 13:31–38, specifically vs. 38) were involved, and in the wake of Jesus’ arrest, the 11 disciples, specifically Peter could not have been calm, but were instead troubled, ‘lost, confused, and hopeless’ (Doctor 2023). Jesus, however, calmed them with these introductory words to this passage:

3.The translations used in this article are mostly those of the NIV.

¹Μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδιά·

πιστεύετε εἰς τὸν θεόν,
καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ πιστεύετε.⁴

Part 2: The way to God the Father: John 14:2–6

After these words, Jesus indicated to his disciples where he was going – to the Father – that was where they were also going (a little later). The *only* way for them to get to the Father was through Jesus himself. This reminds us strongly of John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

²ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαὶ εἰσιν·

εἰ δὲ μὴ, εἶπον ἂν ὑμῖν ὅτι πορεύομαι ἐτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν;

³καὶ ἐὰν πορευθῶ καὶ ἐτοιμάσω τόπον ὑμῖν,

πάλιν ἔρχομαι καὶ παραλήμψομαι ὑμᾶς πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν,
ἵνα ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ᾔτε.

⁴καὶ ὅπου [ἐγὼ] ὑπάγω οἴδατε τὴν ὁδόν.

⁵Λέγει αὐτῷ Θωμᾶς,

Κύριε, οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ὑπάγεις·
πῶς δυνάμεθα τὴν ὁδὸν εἰδέναι;

⁶λέγει αὐτῷ [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς,

Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή·
οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι’ ἐμοῦ.⁵

Part 3: Knowing the Father through Jesus: John 14:7–11

Jesus and the disciples were on their way to the Father. However, Jesus would go ahead of them and ‘prepare the way’ for them. The Father was already known to them because they knew Jesus, as he and the Father are one (cf. Jn 14:9–11).

⁷εἰ ἐγνώκατέ με, καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου γνώσεσθε·

καὶ ἂν ἄρτι γινώσκετε αὐτὸν καὶ ἐωράκατε αὐτόν.

⁸λέγει αὐτῷ Φίλιππος,

Κύριε, δεῖξον ἡμῖν τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ἄρκει ἡμῖν.

⁹λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς,

Τοσοῦτον χρόνον μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἔγνωκάς με, Φίλιππε;
ὁ ἐωρακὼς ἐμὲ ἐώρακεν τὸν πατέρα·
πῶς σὺ λέγεις, Δεῖξον ἡμῖν τὸν πατέρα;

¹⁰οὐ πιστεύεις ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐστιν;

τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν ἂν ἐμμαντοῦ οὐ λαλῶ·
ὁ δὲ πατὴρ ἐν ἐμοὶ μένων ποιεῖ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ.

4.¹Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me’.

5.²My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going’. ⁵Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ ⁶Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’.

¹¹πιστεύετε μοι ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἐν ἐμοί·
εἰ δὲ μή, διὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτὰ πιστεύετε.⁶

Part 4: The significance of Jesus: John 14:12–14

In the last part of this pericope, Jesus assured his disciples of his significance. First of all (Part 2), he indicated that he was the way to the Father, then he assured them that he and the Father are one and the same (Part 3), and therefore he had the same significance as his Father (Part 4).

¹²ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν,

ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ κάκεινος ποιήσει,
καὶ μεῖζονα τούτων ποιήσει, ὅτι ἐγὼ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα πορεύομαι.

¹³καὶ ὁ τίς ἂν αἰτήσῃ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου τοῦτο ποιήσω,
ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ.

¹⁴ἐάν τις αἰτήσῃ με ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου ἐγὼ ποιήσω.⁷

In this pericope (Jn 14:1–14), it becomes clear that it is all about Jesus. In the first part, Jesus summoned his disciples to believe in God and in him. The reason is found in the second part where Jesus clearly indicated that he is the way to the Father. Here 'Jesus didn't say he would show them a way or that he would merely pave a path; he said that he himself is the way' (Doctor 2023). Part three depicts the unity between Jesus as his Father as he indicated to his disciples that by knowing him, they would also know the Father. This pericope closes with the significance of Jesus where he once again touched on his summons to believe in him and where he repeated that he was going to the Father. The focal point in this pericope therefore seems to be Jesus himself, with two combined outstanding points, namely (1) belief in Jesus as (2) he is the (only) way to the Father.⁸

Possible meaning of ὁδός in John 14:6

In Acts 24:14, we read, ὁμολογῶ δὲ τοῦτό σοι ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἦν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν οὕτως λατρεύω τῷ πατρί ὡς θεῷ [However, I admit this to you that I worship the God of our forefathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect]. The first Christians called themselves *people of the way* (Relevant 2002). In John 14:6, Jesus referred to himself as *the way*. According to

6.⁷If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him'. ⁸Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us'. ⁹Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father?" ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves'.

7.¹²Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my Name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my Name, and I will do it'.

8. Doctor (2023) portrays the following. On the night when Jesus was arrested, he "beseeched his Father three times "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me". What was Jesus asking? He was asking his Father if there was any *other* way to save, redeem, and bring people to the Father – and if there was, Jesus begged to be spared the agony of the crucifixion. [However, the Father responded:] "No, Jesus, you are the way, the only way". So Jesus willingly went to the cross to open the way for us'.

Louw and Nida (1988:171), the term ὁδός has the following possible meanings:

- road
- journey
- way of life
- Christian way of life.

Danker (2000:691) applies two possible meanings to ὁδός:

- A way for travelling or moving from one place to another.
- Course of behaviour, way, or way of life.

The two possible meanings that could be applied to this text are 'road' and '[*Christian*] way of life'. As it is all about a way in this part of the pericope, it looks as if Jesus had the first possible meaning in mind, namely to act as a road. However, then he would have the figurative meaning of 'road' and destiny here in mind, applying it to himself. John 13:33 already starts with the 'road' idea, where Jesus told his disciples, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'. This is followed by John 13:36, where Simon Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?' (Interestingly this question is repeated by Thomas in Jn 14:5.) In the same verse (Jn 13:36), Jesus replied, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later'. These all link to John 14:2, where Jesus stated, 'My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?' Then follows John 14:6 after Thomas' question in John 14:5.

From the broader context, in line with the traditional translation, one could add the second possible meaning by referring to the way in which Jesus lived on earth (cf. Heitzman 2014), which is very clearly indicated in John, also in this Farewell Discourse. Three examples of Jesus' words from John 13 and 14 will suffice:

- John 13:34: 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another'. Here Jesus acted as the example of (Christian) love.
- John 14:10b: 'The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work'. In this part of the verse, Jesus indicated to his disciples how closely they should live to God, following his example.
- John 14:12: '[W]hoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these'. Jesus indicated to his disciples that belief in him will cause them to act in the same way as he did, always obedient to the Father – and even doing greater things that he did.

However, from the pericope, there is no clear indication that Jesus had this meaning in mind (cf. Newman & Nida 1980:457). Contra Heitzman (2014) who states that 'John's author did not intend to make belief in Jesus the exclusive "way" to reach the Father', Jesus, in this passage, read together with John 3:16, clearly stated that he is the *only* way to the Father.

An epexegetical καὶ in John 14:6?

From 65⁹ translations being consulted, only the EXB (Expanded Bible) and the GeCL give alternative readings for John 14:6a, *Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life'*. The EXB translates this part of the verse as *Jesus answered, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life [or the one true way to have life]'*. GeCL's translation puts it in another way: *Jesus answered, 'I am the way, and I am also the goal, since in me you have the truth and the life'*. The reason for the other translations to opt for the traditional translation is that καὶ is mostly translated with 'and' or 'also'. This traditional translation is a 'fairly literal translation of the Greek text' but not applicable to John 14:6 (Newman & Nida 1980:457).

Looking at the structure of this pericope, it becomes clear that there is no real reference to 'truth' and 'life' in it. Here we detect how Jesus calmed his disciples and then assured them that they need not look further to become citizens of 'the house of my Father' (Jn 14:2). If one studies the context of the sub-pericope John 14:2–6 within the context of John 14:1–14, it becomes clear that Jesus only had the direction or the way to the Father in mind when he was saying these words, and that he applied it to himself. Neither in John 14:1–6 nor in 7–14 does Jesus elaborate on the terms 'truth' and 'life'. Obviously in other passages, Jesus declared that he is the truth and the life. In John 1:17, the Gospel indicates that 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (cf. Newman & Nida 1980:21–24). The Holy Spirit is also referred to as the 'Spirit of truth' (Jn 15:26; 16:13), while the word of God is also equalled to truth (Jn 17:17). With reference to life (cf. Newman & Nida 1980:10–12), John 1:4 already indicates that Jesus' life was the light of humankind. John 3:16 spells out that Jesus gives eternal life (cf. also Jn 3:36; 4:14; 5:25; 5:40; 6:27, 33, 40, 48, 53, 54; 10:28; 11:25). To derive from John 14:6 that Jesus is truth and life is therefore not wrong in light of the entire Gospel of John, as the Gospel clearly indicates it, but according to the structure of the pericope that is not what Jesus intended to say at that very moment in the pericope.

Newman and Nida (1980:457) argue in line with this. Being expert Bible translators, they also have the conviction that Jesus as the way is the 'primary focus' in the sub-pericope of (according to them) John 14:1–8. The question, however, is what is the relation between the three terms, ὁδός, ἀλήθεια and ζωή in this verse? If ὁδός is the primary focus, then ἀλήθεια and ζωή must somehow be related to it. Newman and Nida (1980:457) distinguish two ways in which this verse could be translated:

- With the emphasis on the goal of the way, the translation could be: *I am the way that leads to the truth (about God) and to (the) life (that God gives)*.

9. These include the KJ21, ASV, Amplified Bible, Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, BRG Bible, CSB, CEB, CJB, CEV, DARBY, DLNT, DRA, ERV, EASY, EHV, ESV, ESVUK, EXB, GeCL, GNV, GW, GNT, HCSB, ICB, ISV, PHILLIPS, JUB, KJV, AKJV, LSB, LEB, TLB, MSG, MEV, MOUNCE, NOG, NABRE, NASB, NASB1995, NCB, NCV, NET, NIRV, NIV, NIVUK, NKJV, NLV, NLT, NMB, NRSVA, NRSVACE, NRSVCE, NRSVUE, NTFE, OJB, RGT, RSV, RSVCE, TLV, VOICE, WEB, WE, WYC and YLT.

- Translated with the focus, as it is expressed in this article, on the way, 'truth' and 'life' should be regarded as qualifiers of 'way'; therefore, *I am the true way, the way that gives people life; or, I am the way that reveals the truth about God and gives life to people*. Paraphrased, one may translate it as follows: *I am the only [ἀλήθεια] way [ὁδός] to the Father that will give people [eternal] life [ζωή]*.

Koplitz (2020:15 of 19) argues very much in the same line with his translation: *What I teach is the path of truth and eternal life*. The problem, however, with his translation is that it does not equal Jesus to ὁδός.

The main indicator that the translation at the preceding second bullet is closer to correct, is the second part of the verse: οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ ['No one comes to the Father except through me']. This indicates that the Father is the goal of *eternal* life and that *only* Jesus can lead people to him. The first part of the verse actually strengthens the words that Jesus uttered in the second part. Here nothing is stated about 'truth' and 'life' because it is all about the ὁδός to the Father. Jesus is therefore the only way to the Father (in line with Jn 3:16). There is no other way to reach the Father, but through Jesus¹⁰: 'As the Only Son of the Father, Jesus is the only path to the Father' (Aryanto & Kurniawan 2023:185). The reason lies in the words that Jesus said in this pericope. Just after John 14:6, in John 14:7 Jesus assured his disciples, 'If you really know me, you will know my Father as well'. In John 14:9, Jesus more explicitly told them, 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'. He then added in John 14:10–11: 'Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? ... I am in the Father and the Father is in me'. Koplitz (2020:15 of 19) supplies background to what Jesus has stated here. In Jesus' days there was a special bond between a father and his son, so special that the father would not hesitate to disclose many of his secrets to his son. Should anyone else inquire about their family secrets, the son was the one to be asked. This is exactly what Jesus conveyed here to his disciples, indicating and confirming the strong bond between him and his Father.

Conclusion

The traditional translation of John 14:6a will never change – that is for sure. This translation is filled with so much power, vigour and message all caught up in a few words, that any narrowing, lessening, or change of its content will be met with utmost disgust by most Christians. Fortunately, academia gives one the freedom to debate even verses like these.

This article did not speak the final word on John 14:6, but hopefully gave a more informative word. Something that is of utmost importance when doing translation from and interpretation of the ancient biblical texts, is the context – fundamentally the context of the Bible and more specifically the context of a pericope within the book in which it was written. If something is a general truth, even inside the book where a specific pericope is situated (like in this case), it does not mean that it is what that specific pericope or verse also

10. No ancestor or saint could fill that place.

wants to convey. For example, the Gospel of John frequently refers to Jesus as 'truth' and 'life' as indicated above, but that does not mean that we must get it from John 14:6. The reason is that John 14:6, within its pericope, has something else in mind, that is the ὁδός with a specific focus on Jesus. Jesus is the ὁδός – but what kind of ὁδός is he? He is the ὁδός of ἀλήθεια and the ὁδός of ζωή. This makes sense in this pericope and this idea fits well inside this specific pericope. It should therefore be translated accordingly.

Having argued about John 14:6, it is a fact that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, according to the Gospel of John and the entire NT, although it is incorrect to derive it from John 14:6.

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