"Οτι Recitativum in John’s Gospel: A Stylistic or a Pragmatic Device? *

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This paper distinguishes three ways in which speech is reported in the Greek of John’s Gospel: directly (without the complementizer ὡτι), indirectly (with ὡτι and appropriate changes to first and second person references), and in ‘hotmail-direct’ form (i.e., with ὡτι but without changes to first and second person references). The default way of reporting speech in Koine Greek is directly. Typically, when using direct speech, the reporter purports to reproduce the original speech verbatim. When in indirect form, the speech is not reported verbatim and/or is backgrounded with respect to what follows. The ὡτι-direct form is used to signal that the speech culminates some unit. When a reported speech is embedded in another reported speech, however, the use of ὡτι may be influenced also by the presence of ὡτι in the immediate context. When ὡτι follows the formula ὁμοίως ὁμοίως ἐγώ σου/ὑμίν ‘truly truly I say to you’, it signals that the assertion concerned makes explicit some previous point.

When a speech or writing is reported in Ancient or Koine Greek using the orienter verbs λέγω/εἶπον ‘say/said’ or γράφω ‘write’, the author has the option of inserting the complementizer ὡτι between the orienter and the reported speech.

Example (1) (John 8:19) illustrates a speech which is not preceded by ὡτι; and (2b) (John 4:41-42a—UBS text), one which is preceded by ὡτι.2 In both, the orienter verb is ἔλεγον ‘were saying’.

Example (1) (John 8:19) illustrates a speech which is not preceded by ὡτι; and (2b) (John 4:41-42a—UBS text), one which is preceded by ὡτι.2 In both, the orienter verb is ἔλεγον ‘were saying’.

(1) ORIENTER REPORTED SPEECH

ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ, Ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ πατὴρ σου;

were.saying so.to.him where is the father your

So they were saying to him, “Where is your father?”

(2) a. καὶ πολλοὶ πλείους ἐπιστέφασαν διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ,

and more many believed because.of the word his

(2) b. ORIENTER ὡτι REPORTED SPEECH

τῇ τῇ γυναῖκι ἔλεγον ὡτι Οὐκέτι διὰ τὴν σήν

to.the and the.woman were.saying that no.longer because.of the your

λαλάν πιστεύομεν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκούσαμεν καὶ οἴδαμεν

word we.believe selves for we.have.heard and we.know

I am grateful to Tony Pope for the many observations and suggestions that he made on an earlier version of this article.

1 “Complement types often have associated with them a word, particle, clitic, or affix whose function it is to identify the entity as a complement. Such forms are known as complementizers” (Noonan 1985:44-45).

2 Some MSS omit ὡτι. Throughout this paper, the comment UBS text indicates that I have followed the reading in the 27th (1994) edition of Nestle-Aland’s Novum Testamentum Graece, but that ὡτι is absent (or present) in some MSS.
that this is truly the savior of the world

And many more believed because of his word and were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

In (2b), the references to the speakers and the addressee are respectively in the first and second person, not the third person, even though ὅτι is present. In (3b) below (John 4:51—UBS text), in contrast, the reference to the addressee is in the third person:

(3) a. οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ ὑπήντησαν αὐτῷ
the slaves his met him

b. ORIENTER ὅτι REPORTED SPEECH
λέγοντες ὅτι ὁ παῖς αὐτοῦ ἔζη.
saying that the child his lives
his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive.

Because the references to the speakers and/or addressees change to third person, the reported speech of (3b) is considered to be indirect. In contrast, the reported speeches of (1) and (2b) are considered to be direct, because the first and/or second person references of the original speech are preserved. To distinguish the types represented by (1) and (2b), I shall refer to (2b) as ὅτι-direct.

Grammarians refer to the use of ὅτι in (2b) as “recitativum, when it is practically equivalent to our quotation marks” (Moulton & Milligan 1974 (1930):463; see also Arndt & Gingrich 1957:593; Blass, Debrunner & Funk 1961 §470(1); Porter 1992:268; Robertson 1934:442; Wallace 1996:454). However, they offer no explanation as to why it is sometimes present and sometimes absent with direct speech. The purpose of this paper is to address that deficiency. The explanation will entail recognizing different functions for the indirect and ὅτι-direct ways of reporting.

In order to be able to contrast the presence versus the absence of ὅτι recitativum in comparable contexts, the data are divided as follows. Examples of reported speech or writing that are not embedded in another speech are considered in §1. Citations of a previous speech or writing that are embedded in another speech are discussed in §2. Reported speeches introduced with the formula ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν ‘truly truly I say to you’ are presented in §3.

This paper does not discuss ὅτι following verbs that require a complementizer when their complement is verbal. Such verbs denote sense perception (e.g. ἀκούω ‘hear’), mental perception (e.g. γινώσκω ‘know’), “thinking, judging, believing, hoping,” and “verbs of swearing, affirming and corresponding formulae” (Arndt & Gingrich loc. cit.).

Nor does this paper consider ὅτι when used as a causal conjunction. Zerwick (1963:145 §422) suggests that ὅτι is often used to give “the reason not why the fact is so, but whereby it is known

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3 Although all MSS have ὅτι present, some read σοι for αὐτοῦ, in which case the speech of (3b) would be ὅτι-direct.

4 See (12) (sec. 2.2) for an instance of indirect speech in which second person changes to first person when a speech is embedded in another. See chapter 17 of Porter 1992 for the different forms of indirect reporting found in the New Testament. For example, indirect speech is introduced with ἵνα ‘so that’ in John 4:47—see Table 1 of sec. 1.

5 ὅτι appears to be obligatory also if the demonstrative οὗτος is used in the speech orienter to refer to the following speech. See, for example, John 21:23b (ἐξῆλθαν οὖν οὗτος ὁ λόγος εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὅτι...So this word spread among the brothers that...).
to be so.” In (4) (John 5:16), for instance, the reason that the Jews persecuted Jesus was because he was ‘working’ on the Sabbath and they knew this to be so.

(4) καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐδώκον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τὸν Ἰησοῦν, and because of this were persecuting the Jews the Jesus

because these things was doing on Sabbath

It was because of this that the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Following a verb of saying, it is not always clear whether ὅτι is to be interpreted as a causal conjunction or as *recitativum*. In (5b) (John 20:13), for instance, the UBS text treats ὅτι as *recitativum*. However, the preceding question (5a) asks the addressee why she is weeping, so it would be natural to interpret (5b) as giving the reason for her weeping (see the punctuation in Alford 1863: I, 900).

(5) a. καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῇ ἐκείνοις, Γάνα, τί εἶλαίες; and say to her those ones woman why you weep

And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

b. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὅτι Ἡραν τὸν κύριόν μου, says to them that because took the lord my

She said to them, “(Because?) they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

1. "Ὅτι introducing unembedded reported speech

When a speech is reported and it is not embedded in another speech, the author may use direct speech (as in (1) above), ὅτι-direct speech (as in (2b)), or ὅτι-indirect speech (as in (3b)).

The norm is for speeches to be reported in direct form. In John’s Gospel, orienters containing a form of ἀποκρίνομαι ‘answer’ or ἐρωτάω ‘ask’ are never followed by ὅτι, while the only example of ὅτι following the historic present of λέγω is the one discussed above (5b), which may well not be *recitativum*. Typically, when using direct speech, the reporter purports to reproduce the original verbatim (see Li 1986:38-40). 7,8

*Indirect* reported speech introduced with ὅτι occurs infrequently in John’s Gospel. By using indirect speech, the reporter claims only that the speech is “truthful in relevant respects” (Follingstad forthcoming); he does not purport to reproduce the original verbatim. Thus, in (3b) above, the reported speech conveys the sense of what the slaves said without communicating their exact words.

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6 See also the example of ἔξηταξον ‘ask’ in 21:12. Ὅτι may follow ἀποκρίνομαι; see Acts 25:16, for example.

7 Or as ‘verbatim’ as is possible for a speech that was translated into Greek from Hebrew or Aramaic. I am grateful to Jim Meyer for pointing out to me that such speeches are not truly reported verbatim.

8 Citations from a written source are usually introduced with a form of γράφω ‘write’ or the noun γραφή ‘writing, scripture’, though the introducer is sometimes ἔπειται ‘said’ or λόγος ‘word’. All the citations in John’s Gospel that are not embedded in a reported speech are presented directly (i.e., with ὅτι absent). In each instance, it seems evident that the author’s intention is to cite the original verbatim. See 2:17, 12:14-15, 12:38, 12:39-40, 19:19, 19:24, 19:36 and 19:37.
However, saying that indirect speech is not verbatim does not explain why an author chooses to report certain speeches indirectly. One common motivation in languages for using an indirect form is to *background* the speech with respect to what follows. For example, Mfønym (1994:195) observes concerning Bafut (Grassfields Bantu, Cameroon), “Another means by which background information is marked in Bafut is by indirect reported speech.”

Indirect speech appears to be used in John’s Gospel for the same reason. The following table gives an overview of the distribution of direct and indirect speech in the passage which includes (3).

Table 1: John 4:46b-54 (UBS text)

(46b) *Now there was a certain royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum.* (47) *This man, having heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, went and was asking that (́ prá) he come down and heal his son,* for he was at the point of death.

(INDIRECT)

(48) *Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”* (DIRECT)

(49) *The official says to him, “Sir, come down before my little boy dies.”* (DIRECT)

(50a) *Jesus says to him, “Go, your son will live.”* (DIRECT)

(50b) *The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way.*

(51) *As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him ōtī his child was alive.* (INDIRECT)

(52a) *So he asked them the hour when he began to recover,* (INDIRECT)

(52b) *and they said to him ōtī “Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.”* (ōtī-DIRECT or INDIRECT)

(53a) *Then the father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,”* (EMBEDDED DIRECT)

(53b) *and he himself believed, along with his whole household.*

(54) *This was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.*

As v. 54 indicates, this passage recounts one of Jesus’ ‘signs’. The improvement in the child’s health (v. 51) does not itself show that Jesus had healed him. It is because the child got better at the time that Jesus had assured the official that his son would live that convinces him that Jesus was responsible for the healing. The speeches of vv. 51-52a can, therefore, be viewed as *preliminary* to the rest of the episode of vv. 51-53. Similarly, the request of v. 47 can be viewed as preliminary to the rest of the episode of vv. 46b-50.

The same argument probably applies to the short speeches found in John 7:12b ((6b) below), 9:9a (UBS text) and, in some MSS, 7:40, 7:41 and 9:9b. It is not possible to know for certain whether the speeches concerned are in indirect or ōtī-direct form. However, each one is the first speech of an exchange⁹ and can readily be viewed as preliminary to the subsequent speech(es), so I think it likely that they should be interpreted as indirect ones. Furthermore, in the case of (6b), prospective μέν also backgrounds the sentence (see Levinsohn 1999, §10.1).

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⁹ In Luke-Acts, in contrast, it is the *final* speech of such exchanges (“the quotation that culminates the build-up to a key speech”—Levinsohn 1978:33) which is typically introduced with ōtī; see Acts 2:12-13, for example.
(6) a. And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds.

b. οἱ μὲν ἔλεγον ὁτι Ἄγαθός ἐστιν,
some were saying that good is

c. ἄλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον, Ὑμῖν πλανᾷ τὸν ἄγαθον.
others but were saying no rather deceives the crowd

While some were saying that he was a good man, others were saying, “No, he is deceiving the crowd.”

The remaining unembedded reported speeches in John’s Gospel that are introduced with ὁτι are either unambiguously ὁτι-direct or, like 4:52b (Table 1 above), may be interpreted as such. In an earlier paper I suggested that, in Luke-Acts, ὁτι recitativum “in some sense ... is always used to introduce a quotation which terminates or culminates some unit” (Levinsohn 1978:25). It appears that the same is true in John’s Gospel when the speech is in ὁτι-direct form. For instance, the speech of John 4:42 ((2b) above) is “the final speech of a narrative section” (op. cit. 32), while the speech of 4:52b is the culmination of the conversation reported in vv. 51-52. 10

In summary, then, the default way of reporting unembedded speeches in John’s Gospel is in direct form. When reported in indirect form, the speech is preliminary to what follows. When reported in ὁτι-direct form, the speech is the culmination of some unit.

2. ὁτι introducing an embedded speech

This section first considers a stylistic explanation for the use of ὁτι in connection with a reported speech or writing in John’s Gospel that is embedded in another speech (§2.1). This explanation accounts for the majority of the data, but leaves a residue. I then discuss possible pragmatic explanations for the same data (§2.2), which also leave a residue.

2.1. A stylistic explanation for the occurrence of ὁτι with embedded speeches and writings

The stylistic reason for the use of ὁτι with embedded speeches and writings in John’s Gospel is simply that, if the matrix speech is not introduced with ὁτι, then the embedded material will be. Conversely, if the embedded material is preceded by ὁτι (whether recitativum or the causal conjunction), then it will not be introduced with ὁτι. 11

This principle is illustrated in (7a) below (John 10:34). Because the matrix speech (Is it not written in your law) is not introduced with ὁτι, the embedded citation (I said, “You are gods”) will be introduced with ὁτι, while the doubly embedded speech (You are gods) will not be. The same argument applies to the embedded speeches of (7c) (v. 36). According to the stylistic preference described in this section, because the matrix speech (Is it not written ... you say) is introduced without ὁτι, the embedded speech (You blaspheme) will be introduced with ὁτι. Then, because the continuation of the matrix speech contains ὁτι, the second embedded speech (I am the Son of God) will be introduced without ὁτι.

(7) a. Ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς, Ὁῦ, ἔστιν γεγραμμένον ἐν τῷ answered to.them the Jesus not is written in the law your that I l.said gods you.are

Jesus answered, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’?”

10 See also 1:32, 6:14, 9:9c (UBS text), 9:17b, 9:23, 10:41 (UBS text), 13:11 (UBS text—the conclusion of the explanation which was introduced with γάρ), and 18:9.

11 This principle presumably lies behind Blass, Debrunner & Funk’s (1961:§470(1)) comment about John 3:28, “ὁτι is omitted before ὅπως because ὁτι already comes before ἐλπίζω.”
b. “If those to whom the word of God came were called ‘gods’—and the scripture cannot be annulled—

c. ὃν ὁ πατήρ ἠγάστηκεν καὶ ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον

whom the father sanctified and sent into the world

ἔμεις λέγετε ὅτι Βλασφημεῖς,
you say that you blaspheme

ὅτι εἶπον, Υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ εἶμι;
because I said Son of the God I am

“can you say of the one whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You blaspheme’ because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”

Similarly, in (8) (John 13:29), because δοκέω ‘think’ requires a complementizer when its complement is verbal and ὅτι introduces the matrix thought (Jesus was telling him...), the embedded speech (Buy what we need for the festival) will not be introduced with ὅτι.  

(8) τινὲς γὰρ ἔδοκουν, ἐπεὶ τὸ γλῶσσοκινούμεν ἔγειν Ἰωάννας,
some for were thinking since the money box had Judas

ὅτι λέγεται αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς, Ἀγόρασον ὅν χρείαν ἔχομεν

that says to him the Jesus buy of which need we have

εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν, ἡ τοῖς πιστοῖς ἤνα τι δῷ.

for the feast or to the poor that something give

For some were thinking that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we have for the festival” or that he should give something to the poor.

Although this stylistic principle accounts for the presence versus absence of ὅτι at the beginning of many embedded speeches, there are some notable exceptions.

First of all, on four occasions, a citation from a written source is embedded in a reported speech that is not introduced with ὅτι, yet is not introduced with ὅτι, either. This is illustrated in (9) (John 6:31).

(9) οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν τὸ μάννα ἔφαγον ἐν τῇ ἑρήμῳ, καθὼς ἐστίν

the fathers our the manna ate in the wilderness as is

γεγραμμένον, ἠρετῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὑδάτος ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς φαγεῖν.

written bread from the heaven gave to them to eat

Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat”.

Secondly, those assertions that are introduced with the formula ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι/ἡμῖν (§3) are arguably to be viewed as embedded, yet the majority are not introduced with ὅτι.

Thirdly, several other speeches are embedded in a reported speech that is not introduced with ὅτι, yet are not introduced with ὅτι, either. One such is illustrated in (10b) (John 7:35-36—UBS text).

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12 The second alternative in the embedded speech (‘that he should give something to the poor’) is presented indirectly, with the complementizer ἵνα (the speech orienter is elided).

13 The others are found in 6:45, 13:18 and 19:21a.

14 The others are found in 1:15, 1:30, 8:52 (UBS text) and 14:9.
(10) a. εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ... ζητήσετέ με καὶ οὐχ εὑρήσετε
said so the Jesus you.will.seek me and not you.will.find

[με], καὶ ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἔλθεῖν,
me and where I.am I you not you.will.be.able to.come

So Jesus said, “... You will search for me and not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

b. εἶπον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πρὸς ἑαυτούς, ... τίς ἔστιν ὁ λόγος
said so the Jews to selves what is the word

οὗτος ὅν εἶπεν, Ζητήσετε με καὶ οὐχ εὑρήσετε [με],
this which said you.will.seek me and not you.will.find me
καὶ ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἔλθεῖν;
and where I.am I you not you.will.be.able to.come

So the Jews said to one another, “... What does he mean by saying, ‘You will search for me and not find me; and where I am, you cannot come’?”

Finally, in one or two instances an embedded speech is introduced by ὅτι even though another ὅτι precedes it. One such is illustrated in (11) (John 1:50); ὅτι recitativum introduces the embedded speech in the UBS text, even though the matrix speech begins with causal ὅτι.15

(11) ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, ὅτι εἶπόν σοι
answered Jesus and said to.him because I.said to.you

ὁτι εἶδόν σε ὑπὸκάτω τῆς σοφῆς, πιστεύεις;
that I.saw you underneath the fig.tree you.believe

Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you underneath the fig tree?”

I conclude that there are enough counter-examples to the stylistic principle described in this section to warrant examining the pragmatic motivation for the use before an embedded speech or writing of ὅτι.

2.2. ὅτι marking the embedded speech as indirect or ὅτι-direct

Most speeches that are embedded within another speech in John’s Gospel cite a previous speech. The conclusions of §1 would lead us to expect ὅτι not to be present when the reporter purports to cite the original speech verbatim. When the reporter gives only the gist of the original speech, in contrast, he should introduce the speech with ὅτι. Similarly, ὅτι-direct speeches should be the culmination of some unit. And in fact, these principles account for many (but not all) of the speeches and writings that are embedded within another speech.

Example (10b) of §2.1 illustrates the absence of ὅτι when the reporter purports to cite a previous speech verbatim. The speech of (10b) cites (10a) (John 7:33-34) word for word.16

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15 The other potential example is 3:28a, though the UBS text brackets ὅτι recitativum.

16 See also 1:30 (repeating v. 15 with minor changes), 4:53 (UBS text—repeating v. 50), 6:41 (repeating parts of vv. 35 and 38), 8:22 (repeating v. 21), 8:52 (UBS text—repeating v. 51 with minor changes), 10:34 ((7a) of sec. 2.1, citing a speech in Psalm 82:6), 14:9 (repeating v. 8), 15:20 (repeating 13:16), 16:19 (repeating v. 17), and 21:17b (repeating v. 17a). In the case of 19:21b, the authorities are repeating the exact words that they claimed Jesus had said. In the cases of 1:15 and 1:33, there is no record in the Gospel of the original occasion when the words were uttered.
Similarly, (9) illustrates the absence of ὅτι when the reporter purports to cite a written source verbatim. Psalm 78:24 is cited word for word.\textsuperscript{17}

Example (12b) below (John 18:37b) illustrates the presence of ὅτι when the reporting of the speech is not verbatim. The speech is reported in indirect form, with the form of the verb changed from second person (12a) to first person. This embedded speech provides the ground for the assertions of (12c) (v. 37c), so can be viewed as preliminary to those assertions.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(12)]
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. ἔλεγεν ὁ Πιλάτος, ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὃς βασιλεὺς ἂν ἦν; said so to.him the Pilate not.so king you.are you

\textit{Then Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?”}

\item b. ᾧ ἔλεγες ὅτι βασιλεὺς ἐμί. answered the Jesus you say that king I.am

\textit{Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king.”}

\item c. “For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who listens to the truth listens to my voice.”

Similarly, though (13a) below (John 8:17) may allude to Deuteronomy 19:15 (“A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses”), it does not cite it directly. In other words, it gives but the gist of the Scripture to which it alludes, so may be interpreted as an instance of indirect reporting.\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, the quotation provides the ground for the assertion of (13b) (v. 18), so may be viewed as preliminary to that assertion.

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(13)]
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ δὲ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ γέγραπται ὅτι also in the law and the your has.been.written that

\textit{“Furthermore, in your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid.”}

\item b. “I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf.”

"Ὅτι also introduces an embedded speech when that speech is not cited verbatim because it was \textit{not uttered on a specific occasion.} This is illustrated in (14) (John 4:19-20); the woman is not thinking of a specific occasion when the generic ‘you’ (Jews) say, \textit{The place where people must worship is Jerusalem.}\textsuperscript{20}

\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] 6:45 is cited verbatim from Isaiah 54:13, and 13:18 from Psalm 41:9, while 19:21a cites what Pilate wrote (see v. 19).

\item[18] See also 21:23b (alluding to v. 23a and providing the ground for the negative and positive assertions of v. 23c). In the case of embedded speeches involving the same speaker and addressee that are introduced with ὅτι and are not reported verbatim, it is unclear whether the speech is in indirect or ὅτι-direct form. Most are listed in footnote 23, as they appear to be the culmination of some unit.

\item[19] Compare France’s (1985:88-89) comment about the allusion to the Scriptures in Matthew 2:23, “The formula introducing the quotation differs from the regular pattern … it concludes … with ‘that’ (hōti). This suggests that it is not meant to be a quotation of a specific passage, but a summary of a theme of prophetic expectation.”

\item[20] Commonly, the reputed speaker of such embedded speeches is the generic ‘you’. Further examples of this are 4:35, 8:54 and 9:19. See also 4:37 and 21:23a, both of which cite a saying (ὁ λόγος) that had wide currency at the time.

Incidentally, the only time that ὅτι is used in Revelation is to introduce embedded speeches that were not uttered on a specific occasion; see Rev. 3:17 (UBS text—following a causal ὅτι) and 18:7 (most MSS).
\end{footnotes}
(14) λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, ... καὶ ὡμείς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἰεροσολύμων
says to him the woman and you you say that in Jerusalem

(15) καὶ οὐ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα περὶ ὑμῶν
and not I say to you that I I will ask the father concerning you

The woman said to him, “... and you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”

Embedded speeches that are hypothetical are not uttered on a specific occasion, either, so ὅτι introduces them. This is seen in (15) (John 16:26).

Example (16c) (John 6:42) illustrates a speech which is reported in ὅτι-direct form because it culminates a reasoned argument. As far as the reporters are concerned, the fact that they know Jesus’ relatives (16b) enables them to conclude that his assertion of (16a) (v. 38) is absurd.

Similarly, several citations from a written source that are presented with ὅτι are “quoted as the final point to an argument” (Levinsohn 1978:29), so I again take them as instances of ὅτι-direct forms. Such is the case with (17b) (John 15:25).
b. ἀλλὰ ἕνα πληρωθῆ ὁ λόγος ὃ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτῶν
but that may be fulfilled the word the in the law their

γεγραμένος ὃτι Ἐμίσησάν με διωκέναι.
written that they hated me without cause

“Indeed, it was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause’.”

Now for the residual examples! First, there are three occasions when a reported speaker quotes himself without introducing his words with ὅτι, yet the report is not verbatim. In each instance, ὅτι occurs in the immediate context, so the stylistic principle of §2.1 would explain why it is not used to introduce the embedded citation. However, the absence of ὅτι may imply that the reporter considers himself to be saying the same thing as before.

This is seen in (18b) (John 3:5-7), where Jesus cites what he said in v. 3 (18a). The stylistic reason for not using ὅτι is that it occurred only two words before. The pragmatic explanation is that, although Jesus uses different words, the absence of ὅτι implies that he considers himself to be saying the same thing.

(18) a. ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἄμην ἰμήν λέγω οοι,
answered Jesus and said to him truly truly I say to you

εἴν μή τες γεννηθηδανοθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν
if not anyone be born again not be able to see the

βασιλεύαν τοῦ θεοῦ.
kingdom of the God

Jesus answered and said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

b. ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς, ... μὴ θαυμάζῃς ὅτι εἶπόν οοι,
answered Jesus not marvel that I said to you

Δὲ ὡμοὶ γεννηθηδαν ἄνοθεν.
it is necessary you to be born again

Jesus answered, “... Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’”

Concerning (19c) below (John 18:8), a second reference to the original speech has already been made in (19b) (v. 6), without using ὅτι (at least, in the UBS text). The stylistic explanation for the presence of ὅτι when Jesus himself refers again to the speech is that the matrix speech is introduced without ὅτι. However, the speech of (19d) may be indirect (first person references remain unchanged in embedded speeches when the reporter was also the original speaker). The presence of ὅτι would then mark the speech of (19c) as preliminary to the request of (19d).

24 The other examples are found in 10:36b and 14:28. Pope (p.c.) comments, “Perhaps the point is that when a speaker claims to cite himself, it doesn’t matter what kind of transforms or summarization he uses, it still counts as citing himself accurately... If this line of argument is correct, any case of ὅτι when a speaker is citing himself would have to be ὅτι-direct not indirect.”

25 A related explanation is one I offered for ὅτι recitativum in Luke-Acts, viz., that the speech so marked terminates “a local topic which forms the basis for a larger unit” (Levinsohn 1978:30). In this particular passage, the topic of identifying ‘I’ as the person being sought is terminated, and forms the basis for the request of (19d). See also 1:50 (UBS text).
(19) a. λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἡγώ εἰμι.
He says to them, “I am he.”

b. ὃς οὖν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἡγώ εἰμι, ἀπῆλθον …
when so said to them I I.am withdrew

So when he said to them, “I am he,” they stepped back...

c. ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς, Ἐἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι.
answered Jesus I said to you that I I.am

d. εἰ οὖν ἤμεν ζητεῖτε, ὧθετε τοῖς ὑπάγειν.
if so me you.seek allow these.ones to.go.away

Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.”

Finally, the speech of (20b) (John 4:17) is in ὅτι-direct form, but does not culminate Jesus’ argument. The presence of ὅτι is most easily explained by the stylistic principle of §2.1.  

(20) a. ἀπεκρίθη ἡ γυνῆ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, ὦκ ἔχω ἄνδρα.
answered the woman and said to him not I have husband

The woman answered and said to him, “I don’t have a husband.”

b. λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐλλάδος εἶπας ὅτι Ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω.
says to her the Jesus well you.say that husband not I have

Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I don’t have a husband’;

c. for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”

In summary, the absence of ὅτι recitativum before an embedded speech or writing usually indicates that the reporter purports to repeat verbatim what was communicated on a specific, previous occasion. An embedded speech or writing in indirect form does not purport to reproduce verbatim the original words of a specific communication and/or is preliminary to what follows. An embedded speech or writing in ὅτι-direct form usually indicates that it culminates some unit. However, a stylistic explanation for the presence or absence of ὅτι before an embedded speech sometimes seems the best.

3. ὅτι following ὁμιὴν ὁμιὴν λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν

On twenty-five occasions in John’s Gospel, Jesus is reported as introducing an assertion with the formula ὁμιὴν ὁμιὴν λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν. The norm is for ὅτι not to follow the formula; it is used only seven times.

When ὅτι follows a similar formula in Luke-Acts, it marks the culminating point of a reasoned argument (Levinsohn 1978:28-29). While this does not exactly hold in John’s Gospel, it is true that the following assertion “is a commentary on” what has already been stated (loc. cit.). In particular, when ὅτι follows ὁμιὴν ὁμιὴν λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν, it signals that the following assertion explains,

26 Another instance in which the speech is in ὅτι-direct form but does not culminate an argument is found in 9:11 (UBS text). Pope (p.c.) comments, “I suggest follow variant reading which is also well supported.”

27 In addition, Jesus’ assertion of 16:7 is introduced with ἐγώ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν ‘I tell you the truth.’
clarifies or otherwise makes explicit some previous point. In contrast, assertions introduced with ἄμην ἄμην λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν that lack ὅτι typically introduce new points.

This is seen by comparing (21a) (John 10:1) with (21b) (v. 7—UBS text). Assertion (21a), which lacks ὅτι, introduces the topic of “false and true shepherds” (Alford 1863:1:804), together with the image of the gate of the sheepfold. This speech is followed by the observation (v. 6), Jesus used this figure with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. Consequently, the assertion of (21b) interprets the figure for Jesus’ audience. The presence of ὅτι signals that (21b) does not introduce a new point, but makes some previous point explicit.

(21) a. Ἄμην ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅ μὴ εἰσερχόμενος διὰ τῆς θύρας ἔις τὴν αὐλὴν τῶν προβάτων ἄλλα ἀναβαίνον ἄλλαξθεν into the fold of the sheep but going up another way

that one thief is and robber

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit...”

b. Ἐπεν οὖν πάλιν ὅ Ἰησοῦς, Ἄμην ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι said so again the Jesus truly truly I say to you that

ἔγω εἰμὶ ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων. ... I I am the gate of the sheep

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep...”

A similar contrast is found in (22) (John 13:18-21). The absence of ὅτι in (22b) (v. 20) is consistent with the assertion not relating closely to the context. Its presence in (22c) (v. 21) signals that the assertion makes explicit something that has already been said (22a) (vv. 18-19).

(22) a. “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, ‘The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it occurs, you may believe that I am he.

b. Ἄμην ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅ λαμβάνον ἄν τινα πέμψα ἐμὲ truly truly I say to you the one receiving whomever I may send me λαμβάνει, ... receives

“Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me...”

c. Ταῦτα εἶπον ὅ Ἰησοῦς ἔταραθῆ ἑαματὶ this having said the Jesus was troubled in the spirit καὶ ἐμαθητῆσεν καὶ ἔπεν, Ἄμην ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι and testified and said truly truly I say to you that


28 I am grateful to Tony Pope (p.c.) for pointing this out to me.

29 “The connexion is very difficult, and variously set down” (op. cit. 838).

30 See also 5:24 and 25 (making more explicit points made in vv. 22 and 21 in support of the assertion of v. 19), 8:34 (making explicit the implication of v. 32 that the hearers need to be freed from some sort of slavery), and 16:20 (vv. 20-22 explain how v. 19 is to be understood). 3:11 (“we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you (plural) do not receive our testimony”) gets “to the heart of the matter” (Pope p.c.) discussed in previous verses, especially the unbelief expressed in v. 9 by the question, “How can these things be?”
one from you will betray me

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

In summary, then, when ὅτι follows the formula ὃμην ὃμην λέγω σοι/ὁμην in John’s Gospel, it signals that the assertion concerned makes some previous point explicit.

I conclude that ὅτι recitativum is not to be taken as the “equivalent of inverted commas” (Turner 1963:326). Instead, when introducing direct speech, its function is to mark the speech concerned as culminating some unit or, at least, as signaling that the speech makes some previous point explicit.31

References


It may be significant that both causal ὅτι and ὅτι recitativum relate to what has already been stated in a supportive way.

On the basis of this paper, Pope made a preliminary analysis of ὅτι recitativum in Matthew’s Gospel, and concluded (p.c.), “Most ὅτι-direct examples in Mt are culminating a unit or providing a strong reply or riposte which stops someone in their tracks. The latter don’t fit well into this pattern; they seem to be simply exclamatory and/or shocking. This is related in the sense that they mark strong assertion, just as the climaxtic/culminating use, but they do not culminate the unit. So these data make me doubt whether your pragmatic explanation in Jn is exactly right. It ought to be broader, I think, and it might be that some of your residue examples would then fit better.”


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