

CONDITIONALITY IN JOHN'S GOSPEL: A CRITIQUE
AND EXAMINATION OF TIME AND REALITY
AS CLASSICALLY CONCEIVED IN
CONDITIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

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“The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once.”
“Reality is merely an illusion, although a very persistent one.”

Albert Einstein

In her famed poem “Sacred Emily,” penned in 1913, Gertrude Stein claimed, “A rose is a rose is a rose.”¹ The verse has since sparked legendary appropriation—ranging from Margaret Thatcher’s “a crime is a crime is a crime” quip in 1981, referring to the actions of IRA affiliates, to Ernest Hemingway’s satirical stab at French editors, “a stone is a stein is a rock is a boulder is a pebble,”² and to D. A. Carson’s claim that “an aorist is an aorist is an aorist.”³ The saying has become inculcated as cultural idiom for claiming that things are what they are, or, as with the aorist, that however diverse the pragmatic function, the semantics of the inflection remain constant. The aim of this paper is to investigate the function of conditional clauses with an indicative in the protasis in John’s Gospel, and to see if, after all, “a conditional is a conditional is a conditional.” We will stay our answer until the end of this essay, while tracing the two categories of time and reality.

What is a conditional?⁴ Defining words properly is indeed a fine and peculiar craft.⁵ C. F. D. Moule states that “[t]he general formula ‘Given

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¹ Gertrude Stein, “Sacred Emily,” in *Geography and Plays* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1999 [1922]).

² Hemingway would later write, “an onion is an onion is an onion,” in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

³ The aphorism was uttered during the seminar on “Advanced Greek Grammar” at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the spring semester of 2006. The theory behind the large majority of this essay must be credited to the rough proposal of D. A. Carson.

⁴ See Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 254. See, too, Dwight Bolinger and Donald A. Sears, *Aspects of Language* (3d ed.; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981) 137, for conditionality in special languages of logic.

⁵ Simon Winchester, *The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998) 151.

certain conditions, certain results follow', which underlies Conditional Sentences, has to include a wide and flexible range of phrase in order to express the range of contingencies in varying conditions."⁶ Tight definitions therefore should be avoided. Structurally speaking, a conditional sentence consists "of a subordinate clause stating the condition or supposition (the if-clause) and a main clause giving the inference or conclusion."⁷ It is a "construction that functions in the realm of pragmatic usage, linking two smaller units within one larger discourse unit."⁸ It is important when discussing conditionals to keep in mind the levels of differential analysis—structural, semantic, and pragmatic.⁹ This essay will for the most part skip over the semantic discussion,¹⁰ for the structural and pragmatic analyses will inform and modify the semantic.¹¹

While the scope of this project is rather inert—limited to one book of the NT, and one aspect—the ambition behind it is fairly grand. The data presented here are the groundwork for what hopes to be a full investigation of Johannine idiolect vis-à-vis the conditional construction.¹² Of course, in order to discover Johannine idiolect, the steps of this assignment would need to be enlarged to cover the whole of conditionality,¹³ and extended to the rest of the Johannine literature, and then repeated within the Gospel genre in particular, and the NT and the wider Hellenistic writings of the period in general. The benefits of such a study would be far reaching—not least as it relates to the aspectuality of the verb. Conditional statements prove a fertile field for testing verbal aspect theory, "since so much discussion revolves around their sphere of temporal reference."¹⁴ For now, we will only examine εἰ + the indicative in the protasis,¹⁵ moving from a purely descriptive probe to a rough proposal.

⁶ C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959) 148.

⁷ Robert W. Funk, *A Beginning-Intermediate Grammar of Hellenistic Greek*, Vol. II: *Syntax* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973) 679.

⁸ Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (SBG 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1989) 320.

⁹ Pragmatics as defined by John L. Lyons, *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 171, is "the study of actual utterances."

¹⁰ See G. Van W. Kruger, "Conditions in the New Testament: A Study in their Rationale" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1966), for an interesting analysis in this regard.

¹¹ I have in mind something akin to J. P. Thorne, "Generative Grammar and Stylistic Analysis," in *New Horizons in Linguistics* (ed. John Lyons; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970) 185–97.

¹² To my knowledge, such an investigation has not been done. Edwin A. Abbot, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), for example, lacks a section on the conditional construction—though he mentions it here and there in sections 2078–86; 2513–16.

¹³ See, for example, Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament* (WUNT 167; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 198–200, 227–28.

¹⁴ Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 291.

¹⁵ The choice of the indicative should be evident. This is the mood where grammars traditionally place the interface of time. Outside of the indicative, so the saying goes, all bets are off.

I. PREVIOUS PROPOSALS

1. *Goodwin*. Though there are numerous proposals for classification, two major schools on conditional statements hold sway.¹⁶ The first dominant school of classification is that of W. W. Goodwin, who argued for four groupings of conditional statements: (1) present and past conditions implying nothing as to fulfillment; (2) present and past conditions implying non-fulfillment; (3) future conditions; and (4) future less vivid.¹⁷

- a. Present and past conditions implying nothing as to fulfillment. Within this grouping, there are two forms:
 - i. Particular— $\epsilon\iota$ + indicative (including the future) in the protasis, and any verbal in the apodosis.
 - ii. General—either $\epsilon\check{\alpha}\nu$ + subjunctive in the protasis and a present indicative in the apodosis; or an augment with $\epsilon\iota$ + optative in the protasis and imperfect verbal in the apodosis.
- b. Present and past conditions implying non-fulfillment. This form consists of $\epsilon\iota$ + augment in the protasis, and $\check{\alpha}\nu$ + augmented form in the apodosis.
- c. Future more vivid conditions. This can consist of either $\epsilon\check{\alpha}\nu$ + subjunctive, or $\epsilon\iota$ + future in the protasis, any future verbal form in the apodosis.
- d. Future less vivid conditions. This is when $\epsilon\iota$ + optative occurs in the protasis, and $\check{\alpha}\nu$ + optative follows in the apodosis.

This position has been roundly criticized in the literature,¹⁸ and these criticisms need not be rehearsed here.¹⁹

2. *Gildersleeve*. The second major conditional scheme was formulated by B. L. Gildersleeve.²⁰ Porter comments that in “using Gildersleeve’s Mood-oriented analysis, along with the significant contribution of verbal aspect, a sizable step forward can be taken in understanding conditional statements.”²¹ Gildersleeve’s scheme “combines a formal analysis of the protasis with the

¹⁶ It is not the purposes of this paper to provide a history of the literature. For the vast bibliography and nuanced proposals, see Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 291–94. It will be apparent that I rely rather heavily upon Porter’s analysis.

¹⁷ W. W. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar* (rev. C. B. Gulick; Boston: Ginn, 1958); idem, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (5th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1892); idem, “On the Classification of Conditional Sentences in Greek Syntax,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 4 (1873) 60–80; *Journal of Philology* 5 (1874) 186–205. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 292–93.

¹⁸ For a bibliography on the conditional construction, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 701–2.

¹⁹ See Porter’s six criticisms in *Verbal Aspect* 292–93; idem, *Idioms* 254.

²⁰ See Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 293–94 for bibliography.

²¹ *Ibid.* 294.

semantics of attitudinal function,²² providing two major categories: assertion and projection.

- a. Assertion
 - i. For the sake of argument
 - ii. Assertion to the contrary
 - aa. Projection with no reference to fulfillment
 - bb. Projection with contingency for fulfillment
 - cc. Expectation of fulfillment
- b. Projection
 - i. Projection with no reference to fulfillment
 - ii. Projection with contingency for fulfillment
 - iii. Expectation of fulfillment.

Despite these improvements, problems remain: the aspects are scattered haphazardly, and some of the labels revert to time-based categories.

3. *Porter*. A third proposal worthy of note²³ is the recent work of Stanley E. Porter.²⁴ For our purposes, we will examine only his designation of first and second class conditionals.²⁵

a. *First Class Conditionals*. A first class condition asserts something for the sake of argument: the general form is $\epsilon\iota$ + indicative. "Despite much work on the Moods, there is still the persistent belief among certain grammarians that this category of conditional asserts a fact."²⁶ As J. L. Boyer's study has demonstrated, however, this category is not necessarily as tight as is suggested in the grammars.²⁷

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Nutting and Kruger have been skipped over due to their analysis being more logically driven, with little attention given to tenses and moods. Though see H. C. Nutting, "The Modes of Conditional Thought," *American Journal of Philology* 24 (1903) 278–303; *idem*, "The Order of Conditional Thought," *American Journal of Philology* 24 (1903) 25–39, 149–62; and Kruger, *Conditionals in the New Testament*. Nutting formulates four distinguishable relations for conditionals:

- (a) Cause and effect
- (b) Ground and inference
- (c) Relation of equivalents
- (d) Unreal conditional periods

²⁴ See Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 294–320; and *idem*, *Idioms* 255–67. This position is followed, more or less, by David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* (exp. ed.; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) 163–66.

²⁵ First— $\epsilon\iota$ + indicative, negated by $\omicron\upsilon$

Second— $\epsilon\iota$ + imperfect or aorist, negated by $\mu\eta$ ($\acute{\alpha}\nu$ + imperfect or aorist in apodosis)

Third— $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\alpha}\nu$ + subjunctive, negated by $\mu\eta$

Fourth— $\epsilon\iota$ + optative, negated by $\mu\eta$ ($\acute{\alpha}\nu$ + optative, or imperfect in apodosis)

Fifth— $\epsilon\iota$ + future, negated by $\omicron\upsilon$

²⁶ Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 295.

²⁷ J. L. Boyer, "First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?" *GTJ* 2 (1981) 75–114.

Of the twenty-eight first class conditionals that appear in John's Gospel,²⁸ sixteen (57%) fit the classic pattern of assertion, with the helping word "since" figuring into the protasis;²⁹ two remain unclear (7%);³⁰ and the remaining ten (36%) are exceptions to one degree or another.³¹ Boyer's classification of the whole of the NT yields similar results:³²

Instances where the condition was obviously true	115	37%
Instances where the condition was obviously false	36	12%
Instances where the condition was undetermined	155	51%

Consider the following exceptions. In John 8:39, Jesus states εἰ τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ ἐστε, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ ἐποιεῖτε. Though εἰμί shows up in the protasis in the present tense, it is, of course, aspectually vague. Grammatically speaking, this is mere assertion: if you are *x*, you would do *y*. However, the Whispering Wizard's³³ polemics are far more biting. Jesus turns the Pharisees' claim of bastardry on its head (8:19). This was a radical indictment,³⁴ and a charge not missed by the Pharisees (cf. v. 41). Naked grammar and classification miss the point. Somewhere between Οἶδα ὅτι σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἐστε (8:37), and ὑμεῖς ποιεῖτε τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν (Satan; 8:41), lies the thrust of the condition of 8:39: εἰ τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ ἐστε, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ ἐποιεῖτε. Contextually, Jesus' interlocutors' "father" must therefore be someone else.³⁵ Does the label *realis*, or assertion for the sake of the argument, capture the narrative dynamics of 8:39?

The simple assertion of "since" could work for 8:46, but misses what the language is doing. The apodosis διὰ τί ὑμεῖς οὐ πιστεύετε μοι draws the interlocutor into a dialogue with the protasis.

The simple assertion "since" will not work for 10:24: εἰ σύ εἶ ὁ χριστός, εἰπὲ ἡμῖν παρρησίᾳ. There is little doubt in the Jews' minds that Jesus is *not* the Christ. As Young Siward said in a different context, "The devil himself could not produce a title more hateful to mine ear."³⁶ Of course, one could argue that this is an assertion for the sake of argument, but this misses the

²⁸ This number was arrived at by searching GRAMCORD for a subordinating conjunction + the indicative, excluding all of Porter's second class conditionals. In twenty-seven of the hits, εἰ signaled the protasis. The one exception—which needs closer inspection—was 12:26.

²⁹ 1:25; 3:12; 5:47; 7:4; 7:23; 9:33; 10:35; 10:37; 12:26; 13:14; 13:32; 14:7; 15:24; 18:8; 18:23b; 19:11.

³⁰ 14:11; 15:22.

³¹ 8:39, 46; 9:25; 10:24; 11:12; 15:18; 15:20a, b; 18:23a; 20:15.

³² Boyer, "First Class Conditions" 76. Of course, one exegete's "undetermined" may be another's "obviously true," or "obviously false." There is a learning curve, and its name is "interpretation"!

³³ The language of "whispering wizard" (of the imperfect tense) belongs to Thomas Mann and *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*), and is applied to John's Gospel by R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 15.

³⁴ See Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005) 267.

³⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 352.

³⁶ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act V, Scene VII, Lines 8–9.

tenor of the Jews' "question." There is no interest on the part of the Pharisees in "argument" in any loose sense. The language is accusatory. The idea of assertion *for the sake of argument* is present, but there are obvious problems with the nomenclature.

John 15:20a departs from this scheme as well. Jesus warns the disciples: εἰ ἐμὲ ἐδίωξαν, καὶ ὑμᾶς διώξουσιν. Jesus is certainly not denying the assumption that he in fact was persecuted, but the persecution Jesus has in mind is the future event of the cross.³⁷ Moreover, certainty (vivid expectation) is grammaticalized in the apodosis. The disciples *can expect* to be persecuted *because* Jesus *was* persecuted (cf. 16:33). Verse 20b is less certain: εἰ τὸν λόγον μου ἐτήρησαν, καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον τηρήσουσιν. Who are the "they" referred to in the morphology of ἐτήρησαν? Is it the "they" referred to in the morphology of ἐδίωξαν? If so, then the augmented tense in the protasis would suggest *irrealis*. But the certainty (*realis*) of 20a seems to suggest that equal certainty (*realis*) be assumed in the protasis of 20b. Moreover, the prevalent notion that the aorist and the imperfect are past-referring and the present is present-referring is doubtful. As John A. L. Lee has demonstrated in his work on the inheritance of errors in lexicography,³⁸ so it seems that the sins of the fathers, as it were, have passed from grammar to grammar, with little thought given to the large body of counterexamples.³⁹ In fact, "[e]nough clear examples exist to prove the standard rule inadequate and force subsequent examination to approach verbal usage from a non-temporal perspective."⁴⁰ To press the two aorist verbs in the protasis of 15:20 for temporal distinctiveness "on the basis of verb tense is to run the risk of making nonsense."⁴¹

The use of the present tense ποιῶ in the protasis of 10:37, for example, needs to be read in light of the perfective ἔδειξα of verse 32. The protasis cannot be reduced to Jesus' current workings. It is best read as proverbial, or timeless.⁴² The apodosis contains the directional command μὴ πιστεύετε μοι. Many translations (e.g. NIV, TNIV) flip the protasis and apodosis. Doing so, however, misses the emphasis and rhetoric—that is, εἰ οὐ ποιῶ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πατρὸς μου.

Aktionsart has a difficult time explaining the use of the present tense in 15:18: Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ, γινώσκειτε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν. The protasis is presented by John as being imperfective. John's Gospel has yet

³⁷ Pace C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1967) 480.

³⁸ John A. L. Lee, *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (SBG 8; New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

³⁹ See, e.g., Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963) 513–37; F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) 360, 3701–76; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 1004–27; *inter alia*.

⁴⁰ Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 297; who cites John 15:20; 1 John 3:13; John 12:12; 14:1, 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 298.

⁴² See the interesting work of Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 390, who sees the ἔργα in verses 37–38 as referring to "Jesus' revealing activity as a whole."

to reveal Jesus being hated by the world, much less any hint of the world's hatred of the disciples.⁴³ Time, therefore, is irrelevant, and is best taken as timeless or gnomic. The tense communicates aspect, not time. The apodosis consists of both direction: γινώσκετέ and stative assertion: ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ἰμῶν μεμίσηκεν.

Our brief survey of first class conditionals, as classified by Porter, in John's Gospel reveals that "[c]onditionals that are past-referring virtually always have clear temporal daxis."⁴⁴ Moreover, the relationship between the hypothesis and its consequent "must be determined by appeal to context."⁴⁵ Stringent classification and definition must therefore be avoided.

b. *Second class conditionals.* This group is often labeled contrary to fact: εἰ + indicative (negated by μὴ), with ἄν in the apodosis, with an aorist or imperfect in the apodosis.⁴⁶ It is in these hypothetical statements and counterfactuals where verbal aspect, as opposed to the time-based schemes found in most grammars, makes the best sense of the tenses.⁴⁷ Porter hints that this is merely a subcategory of the first category,⁴⁸ but insists that the "major distinctive of this class is provided by the apodosis with the conditional particle (ἄν)."⁴⁹ This takes seriously the phenomenon of the particle in the apodosis, but gaps remain in this approach (cf. the absence of ἄν in 15:22).

Of the thirteen second class conditionals that appear in John's Gospel, eight (62%) fit the mold of the contrary-to-fact label; five (38%), however, need closer inspection.

John 9:41, on the face of it at least, appears to be more proof in the pudding of the *irrealis* or contrary-to-fact scheme. Jesus says, εἰ τυφλοὶ ἦτε, οὐκ ἄν εἴχετε ἁμαρτίαν. Yes, ἦτε is aspectually vague, but grammatically the scheme holds. The Pharisees are not τυφλοί, for they claim to be able to see. But can they *really* see? This is the brilliance of John—for the grammar would suggest "yes," while the context would suggest "no." To press the category of the second class conditional would miss the "guiding irony" within the surrounding context.⁵⁰

John 14:28, however, presents a problem for those who assert that the augmented tense in the protasis carries with it a flavor of *irrealis*. Jesus, in

⁴³ Pace Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (ABC; New York: Doubleday, 1970) 686.

⁴⁴ Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 300.

⁴⁵ Porter, *Idioms* 255.

⁴⁶ See John L. Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 2.818. Porter (*Verbal Aspect* 304; *Idioms* 259–60) seems to drop the pluperfect from this category in his most recent presentation. He cites John 11:12 in his simple condition section in *Idiom*.

⁴⁷ That is, against temporal reference. See Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 305, following J. Gonda, *The Character of Indo-European Moods, with Special Regard to Greek and Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden: Harrossowitz, 1956) 179.

⁴⁸ Porter, *Idioms* 260.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Vol. 1; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003) 795. On irony, especially as it relates to this text, see Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985) 124.

response to his disciples' questions, states that εἰ ἠγαπᾶτέ με ἐχάρητε ἂν ὅτι πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. Does the imperfect use of ἀγαπάω reveal Jesus' incredulity toward the disciples' love for him? Surely their love is not perfect, but is Jesus really saying something like, "If you love me (and you most certainly do not!)," or, "If you *did* love me . . ."? No, Jesus knows that his disciples love him. This is Jesus teaching his disciples what it means to love him: to rejoice that he is going to the Father.

Boyer rightly claims that "the tenses used were determined by normal aspectual considerations, not by arbitrary rule of grammar."⁵¹ Aspect, not time, is communicated by the morphemes.⁵² The use of the pluperfect in 8:19, for example—εἰ ἐμὲ ἤδεδετε, καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου ἂν ἤδεδετε—apparently refers to a present situation.⁵³

Group One Conditionals

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Protasis</i>	<i>Apodosis</i>	<i>Neg.</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1:25	εἰ σὺ Οὐκ εἶ (PAI2S) ὁ χριστὸς οὐδὲ Ἡλίας οὐδὲ ὁ προφήτης;	τί οὖν βαπτίζεις (PAI2s)	οὐκ	Apodosis comes first;
3:12	εἰ τὰ ἐπίγεια εἶπον (AAI1s) ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε (PAI2pl)	πῶς ἐὰν εἴπω (AASubj1s) ὑμῖν τὰ ἐπουράνια πιστεύσετε (FAI2pl);	οὐ	Subj in apodosis
4:10	εἰ ἤδεις (PIpAI2s) τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων σοι· δός μοι πεῖν	σὺ ἂν ἤτησας (AAI2s) αὐτὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν ἂν σοι ὕδωρ ζῶν.		Pluperfect in protasis
5:46	εἰ γὰρ ἐπιστεύετε (IAI2pl) Μωϋσεῖ,	ἐπιστεύετε (IAI2pl) ἂν ἐμοί·		Note the use of ἂν in apod.
5:47	εἰ δὲ τοῖς ἐκείνου γράμμασιν οὐ πιστεύετε (PAI2p)	πῶς τοῖς ἐμοῖς ῥήμασιν πιστεύσετε (FAI2pl);	οὐ	
7:4	εἰ ταῦτα ποιεῖς (PAI2s)	φανέρωσον (AAImpv2s) σεαυτὸν τῷ κόσμῳ.		Imperative in apod.
7:23	εἰ περιτομὴν λαμβάνει (PAI3s) ἄνθρωπος ἐν σαββάτῳ ἡσῶνα μὴ Λυθῆ ὁ νόμος Μωϋσέως,	ἐμοὶ χολᾶτε (PAI2pl) ὅτι ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ὕγιῃ ἐποίησα ἐν σαββάτῳ;		

⁵¹ J. L. Boyer, "Second Class Conditions in NT Greek," *GTJ* 3 (1982) 81.

⁵² Though in disagreement with his classification of contrary-to-fact conditions, on this point see Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) 252.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 309.

8:19	εἰ ἐμὲ ἦδείτε (PlpAI2pl)	καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου ἄν ἦδείτε (PlpAI2pl).		Pluperfect in prot., and apod.
8:39	εἰ τέκνα τοῦ ἄβραάμ ἐστε (PAI2p)	τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ἄβραάμ ἐποιεῖτε· (IAI2p)		
8:42	εἰ ὁ θεὸς πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἦν (IAI3s)	ἠγαπᾶτε (IAI2p) ἄν ἐμέ		Note use of ἄν in apod.
8:46	εἰ ἀλήθειαν λέγω (PAI1s)	διὰ τί ὑμεῖς οὐ πιστεύετε (PAI2pl) μοι;		
9:25	εἰ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν (PAI3s)	οὐκ οἶδα (PfAI1S)	οὐκ	
9:33	εἰ μὴ ἦν (IAI3s) οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ	οὐκ ἠδύνατο (IMI3s) ποιεῖν (PAInf) οὐδέν	μὴ P οὐ A	
9:41	εἰ τυφλοὶ ἦτε (IAI2p)	οὐκ ἄν εἴχετε (IAI2p) ἁμαρτίαν	οὐκ	Note use of ἄν in apod.
10:24	εἰ σὺ εἶ (PAI2s) ὁ χριστός.	εἰπέ (AAImpv2s) ἡμῖν παρρησιᾶ.		
10:35	εἰ ἐκείνους εἶπεν (AAI3S) θεοῦς	Uncertain (interference)		w/o apodosis?
10:37	εἰ οὐ ποιῶ (PAI1S) τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πατρός μου	μὴ πιστεύετε (PAImpv. 2Pl) μοι·	μὴ	Imperative
10:38	εἰ δὲ ποιῶ (PAI1S)	κἄν ἐμοὶ μὴ πιστεύητε (PASubj.2P), τοῖς ἔργοις πιστεύετε (PAImpv.2pl)		A lot of interference; also look at κἄν
11:12	εἰ κεκοίμηται (Pf.MI3S)	σωθήσεται (FPI3S)		
11:21 11:32	εἰ ἦς (IAI2s) ὧδε (adv)	οὐκ ἄν ἀπέθανεν (AAI3S) ὁ ἀδελφός μου·	οὐκ	Note use of ἄν in apod.
12:26	καὶ ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ	ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ διάκονος ὁ ἐμὸς ἐστί (FMI3s)		Note use of ὅπου
13:14	εἰ οὖν ἐγὼ ἔνιψα (AAI1S) ὑμῶν τοὺς πόδας ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ διδάσκαλος	καὶ ὑμεῖς ὀφείλετε (PAI2P) ἀλλήλων νίπτειν (PAInf) τοὺς πόδας·		Note use of καὶ
13:17	εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε (Pf.AI2Pl)	μακάριοί ἐστε (PAI2P) ἐὰν ποιῆτε (PASubj.2P) αὐτά		Use of ἐὰν
13:32	εἰ ὁ θεὸς ἐδοξάσθη (API3S) ἐν αὐτῷ.	καὶ ὁ θεὸς δοξάσει (FAI3S) αὐτὸν ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ εὐθὺς δοξάσει (FAI3S) αὐτόν.		Note use of καὶ

14:2	εἰ δὲ μή (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαί εἰσιν [PAI3P])	εἶπον (AAI1S) ἄν ὑμῖν	Note use of ἄν and the “relative” use of the prot.
14:7	εἰ ἐγνώκατε, (Pf.AI2pl) με	καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου γνώσεσθε (FMI2P)	Note use of καὶ
14:11	εἰ δὲ μή.	διὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτὰ πιστεύετε (PAImpn2p).	
14:28	εἰ ἠγαπᾶτε, (IAI2P) με	ἐχάρητε (API2pl) ἄν ὅτι πορεύομαι (PMI1S) πρὸς τὸν πατέρα	Note use of ἄν
15:18	Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ (PAI3S)	γινώσκειτε (PAImpn.2pl) ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν (Pf.AI3S)	Imperative intermittent with Pf. apod.
15:19	εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἦτε (IAI2P)	κόσμος ἄν τὸ ἴδιον ἐφίλει (IAI3S)	Note use of ἄν
15:20a	εἰ ἐμὲ ἤεδίζαν (AAI3P)	καὶ ὑμᾶς διώξουσιν (FAI3P)	Note use of καὶ
15:20b	εἰ τὸν λόγον μου ἐτήρησαν (AAI3P)	καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον τηρήσουσιν (FAI3P)	Note use of καὶ
15:22	εἰ μὴ ἦλθον (AAI1s) καὶ ἐλάλησα (AAI1S) αὐτοῖς,	ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ εἶχουσαν (IAI3P)	οὐκ
15:24	εἰ τὰ ἔργα μὴ ἐποίησα (AAI1S) ἐν αὐτοῖς ἃ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐποίησεν (AAI3S)	ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ εἶχουσαν (IAI3P)	οὐκ
18:8	εἰ οὖν ἐμὲ ζητεῖτε (PAI2Pl)	ἄφετε (AAImpn2pl.) τούτους ὑπάγειν (PAInf.)	Imperative in apod.?
18:23a	εἰ κακῶς ἐλάλησα (AAI1S)	μαρτύρησον (AAImpn.2S) περὶ τοῦ κακοῦ·	Imperative in apod.?
18:23b	εἰ δὲ καλῶς,	τί με δέρεις; (PAI2S)	
18:30	εἰ μὴ ἦν (IAI3S) οὗτος κακὸν ποιῶν (PAPtcMSN)	οὐκ ἄν σοι παρεδώκαμεν (AAI1P) αὐτόν.	οὐκ Use of ἄν
18:36	εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἦν (IAI3S) ἢ βασιλεία ἢ ἐμή	οἱ ὑπηρεταὶ οἱ ἐμοὶ ἠγωνίζοντο (ImI3Pl) [ἄν] ἵνα μὴ παραδοθῶ (APSubj.1S) τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις	

19:11	εἰ μὴ ἦν (IAI3s) δεδομένον (PfPPtensn) σοι ἄνωθεν·	οὐκ εἶχες (IAI2s) ἐξουσίαν κατ' ἐμοῦ οὐδεμίαν	οὐκ Apodosis comes first
20:15	εἰ σὺ ἐβάστασας (AAI2S) αὐτόν,	εἰπέ (AAImpv.2s) μοι ποῦ ἔθηκας (AAI3S) αὐτόν, κἀγὼ αὐτὸν ἄρῶ (FAI1S).	

II. A CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL

What then of the various tenses in conditional constructions, and the relationship between the protasis and the apodosis? Diversity demonstrates choice, and choice reveals emphases. Can any emphases be determined based upon John's morphological decisions? "Establishing the exact relation between protasis and apodosis is more difficult, since there are no firm criteria by which such an analysis may be made."⁵⁴ Boyer suggests, in the first class construction at least, "a simple logical connection between protasis and apodosis."⁵⁵ Is this correct? Porter is probably right in stating there likely will "never be a scheme for conditionals that will meet the approval of all grammarians, but formal criteria utilizing attitudinal and aspectual semantics provide a helpful basis for advancing discussion of the protasis."⁵⁶

Following the preliminary work of D. A. Carson,⁵⁷ I suggest that Porter's first and second class conditionals be lumped into a single group where the assertive attitude—the indicative—appears or is assumed (e.g. 18:23b) in the protasis, excluding the future. The distinguishable morphological aspect of this group is the assertive attitude. Though the majority of Porter's class one and class two conditionals are distinguishable, often enough these categories prove inadequate. Though the label "assertion" can bring with it the baggage of the simple gloss "since," the label is still helpful because group one conditionals all assert or do something. *Assertion* is broad enough to allow context to define what is being asserted.⁵⁸ The benefits of this proposal are that it allows flux for the uncertainty of the particle ἄν, appreciates verbal aspect, and, of course, creates a wide open space for interstructural dialogue of protasis and apodosis.

Therefore, as McKay rightly suggests, the "measure of doubt introduced by a conditional protasis depends partly on the form of the protasis, but mainly on the context as a whole."⁵⁹ Such categories as "open condition," "unreal

⁵⁴ Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 320.

⁵⁵ Boyer, "First Class Conditions" 75.

⁵⁶ Porter, *Verbal Aspect* 320.

⁵⁷ See note 3.

⁵⁸ Though perhaps splitting hairs, I would not want to say "assertion for the sake of the argument," as, in my opinion, it can be a confusion of nomenclature (see above on 10:42).

⁵⁹ K. L. McKay, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek: An Aspectual Approach* (SBG 5; New York: Peter Lang, 1994) 163.

condition,” “remote condition,” and the like may be helpful at the pragmatic level, but structurally speaking the categories can be misleading.⁶⁰

At the pragmatic level, conditional sentences can be “uttered as a veiled threat, request, command, and the like.”⁶¹ Grouping Porter’s class one and class two conditionals allows contextual indicators to interpret the nature of the assertion and gives room for the interplay of semantically-relevant factors which, according to John L. Lyons, are impossible to identify. Moreover, “it is also impossible to calculate the probability, and therefore the information-content, of any part of them.”⁶²

Any classification of the conditional construction must remain wide and flexible and allow for context to determine the precise relation of the protasis with the apodosis. “The prominent role that dialogue and direct speech play in the Fourth Gospel calls for attention to the capacity of language to perform multiple functions in one literary context.”⁶³ The scheme must fit the script.

III. CONCLUSION

A. T. Robertson once said, “For some reason the Greek conditional sentence has been very difficult for students to understand.”⁶⁴ Part of this difficulty is owing to its overclassification. As Moisés Silva said in a different context, “[W]e need not be disturbed when complete precision and certainty elude us; responsible uncertainty will take us considerably further than baseless assurance.”⁶⁵

So, can we conclude that “a conditional is a conditional is a conditional?” With respect to group one conditionals outlined above, just as a Hybrid Tea, a Grandiflora, a Floribunda, and a Miniature are all a rose, so are all group one conditionals assertive, in a responsibly uncertain way. Context, it seems, is king after all.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Ibid. 164.

⁶¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 681.

⁶² John L. Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 97.

⁶³ Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004) 75.

⁶⁴ Robertson, *Grammar* 1004.

⁶⁵ Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 177.

⁶⁶ This essay is the fruit of D. A. Carson’s lively seminar, “Advanced Greek Grammar,” held at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School during the spring semester of 2006. I am profoundly grateful to both professor and students for the stimulating discussion and collegial environment and offer these pages as a hearty dedication.