1999

hoti Recitativum in John's Gospel: A Stylistic or a Pragmatic Device

Stephen H. Levinsohn

SIL-UND

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.und.edu/sil-work-papers

Part of the Linguistics Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://commons.und.edu/sil-work-papers/vol43/iss1/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UND Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Work Papers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota Session by an authorized editor of UND Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact zeinebyousif@library.und.edu.
"Ὅτι Recitativum in John’s Gospel: A Stylistic or a Pragmatic Device? *

Stephen H. Levinsohn

This paper distinguishes three ways in which speech is reported in the Greek of John’s Gospel: directly (without the complementizer ὅτι), indirectly (with ὅτι and appropriate changes to first and second person references), and in ‘ὅτι-direct’ form (i.e., with ὅτι 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 ὅτι-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 ὅτι may be influenced also by the presence of ὅτι in the immediate context. When ὅτι follows the formula ὅμως ὅμως λέγεις οὐ/ὑμῖν ‘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/εἴπων ‘say/said’ or γράφω ‘write’, the author has the option of inserting the complementizer ὅτι between the orienter and the reported speech.

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

(1) ORIENTER REPORTED SPEECH
ἐλέγειν οὖν αὐτῷ, Ποῦ ἔστιν 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 πολλῷ πλέον ἐπέστιν διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ, and more many believed because.of the word his
b. ORIENTER ὅτι REPORTED SPEECH
τῇ τῇ γυναῖκι ἐλέγειν ὅτι Οὐκέτι διὰ τὴν σήν to.the and the.woman were.saying that no.longer because.of the your
λαλάν πιστεύομεν, αὐτοῖς γὰρ ἀκηκόαμεν καὶ οἶδαμεν 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 ὅτι. 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 ὅτι is absent (or present) in some MSS.
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 ὁτι 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 ὁτι REPORTED SPEECH
λέγοντες ὁτι ὁ παις αὐτοῦ ζη.
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 ὁτι-direct.

Grammarians refer to the use of ὁτι 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 ὁτι-direct ways of reporting.

In order to be able to contrast the presence versus the absence of ὁτι 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 ἐμὴν ἐμὴν λέγω σοι/ὕμιν ‘truly truly I say to you’ are presented in §3.

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

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

---

3 Although all MSS have ὁτι present, some read σοι for αὐτοῦ, in which case the speech of (3b) would be ὁτι-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 ὁτι appears to be obligatory also if the demonstrative αὐτος is used in the speech orienter to refer to the following speech. See, for example, John 21:23b (ἐξῆλθεν οὖν αὐτος ὁ λόγος εἰς τοὺς ἀδελ-

φοὺς ὁτι...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 ὦ Ἰουδαῖοι τὸν Ἰησοῦν, and because of this were persecuting the Jews the Jesus ὅτι ταύτα ἐποίει ἐν σαββάτῳ. 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 ἔκειν, Γάναι, τί εἶπες; 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 κύριον μου, says to them that because took the lord my
καὶ οὐκ οἶδα ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν. and not I know where placed him

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 ἔρωτάω ‘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.

6 See also the example of ἔξετάξω ‘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 ἔπειθ ‘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, Mfanyam (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)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(46b)</th>
<th>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 (IPA) he come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(INDIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(48) Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(49) The official says to him, “Sir, come down before my little boy dies.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(50a) Jesus says to him, “Go, your son will live.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(50b) The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(51) As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him ŒΤΙ his child was alive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(INDIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(52a) So he asked them the hour when he began to recover,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(INDIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(52b) and they said to him ŒΤΙ “Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ŒΤΙ-DIRECT or INDIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(53a) Then the father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(EMBEDDED DIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(53b) and he himself believed, along with his whole household.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(54) This was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 ŒΤΙ-direct form. However, each one is the first speech of an exchange 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).

---

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 ŒΤΙ; see Acts 2:12-13, for example.
(6) a. And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds.

b. oî mèn ἔλεγον ὁτι Ἀγαθός ἔστιν,
some were saying that good is

c. ἄλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον, Οἱ ἄλλα πλανάτ' τὸν ὄχλον.
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, Οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένον ἐν τῷ answered to them the Jesus not is written in the

νόμῳ ὡμον ὁτι Ἐγώ εἶπα, Θεό ἔστε;

law your that I 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 γὰρ), 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 οὐκ because ὁτι already comes before εἶπον”.

b. “If those to whom the word of God came were called ‘gods’—and the scripture cannot be annulled—

c. ὃν ὁ πατὴρ ἐγνώρισε καὶ ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον

whom the father sanctified and sent into the world

ἐμὲ λέγετε ὅτι Βλασφημεῖς,

you say that you blaspheme

ὅτι εἶπον, Ὑιὸς 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 δοκεῖν ‘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.12

(8) τινὲς γὰρ ἐδοκοῦν, ἐπεὶ τὸ γῆλοσάκομον ἐξέβαλεν Ἰούδας,

some for were thinking since the money.box had Judas

ὅτι λέγει ἄντω [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς, Ἀγόρασον ὅν χρείαν ἔχομεν

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

eἰς τὴν ἐορτὴν, ἣ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἵνα 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).13

(9) οἱ πατέρες ἐμὸν τὸ μάννα ἔφαγον ἐν τῇ ἑρήμῳ, καθὼς ἐστὶν

the fathers our the manna ate in the wilderness as is

gεγραμμένον, Ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ 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).14

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

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.

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.

---

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.\(^{17}\)

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.\(^{18}\)

(12) a. ἐξῆνεν οὖν ὁ Πιλάτος, ὅτι οὐ; said so to.him the Pilate not.so king you.are you
Then Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?”

b. ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασίλευς εἰμι.
answered the Jesus you say that king I.am
Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king.”

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.\(^{19}\) Furthermore, the quotation provides the ground for the assertion of (13b) (v. 18), so may be viewed as preliminary to that assertion.

(13) a. καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ δὲ τῷ ὑπερέρῳ γέραπται ὅτι also in the law and the your has.been.written that ἀνθρώπων ἡ μαρτυρία ἡ ἀληθῆς ἐστιν.
two of.men the witness true is
“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.”

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 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, The place where people must worship is Jerusalem.\(^{20}\)

---

\(^{17}\) 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).

\(^{18}\) 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.

\(^{19}\) 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’ (hoti). This suggests that it is not meant to be a quotation of a specific passage, but a summary of a theme of prophetic expectation.”

\(^{20}\) 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).
(14) λέγει αὐτῷ ἢ γυνή, ... καὶ ἱμέες λέγετε ὦτι ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις
says to him the woman and you you say that in Jerusalem
ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ.
is the place where to worship it is necessary

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 ὦτι introduces them. This is seen in (15) (John 16:26).

(15) καὶ ὅ ὄντος ἥμοιν ὀτι ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσομαι τὸν πατέρα περὶ ἥμοιν
and not I say to you that I will ask the father concerning you
and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;

Example (16c) (John 6:42) illustrates a speech which is reported in ὦτι-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.

(16) a. ... καταβάθηκα ἀπό τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ...
I have come down from the heaven

“... I have come down from heaven...”

b. καὶ ἔλεγον, ὦ ζη τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὁ νῦν Ἰωάν, and were saying not this is Jesus the son of Joseph
ὅτι ἥμεις οἴδαμεν τὸν πατέρα καὶ τῇ μητέρᾳ;
of whom we we know the father and the mother

c. πῶς νῦν λέγει ὦτι ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάθηκα;
how now says that out of the heaven I have come down

and they were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

Similarly, several citations from a written source that are presented with ὦτι are “quoted as the final point to an argument” (Levinsohn 1978:29), so I again take them as instances of ὦτι-direct forms. Such is the case with (17b) (John 15:25).

(17) a. “Whoever hates me hates my Father also. (24) If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

21 See also 8:48 and 8:55. All the speeches in 1 John that are introduced with ὦτι are hypothetical ones that are not uttered on a specific occasion; see 1 John 1:6, 1:8, 1:10, 2:4 (UBS text) and 4:20.

22 See also 8:33, 11:40 (UBS text), 13:33 (UBS text) and 16:15. In addition, the following speeches could be interpreted as being in indirect or ὦτι-direct form but, as they are the culmination of some unit, are listed here: 6:36, 6:65 and 12:34b (UBS text). As in Luke-Acts, the culminating citation is sometimes followed by a supporting comment (see Levinsohn 1978:30), such as one introduced with γάρ or causal ὦτι (e.g. 8:24 and 10:36a).

In the case of 9:41b (νῦν δὲ λέγετε ὦτι Βλέπομεν ‘But now you say, “We see”’), the speech in ὦτι-direct form occurs as the ground of the concluding assertion.

23 The Scriptures to which (17b) alludes (Psalms 35:19 and 69:4) express the same thought in nominalized form in both the Hebrew and the LXX (e.g. ὁι ἐκδιώκοντες με ἀδίκως ‘the ones hating me unjustly’). See also 19:21b (though a complementizer such as ὦτι may be obligatory when the speech orienter is elided). The quotation in 7:42 (‘Has not the Scripture said…?’) also concludes an argument, though it cites no Scripture directly.
b. ἀλλ’ ἴνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτῶν
but that may be fulfilled the word the in the law their

λεγόντες †ι’ ἑμῶσαν με δορεάν.
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.24

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

ἐὰν μὴ τίς γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν
if not anyone be born again not be able to see the

βασιλείαν 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 θαυμάσῃ ὅτι εἶπόν σοι,
answered Jesus not marvel that I said to you

Δὲ ὃμὴς γεννηθῆναι ἄνοιξθεν.
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 un changed 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).25

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).
Recitativum in John’s Gospel

(19) a. λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἑγὼ εἰμί.
    says to them I am

    He says to them, “I am he.”

b. ὥς οὖν ἔπειν αὐτοῖς, Ἑγὼ εἰμί, ἀπῆλθον ...
    when so said to them I withdrew

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

c. ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς, Εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἔγώ εἰμί.
    answered Jesus I said to you that I am

d. εἰ οὖν ἐμὲ ζητεῖτε, ἀφετε τούτους 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. 26

(20) a. ἀπεκρίθη η γυνὴ καὶ ἔπειν αὐτῷ, Οὐκ 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, Καλῶς εἶπας ὅτι Ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω.
    says to her the Jesus well you said 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 Ἰμήν Ἰμήν λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν

On twenty-five occasions in John’s Gospel, Jesus is reported as introducing an assertion with the formula Ἰμήν Ἰμήν λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν. 27 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 Ἰμήν Ἰμήν 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 ἔγω τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν ‘I tell you the truth.’
clarifies or otherwise makes explicit some previous point. In contrast, assertions introduced with ἐστιν 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. Ἄμὴν ἂμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅ μὴ εἰσερχόμενος διὰ τῆς θύρας eἰς τὴν αὐλὴν τῶν προβάτων ἀλλὰ ἀναβαίνων ἀλλαζόθεν into the fold of the sheep but going up another way ἐκεῖνος κλέπτης ἐστὶν καὶ λῃστής … 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. Ἐλάττων ὃν πάλιν ὃ Ἰησοῦς, Ἀμὴν ἂμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι said so again the Jesus truly truly I say to you that ἐγώ εἰμὶ ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων. … 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 does occur, you may believe that I am he.

b. Ἄμὴν ἂμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅ λαμβάνων ἂν τινα πεσὼν 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 εἶπὼν Ἰησοῦς ἔταράκη τῷ πνεύματι this having said the Jesus was troubled in the spirit καὶ ἐμαρτύρησεν καὶ ἔλεησθε, Ἄμὴν ἂμὴν 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?”
According to 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 ὁμον ὁμον λέγω σοι/ὑμῖν 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

31 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 climactic/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.”


*Stephen H. Levinsohn*

58 Hithercroft Road
High Wycombe, Bucks.
HP13 5RH
England

stephen_levinsohn@sil.org