



DET TEOLOGISKE  
MENIGHETSAKULTET

# As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you

A Study of the Parallels between the Father/Son and Son/Disciple Relations in  
the Gospel of John

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# Abstract

In several texts the Gospel of John presents the relation between Jesus and his disciples in parallel to the relation between the Father and Jesus. Most well-known of these parallels is perhaps John 20:21b (“As the Father has sent me, so I send you”), but several other texts follow the same pattern.

In this thesis I will examine the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John. I will take an “in-the-text” approach to the Gospel, using elements of narrative criticism and discourse analysis. The interpretation of comparisons will be of particular importance, as I seek to identify the *tertium comparationis* and direction of the comparisons John makes between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations.

In the main section of my thesis I will first present the textual material which suggests *that* John regards these relations as parallel to one another. I will then, through the study of four selected texts (15:9–11; 17:20–23; 17:18 and 20:21), examine *how* these relations are parallel to one another, and seek the answer to my questions of research: How is the Father/Son relation illuminated by the parallels to the Son/disciple relation? And how is the Son/disciple relation illuminated by the parallels to the Father/Son relation?

My primary contention is that the *tertium comparationis* of the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations is to be found in the love which marks both relations. This love is the basis for the relations, and is the foundation for both unity and sending. By seeing the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel and founded on the same love, several aspects of these relations are illuminated, and we can see how discipleship and Christology are interconnected themes in John’s Gospel.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Method

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## 1.1 Introduction: The Parallel Relations

### 1.1.1 The Parallel Relations in John's Gospel

In the discourse on the Gospel of John few discussions are as old, as significant and as frequent as the discussions surrounding the relationship between Jesus and his Father. At least since the Arian controversy the discussion has often centered on the key-word "subordination": Is it appropriate to say that John presents Jesus as subordinate to his Father? Even today, there is no consensus on the question, and numerous models for understanding Jesus' role in relation to his Father in John have been suggested.<sup>1</sup>

Until recently, the relation between Jesus and his disciples has received significantly less attention. Alan Culpepper wrote in 1983 that "the role of the disciples in John has escaped the intense interest which has recently been turned on their role in Mark."<sup>2</sup> And even around the turn of the century, Francis Moloney thought the powerful Johannine Christology left little space for Johannine discipleship as an individual theme.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps even less attention, however, has been given to how Christology and discipleship in John are heavily interconnected themes. In particular, several texts in John present *the relation between Father and Son as a parallel to the relation between Jesus and his disciples*. Most well-known of these texts is perhaps 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, so

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of various interpretations of the Father/Son relation in the Gospel of John, see among others, Mark L. Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel: Motif Analysis and Exegetical Probe into the Theology of John*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 1 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1976); C. K. Barrett, "The Father Is Greater Than I," in *Essays on John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); James D. G. Dunn, "Let John Be John - a Gospel for Its Time," in *Das Evangelium Und Die Evangelien: Vorträge Vom Tübinger Symposium 1982* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983); A. E. Harvey, "Christ as Agent," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (Oxford: Clarendon Pr, 1987); Wayne A. Meeks, "Equal to God," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John in Honor of J Louis Martyn* (Nashville: Abingdon Pr, 1990); Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001); Richard Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005); Christopher Cowan, "The Father and Son in the Fourth Gospel: Johannine Subordination Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 1 (2006).

<sup>2</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 115.

<sup>3</sup> In Rekha M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), xiii. In recent decades more attention has been given to the theme of discipleship in John. See the overview in *ibid.*, 1-17.

I send you.”<sup>4</sup> (cf. 17:18). But several other texts follow this same pattern: “Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.” (6:57). “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.” (15:9).<sup>5</sup>

These parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in the Gospel of John are highly significant. They imply that, at least on the areas where the relations are said to be parallel, the conclusions we draw regarding the Father/Son relation in John have direct implications for how the Son/disciple relation can be interpreted, and vice versa. The interpretation of the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in turn impact our understanding of such areas as Johannine Christology, soteriology, discipleship/ecclesiology and missiology. Thus a proper understanding of how John connects the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations to each other is highly significant for our general understanding of Johannine theology.

### *1.1.1.1 Aim of the Thesis and Questions of Research*

In this thesis I will examine how the parallel relations impact our interpretation of John. I will present the textual basis for claiming that John presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel, and through analysis of selected texts examine how these parallels impact our understanding of the individual relations. My question of research is therefore: *How is the Father/Son relation illuminated by the parallels to the Son/disciple relation? And how is the Son/disciple relation illuminated by the parallels to the Father/Son relation?*

Before I begin my own study of the parallel relations I will in this chapter briefly note how the parallel relations have been treated in recent scholarship, and present my methodological approach. Finally, I will give an outline for the remainder of the thesis.

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<sup>4</sup> Where nothing else is noted, English bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Where I find the NRSV to be imprecise, I have provided my own translations.

<sup>5</sup> 10:14–15; 15:10; 17:8, 22 and 17:23 are other examples of the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations being placed in parallel. See chapter 2 for a more extensive overview.



### 1.1.2 The Parallel Relations in Recent Scholarship

While the various parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations have often been noted by scholars, they have rarely been emphasized and studied together. Davey for instance claims that in John “the ratios God : Christ, and Christ : men, are strictly parallel and proportionate.”<sup>6</sup> But he does not give adequate support for his claim. Appold discusses many of the parallels as part of a wider group of texts which he calls “reciprocity statements.”<sup>7</sup> However he overlooks the wide variety of themes touched upon by these parallels, and seems to assume his own conclusion when he sees the parallels almost exclusively as evidence of the oneness of Father and Son. Commentaries on John note the individual parallels, but they rarely connect these passages with one another. Similarly, works pertaining to specific themes in the Gospel usually note the parallels connected with these themes (e.g. most works on the sending of Jesus in John note the parallels in 17:18 and 20:21). But few go the extra step to connect those parallels with other parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations.

While this tendency to underemphasize the parallel relations in John forms the general rule, three exceptions, provided by C. H. Dodd, Andreas Köstenberger and Marianus Pale Hera, should be mentioned.

Dodd, in his classic work *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, groups many of the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations together under the heading “Union with God”.<sup>8</sup> According to Dodd, Jesus acts as a mediator, reproducing the relationship he has with his Father in his own relation to believers.<sup>9</sup>

Dodd should be commended for connecting these parallels to each other. However, as an examination of the parallel relation his text also has certain weaknesses. First, he is more concerned with the philosophical and religious background for the motif of union with God (ἐν θεῷ) than with the texts themselves. Furthermore, by focusing on the motif of union, he underemphasizes other themes connected to the parallels, such as the parallel

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<sup>6</sup> J. Ernest Davey, *The Jesus of St. John; Historical and Christological Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 87.

<sup>7</sup> Appold, *The Oneness Motif*, 18-47.

<sup>8</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge Eng.: University Press, 1953), 187-200.

<sup>9</sup> "At every point the unity of Father and Son is reproduced in the unity of Christ and believers." *ibid.*, 195.

sending of Jesus and the disciples. Thus, while Dodd provides valuable insight, a more comprehensive view of the parallels should be sought.

In *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*, Köstenberger discusses the similarities and differences between the missions of Jesus and the disciples in John. While the study has a wide scope, the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples in 17:18 and 20:21 play a significant role.<sup>10</sup> Köstenberger also notes how the parallel sending is but one part of the larger parallel complex of the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations.<sup>11</sup> Although I will argue that he overemphasizes the role of sending in the parallel relations, Köstenberger nevertheless places the parallel sending in its proper context, and is one of the most significant contributors to the study of the parallel relations.<sup>12</sup>

*Christology and Discipleship in John 17* by Hera differs from the two works above in that it is not based on the particular textual parallels between the Father/Son and Jesus/disciple relations. Instead, it builds on the general connection between Christology and discipleship in John. Through an examination of the Gospel, with particular emphasis on John 17, Hera seeks to show that Christology is the basis for discipleship in John's Gospel.<sup>13</sup>

With his more general approach Hera gains a more comprehensive view of the parallels between Christology and discipleship than Köstenberger and Dodd. However, whereas Hera focuses on the general themes which connect Christology and discipleship in John, I will consider the concrete texts which place the Father/Son and Son/disciple *relations* in parallel. Thus I will emphasize more than Hera how the Gospel presents Jesus *in relation to his Father*, as a model for the disciples – an aspect I believe Hera underemphasizes in his study.<sup>14</sup>

In my interpretation of the parallels in John, I will return to and discuss the conclusions of each of these authors. However, we may already now note that while Dodd,

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<sup>10</sup> See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel : With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 180-98.

<sup>11</sup> See especially *ibid.*, 186-97.

<sup>12</sup> See my discussion on pages 95–97 and 112–113.

<sup>13</sup> Marianus Pale Hera, *Christology and Discipleship in John 17*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament* 2. Reihe 342 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 36.

<sup>14</sup> See below pages 109–110.

Köstenberger and Hera describe and discuss the parallel relations in John in more detail than most authors, none of their studies have the textual parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationship in John's Gospel as their focal point, and as such none of their studies capture the full implications of these parallels. As my study will center on the concrete textual evidence for the parallel relations in John I hope to encompass more of what John says about the parallel relations than Dodd, Köstenberger and Hera. By this I hope to supplement their conclusions on the subject.

### 1.2 Method

Before I can move on to the examination of the parallel relations in John's Gospel I will make some notes regarding my methodological approach. I will discuss the interpretation of New Testament texts in general, and the interpretation of comparisons in particular. Finally, I will discuss briefly the identity of "the disciples" who are part of the parallel relations.

#### 1.2.1 Interpreting New Testament Texts

##### 1.2.1.1 *A Brief Note on the Multiplicity of Methods*

A major challenge for the study of New Testament texts is the multiplicity of methods applied in the field. In the words of Joel B. Green, "no one interpretive method can claim to provide the one authentic meaning of an NT text."<sup>15</sup> While the lack of a paradigmatic method might be seen as a weakness, it could also be interpreted as a consequence of the nature of texts: texts do not have a single and defined "meaning". Almost any text can have multiple adequate interpretations, and the conclusions reached by the interpreter depends as much on the question he or she puts to the text as on the text itself.

This does not imply that all interpretations are equally valid, but it does imply that it is important to be clear about one's methodological approach. In this way, many apparent disagreements with other interpreters can be explained as primarily different answers to different questions, while the true disagreements are brought to light.

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<sup>15</sup> Joel B. Green, "The Challenge of Hearing the New Testament," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 14.

### 1.2.1.2 *An “In the Text” Approach to the Gospel of John*

The various methods of New Testament research can be roughly grouped into three categories – usually called “behind the text”, “in the text”, and “in front of the text” – according to where the interpreter seeks the answer to his question.<sup>16</sup> In this thesis I will take an “in the text” approach: I will be primarily concerned with the text itself, rather than emphasizing its historical background and context, or centering on the concerns of modern readers. More specifically, I will lend primarily from narrative criticism and discourse analysis.<sup>17</sup> Such an approach has several implications for the study:

Instead of emphasizing the historical author or the concerns of the modern day reader of John, I will consider the *implied* author and reader of the text, as is common in narrative criticism.<sup>18</sup> These characters are not historical persons, but rather constructs internal to the text itself. “By ‘implied author’ narrative critics mean the perspective from which the work appears to have been written, a perspective that must be reconstructed by readers on the basis of what they find in the narrative.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly the implied reader is “one who actualizes the potential for meaning in a text, who responds to it in ways consistent with the expectations that we may ascribe to its implied author.”<sup>20</sup> While historical research on the Gospel is helpful in order to determine the knowledge and presuppositions a first or second century reader might have had, questions of historical reliability and background of the Gospel are insignificant for such a reading of the Gospel: What is important is the message the implied author seeks to convey. Similarly, while I agree with the claim that the reader is an active subject in constituting the meaning of a text (as is the basic claim of “in front of the text” methods), I will here subscribe to an “obedient” or “normative” reading.<sup>21</sup> I

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<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, 10-14. For a presentation of various methods within each category, see the following chapters of the book: Chapters 2–6 present “behind the text” methods; chapters 7–12 present “in the text” methods, and chapters 14–18 present “in front of the text” methods.

<sup>17</sup> As presented by Mark Allan Powell, “Narrative Criticism,” *ibid.*; Joel B. Green, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation,” *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See Mark Allan Powell, “Narrative Criticism,” *ibid.*, 240-45. While narrative as such will not play an important role in this thesis, several elements of this method’s view of the text as a communication between implied author and implied reader are appropriate to my study.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*, 244-45.

will attempt to read the text as the implied author would wish it to be read, and to enter and share the context and presupposition pool of the implied reader.<sup>22</sup>

An “in the text” approach also means that I will interpret the text as we know it, rather than identifying and interpreting any suggested original version of the Gospel. While I will use textual criticism where appropriate in order to determine which of the textual variants we know of is likely to be closest to the original, I will not go behind the text known to us and attempt to identify the sources or redactional layers of the text. This is despite the fact that John shows clear signs of having a complex textual history.<sup>23</sup>

While treating the text in its current form is primarily a consequence of an “in the text” approach, there are also two other arguments for interpreting the text as we know it: First, while the Gospel might have had a complex history of origin, we know that *someone* at some point chose to publish the Gospel of John in a version close to the one we know today. This implies that this someone saw the Gospel in its final form as a more or less coherent whole, witnessing to a message he wished to spread. Therefore the text as we know it can be regarded as meaningful also to the interpreter. Second, it is the Gospel in its current form which is read and considered Holy Scripture by modern Christians. It is therefore important that biblical scholars too devote time and energy to understanding the message of the text as we know it.

### 1.2.2 Interpreting Comparisons

As the central chapters of this thesis will focus specifically on the interpretation of a few selected texts which present the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel, some notes must be made regarding the characteristics and interpretation of comparisons.

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<sup>22</sup> See Joel B. Green, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation," *ibid.*, 218-30. On the reader as active in determining the meaning of the text, see also "The Challenge of Hearing the New Testament," 13. While I will not apply an “in front of the text” method, I am of course a modern reader. As such, while I center on the text itself, and attempt to read it as the implied reader, I am aware that my hermeneutical horizon differs from that of the implied reader. The scholarly discussion and theological debates into which I will enter is an important part of my hermeneutical horizon, which the implied reader does not share.

<sup>23</sup> Three texts provide especially clear evidence of this. 1: Textual criticisms reveals that 7:53–8:11 was not originally part of John (see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 187-89.). 2: 14:31b fits awkwardly in its present context, and was likely at some point the conclusion to the farewell discourse (See pages 39–40 below). 3: Chapter 21 has the character of an epilogue, and is likely an addition to the original Gospel (See Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., The Anchor Bible, 29-29A (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 2:1077-82.).

### 1.2.2.1 *The Categories of Comparisons*

Comparisons fall in two main categories, metaphors and similes.<sup>24</sup> Metaphors are implicit and non-literal comparisons, while similes are literal and explicit.<sup>25</sup> As an example, it is from the text alone impossible to tell if the sentence “He is a wolf” is an implicit comparison (a metaphor describing a person) or a plain statement (identifying the species of an animal.) On the other hand “He is *like* a wolf” is an explicit comparison i.e. a simile.

Most of the parallels I will consider in the following chapters are similes. They are explicit statements where the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations are said to be similar. In addition I will also discuss texts where the same or parallel claims are made regarding both relationships, without comparison. While these are not comparisons *per se*, many of the observations made below regarding comparisons also hold true for these statements which could easily be converted into similes.<sup>26</sup> As a group I will call the texts I will discuss “textual parallels”. This group includes both the similes and the texts making the same claim about both the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations.<sup>27</sup>

Three characteristics of comparisons will be of special importance in my discussion: The *direction* of the comparisons, the point of comparison or *tertium comparationis* and the degree of *correspondence* in a comparison. Below I will introduce these in turn.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.2.2.2 *Direction of Comparison*

Comparisons have direction: they convey knowledge by leading from the known to the unknown.<sup>29</sup> When the Kingdom of God is compared to yeast (Luk 13), what is known to us (yeast and how it functions) helps us understand the Kingdom of God – and not the other

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<sup>24</sup> G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 144-45. Other forms of comparisons such as parables, allegories etc. are according to Caird, elaborations of one of the two basic types.

<sup>25</sup> As Caird points out, the differences between metaphor and simile, although important, should not be overemphasized. Quoting Fowler, he states that “every metaphor presupposes a simile, and every simile is compressible or convertible into a metaphor.” *Ibid.*, 144n2.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. 17:22a “The glory that you have given me I have given them” could be converted into the simile “Just as you have given me glory, so I have given them the same glory” without significantly altering the meaning of the statement.

<sup>27</sup> See pages 19–22 below.

<sup>28</sup> Caird also notes the development – that is the degree to which the author exploits the individual characteristics of the first element of the comparison (“the vehicle” – see “Direction of Comparison” below) – as fourth characteristic. See Caird, *Language*, 154-55. While I will not pursue this characteristic further, it will be clear that the comparisons discussed in chapter 4–6 (with the arguable exception of 15:9–10) are not highly developed.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-45.

way around. In the interpretation of the comparisons between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations it is therefore important to recognize the direction of the comparison: Which relation is known, and which is unknown? Which relation is described by the comparison, and which forms the background for the description?

When describing metaphors the known element (e.g. the yeast) is called the *vehicle*, while the unknown element (e.g. the Kingdom of God) is called the *tenor*.<sup>30</sup> While this terminology is appropriate to metaphors rather than the similes and parallels I will discuss, I will occasionally apply it to the similes and parallels I discuss in order to convey the direction of comparison.

According to Caird, one of the two primary ways a comparison can be misunderstood is if what is presumed known by the author of the comparison is not known by the audience.<sup>31</sup> The comparison between the kingdom of God and yeast will for instance be of little help to one who does not know what yeast is. This presents a problem in the discussion of the parallel relations: As the scholarly discussion surrounding both the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations makes clear, neither of these relations is completely understood by John's modern interpreters. Therefore, even if John intended the similes between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations to be a simple path from the known to the unknown they do not function as such to the modern reader.<sup>32</sup>

This does not mean that the similes cannot be understood. But it does mean that instead of being immediately clear, the similes are part of a hermeneutic circle. As we gain a better understanding of each of the relations that are part of the simile, we will be able to understand the simile in greater detail. This in turn will help us understand the individual relationships better. The directionality of the simile is not lost. But as both relations are partially unknown, both relations are also in part illuminated by the comparison.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 152; John W. Sider, "The Meaning of Parable in the Usage of the Synoptic Evangelists," *Biblica* 62, no. 4 (1981): 459-62.

<sup>31</sup> Caird, *Language*, 145.

<sup>32</sup> This is of course a general problem facing biblical interpreters. See *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> See my concluding discussion pages 101–102.

### 1.2.2.3 *Tertium Comparationis*

When two items are compared to one another, it does not mean that they are entirely identical or similar: For instance if we compare a person to a wolf, we do not (usually) mean that they walk on four legs or that they have fur. Instead there is in any simile or metaphor a point of comparison, a *tertium comparationis*, which denotes the characteristic the two elements have in common.<sup>34</sup> In the comparison between a person and a wolf, it might be for instance a similar “savageness”, and in the comparison between the kingdom of God and the yeast it might be located in the ability to expand and impact its surroundings. Attention to context is important, however: When a person is compared to a wolf, the character of the wolf’s fur is not generally assumed to be part of the *tertium comparationis*. However, if the comparison was made within a discussion of the person’s hair style it might well be!

Failure to properly identify the *tertium comparationis* is, according to Caird, the second way in which a comparison can fail.<sup>35</sup> A precise identification of the *tertium comparationis* will therefore be of utmost importance in my examination of the comparisons between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations.

In locating the *tertium comparationis* I will build on two foundations: First, I must have an initial understanding of the individual relations, in order to understand the elements of the relations which *might* be compared. Second I will pay particular attention to the context in which the parallels are set, as this helps determine the precise elements which *are* compared in each simile. While I will discuss the context of the individual parallels I will examine in their respective chapters, I will devote chapter 3 to placing the parallels in their general context within John.

Once again we see a hermeneutical circle take shape: Understanding the individual relations and the context of the similes will help us determine the *tertium comparationis*.

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<sup>34</sup> Caird, *Language*, 145-49; Sider, “The Meaning of Parable,” 459-60.

<sup>35</sup> Caird, *Language*, 145. Caird divides the potential point of comparisons in four classes: “perceptive” (relating to the senses), “synaesthetic” (applying terms appropriate to one sense to another, e.g. sharp words), “affective” (relating to the “feel or value” of the things compared) and “pragmatic” (relating to the activity or result of the elements compared). See *ibid.*, 145-49. While I will not pursue these categories further, the *tertium comparationis* of the similes I will discuss are best classified as pragmatic.



And determining the *tertium comparationis* will in turn help us understand the individual relations.

### 1.2.2.4 Correspondence

The final characteristic of a comparison which I will note is correspondence, which refers to how similar the two elements of the comparison are.<sup>36</sup> In a comparison with a low degree of correspondence, the elements will have little in common outside the precise *tertium comparationis*. On the other hand Caird notes the comparison between the church and the body as displaying a high degree of correspondence: The elements are similar in many ways, including the various functions of the members, the interdependence of the member, the subordination of the members to the head and more.<sup>37</sup> Thus several different comparisons with different points of comparison between the church and the body can be made. Similarly, the many comparisons made between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John suggest that we might also here find a comparison with a high degree of correspondence. I will return to this point in my concluding discussion.<sup>38</sup>

### 1.2.3 “The Disciple” in the Parallel Relations

The parallel relations include three (groups of) characters: The Father, the Son, and the disciples. While the former two are clearly defined characters in John, it is not immediately clear who the disciples in the parallel relations are. For one, the group is not consistent across the texts I will discuss: As we shall see, while the texts discussed in chapters 4 and 6 concern (primarily) a group of believers close to Jesus, the text discussed in chapter 5 concerns all believers. And additionally, as we shall see in chapter 3, there is a clear difference between the disciples as characters, and the ideal disciple as described by Jesus.<sup>39</sup> The question therefore remains: Who is the “disciple” in the parallel relations?

One way to approach this question is to look at the varied ways in which the term disciple (μαθητής) is used of Jesus’ followers in John: It can be used to refer to large groups of followers (6:66) or groups even smaller than “the twelve” (21:1–2). It can be used of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 153–54.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>38</sup> See pages 101–102.

<sup>39</sup> See pages 31–35.

groups that are absent from Jesus (as the disciples in Jerusalem in 7:3) or those who are with him constantly. Some people are also disciples in secret (Joseph of Arimathea in 19:38).

This multifaceted and ambiguous use of the term “disciple” makes the Johannine use of the term very hard to define. However, this ambiguity might in itself be a sign that a precise definition of the term is unnecessary for John to communicate what he wants to say about discipleship. It has been suggested that the anonymity and ambiguity of several characters who respond positively to Jesus may well be a conscious strategy by the author of John: The anonymity allows the reader to more easily identify with these characters.<sup>40</sup> The same is true for the group of disciples as a whole. By not defining the group, and eventually opening it up for future believers, the Gospel of John allows the reader himself to enter into Jesus wider group of disciples.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, the relation John describes between Jesus and his disciples is not exclusive: The disciples are models characters, and their relation to Jesus is open to all who believe in him, including the reader.<sup>42</sup>

### 1.3 Summary and Outline of the Thesis

In this chapter I have presented the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John as the topic for this thesis. I have noted that while these parallels are rarely treated extensively by scholars they might be significant for our understanding of many areas of John’s theology, including Christology, discipleship/ecclesiology, missiology and more. These observations provide the background for my thesis where I will take an in the text approach to John, and examine the concrete textual parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations. In this way I will attempt to answer my questions of research: *How is the Father/Son relation illuminated by the parallels to the Son/disciple relation? And how is the Son/disciple relation illuminated by the parallels to the Father/Son relation?*

The outline for the remainder of the thesis is as follows. In chapter 2 I will seek to demonstrate *that* John presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel. I will

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<sup>40</sup> This suggestion have been made by D.R. Beck, amongst others. See Chennattu’s presentation of his claims in Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 14-16.

<sup>41</sup> Though future believers are never specifically called disciples, the terms “believer” and “disciple” are virtually synonymous in John. Brown, *John*, 1:512.

<sup>42</sup> On this theme see my discussion on pages 62–63.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Method

present the texts where the relations appear parallel to one another, briefly note some more general parallels between the relations, and select four texts for further study.

As we shall see the parallels I will examine are all located in the latter half of John. I will therefore in chapter 3 briefly examine the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as they are introduced and presented in the first half of the gospel, in order to place the following examination of concrete textual parallels in its proper context.

In chapter 4–6 I will examine in detail four concrete textual parallels which I selected in chapter 2: In chapter 4 I will discuss the parallel love and abiding of 15:9–10. In chapter 5 I will examine the parallel unity presented in 17:20–23. And in chapter 6 I will examine the parallel sending of 17:18 and 20:21.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, in chapter 7 I will examine the *implications* of the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationships. In this chapter I will draw together the observations and conclusions from my previous chapters, and present my answer to my questions of research.

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<sup>43</sup> For the rationale for selecting these texts, see chapter 2 pages 25–26.

## Chapter 2: Introducing the Parallel Relations

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### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will look more closely at the texts and themes which indicate that John presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel to each other. I will also select four texts which I will examine in detail in chapters 4–6.

### 2.2 The Textual Evidence

John presents the relationship between Jesus and the Disciples as parallel to the relationship between Jesus and his Father in several ways. First there are several instances where the Father/Son and Son/Disciple relationships are presented as parallel within a single text. I have labeled these instances “explicit parallels”. Second, there are disconnected parallels where the same claim is made about both relationships, but in different parts of the Gospel. Third, there are thematic parallels, which are based not on individual texts, but rather on more general themes in the Gospel.

#### 2.2.1 Explicit Parallels

Eight times throughout the Gospel of John, the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations are explicitly said to be similar to one another. These similes and other parallels<sup>44</sup> make up the most significant evidence for the parallel presentation of the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John. Below I have listed these texts, and briefly noted the context of each statement.

- 6:57, towards the end of the discourse following the multiplication of bread and fish: “Just as [καθὼς] the living Father sent me, and I live because of [διὰ + acc] the Father, so [καὶ] whoever eats me will live because of [διὰ + acc] me.”
- 10:14–15a, during the discourse on the sheep and the good shepherd: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as [καθὼς] the Father knows me and I know the Father”.

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<sup>44</sup> See above page 13.

## Chapter 2: Introducing the Parallel Relations

- 15:9–10, following the metaphor of the vine<sup>45</sup>, contain two explicit parallels in successive verses: “As [καθώς] the Father has loved me, so I [ἐγώ] have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as [καθώς] I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”
- 17:8, at the beginning of Jesus’ prayer for his disciples:<sup>46</sup> “for the words that you gave to me I have given to them [...] [τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἔδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς].”
- 17:18, towards the end of Jesus’ prayer for his disciples: “As [καθώς] you have sent me into the world, so I [ἐγώ] have sent them into the world.”
- 17:22a, in Jesus prayer for all believers: “And the glory that you have given me I have given to them [ἐγώ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς].” (my translation).<sup>47</sup>
- 20:21, during Jesus’ first post-resurrection to the disciples: “Peace be with you. As [καθώς] the Father has sent me, so I [ἐγώ] send you.”

Three other texts in the Gospel make similar claims to the texts above regarding the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations. However, for reasons given below, I regard each of these parallels as less clear than the eight first explicit parallels.

- 13:20, following the footwashing: “Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me”.
- 14:20, early in the farewell discourse: “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you”.
- 17:23a, following the explicit parallel in 17:22: “...that they may be one, as we are one, *I in them and you in me*, that they may become completely one...” (The parallel emphasized).

The primary reason why I present these statement separately is that it is not entirely clear that they are intended to convey a parallel between the relationships in question. For one, they all lack the comparative *καθώς*, which is found in most of the regular statements

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<sup>45</sup> John 15:1–8 is not a parable, but an “extended metaphor without narrative”. D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 90.

<sup>46</sup> For the structure of Jesus final prayer, see below pages 58–59.

<sup>47</sup> This parallel, along with the parallel found in 17:23 (see below) are part of the larger statement spanning 17:20–23, and must be interpreted in this context. For a closer interpretation of 17:20–23 see chapter 5.

(17:18 and 17:22 being the exceptions).<sup>48</sup> Additionally the following points distinguish them from the other explicit parallels and complicate the evidence they give concerning the parallel relationships:

- 13:20 does not so much emphasize the parallel between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as the general interconnectedness of the Father, Son and disciple. Even so, a parallel is implied, and the topic of 13:20 is closely related to the other explicit parallels on sending (17:18/20:21b).<sup>49</sup>
- In 14:20 the parallel between the relations is broken by the two-directional indwelling of the Son and the disciples, while the indwelling of the Father and the Son is only described in a single direction. However, this should not be given too much weight. The “direction” of the indwelling seems much less important in the statement than the fact of the indwelling itself, and in 17:23a the Father is said to dwell in Jesus, completing the parallel.
- The parallel found in 17:23a is a true parallel, but it is not an independent statement. Instead it is heavily ingrained in the complex statement 17:22–23. While 17:22a (which I included above) could reasonably be separated as an individual statement, the parallel in 17:23a is impossible to extract from its context.
- Finally, the direction of comparison is not immediately clear in these parallels. As we shall see below, the eight first parallels share a direction, describing the Son/disciple relation by means of the Father/Son relation. This direction is not as obvious in 13:20; 14:20 and 17:23a.

Despite these points, these three text all seem to support the claim that John presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationships as parallel, and I will therefore consider them together with the first group of parallels in the following sections.

Several general observations about the explicit parallels can be made. First, all the explicit parallels are *utterances of Jesus*. No other character in the Gospel makes any similar statements and neither does the narrator. Second, *the majority of the explicit parallels are*

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<sup>48</sup> These parallels could for this reason alone be excluded from the first group of parallels presented. However as they present a clear parallel between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations, I have included them among the group of clear and explicit parallels, despite the lack of the usual comparative clause.

<sup>49</sup> On the relation of this saying to its synoptic parallel in Matt 10:40 (and partial parallels in Mark and Luke) see C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge Eng.: University Press, 1963), 343-47.

*found in the farewell discourse* (13:1–17:26), with only three (6:57; 10:14–15a; 20:21) found outside this section of the Gospel.<sup>50</sup> Third, we can already at this point note that the comparisons made by these parallels share a direction: The Father/Son relation (as the known element/vehicle) is used to describe the Son/disciple relation (the unknown element/tenor). In the case of 17:8; 17:18; 17:22a and 20:21 this is made clear by either chronological or logical progression (the Son is sent before the disciples. The Son must receive the Father's glory before he can pass it on, etc.). In the case of 6:57 and 15:9–10 it is clear from the grammatical tenses that the statement on the Father/Son relation forms the background for the Son/disciple relation. In 10:14–15a it is the relationship between Jesus and his sheep which is the subject of discourse, and as such it is this relation which is described by the parallel. As noted above, this direction is less clear in 13:20; 14:20 and 17:23, than in the eight first explicit parallels.

Finally some notes on the grammatical characteristics of the parallels: The parallels are presented in different grammatical tenses: The utterances pertaining to the Father/Son relationship are past (aor. 17:18a, pf 17:22a) and present (10:15a; 6:57a), while the utterances pertaining to the Son/disciple relationship are past (aor: 17:18b<sup>51</sup>, pf: 17:22), present (10:14) and future (6:57b). On the surface, the parallels are mostly *declarative and descriptive*. The primary exception is 15:10, which is hypothetical in nature and uttered as a command or encouragement to the disciples. Additionally, several of the parallels are teleological – they are presented as leading towards a goal. See 15:10, and in particular 17:22–23 where one of the parallels (17:23a) is presented as the goal of another (17:22a).

### 2.2.2 Disconnected Parallels

While the explicit parallels form the foundation for my claim that John presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel there are also other texts which support this claim. Among these are instances where the Gospel makes the same claim about both the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationships in different locations in the Gospel.<sup>52</sup> These

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<sup>50</sup> This clustering is somewhat less obvious if only the eight first explicit parallels are considered.

<sup>51</sup> Note that although the past-tense is used in 17:18, the actual sending of the disciples does not occur until 20:21. See pages 85–86 below.

<sup>52</sup> A special case of this is when the Gospel makes a claim regarding one of the relations, which is repeated in an explicit parallel. For instance, several texts note either the Father's love for Jesus or Jesus' love for his disciples. But only in 15:9 do we find them placed in parallel.

texts are harder to define than the explicit parallels. As such the following list is not exhaustive, but contains some notable disconnected parallels:<sup>53</sup>

- εἰς τὸν κόλπον: In the prologue, Jesus is describes as being εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (1:18). This is remarkably similar to how the beloved disciple is ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (13:23).<sup>54</sup>
- Dependence: A more extensive parallel is found in the notion of dependence. In 5:19, Jesus states that “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own [οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ οὐδέν], but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father [ἐκεῖνος] does, the Son does likewise.” The notion that Jesus’ actions are rooted in the Father is repeated throughout the book of signs (see for instance 4:34; 6:38; 8:28–29; 9:4 etc.). A striking parallel to this notion is found in 15:1–8, most notably in verse 5b, where Jesus tells the disciples: “apart from me, you can do nothing” [χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύναστε ποιεῖν οὐδέν].<sup>55</sup>
- The gift of the Spirit: The Father has given the spirit to Jesus (1:32).<sup>56</sup> Later, the disciples receive the Spirit directly from Jesus (19:30/20:22).<sup>57</sup> Note however the conflicting evidence of 14:16 and 14:26, where the Father is the one who gives the spirit to the believer and Jesus at most is a mediator.
- Glorification: God is glorified through the Son (13:31–32) and the Son is glorified through the disciples (17:10). Note however that while the Son is also glorified through the Father (13:32) the disciples are never said to be glorified (though they have received the glory of the Son as noted above).

### 2.2.3 Thematic Parallels

Before I present the parallels which I will examine in the remainder of this thesis, I will briefly note some more general, or thematic, parallels between the Father/Son and

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<sup>53</sup> Some would perhaps also find a parallel in that Jesus is both the lamb of God (1:29) and the good shepherd (of the disciples) (10:11–16). However, this parallel seems somewhat accidental: While the images are parallel, they carry very different connotations. See for instance Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 58-59; 304-05; 15.

<sup>54</sup> Note that, in contrast to the explicit parallels, it is not Jesus but the narrator who voices this parallel.

<sup>55</sup> See chapter 4 for a closer interpretation of 15:1–17.

<sup>56</sup> 3:34 could also be interpreted as Jesus receiving the Spirit from the Father. However, this interpretation is not certain. See the discussion in Brown, *John*, 1:160-62.

<sup>57</sup> The exact time of the gift of the Spirit to the disciples is contested. Some regard 19:30 as only proleptic, while others regard it as the gift of the Spirit to the disciples. While the distinction is not without consequence, it is not very significant in this context. For a discussion see Moloney, *John*, 504-05; 31-32; Brown, *John*, 2:931.



## Chapter 2: Introducing the Parallel Relations

Son/disciple relations. These parallels are not based on single texts, but rather on general themes in John. While these thematic parallels are not as clearly defined as the parallels above, they are nevertheless important as they support my contention that the parallel relations in John extend beyond individual texts, and make up a general pattern. Although I will not pursue the thematic parallels beyond this chapter, I will briefly note what I see as two thematic parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John.

First, it seems that both relations are marked by *interconnected relations to the world*. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus makes clear that how a person reacts and relates to him is connected with how the same person reacts and relates to God: When the crowds/"Jews"<sup>58</sup>/Pharisees reject Jesus, their reaction is determined by their faith in/relation to God: "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here." (8:42. Cf. 5:37–38; 3:17–21, 33; 6:45b; 15:23.) Similarly, Jesus affirms that those who believe in him truly believe in God, rather than him. (12:44–45; 14:21–24). In 15:18–22 Jesus explains that the pattern established above also applies to himself and his disciples: If the world has rejected him, it will also reject his disciples. And if the world had accepted him, it would also accept his disciples.

The second thematic parallel is related to a tension between unity and subordination. As noted in the introduction, and as will be discussed further in the following chapter there is a tension in the description of the Father/Son relation in John:<sup>59</sup> On the one hand they are described as remarkably close, united almost as equals (1:1; 10:30; 14:8–11, 20; 17:20–23 etc.). On the other hand it is clearly indicated that the Son is subordinate to the Father (5:19; 13:16; 14:28 etc.)

It is however less frequently noted that, to a certain degree, the same pattern can be recognized in the Jesus/disciple relation. The subordination of the disciples to Jesus and Jesus to his Father is presented in similar terms: The disciples are sent as Jesus was sent (17:18; 20:21), dependent upon Jesus as Jesus is dependent on the Father (5:19; 15:5b), and must obey Jesus' commandments as Jesus obeys his Father (15:10). Furthermore, the

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<sup>58</sup> As the word "Jews" in John does not denote a religious or ethnic group (as most of the characters are Jews), but rather a group marked by their opposition to Jesus, the word should always be placed within quotation-marks when referring to this group. See Moloney, *John*, 9-11.

<sup>59</sup> See the scholarly discussion referenced on page 1, note 1. See also my discussion below on pages 27–31.

disciples are united with Jesus, as Jesus is with the Father (14:20; 17:8, 20–23). And the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is described as a friendship (15:15), which in the Greco-Roman world, implied complete unity.<sup>60</sup> Finally 20:17 seems to imply that the disciples in some sense are on equal footing with Jesus in their relation to God. Thus, the Jesus/disciple relation presents a parallel to the tension between unity and subordination in the Father/Son relation.

### 2.3 Parallels for Further Study

As I mentioned in the introduction the remainder of this thesis will be centered on four selected texts. The texts I will examine are 15:9–11; 17:20–23 and 17:18/20:21. Below I will explain this selection.

In chapter 4 I will discuss John 15:9–11.<sup>61</sup> I have selected this text for several reasons. First, verses 9 and 10 include two explicit parallels in rapid succession, which makes the text significant in itself. Second, 15:1–17 is as a whole one of the most central text in John when examining the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations and it is therefore natural to examine the parallels in this text in more detail. Third, the parallels in 15:9–10 are connected to the themes of love, and abiding, which, as we will see, are some of the most important themes connected to the parallel relations.

In chapter 6 I will discuss the two nearly identical explicit parallels on the sending of Jesus and the disciples found in 17:18 and 20:21. This is again a natural selection: As previously noted, 20:21 is perhaps the most well-known parallel between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations. Furthermore, sending, which is the theme of 13:20 in addition to 17:18 and 20:21, is perhaps the most prominent theme in the explicit parallels. Finally, as I noted in the introduction, Köstenberger's study of the missions of Jesus and the disciples is one of the most important works examining the parallel relations in recent scholarship. By selecting sending as a focal point for my study, I will be able to build on Köstenberger's work, and examine how my conclusions match or differ from his.

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<sup>60</sup> Alexandar Gusa, "Excentriske Venner - Om Venskabet I Johannesevangeliet," (København: Det Teologiske Fakultet, 2004), 51-52. Gusa acknowledges that the word "friendship" in common speech also could be used to refer to asymmetrical relationships, but contends that equality between friends was an important part of true and ideal friendships.

<sup>61</sup> As will be made clear in chapter 4, although the parallels are found in 15:9–10, verse 11 is also part of the textual unit.

## Chapter 2: Introducing the Parallel Relations

In chapter 5 I will examine 17:20–23. While this text also includes two explicit parallels (17:22a and 17:23), it is perhaps a less obvious choice, than the texts discussed in chapter 4 and 6, especially as the parallel in 17:23 is not one of the eight clear and explicit parallels I have identified. But despite this, there are several reasons to look closer at this text:

First, chapter 17 is an extremely significant chapter for the interpretation of the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations, and although I include 17:18 from this chapter, I find it important to also examine the unity-language which is presented in 17:20–23. Second, in 17:20–23 the unity of the believers with Jesus and one another is presented as a foundation for the disciples' witness to the world. Therefore 17:20–23 will function as a bridge, connecting the themes of love and abiding/unity from 15:9–10 to the theme of sending in 17:18/20:21. And third, in 17:20–23 Jesus includes all believers and not only the disciples who are with him in the parallels that are presented. This text is therefore significant as it explicitly extends the relation Jesus has with his disciples, to all believers.<sup>62</sup>

### 2.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the primary textual evidence for my claim that John presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel to each other. I have presented the explicit textual parallels between the relations, and also noted some disconnected and thematic parallels between the relations.

Finally I have selected four texts for closer examination in the chapters that follow. These texts are 15:9–10; 17:20–23 and 17:18/20:21. In order to prepare the examination of these texts, I will in chapter 3 give an introduction to the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as they are presented in the first half of John.

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<sup>62</sup> For additional reasons for the selection of 17:20–23 as a text for further study see my discussion in chapter 5 on pages 56–57.

## Chapter 3: The Father/Son and Son/disciple Relations in the Prologue and Book of Signs

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### 3.1 Introduction

As all the textual parallels I will examine in the following chapters are located in the book of glory<sup>63</sup>, and mostly in the farewell discourse, my discussion in the following chapters will be centered on the second half of John. However, as noted in the introduction, the parallels I will discuss must be interpreted in their context. In order to present the larger context for the parallels, as well as to introduce the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John, I will in this chapter present the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as they are introduced and presented in the prologue and book of signs.

### 3.2 The Father and Son in the Book of Signs

It is important to notice that the religious dispute in John is not centered upon the basic identity of God. Nearly all the primary actors in the gospel are Jews, and as such, the confession to YHWH as God is agreed upon.<sup>64</sup> The dispute is rather centered on God's will, and God's *relation* to the different characters in the narrative: Who know and recognize the will of God? Who among the characters are God's children (cf. 8:41)? Jesus' opponents claim to know God through the scriptures and their tradition (5:45–47; 7:52; 8:31–59). Jesus on the other hand claims God as his own Father, and claims to act and speak on his behalf. These are the claims that cause "the Jews" to reject him, and eventually seek to kill him (5:16–18; 10:30–39).

That God is Jesus' Father, and that God is perfectly revealed through Jesus could fairly be said to be John's primary contentions regarding God. The Father is the one who

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<sup>63</sup> There is a general agreement regarding the basic structure of the Gospel of John. Throughout the thesis I will refer to the five major parts of the Gospel by the following names:

- I) The Prologue (1:1–18)
- II) The Book of Signs (1:19–12:50)
- III) The Book of Glory (13:1–20:29)
- IV) The Conclusion to the Gospel (20:30–31)
- V) Epilogue (21:1–25)

For a more detailed structure of the Gospel, see for instance Brown, *John*, 1:CXXXVIII–CXLI; Moloney, *John*, 23–24.

<sup>64</sup> As I have already noted "the Jews" is in John not a religious marker, but a reference to a group of Jesus' opponents. See page 24 note 58.

sends Jesus (about 40 times throughout the Gospel), and who is perfectly revealed in Jesus.<sup>65</sup> While no one has ever seen God, Jesus makes him know (ἐξηγήομαι) (1:18). If one knows Jesus, one also knows the Father (8:19). And Jesus actions are also the actions of the Father, as they act in complete unity and accordance (5:16–19).

Just as John's primary message about God is that he is revealed through Jesus, John's most central message about Jesus is his close relation to the Father. The prologue introduces Jesus as God's word, who was with God in the beginning, and who is himself describes as God (1:1).<sup>66</sup> Though the prologue takes care to ensure that the Logos is not equated with God, it is also clear that they are as intimately linked as possible.<sup>67</sup> As God's Logos, Jesus shares his glory (1:14) and is involved creation (1:2–3; 10) and salvation (1:12–14; 17) – the most significant of God's actions. Later in the book of signs, Jesus again claims to have received the authority to do what only God himself can:<sup>68</sup> He has life in himself, and can judge and give life to humans (5:24–30).

Throughout the book of signs, Jesus presents himself as the location for God's revelation and presence on earth. Jesus' first self-revelation to the disciples could be interpreted as him presenting himself as the new Bethel where God's presence was revealed to Jacob (1:51 cf. Gen 28:10–22).<sup>69</sup> He speaks of his own body as the new temple (2:18–22), and the entire Feast Cycle (5:1–10:42) could be said to be primarily devoted to how "[Jesus] evokes prominent Old Testament and contemporary Jewish traditions connected with these ceremonies in such a way as to reveal their eschatological enactment in his very person and work."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 113-14.

<sup>66</sup> For a thorough examination of John's use of λόγος to describe a character intimately related with God, and its historical background, see A. Debrunner et al., "Λέγω, Λόγος, Ῥῆμα, Λαλέω, Λόγιος, Λόγιον, Ἄλογος, Λογικός, Λογομαχέω, -Χια, Ἐκλέγομαι, Ἐκλογή, Ἐκλεκτός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), vol. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Moloney, *John*, 35. Even Barrett, who otherwise emphasizes the subordination of the Son, emphasizes the close connection between Jesus and God in the prologue. Barrett, "'The Father Is Greater Than I'," 23.

<sup>68</sup> Moloney, *John*, 178-79.

<sup>69</sup> This is Moloney's and Brown's interpretation, yet the precise meaning of the verse is highly debated. Ibid., 57; Brown, *John*, 1:88-91. For an examination of the many complexities of this verse, and a somewhat different interpretation see for instance David R. Kirk, "Heaven Opened: Intertextuality and Meaning in John 1:51," *Tyndale Bulletin* 63, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>70</sup> Gerry Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series volume 162 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 158.

Other aspects of Jesus' words and actions also reveal his connection to God: His signs reveal his glory (2:11; 11:4; 11:40) – which in the Old Testament is closely connected with God's self-revelation.<sup>71</sup> He employs the formula “ἐγώ εἰμι” (John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58)<sup>72</sup>, which in the Old Testament is connected with theophany (as a translation of the Hebrew אֲנִי הוּא several times in Deutero-Isaiah and in Deut. 32:39) and according to Bauckham is “an expression of divine identity” where Jesus is claiming the uniqueness of God for himself.<sup>73</sup> John's message of Jesus' intimacy and close relation to the Father is summarized in Jesus' own words at the end of the Feast Cycle: “The Father and I are one” (10:30).

The oneness between the Son and the Father is expressed primarily through the agency-model. Jesus is sent by God, and acts as his true agent. This implies that Jesus is also subordinated to his Father – a claim that is supported by the Gospel itself when Jesus in John 13:16 compares the relationship between one who is sent and the one sending him to the relationship between a slave and his master: “Very truly I tell you, a slave (δοῦλος) is not greater than his lord, nor is a messenger (ἀπόστολος) greater than the one who sent him.” (my translation), and it is also supported by the rabbinic rules for agency.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, the same rabbinic rules also state that “the agent of the ruler is like the ruler himself”<sup>75</sup>. This statement, however, does not seem to be a contradiction of the subordination. To the one who receives him, the agent of the king should be treated as the king himself, and his words should be considered as the words of the king.<sup>76</sup> But this does not imply that the king and his agent are equals in relation to one another. The agent is only regarded as equal to his sender for the sake of the mission he is to accomplish.<sup>77</sup> And as the agent is dependent upon his sender for his authority, so Jesus is dependent upon the Father at every point in his mission

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<sup>71</sup> Sverre Aalen, “Glory,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975), vol. 2.

<sup>72</sup> See also 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8 outside the book of signs.

<sup>73</sup> Bauckham, “Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John,” 153-63, citing 57.

<sup>74</sup> Peder Borgen, “God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Religions in Antiquity; Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 140. As Thompson points out, none of the rabbinic sources which establish these rules for agency are contemporary with the Gospel of John. As such, we should not draw too specific conclusions based on single points in the rabbinic material. The main points discussed here are, however, are both found in a wide range of rabbinic texts, and are echoed in the Gospel of John itself. As such it seems safe to assume that the general principles were known already at the time of the writing of the Gospel of John. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 126. Contrary, on the problems of assuming a shaliah-institution in New Testament times, see C. K. Barrett, “Shaliah and Apostle,” in *Donum Gentilicium: New Testament Studies in Honour of David Daube* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978).

<sup>75</sup> Borgen, “Agent,” 138. Citing Baba Qamma 113b.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 138-43.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Walter Manson, *The Church's Ministry* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 35-44.

including his power (5:19), life (5:26), testimony (5:37), message (7:16), origin and mission (7:28) and more.<sup>78</sup>

While the presentation of Jesus as God's agent is probably the most satisfactory model to explain the relationship between them, John also presents a oneness between them which goes beyond what this model can contain. This is expressed primarily in the prologue; in Jesus' use of the divine name; and his claim of oneness with the Father, which – at least in 10:30 (and several places in the farewell dialogue) – seems to point beyond a mere “unity of power and operation.”<sup>79</sup> In order to explain this unity scholars have turned to other explanations – primarily wisdom-motifs, where the Jesus can be presented as a character which is in an even closer unity with God. According to several authors, to see Jesus as the divine Wisdom is to see him as a character which cannot be truly separated from God himself.<sup>80</sup>

It seems very likely that John applied both the agent-motif and the wisdom-motif (alongside other motifs) in his description of Jesus' relation to the Father. Consequentially there is an ambiguity in the Father/Son relation in John which cannot be captured by any single model: The Son is both subordinate to God, and is himself God. He is described as both separate from and united with God. In order to most fairly represent what John is claiming about Jesus, this tension should not be diminished.

As the sent one, Jesus is sent with a specific mission which is expressed in several ways: He has come to give the believers authority to become children of God (1:12), as a sacrifice to let the believers escape judgement and receive eternal life (3:16) and to preserve those who come to him and raise them up on the last day (6:40). In short he has come to

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<sup>78</sup> For a more extensive list, also extending beyond the book of signs Davey, *The Jesus of St. John*, 77-78; 90-157.

<sup>79</sup> As Brown expresses the unity presented here. Brown, *John*, 1:407. Supporting my view that the unity presented here borders the metaphysical, Moloney, *John*, 320; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John : An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 382.

<sup>80</sup> According to Thompson, Wisdom is “not a separable being [...] but an expression of God's mind”. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 134. According to Dunn, Wisdom is “God insofar as he may be known by the mind of man”. Dunn, “Let John Be John,” 331.

save those who believe in him.<sup>81</sup> With this we can turn to present Jesus relationship to those believers.

### 3.3 The Son and the Believers in the Book of Signs

While the Father and Son are clearly defined characters in the gospel narrative, the believer is not.<sup>82</sup> Rather, different characters throughout the gospel display various degrees of faith and unbelief. Furthermore, when Jesus speaks about belief he does not describe of any particular character, but rather characterizes what we might call “the model believer” – the one who exemplifies perfect faith.<sup>83</sup> The concept of the model believer is particularly dominant in the farewell narrative. There, “Jesus speaks further about the ideal role of the disciples and their future experience, but this reflects John’s concept of discipleship rather than his characterization of the disciples.”<sup>84</sup>

We are therefore dealing with at least two different entities when we discuss the Son and believers in the book of signs: On the one hand we are speaking of characters who exemplify belief. On the other, we are speaking of the “model believer” which is primarily presented through Jesus’ teachings on belief and discipleship. Below I will therefore deal with these separately.

#### 3.3.1 Believing Characters in the Book of Signs

In the following I will examine how the book of signs portrays the believer and their relation to Jesus by discussing three (groups of) characters: John the Baptizer, Jesus’ closest disciples, and “the crowds”.

##### 3.3.1.1 *The Baptizer*

John the Baptizer is introduced already in the prologue, and is as such the first character in the Gospel to exhibit faith. While the Baptizer has a unique relation to Jesus, as a forerunner, rather than disciple or follower, he nevertheless is a model for perfect belief in John. The Baptizer exemplifies this faith by constantly witnessing to the superiority of

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<sup>81</sup> See below pages 48–49.

<sup>82</sup> See my discussion in chapter 1, pages 16–17.

<sup>83</sup> Jesus variously describes the believer with other terms, including “my own” (10:14–15), “the one who believes in me” (7:38), the one who “comes to me” (6:37) etc. I do not have the space to treat these individually, and will therefore generalize.

<sup>84</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 118. See also Hera, *Christology*, 142–43.



Jesus.<sup>85</sup> Though others think he is the messiah himself (1:19–28; 3:26–36), the Baptizer always acknowledges his status as Jesus' subordinate.

The baptizer is therefore the paradigmatic witness in the Gospel (note the frequent use of μαρτυρέω and related words in connection with the Baptizer), and he is presented as a role model first and foremost through how he acknowledges the proper relation between himself and Jesus.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.3.1.2 *The Disciples*<sup>87</sup>

The first substantial narrative segment in John relates the encounters between Jesus and his first disciples.<sup>88</sup> That John devotes significant space to Jesus' closest followers at such a prominent place in the narrative underscores the emphasis John places on his theology of belief and discipleship.

The plethora of titles the disciples apply to Jesus when they first encounter him indicates that they immediately recognize his special character and connection with God. But even so, the precise interpretation of these titles is disputed. While Brown and Barrett sees the titles as expressions of Johannine faith, Moloney holds that they fall short of this standard.<sup>89</sup> Culpepper takes a middle position, holding that although the titles reveal the true identity of Jesus, the disciples do not understand the ramifications of their confession.<sup>90</sup>

Such an ambiguity in the closest disciples' relation to Jesus is in any case clear in the remainder of the narrative: On one hand the closest disciples believe (2:11), and are committed followers who stay with Jesus even when many other disciples go away (6:66–69). But on the other hand they repeatedly misunderstand Jesus' mission and purpose: For instance, they do not understand his speaking of his own body as a temple (2:22); why he

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<sup>85</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 133. The baptizer shares this perfect faith with the "beloved disciple" who is the paradigm for Johannine faith and discipleship. I will however not discuss the beloved disciple here, as he is not introduced in the book of signs, first appearing in 13:25. For a presentation of the beloved disciple in John see *ibid.*, 121–23.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 132–33.

<sup>87</sup> Note the ambiguity of this term as discussed on pages 16–17. Here I use "disciples" to refer to the closest group of Jesus' followers.

<sup>88</sup> 1:35–51 has often been called "the call narrative" but, as Hera notes, of the first disciples only Philip is called by Jesus. Hera, *Christology*, 51n43.

<sup>89</sup> Moloney, *John*, 54–57; Brown, *John*, 1:76–78; Barrett, *John*, 179–87.

<sup>90</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 116.

speaks to the Samaritan woman (4:27) or the implication of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (12:16 See also 6:5–9, 19; 9:1–3; 11:1–16).

The simultaneous misunderstandings and commitment of the disciples is perhaps best illustrated by Thomas' response to Jesus' decision to go and raise Lazarus: "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (11:16). Though the comment completely fails to comprehend the situation, including Jesus' mission and the role of the disciples, it still communicates an unfailing commitment to Jesus.<sup>91</sup> At this point in the narrative, at least, the disciples are willing to stay with Jesus even when there is great risk involved.<sup>92</sup>

As committed (though misunderstanding) followers, the disciples also share the Baptizer's role as witnesses.<sup>93</sup> Although the disciples are rarely at the center of the narrative, they are repeatedly noted as present at or as remembering certain events (2:11; 2:17; 2:22; 6:5–13; 10:16; 12:16 etc.), and the epilogue summarizes the whole Gospel as the testimony (μαρτυρία) of the beloved disciple (21:24).

### 3.3.1.3 *The Crowds*

A third "character" who responds to Jesus, though with a much more limited and varied faith than the baptizer and the disciples, is "the crowd" (ὄχλος). As Culpepper notes, the crowds are primarily present in chapters 6, 7 and 12, thus being closely connected with the controversies over Jesus' signs (cf. 6:2).<sup>94</sup> Their response to Jesus is varied. Many believe or support him (7:12, 31, 40–41) and others reject him (7:12, 20, 43–44). "The crowd represents the struggle of those who are open to believing, but neither the scriptures nor the signs lead them to authentic faith" writes Culpepper.<sup>95</sup> For the discussion in the following chapters it is noteworthy that in the crowds are absent in the farewell discourse. Only the closest disciples remain to hear Jesus' final speech.

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<sup>91</sup> Barrett, *John*, 393–94; Moloney, *John*, 327.

<sup>92</sup> Of course the disciples eventually fail in this commitment, and abandon Jesus after his arrest.

<sup>93</sup> Note especially the emphasis on the disciples "seeing" both at the beginning (1:39, 50) and end (19:35 cf. 21:24; 20:29–30) of the Gospel.

<sup>94</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 131.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 132. The characters Jesus encounters in the Cana cycle are another example of the ambiguous and varied responses to his revelation. Moloney, *John*, 65.

#### 3.3.1.4 *Summary*

Summarizing what we have found we see that the baptizer exemplifies faith by being a constant witness to Jesus' superiority. The disciples exemplify faith especially through their commitment to Jesus. At the same time they are flawed believers, who often fail to understand Jesus' intentions and full identity. Finally the crowds exemplify the varied responses to Jesus' revelation, which include both acceptance and rejection.

What does this tell us about the relationship between Jesus and the believer? First and foremost, the book of signs demonstrates the various responses to Jesus revelation. Though we have left the entirely negative response (exemplified by "the Jews") aside, there is still a large variety of responses, and only the baptizer (and later the beloved disciple) demonstrate full faith and understanding. Common to all the encounters is that it is the response of the believer that determines their relationship to Jesus. The revelation is available to all Jesus meets. Yet only a few respond with true faith. At the start of the farewell discourse, only a small group of committed followers remain with Jesus.

#### 3.3.2 Jesus' Teaching on Belief and Discipleship

Before we analyze Jesus' own teachings, we will briefly note what the prologue says about Jesus and his relation to believers: According to the prologue Jesus was rejected by his own (1:11). However to those who did receive him, Jesus functions as a mediator of God. He gives the believers the power to become children of God (1:12), he shows them the glory he has from his Father (1:14), he gives them grace and truth from his own fullness (1:16–17 cf. 1:14), and makes God known to them (1:18). In short the prologue testifies that Jesus communicates God's identity and benefits to the believers.

In examining Jesus' own teachings on belief and discipleship in the book of signs, I will limit my discussion to three texts: 4:31–38; 10:1–18 and 12:24–26. Together, three texts together summarize what I find to be the most significant of Jesus teachings on the topic, by emphasizing three different facets of his teaching.<sup>96</sup>

In 4:31–38 Jesus invites his disciples to be participants in his own mission. He states that others have worked previously and that the disciples now are to enter into this work

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<sup>96</sup> Other texts which could be discussed include 3:1–21; 6:24–46; 6:60–65 and 9:1–41.

(4:38). Although it is unclear who these ‘others’ are, it seems clear that Jesus is included among them, and that the disciples here are invited to continue the work of God which Jesus is already doing (cf. 4:34).<sup>97</sup> This role of the disciples as participants in Jesus work is repeated several times throughout the book of signs, when Jesus includes his disciples in his own work by use of the first person plural: πόθεν ἀγοράσωμεν ἄρτους... (6:5); ἡμᾶς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα του πέμπσαντός με... (9:4); ἄγωμεν εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν πάλιν. (11:7). While the book of signs does not deliberate on the disciples as participants in Jesus’ mission, these texts form a significant background to the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples, which I will discuss in chapter 6.

10:1–18 centers on the benefits the believers have as the objects of Jesus’ care and love. The very image of the disciples as sheep conveys the passivity and dependence they have upon Jesus – their shepherd. He calls them by name and lead them (10:3–4), he saves them and lets them find pasture (10:9) and he gives his life for the sheep (10:11, 15).

Finally 12:24–26 conveys the commitment and willingness to sacrifice which is required of the believer. It is clear in the book of signs that following Jesus is costly: Many leave him because of his message (6:60–66), and others never dare to commit to follow him due to the risks involved (7:13; 12:42–43). The story of the man born blind demonstrates clearly the risks the author of John knew were connected to believing in Jesus: Exclusion from the synagogue and persecution by the religious majority.<sup>98</sup> Now Jesus makes this explicit: Just he is willing to lose his life, his followers must be willing to do the same.<sup>99</sup> It is also worth to note that this text is the only instance of the believer being called Jesus’ servant (διδάκονος). This emphasizes the shift that takes place in the following chapters: The servants of Jesus have their feet washed by him (13:1–17) and become his friends (φίλος, 15:15).<sup>100</sup>

### 3.4 Summary

In this chapter we have set the stage for the discussion of the parallel relations in the book of glory by looking at how these relations are presented in the first half of John.

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<sup>97</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 182-83.

<sup>98</sup> Moloney, *John*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>100</sup> See pages 49–52 below.

Regarding the Father/Son relation, the primary observation is that Jesus is the true and authentic revelation of God. He is both God's agent and God's logos, and no single model manages to capture the simultaneous unity and subordination which marks the relation. Jesus' mission is however clear: He has come to save those who believe in him.

Turning to the relation between Jesus and believers, there is a distinction between believing characters in the book of signs and the "model believer" presented in Jesus teachings. The believing characters respond in various ways to Jesus' revelation – not all accept him, and only a few display full belief. Despite their commitment, even the closest disciples repeatedly misunderstand Jesus. Regarding Jesus own teachings on discipleship we noted three themes: Jesus inclusion of the disciples in his mission, the love and care Jesus' has for "his own" and the commitment Jesus requires from those who wish to follow him.

## Chapter 4: Love and Abiding in John 15:9–11

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### 4.1 Introduction

Having introduced the Father/Son and Son/disciple relation in the first half of John, I will now proceed to the interpretation of the texts I selected for a closer examination in chapter 2. In the present chapter I will examine the two parallels found in 15:9–11, which primarily concern the themes of love and abiding. In the following two chapters I will examine 17:20–23 and 17:18/20:21 respectively.

As we have seen, the farewell discourse is the primary location for the explicit parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations, and three of the four texts I will discuss are located in this section of John. Before I begin the interpretation proper I will therefore introduce the farewell discourse as the context for the parallels. The first section of the present chapter is therefore relevant also for the following two chapters. I will then introduce the closer context and structure of the 15:9–10, before I examine in detail how this text describes the parallel relations.

### 4.2 The Farewell Discourse as the Context for the Parallels

#### 4.2.1 The Farewell Discourse as the Setting for John's Theology of Discipleship

While the disciples are present throughout the book of signs, it is important to observe how their role in the narrative changes at the transition to the book of glory. Until this point the primary audience and respondents to Jesus' message have been "the Jews" and the general populace. Though the disciples are present, they seldom impact the narrative. With the end of chapter 12 this changes. Now the disciples are the only recipients of Jesus' message.

Moloney calls John 12:37–50 the conclusion to Jesus' ministry.<sup>101</sup> A more appropriate title may be the conclusion to Jesus *outwards* ministry.<sup>102</sup> In chapters 2–12, we have seen

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<sup>101</sup> Moloney, *John*, 362.

<sup>102</sup> Barrett's "public ministry", also seems somewhat imprecise. Barrett, *John*, 429. The significant difference between John 2–12 and the farewell discourse is not primarily that the latter is private, but rather that it is directed entirely "inwards" towards the disciples. Contrast this with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, which is also private, but directed "outward" to one who is not a disciple.

the fulfillment of 1:11: “Jesus’ own” did not believe him.<sup>103</sup> Jesus ministry, however, continues in chapter 13. But the ministry is now directed inwards. No longer is he speaking to the crowds and his opponents. Only his closest followers are in view, and the promise of 1:12 sets the stage for the farewell discourse: “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”<sup>104</sup>

This point can also be put differently: Farely identifies a subplot in the Gospel of John in which “a subsidiary aspect of Jesus’ mission is to prepare a group of believers for a particular task, namely, the continuation of his mission”.<sup>105</sup> In chapters 2–12 this subplot is mostly in the background. But in chapters 13–17 it dominates the discourse. Thus it is in the farewell discourse that Jesus’ teachings on discipleship become a primary aspect of the Johannine narrative. And this is the reason that the farewell discourse is the primary context for the development of the parallels between Jesus’ relation to his Father and the disciples’ relation to Jesus.

#### 4.2.2 Structure and Genre of the Farewell Discourse

Even a superficial reading of John 13–17 reveals three distinct sections with different genres. 13:1–30 is a narrative relating events during the final meal shared by Jesus and his disciples. 13:31–16:33 is a speech given by Jesus to his disciples (with the disciples providing occasional comments and questions). And 17:1–26 is a prayer by Jesus to his Father. Even so it is clear that 13:1–17:26 form a distinct unit of the Gospel. All of 13:1–17:26 takes place in the same place and context, the characters are consistent throughout (with the exception of the departure of Judas), and the section is marked by clear breaks after 12:50 and before 18:1.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, there is a thematic unity in the section. As one example, 13:1 introduces the theme of Jesus’ love for his own, and the way he displays this love in the footwashing is clearly central also in the following speech (See especially 13:34 and 15:9–

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<sup>103</sup> Moloney, *John*, 363.

<sup>104</sup> “Verses 11 and 12 seem to be a summary of the two main divisions of John. Verse 11 covers the Book of Signs [...]. Verse 12 covers the Book of Glory [...].” Brown, *John*, 1:19.

<sup>105</sup> Nicolas Farely, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel : A Narrative Analysis of Their Faith and Understanding*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 290 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 172.

<sup>106</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, *The Farewell of the Word : The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 2-4.

17). Similarly the prayer in chapter 17 picks up several of the most central themes from the preceding speech, so that it can well be called a summary of the speech in form of a prayer.<sup>107</sup> Thus 13:1–17:26 is a single unit of several parts, united by context, cast and themes.

As a whole unit, 13–17 is best characterized as a farewell scene or a last will. Segovia and Gusa both analyze how John 13–17 include several elements typical of these genres.<sup>108</sup> Some notable such elements are a gathering of friends/disciples; a last meal; a conversation between the hero who is about to die and those gathered, including exhortations and commands to those who remain, and predictions of the future; election of a successor; and a final prayer. The farewell discourse is as such properly named, as it is Jesus' farewell and last will, where he gives his final instructions and teachings to his disciples.

Although I will treat the text in its current form, as discussed in chapter 1, I will make a brief note regarding the compositional history of the farewell discourse. 14:31 seems to fit poorly in its context. Jesus' incitement to leave the upper room seems to mark the end of speech – yet Jesus continues to speak until 18:1. This has led the vast majority of modern scholars to conclude that the farewell discourse has been edited, and that in the original version 14:31 and 18:1 were likely successive verses.<sup>109</sup> The attempts to resolve the problem have primarily moved along two distinct lines:<sup>110</sup> Some suggest that the sections of the farewell discourse have been transposed, so that the present order is different from the original (where 14:31 was the conclusion of the discourse). Others suggest that John 15–17 were not present in the original form of the discourse. The latter solution is supported by the fact that chapters 15–16 repeat many of the themes found in 13–14, so that it can be

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<sup>107</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Eerdmans, 1991), 551. See for instance the themes of Glory (13:31–32 cf. 17:1–6) and the unity of the disciples, Jesus and his Father (14:1–20; 15:1–17, cf. 17:9, 20–25) and “the world” (15:18–4 cf. 17:9–19). Some scholars also emphasize the connection between the prayer in John 17 and the passion narrative. For an overview of interpretations of John 17 within its literary context, see Hera, *Christology*, 15–18.

<sup>108</sup> Segovia, *Farewell*, 2–24; Gusa, “Excentriske Venner,” 134–38. My presentation of the farewell scene builds on these authors.

<sup>109</sup> L. Scott Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse: The Literary Integrity of John 13:31–16:33*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 256 (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 1–9.

<sup>110</sup> Barrett, *John*, 454–55. Segovia identifies several other approaches, though the solutions of addition or transposition are the most prominent. See Segovia, *Farewell*, 24–47.



seen as a second version of the discourse, expanding on the first.<sup>111</sup> Chapter 17 also contains a multitude of echoes from the preceding discourse, and if chapters 15–16 are a secondary addition to the farewell discourse, it is also reasonable to conclude that the prayer is so.<sup>112</sup> It should however be noted that these conclusions are not universally accepted, and for instance Scott Kellum has argued extensively for the unity of the farewell discourse in its present form.<sup>113</sup>

While I will not pursue this discussion further, we can note that the parallels discussed below all fit well with the hypothesis that chapters 15–17 are additions to the original discourse, expanding on themes developed in 13–14. The themes of love, obedience and unity in 15:9–10 are found in 14:8–21. The unity of Jesus with the Father and the disciples with Jesus in 17:20–23 is similar to 14:20 and surrounding verses. And while Jesus does not send his disciples in chapters 13–14, 13:16 portrays the disciples as messengers or agents (ἀπόστολοι. Cf. also the love of the disciples as a witness to the world in 13:35 and 17:18–23).

Finally I will note what I consider to be the basic structure of the farewell discourse. Here I follow Gusa, and though there are some alternative suggestions, he claims that there is a “fair consensus” for the following division:<sup>114</sup>

- 1) 13:1–30<sup>115</sup> (The Footwashing).
- 2) 13:31–14:31 (The command to love; the departure of Jesus; the paraclete).
- 3) 15:1–17 (The metaphor of the vine; love and abiding).
- 4) 15:18–16:4a (The disciples and the world).
- 5) 16:4b–33 (The paraclete; the departure of Jesus).
- 6) 17:1–26 (Jesus final prayer).

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<sup>111</sup> Barrett, *John*, 455. For the relation between 13:31–14:31 and 16:4b–33 in particular, see Brown, *John*, 2:588–97.

<sup>112</sup> Barrett, *John*, 499.

<sup>113</sup> Kellum, *Unity*.

<sup>114</sup> Gusa, "Excentriske Venner," 137. Gusa here again follows Martin Winter and Fernando Segovia. In the parentheses I have noted the main themes of each division.

<sup>115</sup> Gusa inserts a lesser break between 13:20 and 13:21.

### 4.3 John 15:9–11: Abiding in Love

We can now begin the interpretation of 15:9–11. In this passage we find two explicit parallels in verses 9 and 10. As will be made clear below, verse 11 is structurally connected with these verses, and I will therefore include it in the interpretation, although my emphasis is on the parallels in verses 9–10. The English and Greek text for 15:9–11 is as follows.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

9 Καθὼς ἠγάπησέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἠγάπησα· μέinate ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐμῇ. 10 ἔάν τὰς ἐντολάς μου τηρήσητε, μενεῖτε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ μου, καθὼς ἐγὼ τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ πατρός μου τετήρηκα καὶ μένω αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ. 11 Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἢ ἐμὴ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ καὶ ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν πληρωθῇ.<sup>116</sup>

These verses connect three central themes of Johannine theology: Love, abiding and obedience/keeping commandments. In the following I will first introduce the context of these verses in the farewell discourse. I will then discuss the verses in their context, and examine how the parallels in 15:9–10 describe the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel.

#### 4.3.1 The Context: John 15:9–11 as the Center Point of the Farewell Discourse

John 15:1–17 forms a distinct subsection of the farewell discourse.<sup>117</sup> Several proposals have been made with regards to its structure, but three suggestions seem most likely: A twofold structure divided after 15:8; a twofold structure divided after 15:11; and a threefold structure with breaks at both 15:8 and 15:11.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Though there are some textual variants in these verses, they concern primarily the ordering of words, and none change the meaning of the text in any significant way. As such, I will not discuss them further.

<sup>117</sup> Many scholars will see 15:1–17 as part of a larger section, usually stretching to 16:4a. Moloney, for instance sees 15:1–16:3 as a single section in three parts, concerning what it means to be a disciple: To abide in Jesus (15:1–11), to love one another (15:12–17) and to be hated (15:18–16:3). Moloney, *John*, 416–18. While this structure is certainly possible, I will treat 15:1–17 as a separate section based on the thematic divide at 15:17 as well as the two inclusios formed by 15:1–9/15:16 and 15:12/15:17. For a discussion, see Segovia, *Farewell*, 125–27.

<sup>118</sup> For a thorough discussion of suggested structures see *Farewell*, 127–31.

The structure with a single break at 15:8 is the majority position.<sup>119</sup> This structure can be argued at least two ways: Several commentators see parallels between the sections 15:1–8 and 15:9–17.<sup>120</sup> These include introductory references to the Father, the repetition of the imperative “abide” (μείνατε), the affirmation that the disciple’s prayers will be heard, and a more general parallel structure in the two sections. Even so, the most convincing argument for the divide at 15:8 is thematic: With the reference to bearing fruit, 15:8 concludes the metaphor of the vine, while 15:9 introduces the topic of love which dominates the following verses.

The argument for a single break at 15:11 is based on the inclusio formed by the command to love in 15:12 and 15:17.<sup>121</sup> Additionally, the phrase ταῦτα λελάληκα... in verse 11 is similar to phrases used to conclude other sections in the farewell discourse (15:17, 16:4a, 16:24c and 16:33) and should according to Kellum be seen to refer to 15:1–11 and not only 15:9–11.<sup>122</sup> This then creates two sections, where 15:1–11 is centered on the theme of abiding, and 15:12–17 is centered on the commandment to love. However, while it is true that the inclusion of 15:12–17 marks these verses as a subsection, another inclusio based on the topic of bearing fruit is found between 15:1–9 and 15:16 implying that these sections are more intimately connected than a clean topical break would imply. Furthermore, the topic of love is not introduced to the passage at 15:12, but rather in 15:9 and Jesus’ commandment to his disciples is thus a continuation of the preceding topic rather than a new section.

The threefold structure solves some of the problems created by dividing the passage at 15:11. It recognizes that the topic of abiding is central to the first part of the text (various forms of μένω are used 11 times in John 15:1–11, and only once in 15:12–17), and that the topic of love is central to the second part (ἀγαπάω/ ἀγάπη are used 9 times in total in 15:9–17). It also recognizes the inclusio formed by 15:12–17 as well as the break at 15:8. Thus 15:1–8 concern the topic of abiding in Christ, while 15:12–17 concern the topic of love, and in particular the commandment to the disciples to love one another. Finally, it recognizes that the two sections are intimately connected through 15:9–11 which becomes the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 128–30; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John; a Commentary*, ed. Rupert William Noel Hoare and John Kenneth Riches, trans. George Raymond Beasley-Murray (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1971), 539–40.

<sup>121</sup> Moloney, *John*, 417; George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary 36 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 269.

<sup>122</sup> Kellum, *Unity*, 172.

transition from the topic of abiding to the topic of love, and the key to the passage as a whole.<sup>123</sup>

Rather than following any of these positions fully, I agree with the observations from both the first and third suggestions: The majority position is correct in stating that 15:8 is the most natural break in the text. Any break at 15:11 is at the very least weaker than the former, and might be considered unnecessary.<sup>124</sup> 15:9–11 is therefore, through the themes of love and obedience, at least as strongly connected with the verses that follow as with the verses that precede them.<sup>125</sup>

However, even if there is not a full break at 15:11 these observations should be supplemented by the third position's view of 15:9–11 as the center point of 15:1–17. On one hand, the climax of the topic of abiding, discussed in 15:1–8, is found in 15:9–11. On the other hand these verses form the basis for the commandment to love in 15:12–17: The commandment to love in 15:12 is given as the concrete answer to the implicit question in 15:10: Which commandments must the disciples keep to abide in Jesus' love?<sup>126</sup> Thus, while the major break in 15:1–17 is found at 15:8, it is 15:9–11 which is the heart of the section, and the ταῦτα λελάληκα of 15:11 is in this interpretation yet another feature which pulls the reader's attention to the importance of 15:9–10

Francis Moloney calls 15:1–16:4 "the centerpiece of the whole farewell discourse", and identifies 15:12–17 as the center of this section.<sup>127</sup> If we follow the reasoning given above it seems that this designation is better given to 15:9–11 which forms the basis for 15:12–17. As such, one might argue that the call to abide in Jesus' love in parallel with Jesus abiding in his Father's love is at the very center of the farewell discourse.

#### 4.3.2 Initial Analysis of John 15:9–11

For the sake of our analysis 15:9–11 can be divided in two parts. 15:9–10 contains the parallels themselves while 15:11 states the purpose of Jesus' teachings on abiding in love. As

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<sup>123</sup> Segovia, *Farewell*, 130.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Contra Kellum, *Unity*, 169-73.

<sup>126</sup> As Chennattu notices, the connection of promise and command in this text is similar to the Old Testament relationship between covenant and command. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 116-18.

<sup>127</sup> Moloney, *John*, 418.

such 15:9–10 is the primary focus of the present analysis, and 15:11 will only receive a brief treatment.

15:9–10 consists of a statement of Jesus' love for the disciples (9a) followed by an encouragement to the disciples to abide in this love (9b), and a statement which explains how the disciples might do this: by following Jesus' commandments (10).

From this it is clear that these verses have a chiastic structure (statement – encouragement – statement), where verse 9b is the center point which contains the primary message of the text. Thus the verses as a whole should be read as an encouragement to the disciples to abide in Jesus' love. The initial statement sets the stage by presenting the status of the disciples as a statement of fact: Jesus has loved them (ἡγάπησα – aorist indicative), just as he himself has been loved by the Father (ἡγάπησέν – aorist indicative). The disciples are already in Jesus' love and the following encouragement therefore does not demand of the disciples to do anything new: They are simply to *abide* in his love (μείνατε – aorist imperative). The final clause then presents the condition that must be fulfilled in order for them to remain where they already are: If the disciples keep Jesus' commandments (ἐὰν + τηρήσητε – aorist subjunctive) they will remain in his love (μενεῖτε – future indicative), just as Jesus abides in his Father's love (μένω – present indicative) due to him keeping the Father's commandments (τετήρηκα – perfect indicative),.

As we have previously noted, the direction of comparison is clear: The Father/Son relation is the background/vehicle, and the Son/disciple relation is the element being described/tenor. This is clear both from the context, where the Son/disciple relation is being described, and from grammatical indicators, especially in verse 10, where Jesus' keeping the Father's commandments and abiding in love is presented as prior to the disciples abiding and keeping commandments.

#### 4.3.3 15:9a: Jesus' Love for his Disciples

15:9–10 begins by affirming the Disciple's status, as loved by Jesus. This is similar to how the metaphor of the vine (15:1–8) begins by introducing the relationship between Jesus, his Father and his disciples. There they were described as branches on the vine. Here the description is more direct, and needs little interpretation: The disciples are loved by

Jesus. Jesus' love for his disciples is the same sort of love the Father has for Jesus: *Καθὼς ἠγάπησέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὼ ὑμᾶς ἠγάπησα*. The aorist indicative is used in both instances and these uses are "best characterized as constative aorists, so both loves are presented from a fully completed or accomplished perspective."<sup>128</sup>

The Father's love for Jesus is mentioned three times in the book of signs. In 3:35 John the Baptizer states that "The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands." In 5:19–30 Jesus himself expands on this point: The Father loves the Son, and shows him everything he is to do (5:20). And the Father gives the Son power to both give life (5:21, 26) and judge (5:22). But all of this Jesus does according to his Father's will – he does not act on his own (5:19, 30). Finally in 10:17–18, Jesus states that the Father loves Jesus because he freely gives and takes back his life in accordance with his mission. Thus the Father's love for Jesus is both a gift of authority, which Jesus needs to fulfill his mission, and a response to Jesus' fulfillment of that mission.<sup>129</sup> It is noteworthy that the Father's love for Jesus displayed in the authority given to Jesus, is necessarily prior to Jesus fulfilling his mission. This parallels Jesus' love for the disciples, which is prior to the condition that they keep his commandments.

Turning to Jesus' love for his own, this is most clearly displayed in the story of the footwashing, which clearly anticipates the crucifixion and resurrection and functions as an image of what Jesus is about to do for his disciples. This is made particularly clear by the verbs used to describe how Jesus lays aside (*τίθησιν*) and takes up again (*ἔλαβεν*) his garments – calling to mind how the Good Shepherd lays down his life and takes it up again (10:17).<sup>130</sup> Jesus' love for his own is emphasized in the introduction to the footwashing (13:1) and when Jesus soon thereafter gives the disciples the command to love each other as he has loved them (13:34–35) it forms a clear parallel to his command that they are to wash each other's feet (13:14–15). Thus, Jesus' love for his disciples is most clearly manifest in his willingness to give his life for them, which he in chapter 15 confirms to be the greatest possible love, and the sort of love he wishes his disciples to imitate (15:13).

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<sup>128</sup> Segovia, *Farewell*, 150.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 150n38.

<sup>130</sup> Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel : Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 10-11.

In light of this it seems clear that it is not the way in which the Father displays his love to Jesus that is set in parallel with Jesus' love for his disciples. In the Father's case his love is displayed as a gift of authority, and in Jesus' case primarily as a willingness to lay down his life and serve his disciples.<sup>131</sup> Another *tertium comparationis* must therefore be sought.

A more promising candidate for a *tertium comparationis* is the *quality* of the love in question. In 15:13 Jesus notes that the self-sacrificial love with which he loves his disciples is the highest potential form of love. Though little is said directly of the quality of the Father's love for Jesus, it is connected with the Father surrendering to or sharing with Jesus what is properly his own. As such this could well be the background for the parallel.

However, the context of the statement points to an even better candidate for the *tertium comparationis*. John 15:1–17 is a thoroughly relational text. And as such I find it likely that the background for the parallel in 15:9 is found in the relationship which is the context for the Father's love for Jesus. As we saw, the Father's love for Jesus is connected to how Jesus receives authority to complete his mission, and that he completes it. That is, it is intimately connected with how Jesus acts on the Father's behalf in complete correspondence with the Father's will. This correspondence of will and action is also the primary way the unity between Jesus and his Father is displayed in the book of signs (5:16–30; 10:22–42; 12:44–50).<sup>132</sup> Thus, while the Father's love for Jesus is displayed in the authority Jesus receives, it finds its source in the oneness that exists between God and his only Son.

If this interpretation holds, the force of the parallel in 9a is not that the Father's love for Jesus and Jesus' love for the disciples have been displayed similarly, but rather that, through Jesus' love, the disciples have entered a loving relationship to him, which is similar to Jesus' loving relation to the Father. Verse 9a thus establishes the status of the disciples: Just as they *are* branches on the vine (15:1–8), so they already are in a loving unity with

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<sup>131</sup> There is a parallel in that the Father loves Jesus because he keeps his commandments, and that Jesus loves his own if they keep his commandments (14:21 cf. 15:10). But as noted above obedience to commandments is not the primary cause of love in either relation.

<sup>132</sup> See pages 29–30 above.

Jesus, which finds its source in the love between the Father and the Son.<sup>133</sup> They have entered into the “chain of love”.<sup>134</sup> However, the branches on the vine are in danger of being pruned off (15:2). Similarly the disciples are in danger of losing the privileged status they have. This forms the basis for the encouragement which follows 9a: The disciples are in Jesus’ love, but they must take care to abide there.

#### 4.3.4 15:9b: Abide!

The call to abide is the primary message of John 15:1–8: The disciples are called to abide in Jesus as branches on a vine. They will bear fruit if they abide in him. But the consequences of not abiding in Jesus are severe: The branches that do not abide in him do not bear fruit (15:4–5). These are thrown out, thrown on the fire and burned (15:6). Contrary, the benefits of those who abide in Jesus are great: Not only will they bear fruit, but the words of Jesus will abide in them, and they will be granted everything they ask for (15:7).

While 15:1–8 describes in great detail the importance of abiding in Jesus, and the consequences of doing or failing to do so, it does not describe *how* disciples might abide in Jesus, nor the fruits they are to bear by doing so.<sup>135</sup> 15:9b provides the answer to the first of these questions, while it prepares the answer to the second one: The unity between vine and branch is in the Son/disciple relation a unity of love. 15:9a made clear that the disciples, because of Jesus’ love for them, have entered into a loving relation to Jesus, similar to Jesus’ relation to his Father. The call to abide in 15:9b thus makes clear that it is in this loving relation the disciples are to abide.

The call in 9b is therefore more than a synonymous restatement of the previous call to abide. It is an expansion and clarification: They are to abide in the love of Jesus. Verse 10 is then the natural follow up: The branches on the vine were in danger of losing their relation to the vine. But it was not clear from the metaphor alone how this might happen. In 15:10 Jesus states plainly what is required of the disciples: They must keep his commandments.

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<sup>133</sup> This is also observed by Dodd. Of the farewell discourse he writes: “As we read, it becomes clear that Christ is not merely telling His disciples about life in union with Him and how to attain it; He is actually imparting it to them.” Dodd, *Interpretation*, 418.

<sup>134</sup> Segovia, *Farewell*, 149-51.

<sup>135</sup> Carson, *Farewell*, 91-92.



#### 4.3.5 15:10: Love as the Prerequisite for Abiding

The connection between obedience to Jesus' commandments and a loving relation with him is not a new concept in the Gospel: In 14:21 Jesus already stated that the one who keeps his commandments is the one who loves him, and that this one in turn will be loved by both himself and his Father (cf. 14:15). This point is expanded in chapter 15, and the context gives the statement additional significance: The disciples have been told that they are in a loving unity with Jesus, and that they must take care not to lose this relation. Therefore they must keep Jesus' commandments.

##### 4.3.5.1 *Jesus' Obedience to the Father*

Once again the parallel to Jesus' own relation to his Father is significant. Jesus' obedience and complete compliance to his Father's will is a central theme in the Gospel, and described in multiple ways: Jesus speaks the words of God (3:34 cf. 12:49) and acts only as his Father does (5:19–30). He comes from his Father (7:28–29) in his Father's name (5:43) and his food is to complete the work of the Father (4:34). He does nothing of himself but only as his Father has taught him (8:28–29). The father dwells (μένω) in him and does his work through him (14:10), so that at the end of his ministry Jesus can state boldly that he has completed the work his Father gave him (17:4). In summary, God is “the source and goal of all Jesus is and does.”<sup>136</sup>

In addition to the general emphasis of Jesus obedience, John twice mentions the Father's command (ἐντολή) to Jesus. In 10:18 the command Jesus has received is to lay down his life (for his sheep) and take it up again. In 12:49 the command is more general: Everything Jesus says and speaks is according to the Father's command. Additionally, the Gospel speaks more indirectly of the Father's command to Jesus when Jesus states that he does the will of the Father. This expression is used several times in a general way (as in chapter 5 mentioned above: everything Jesus does is according to the Father's will) but it is also used with reference to specific tasks, and in particular the preservation of the believers: Jesus is to preserve all those who come to him, and give them eternal life (6:37–40 cf. 10:37–39). To this we can add texts which state that the purpose of the incarnation was to save the

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<sup>136</sup> Moloney, *John*, 421.

believers and, in some cases, to judge the unbelievers (3:13–18; 12:44–50. See also 8:12; 9:39).

In summary, Jesus' obedience to his Father's command includes a specific emphasis on the central and primary mission of Jesus, which is to preserve and save the believers – a mission which ultimately leads to his death and resurrection. However the primary facet of Jesus' obedience is how it characterizes and encompasses his entire mission: Everything Jesus does is according to the will and command of the Father.

#### 4.3.5.2 *The Disciples' Obedience to Jesus*

While Jesus' obedience to the Father is characterized primarily by its comprehensiveness, his commandments (ἐντολὰς) to the disciples are much more focused. The plural form used in 15:10 makes it clear that the entirety of Jesus' teachings about discipleship is in view. However, Jesus only gives his disciples one specific command (ἐντολή) in the Gospel: The command that the disciples love one another as he has loved them. This command is introduced in 13:34, and its repetition and development in 15:12–17 makes it obvious that it is first and foremost this commandment which is in view in 15:10: If the disciples are to abide in Jesus' love they have to display the same love toward one another.

The command to love one another is developed in three parts in 15:17 with 15:12–14 and 15:17 developing the command to love, and 15:15–16 explaining how Jesus' love has established a new relationship with the disciples.<sup>137</sup>

The first section introduces the command to the disciples: They are to love one another with an enduring love (ἀγαπάτε – present subjunctive) just as Jesus has loved them (ἠγάπησα – aorist indicative, encompassing the entirety of Jesus' love for his disciples).<sup>138</sup> The section also expands on the commandment by making clear the quality of Jesus' love which we already noted above: It is the greatest love possible, displayed in the willingness to give one's life for one's friends. Through Jesus' love the disciples have been placed in a close relation to him. This relation is now specified as a friendship (15:14–15).

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 424–26. Segovia finds a larger chiastic structure, which is equally reasonable: A (12–13; 17): The Command to Love – B (14; 16): The Role of the Disciples as Jesus' Friends – C (15): The Nature of the Disciples as Jesus' Friends. Segovia, *Farewell*, 154–63.

<sup>138</sup> Moloney, *John*, 424.

The antique concept of ideal friendship, which is referenced here, encompasses much of what we have already seen: Friends love one another, acts for the benefits of each other, and share everything.<sup>139</sup> Ancient writers can describe the unity created by friendship as a single soul in two bodies or a second self.<sup>140</sup> This unity is the *telos* of friendship.<sup>141</sup> When Jesus calls his disciples “friends” it is therefore in many ways a repetition of what has already been said: The disciples are in a unity with Jesus, marked by love and the willingness to sacrifice one-self for one’s friends.<sup>142</sup>

However, while Jesus’ love for his disciples is presented as an accomplished fact (the aorist ἡγάπησα is used in vv. 9 and 12), their status as his friends is conditional. They are his friends *only if* they keep his commandments (15:14 ὑμεῖς φίλοι μου ἐστε ἐὰν ποιῇτε ἃ ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν). The friendship of Jesus and the disciples is parallel to the relationship between the branches and the vine: Just as the branches can remain on the vine only if they bear fruit, so the disciples are Jesus’ friends only if they follow his commandments.

On the other hand this description of the relationship creates a strong tension with the ideal friendship which is symmetrical and marked by equality.<sup>143</sup> Although the term “friendship” was in fact also used to describe unequal and asymmetrical relations, Gusa sees this as a perversion of the ideal, where the terminology of friendship is used to obscure the power-abuse present in such relations.<sup>144</sup> When the friendship between Jesus and the disciples is presented as dependent on the disciples’ obedience Gusa explains this with reference to the context of the farewell discourse as the testament of Jesus. A common element of such testaments was the release of slaves, and in his farewell speech, Jesus releases the disciples so that they become his friends.<sup>145</sup> 15:15 is therefore a conditional

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<sup>139</sup> These are some of the central motifs of friendship as described by Gusa, “Excentriske Venner,” 36-64.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>142</sup> According to Gusa, the relation between Jesus and the disciples in its entirety can be described as a friendship. Gusa presents many parallels between the antique concept of friendship and the Jesus/disciple relation in the Gospel of John, and it is clear from his study that the concept of friendship is an important background for the relation. However Gusa could also be challenged: “friend” (φίλος) is used only in 15:13–15. While Gusa is correct in stating that the absence of a term does not imply the absence of the idea behind the term, it is difficult to imagine why the Gospel would not use friendship language more frequently if the relationship between Jesus and the disciples could be adequately expressed as a friendship.

<sup>143</sup> As I noted in chapter 2, the tension between equality and subordination is a thematic parallel between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relation. Here we find another example of this pattern. See page 24–25.

<sup>144</sup> Gusa, “Excentriske Venner,” 51-52.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 136; 46-48.

manumission: The status of the disciples is transformed *if* they keep Jesus' commandments.<sup>146</sup>

However, this explanation is not completely satisfying. While 15:15 describes the disciples' transition from slaves to friends, 15:14 describe their status as friends. That is, 15:15 does not describe how the disciples might *become* friends of Jesus but rather upon what condition they already are (ἐστε) his friends. Thus there is a significant tension in the text, between the image of friendship, which implies symmetry, and Jesus' condition, which implies asymmetry.

Despite this tension, it is clear in 15:15 that the status of the disciples has changed: The disciples are no longer slaves/servants (δοῦλοι), but friends (φίλοι). Moloney points out that the disciples have never in the Gospel been called δοῦλοι.<sup>147</sup> However, Jesus does discuss his "servant" (δίακονος) in 12:26.<sup>148</sup> Just as the present text, 12:24–26 concerns Jesus' self-sacrifice, and the necessity that his servants show the same willingness to sacrifice themselves. And although 12:26 is not specifically addressed to the closest disciples, 15:15 makes clear that a reversal has taken place: The disciples are no longer merely subordinate servants – they are Jesus' beloved friends. Their task, however, remains the same in that they must imitate the love of Jesus displayed ultimately in the willingness to die for others.<sup>149</sup>

To abide in Jesus' love by following his commandments is then also to be Jesus' friend. And the disciples' status as friends is also rooted in the knowledge Jesus has given them: "Everything that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (15:15b, my translation). As we have noted repeatedly, in the book of signs Jesus is characterized by a complete knowledge of and obedience to the Father's will. This special knowledge is several times characterized as what Jesus hears from the Father (4:30; 8:26; 8:40). Jesus now states that he has shared his knowledge of God's will with the disciples. Jesus has previously in the farewell discourse noted how knowledge is a prerequisite to following his will (13:17). Now

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<sup>146</sup> Such conditions were not unusual in roman testaments. Ibid., 148.

<sup>147</sup> Moloney, *John*, 425.

<sup>148</sup> See page 35. See also 13:12–17 which seem to imply that the disciples are Jesus' servants (δοῦλοι).

<sup>149</sup> As Gusa notes the call to the disciples is that they love one another. The willingness to die for one's friends is only the extreme consequence of this love when it is required by the circumstances. Gusa, "Excentriske Venner," 183.

the disciples, unlike servants, know what their master is doing and as such are able to follow his will.

Though the disciples have been granted a new status as friends of Jesus, conditional on their keeping his commandments, Jesus finally reminds them in 15:16 that the source of their new status is his own love for them, and not their own choices or efforts: He has chosen them, not the other way around. Jesus therefor once again reminds them of the mission he has given them and the condition that allows them to abide in his love as his friends by returning to the metaphor of the vine: They have to bear fruit that will last (μένω). By recalling the metaphor of the vine, Jesus implicitly recalls the dangers associated with failing to abide in him. The disciples who fail to love each other are in danger of being cut off and burned like branches. The promise to those who do abide is however recalled explicitly: Those who do bear the fruits will receive everything they ask of the Father in Jesus name.

As the final verse of the section repeats the commandment that the disciples love one another it is now clear that it is love which is the primary fruit the disciples are to bear. Through Jesus love they abide in him as his friends, and as branches on the vine. This relationship is the source of the love the disciples are to show one another. Jesus loves them, and through this love they are now united with him. And if they display the same love to each other they can continue to abide in his love.

#### 4.3.5.3 *A Parallel Framework for Obedience*

Returning to 15:10 we can now seek to understand the parallel presented here. In which way is the disciple's obedience to Jesus parallel to Jesus' obedience to his Father? What is the *tertium comparationis*?

The "content" of the obedience is one possible candidate: While Jesus' obedience to his Father is wide in scope and primarily marked by its comprehensiveness, it is especially linked to Jesus care for "his own" and his willingness to sacrifice his life. Similarly, the disciples are encouraged to obey by loving one another with a love that is marked by the will to sacrifice one's self for one's friends. Thus the "content" of the obedience forms a background for the parallel in 15:10: To abide in the love of the Father/Jesus, Jesus/the

disciples (must) display an obedience which is marked primarily by love and will to sacrifice one self.

However, we might once again seek a *tertium comparationis* with even deeper roots in the relationships in question. We have noted already that John 15:1–17 is a highly relational text. We have also noted how Jesus' obedience to his Father is marked primarily by a complete unity of will. Looking at this from a different angle, we might say that Jesus' relation to his Father is so close that his will is entirely conformed to his Father's will.

When the Son/disciple relation is developed in John 15 it is emphasized that this relation is similar to Jesus' relation to the Father. The disciples have received knowledge of God and his will, and know what their master is doing (15:15). They therefore have knowledge of Jesus' will (which is one with God's will), and if they abide in a loving relationship with him, they will share the same unity of will with Jesus as Jesus shares with his Father. Thus the unity of the disciples with Jesus forms the background for their obedience: The disciples are obedient, not primarily because of their own will, but through their unity with Jesus. Their obedience is the natural consequence of their relation – just as the branches naturally bear fruit if they abide in the vine. The commandment to love one another is thus primarily to be seen as a summary of Jesus' own will for his disciples acted out through the disciples themselves: They are a loving community, founded on their relation to Jesus, where the members act out Jesus' love toward one another. Again the *tertium comparationis* is found in the relation which form the background for obedience.

#### 4.3.6 15:11: The Joy of Jesus in the Disciples

As mentioned in the comment on structure, 15:11 breaks up the text and this pulls the reader's attention to the preceding verses. Raymond Brown states that "Jesus' own joy springs from his union with the Father which finds expression in obedience and love [...]. The obedience and love to which in turn Jesus calls his disciples both constitute and witness their union with him; and it is this union that will be the source of their joy. Thus 'my joy,' [...] is a

salvific gift.”<sup>150</sup> Similarly, Gusa states that the joy of Jesus is that he upholds the love of God in loving the disciples to the end.<sup>151</sup>

If we follow this interpretation, 15:11 is once again an affirmation of the interpretation given above: It is the unity of love and obedience of Jesus and the disciples which constitutes a parallel to Jesus’ relationship with his Father. And the consequence for the disciples is the same as for Jesus: A joy that springs from this union.

#### 4.4 Summary

John 15:9–10 present two parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations: Jesus loves his disciples as he is loved by the Father. And to abide in Jesus’ love the disciples must keep his commandments, in imitation of how Jesus abides in the Father’s love by keeping the Father’s commandments.

We saw above that the fundamental love and unity which marks both the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations seems to be the *tertium comparationis*: Through his love for the disciples Jesus has included them in a unity with himself, which resembles the unity he himself shares with his Father. Jesus abides in the unity with his Father by displaying a unity of will with him, so that everything he does is according to the will of the Father. Likewise, the disciples have to display a unity of will with Jesus if they are to abide in the unity with him. Through Jesus’ love they have become his friends, who have knowledge of his will. By following his commandment to love one another they conform to the central element of his will. They become branches bearing fruit through their unity with the vine.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:681.

<sup>151</sup> Gusa, "Excentriske Venner," 210.

<sup>152</sup> It should be noted that the disciples (with the exception of the beloved disciple) are not perfect disciples. Despite their relation with Jesus, they will still fail (16:31–33). The divide between the model disciple and the disciples as characters persist even in the farewell discourse.

## Chapter 5: Unity in John 17:20–23

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### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw how John 15 presents the loving unity between Jesus and his Father and how the disciples have been introduced into this love through Jesus' love for them. To abide in Jesus' love the disciples were commanded to show the same love for one another. John 17:20–23 returns to the relations between Father, Son and disciples/believers focusing on the theme of unity. Jesus prays for the unity of all believers, which is a result of him being in them, just as the Father is in him. The text is as follows, with the most central section for my purposes (21–23a) also quoted in the original Greek:

20 I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 And the glory that you have given to me I have given to them, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.

(My translation)

21 ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὧσιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. 22 καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν· 23 ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ὧσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν...<sup>153</sup>

As previously noted the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in this text are not as clear as the parallels that are interpreted in the previous and the following chapters. Only in 22a and 23a is the relationship between Jesus and the believers set in parallel to the relationship between the Father and Jesus. The rest of the text is more

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<sup>153</sup> There are some minor textual variations in these verses. There is a tendency to alter the tense of the present subjunctives describing the future believers and the world, which can likely be explained as an attempt to make it clear that the text concerns the future community of believers. The most significant textual variant is therefore the insertion of ἐν after the second ὧσιν of verse 21 in some witnesses, resulting in the translation “that they may also be *one* in us”. This insertion likely comes from the ἐν ὧσιν earlier in the verse, and Metzger et al. conclude that it is almost certainly not original. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 214.



concerned with the relationship among the believers, and their inclusion in the relation between Father and Son. One may therefore well ask whether it is justified to devote attention to the brief parallels of 17:22a and 17:23a.

There are however, several reasons why I will devote this chapter to 17:20–23, three of which I noted already in chapter 2: First, John 17 is a very important chapter for the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in general. Second, 17:20–23 function as a bridge between unity and sending, and thus as a bridge between chapters 4 and 6 of this thesis. Third, 17:20–23 are highly significant as these verses include all believers, and not only the first disciples in the parallel relations.<sup>154</sup> To these can now add three more reasons for the selection of 17:20–23 as a text for further study:

First, while the emphasis on the relationship among the believers is stronger in John 17 than in John 15, it is not a new element when discussing the parallel relations. We saw in the previous chapter how the parallel love between Father/Son and Son/disciples was extended in the love commandment. Thus the loving unity of chapter 15 also included relations between the disciples themselves, as a consequence of their relation to Jesus, and John 17:20–23 is a continuation of this theme.

Second, several of the themes of John 17:20–23 are touched upon in parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationships elsewhere in the Gospel. On the theme of unity, 14:20 provides a clear parallel to 17:23a. Additionally, 17:22a describes Jesus as a mediator who passes on what he himself has received from his Father to the believers. This is a pattern which is recognizable several places in John, and in particular in 17:8.<sup>155</sup>

Third, and perhaps most important, 17:20–23 is the passage in the Gospel where it becomes most clear that the parallel relations between Father/Son and Son/disciples in John are not developed in isolation. They are rather an integrated part of the entirety of John's message about these characters, and are in particular connected to what John says about the relationship among believers. While my specific focus is on the parallel relations, these connected motifs cannot be left aside and in this chapter I will therefor emphasize not only how the parallel relations are developed and described in 17:20–23, but also how the

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<sup>154</sup> See page 26 above.

<sup>155</sup> See "5.6.2 Jesus as Mediator" below on pages 70–73.

parallel relations and the relation among the believers are connected. This is also the reason why I include all of 17:20–23 in the following interpretation: 17:20–23 is a tightly knit unit, and to separate out 17:22a and 17:23a would not do justice to how these statements are integrated in the relational web presented in the surrounding verses.<sup>156</sup>

## 5.2 The Context: The Climax of Jesus' Final Prayer

### 5.2.1 The Themes and Purpose of John 17

John 17 is a prayer that concludes the farewell discourse. It is not unusual for testaments or farewell scenes to end with a prayer in this way, and the final prayer of Jesus therefore is an appropriate conclusion to the discourse of chapters 13–16.<sup>157</sup>

The traditional title for John 17 is “Jesus High Priestly Prayer”, but it does do justice to the prayer. While there is a priestly motif in Jesus interceding for the believers, the title overlooks other important themes, including glory, future believers, unity, mission, discipleship and the context of Jesus' departure.<sup>158</sup> In the following I will therefore use a more neutral title, suggested by Moloney, which captures the context of the prayer, without limiting the interpretation: Jesus Final Prayer.<sup>159</sup>

While John 17 is distinguished from the preceding speech in terms of genre, the purpose and function of the prayer and the preceding speech seem very similar. Though John 17 is a prayer, it is a public prayer which the disciples were meant to hear. Earlier in the Gospel Jesus has indicated that he prays out loud not for his own or his Father's sake, but for the benefit of those around him (11:42. Cf. 12:30), and John 17 continues this pattern.<sup>160</sup> The prayer thus has a didactic purpose and continues the teachings to the disciples of the preceding discourse.

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<sup>156</sup> See also my discussion of the eccentric nature of the parallel relations in my conclusion on pages 104–106.

<sup>157</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:744; Moloney, *John*, 462–63. In particular Brown draws attention to the parallels between Deuteronomy as Moses' farewell discourse and John 13–17, and especially John 17 and the prayers of Deut. 32–33.

<sup>158</sup> On the theme of Jesus interceding for the disciples see Brown, *John*, 2:747. On the various approaches to Jesus final prayer, as well as suggestions of alternative titles, see Hera, *Christology*, 1–4; 22–35; Brown, *John*, 2:744–48. Specifically on the theme of discipleship in John 17, see for instance Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 130–39; Hera, *Christology*; Dirk G. Van der Merwe, “John 17: Jesus Assigns His Mission to His Disciples,” *Skriften Kerk* 19, no. 1 (1998).

<sup>159</sup> Moloney, *John*, 458. In the same section Moloney identifies “making God known” as the theme of the prayer.

<sup>160</sup> Hera, *Christology*, 125; Brown, *John*, 2:748.

### 5.2.2 The Structure of the Prayer

While extremely complex structures for John 17 have been suggested, most interpreters follow simpler suggestions.<sup>161</sup> Brown and Moloney follow a threefold structure (1–8, 9–19, 20–26). Moloney claims widespread support for this structure, while Brown cites fourfold structures as about equally common, giving two examples (1–5, 6–19, 20–23, 24–26 and 1–5, 6–8, 9–19, 20–26), the latter being used by Dodd.<sup>162</sup> Hera suggests a five-fold structure (1–5, 6–11a, 11b–19, 20–23, 24–26).<sup>163</sup>

As this brief overview makes clear, there is an agreement that 17:20, where Jesus begins to pray for future believers, marks a new section in the prayer. Apart from this however, no clear agreement can be found. While the tree-part structure of Brown and Moloney is most popular, verses 6, 9, 11b, and 23 are all suggested as beginning new sections by one or more of the above authors. The reasons for these varying structures are found in the criteria which are used to divide the prayer: Brown and Moloney divide the prayer based on who Jesus prays for. In verse 1–8 he prays for himself, in verses 9–19 for his disciples and in 20–26 for future believers. Dodd on the other hand uses a more general thematic division, separating 1–5 which concern Christ's commission, from 6–8 which make up a brief review of his ministry.

Hera's suggestion relies on textual markers, and is as such an attempt to define a structure based more concretely on the text itself. His analysis is, however, hardly convincing. Hera relies primarily on the invocative use of *πάτερ* in verses 1, 5, 11b, 21 and 24–25, and secondarily on the petitions found in verses 1, 5, 11b, 20 and 24 to define his structure. However, he cites the lack of these same clues as the reason to regard verses 6–11a as a separate structure, and says nothing of the petitions (*ἐρωτῶ* x2) of verse 9.

I therefore find the threefold division of Brown and Moloney to be most appropriate, dividing the prayer in three according to who Jesus prays for. However, as the many

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<sup>161</sup> For one such complex structure, see Van der Merwe, who divides the chapter into 46 units, grouped into eight clusters, and five thematic blocks, forming a chiasmic structure around 17:17–19. Van der Merwe, "John 17."

<sup>162</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:748-51; Moloney, *John*, 458-59; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 417.

<sup>163</sup> Hera, *Christology*, 116-17.

suggested divisions make clear, this simple structure does not capture the full complexity of the prayer, and minor breaks can be found after verses 5, 11a and 23.

### 5.2.3 John 17:20–23 in the Context of the Prayer

We may now place 17:20–23 in its context. Following the structure of Moloney and Brown, the prayer has an expansive character, involving a wider group in each section: First Jesus and his Father, then the closest disciples, then all believers.<sup>164</sup> According to this structure 17:20–26 becomes the final and climactic section of the prayer.

This view fits well with the topics and structure of the prayer and Gospel as a whole. As has been discussed previously, Jesus was sent to the world with the specific mission of saving all those who believe in him. His final prayer begins by reference to this mission, and continues with a prayer for those few who are seated at his table as his disciples. Yet John clearly has a wider view of who belong to Jesus (cf. 10:16), and 17:20–26 takes these into view.

This final section is divided in two. While the whole of 17:20–26 concern all believers, there is a thematic break after verse 23, which is also marked by the new appeal to God (17:24: *πάτερ* and 17:25: *πάτερ δίκαιε*). Verses 20–23 are entirely focused on the unity of the believers with the Son and Father as a witness to the world. Verses 24–26 on the other hand are a summary of the prayer entire, now including all believers. Verse 24 recalls verses 1–5 with a reference to the glory Jesus had before the creation of the world (cf. 17:5). Verse 25 recalls verses 6–19, with a reference to the disciples' knowledge of Jesus (17:8) and the contrast to the world's unbelief (17:9, 14–19). And verse 26 again picks up the theme of unity from the second and in particular the first verses of the third section (17:11, 20–23). In light of this 17:20–23 becomes the true climax of the prayer, where the disciple's unique relation to Jesus is explicitly opened to other believers, and the full implications of this relation is described.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> The first two sections also seem expansive internally: 1–5 concern Jesus and God; 6–8 concern Jesus and his disciples. 9–14a concern the disciples and Jesus/God; 14b–19 concern the disciples and the world.

<sup>165</sup> Since 17:20–21 are the only verses of the prayer to mention future believers, some regard them as unoriginal. See Hera, *Christology*, 154n109.

### 5.3 Initial Analysis of John 17:20–23

#### 5.3.1 Structure

17:20–23 has three separate elements: An introduction, which specifies that Jesus prays for all believers (17:20), and two statements (17:21/17:22–23) which concern the unity of the believers with Jesus and the Father.

17:21 and 17:22–23 are parallel to each other.<sup>166</sup> All the significant elements of verse 21 are repeated in the following two verses, including the unity of the believers with each other and with God and Jesus, and the unity as a witness to the world. 22–23 expand on these motifs by introducing the parallel indwelling of God in Jesus and Jesus in the believers, and specifying the oneness of the believers as a complete oneness. And 22–23 also introduce new motifs including glory as the source of oneness and the Father's love for Jesus and the believers.

Just as noticeable is the structural parallel: 17:21, and 17:22b–23 each consists of several successive clauses introduced by ἵνα. Furthermore the first ἵνα clause of each section is expanded by a comparative καθὼς, and the final clause is expanded by a ὅτι-clause, indicating the final purpose of the prayer.<sup>167</sup> Hera also thinks 17:20 and 17:22a are parallel introductions to the sections. This is partially true: The ἵνα-clauses of 17:21 are rooted in the ἐρωτῶ of 17:20, and the parallel ἵνα-clauses of 17:22b–23 are rooted in the δέδωκα of 17:22a. However, while 17:22a only introduce the following clauses, 17:20 is an introduction to the whole unit of 17:20–26. As such, there is a parallel between 17:20 and 17:22a but it should not be overemphasized.

By arranging the verses in the following way, Hera displays the parallel structure in this section well:<sup>168</sup>

20 Οὐ περὶ τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον,  
ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ,  
21 ἵνα πάντες ἐν ᾧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν σοί,  
ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ᾧσιν,

<sup>166</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:769; Hera, *Christology*, 154-57.

<sup>167</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:769; Hera, *Christology*, 155n111.

<sup>168</sup> *Christology*, 154.

ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας.  
22 κάγω τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς,  
ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθῶς ἡμεῖς ἐν· 23 ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί,  
ἵνα ὧσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἐν,  
ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας  
καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθῶς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας.

A different structure is however also possible in verse 21. While the above structure, which is followed by most translations and commentaries,<sup>169</sup> relates the καθῶς in 17:21 to the preceding ἵνα-clause, it could instead be related to the following clause. This alternative structure is followed by NRSV, which translates 17:20–21 as “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”<sup>170</sup>

The translation chosen by NRSV has some attractive qualities: It is not contrary to the style of the Gospel to begin a comparison with καθῶς (see for instance 6:57; 8:28; 15:9). And the comparison of the verse arguably makes more sense if the mutual indwelling of Jesus and the Father is compared to the indwelling of the believers in them, than if it is compared to the *unity* among the believers.

Despite this, the structure followed by the NRSV is not to be preferred: If the καθῶς introduces the comparison, the second ἵνα of the verse becomes awkward. The structure also breaks the parallel between 17:21 and 17:22–23, where the καθῶς is clearly an expansion of the first clause. And finally there is little reason to separate the καθῶς from the first ἵνα-clause: Although indwelling is not mentioned when explaining the unity of the believers, the following passage, and in particular 22b–23 makes clear that unity and indwelling are synonymous in 17:20–23. For these reasons, I will not follow the structure suggested by the NRSV in the following interpretation.

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<sup>169</sup> See for instance Beasley-Murray, *John*, 302; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John; a Commentary*, 512-13; Barrett, *John*, 512.

<sup>170</sup> The ISV translates the verse similarly.

### 5.3.2 Themes for Further examination

Having placed 17:20–23 in its context, and determined the structure of these verses, we can now begin to interpret their content. But while my study is centered on the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in 17:22a and 17:23a the remainder of the section must also be given adequate attention: While 17:20–21 focus specifically on the wider circle of believers and its unity, rather than the parallel relations, I will argue below that this unity is established by God and communicated through the believers' relation with Jesus. As such the relational pattern of John 17:20–23 is similar to the pattern presented in John 15, though viewed from another angle: The relation among believers is also here a consequence of the parallel relations. For this reason, my discussion below will concern both the relation among believers in 17:20–23 and the parallel relations in these verses.

### 5.4 17:20: The Inclusion of Future Believers

The Gospel has several times implied that the salvation offered through Jesus is not exclusive to the first disciples, but available to all who believe. Jesus gave the authority to become children of God to all who received him (1:12 ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν... Literally “as many as...”). And he has been charged to preserve everyone who believe in him and give them eternal life (6:39–40) etc.<sup>171</sup> However, as we have seen, few characters in the Gospel display authentic belief, and only the closest disciples are present when Jesus begins his teachings on belief and discipleship in earnest in chapter 13. Thus, any wider community of believers is dependent upon the missionary activities of the few disciples gathered with Jesus at the final meal.

The Gospel has hinted at the future missionary activity of the disciples (4:31–38, 13:35), and right before the present text Jesus explicitly stated that he has sent his disciples to the world (17:18).<sup>172</sup> It is however 17:20 that for the first time explicitly states that the disciples will be missionaries, and that their missionary activities will succeed:<sup>173</sup> Jesus prays for the disciples who are present with him and for those who believe because of their word

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<sup>171</sup> 6:40: “πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν...” πᾶς + definite article + ptc. = Every one who, whoever. Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), sv. πᾶς.

<sup>172</sup> The sending of 17:18 and 20:21 is the subject of the following chapter.

<sup>173</sup> In contrast to the synoptics, John does not tell of any missionary activity by the disciples before the resurrection. Moloney, *John*, 473. Moloney cites 4:35–38 as a hint of such activities, though 3:2 and 4:1–2 might be more significant.

(τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ). While the present participle (πιστευόντων) can have a future meaning, the central point is not temporal, but rather that all who believe are included in the prayer.<sup>174</sup>

The following verses make clear that all believers are given access to the same relation to Jesus as the disciples themselves have. They have knowledge of Jesus, and are loved by him and his Father (17:26), and they have unity with Jesus, his Father and each other (17:20–23), just as the disciples present with Jesus have (17:11). Here then the words “disciple” and “believer” become more synonymous than anywhere else in the Gospel. The disciples are present at the meal, while the future believers are not. But the relationship to God they have access to through their faith in- and unity with the Son is the same.

## 5.5 17:21: Missional Oneness

### 5.5.1 Structure and Translation

It will be helpful to briefly discuss the structure of 17:21 in closer detail before moving on to interpreting its content. Above we saw that the verse is a prayer for all believers, introduced by 17:20 and consisting of three ἵνα-clauses centered on the theme of unity:

- 17:21a – 1<sup>st</sup> ἵνα-clause: The oneness of the believers is a parallel or imitation of the mutual indwelling of the Father and Jesus.
- 17:21b – 2<sup>nd</sup> ἵνα-clause: The believers are also to be *in* the unity of the Father and the Son.
- 17:21c – 3<sup>rd</sup> ἵνα-clause: The purpose of the unity is that the world may believe that Jesus was sent by God.

While this much was concluded above, a question remains as to how the second ἵνα-clause is connected to the surrounding structure. While it is clear that the first ἵνα-clause introduces the content of Jesus’ prayer, and that the final clause mentions the intended result of the unity Jesus prays for, the role of the second clause is more ambiguous: Is it a separate prayer, or is it a development or result of the unity mentioned in 17:21a?

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<sup>174</sup> Hera, *Christology*, 154-55.



Several translations choose the former alternative, relating the second ἵνα directly to the ἐρωτῶ of 17:20, and making it a separate petition. For instance NET translates the verse “...that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. *I pray that* they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me.” (NET, Emphasis mine).

However, from the structure presented above it seems likely that the three clauses of 17:21 present a development of three stages, rather than two separate prayers and one intended result. If we follow this structure the indwelling of the believers in the Father and Son is not a separate element of prayer, but rather a consequence of their unity with each other: Jesus prays that the believers might be one, *so that* they might be included in the unity of the Father and Son, *so that* the world might believe.

This reading is not only closer to the structure of the text, but also establishes a closer parallel to 17:22–23. There the two first ἵνα-clauses are both related to the unity of the believers, and the second clause only adds that the oneness of the believers is a complete oneness. Thus in 17:22–23 the second ἵνα-clause develops or expands the notion of unity presented in the first, rather than introducing a separate element of prayer.<sup>175</sup>

In light of this, a translation closer to the original Greek text is preferred. 17:21 could therefore be translated: “...that they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (My translation).<sup>176</sup>

### 5.5.2 The Oneness of the Believers in 17:21

When Jesus prays for unity in John 17, the oneness of the believers with each other is the first element he mentions (17:21 cf. 17:11). This stands in some contrast to chapter 15, where the love among the disciples themselves was introduced as the final part of the chain of love which centered on the disciples’ relation to Jesus. Here the relationship among the believers is primary, while the parallel relations are introduced in the following verses as the final element of the relational complex.

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<sup>175</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:769.

<sup>176</sup> This is similar, although not identical to Moloney’s translation. Moloney, *John*, 472.

The oneness of the believers is placed in parallel to the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son. While the unity of Father and Son is a major theme of the Gospel it is not immediately clear in what way it is parallel to the ideal relation between the believers. As such we have again returned to the question of a *tertium comparationis*. How do these unities resemble each other?

We may attempt to answer this question by starting in the text itself. The oneness of the believers is in 17:21 not compared to precisely the *oneness* of Father and Son (although that comparison is made in 17:22), but rather to their mutual indwelling: ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ γὼ ἐν σοί. This formula of mutual indwelling (with slight variations) has already been used twice in the Gospel, in 10:37–38 and 14:9–11.<sup>177</sup> In these texts the mutual indwelling of Jesus and the Father is connected primarily with how Jesus reveals the Father through his person and work. In both chapters Jesus discusses how his audience, even if they initially doubt Jesus, should believe because the works he does reveal that he dwells in the Father and the Father in him.<sup>178</sup> Additionally, in 14:9–11 Jesus uses the mutual indwelling to argue that he is the visual representation of the Father on earth, so that Philip’s request to be shown the Father is meaningless: Whoever sees Jesus has already seen the Father. This understanding of Jesus’ unity with the Father correlates well with Jesus’ description of his own mission earlier in John 17, as the one who comes from God and makes him known (17:6–8).

While these texts are helpful to understand the nuances conveyed by Jesus’ language of mutual indwelling, they do not provide a good candidate for a *tertium comparationis* for 17:21a. The mutual indwelling of Jesus and his Father is what makes Jesus revealed as the

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<sup>177</sup> 14:20 also mentions the indwelling of the Father in Jesus, but here in parallel with Jesus’ indwelling in the disciples.

<sup>178</sup> What are “the works” which reveal that Jesus is sent by the Father? While John makes clear that everything Jesus does is in accordance with the will of the Father, several actions are distinguished as “signs” (σημεῖα). Though the relationship between faith and signs in John is complex, it is clear that the signs are supposed to reveal that Jesus comes from God (2:11; 12:37; 20:30–31). As such, it is likely that the signs in particular are in view when Jesus claims that his works reveal his unity with the Father, although the “works” of Jesus is likely encompasses more than his “signs”. For a discussion of the relationship between signs and faith in the Gospel of John, see for instance Craig R. Koester, “Jesus’ Resurrection, the Signs, and the Dynamics of Faith in the Gospel of John,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Brown, *John*, 1:529–31. For the relationship between Jesus’ “works” and “signs”, see *ibid.*, 1:525–29. Note that in both John 10 and John 14, belief because of Jesus’ works is entirely secondary, and presented almost as a “failsafe”. Both “the Jews” and the disciples should be able to understand the Jesus is one with the Father without relying on his works.

personified revelation of God. But the relationship between revealed and revealer does not have a parallel in the believers' relation to one another.<sup>179</sup>

Rather, the purpose of the unity of the believers is found in the following verses: First the unity of the believers is to lead to their unity also with God. And this unity will be a witness to the world. There is a clear parallel between the first two elements of this chain and John 15. In chapter 15, the loving relation between the disciples was also connected with their relationship with Jesus: In order to abide in Jesus' love the disciples had to follow his command that they love each other. Thus John 17 repeats the pattern of John 15, when it connects the relations among believers, to the believers' relation to Jesus.

In chapter 15, however, the loving relation among the disciples was not primarily a prerequisite, but rather a result of the relation they already had with Jesus. The love among the disciples had its origins outside that relationship. At first glance this seems to run contrary to chapter 17, where the unity of the believers is introduced first, and seemingly is the cause of their unity with God. However, Brown point out that attention should be given to the unity among the believers as an object of Jesus' *prayer*. However we understand the unity Jesus prays for we must recognize it as something Jesus asks *God* to establish.<sup>180</sup> Brown does not contend that this necessarily makes the believers entirely passive in establishing this unity, but rather that the source of the unity is located outside "the solidarity of human endeavor".<sup>181</sup>

Could the *tertium comparationis* in 17:21 be located in the love which establishes the unity? The same love which is the source of the oneness of Father and Son, now establishes a oneness of believers, through their relation with the Son. This view is certainly supported by Dodd, who writes:

"The idea, therefore, that the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son is at least closely related to the idea that the love of the Father for the Son, returned by Him,

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<sup>179</sup> We do find a parallel to Jesus' role as revealer in the disciples' relation *to Jesus*. This is an important foundation for the parallel in 17:18. See pages 78–79.

<sup>180</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:776.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

establishes a community of life between Father and Son, which exhibits itself in that the Son speaks the Father's word and does His works."<sup>182</sup>

And he concludes, regarding the believers:

"It is by becoming first the objects of this love, and then in turn the subjects of the same love, directed towards Christ and towards one another, that we become one by mutual indwelling both with Father and Son and with one another in Him [...]"<sup>183</sup>

It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus' prayer of 17:21 is a parallel to his teachings on love in chapter 15, and that the oneness of the believers is a result of their loving relation to Jesus and his Father. The believers are marked by this love so that they become one, and in turn they are included in the relation of the Father and Son.<sup>184</sup>

With this interpretation, we see how the relational complex in John 17 begins to approach the presentation of the parallel relations between Father/Son and Son/disciples in chapter 15. Though John 17:20–21 has not presented the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel, it is clear that the unity of the believers is closely connected to them loving each other, and that their unity has its source in God. The road is paved for the introduction of Jesus in 17:22–23 as the center of the believers' relation to God, who makes the unity and love between believers possible.

The final element of 17:21 is how the believers, through their unity with each other and with the Father and the Son, become witnesses to the world that Jesus was sent by God. The unity of the disciples as a witness to the world is first introduced in 13:35, just after the love-commandment of 13:34. Thus 17:21 is indirectly connected to the love commandment in 15:12. 17:21c, also expands on 13:35: whereas 13:35 presents the love among the disciples as a community marker, it is in 17:21c a witness to the world regarding the origin of Jesus: The oneness of the believers in 17:21 is a *missional oneness*.

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<sup>182</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, 195.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>184</sup> This interpretation runs (at least in part) contrary to that of Ferreira, who sees in the unity of Father and Son primarily a unity of *function* – that is a unity of word and will – and sees this unity reflected among the disciples. Johan Ferreira, *Johannine Ecclesiology*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 160 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 127-29. While the Son and Father are no doubt united in word and will, I consider this functional unity to be secondary to the *relational unity* established by the love between Father, Son and disciples.

This aspect of the oneness of the believer gives us a further clue to understand the oneness itself. We have seen that the oneness of believers is established through their love for one another, and has its source in God's love for them. But the question remains as to what John intended this relationship to look like in practice.<sup>185</sup> By observing that mission is the telos of the oneness of the believers, we can begin to answer this question: The unity must take a tangible form, visible to the outside world. No merely spiritual unity could have a missional function.

Summarizing briefly, we can conclude that the unity of the believers is a visible loving community based on God's love for them (cf. 1. John 4:19: "We love because he first loved us.") It includes both a vertical axis (believers–God) and a horizontal axis (between believers).<sup>186</sup> But we can perhaps go even further in defining this unity. In one of the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationship found in the book of signs, Jesus presents the Father as the source of his life, and himself as the source of the life for the believer (6:57). Brown sees this verse as one background for the unity between Father and Son that the believers are to imitate: The Father and Son are one because they share the same life, which the Father gives to his Son. When Jesus passes this on to the believers they become part of the same community sharing one life.<sup>187</sup> This sharing of life leads the believers to love one another, as they no longer live only for themselves, but in a unity where they seek the best for one another.<sup>188</sup> They are united in a boundless love, where one is willing to lose one's life for one's friends (15:13).

This altruistic life is the life displayed by Jesus and his Father in that they both act for the sake of the other: The Father by giving his authority to Jesus and Jesus by acting in complete accordance with the Father's will (14:10). Jesus shares this love with the believers. The believers become marked by love. And as a community united by love they become a witness to the world. Just as Jesus' relation with the Father revealed him as the visible manifestation of God on earth, so the community of believers – which is an image of the

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<sup>185</sup> Citing Käsemann, Brown points out that, although most interpreters recognizes the relationship between the disciples as a union of love, we should not leave the pursuit of the question behind at that point, without asking further what such a union would imply. Brown, *John*, 2:776.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. His view is shared by Dodd, *Interpretation*, 194-96.

<sup>188</sup> Gusa, "Excentriske Venner," 279.

unity which marks the Father/Son relation – becomes a witness to the world that Jesus' message was true.

## 5.6 17:22–23: Jesus as Mediator of Unity

As I have noted several times, 17:20–21 does not present Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel. However, we can now see that these verses set the stage for the introduction of the parallel relations in 17:22a and 17:23a. In the preceding verses Jesus prays that the unity of love which marks the relation between Father and Son might also mark the community of the believers. It will now be made clear that this is made possible by Jesus communicating this oneness and love to them. The unity of the believers is established when their relationship to Jesus becomes a parallel to Jesus' relation to his Father.

As we saw above, 17:22a is a new introduction, which in some ways form a parallel to 17:20, while 17:22b–23 forms an almost complete parallel to 17:21. A repeated interpretation of the oneness- and sending-themes is therefore not necessary at this point. 17:22–23 does however add several new elements compared to 17:21. These will be the specific focus of the present section, discussed under the three headings of the gift of glory, Jesus as mediator, and the love of God. The second of these headings is the primary location for my discussion of how the parallel relations are developed in 17:20–23.

### 5.6.1 The Gift of Glory

The first element which distinguishes 17:22–23 from the preceding verses is the concept of glory as a new basis for unity. 17:22 reads *καὶ γὰρ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν*.

Glory is a highly significant theme in Jesus' final prayer. The first verses of the prayer are centered on glory as Jesus prays that the Father might glorify him, so that he might in turn glorify the Father, and that the Father would give him the glory he had before the creation of the world.

Glory has also been a highly significant theme in the narrative leading up to John 17: The prologue tells of Jesus' glory, which the author of the gospel has seen (1:14). Jesus

reveals his glory in his signs (2:11 cf. 11:4; 11:40).<sup>189</sup> And 12:41 tells us that Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus, in what is likely a reinterpretation of Isaiah's call narrative.<sup>190</sup> Jesus' glory is especially connected to his *glorification* (7:39; 12:16; 12:23) which takes place during the crucifixion when Jesus is lifted up (ὑψώω 3:14; 8:28; 12:32.)

The glory of Jesus finds its background in the Old Testament concept of the glory of God. Here the glory (Heb: קְבוֹד LXX: δόξα) of God is the "luminous manifestation of his person, his glorious revelation of himself."<sup>191</sup> It is the visible manifestation of the invisible God on Earth.<sup>192</sup> In John, Jesus possesses the glory of God, and as such takes on the role as revealer and visible manifestation of the creator.

While this much is easy to recognize, it is not immediately clear what it implies that Jesus passes on this glory to the believers. A number of different interpretations of the glory which the believers receive have been suggested.<sup>193</sup> In the context of 17:20–23, it is however clear that the glory Jesus gives to the believers serves two functions: First, it serves to unite them with each other and with the unity of the Son and Father, and second, it leads to them becoming witnesses to the world that Jesus is sent by the Father. Given this, and in light of the above discussion it seems reasonable to agree with those who see the gift of glory as yet another way to speak of the love that Jesus shows for believers.<sup>194</sup> Thus we see again that the loving unity of the believers is established by God through Jesus.

### 5.6.2 Jesus as Mediator

The glory Jesus gives to his believers he himself has received from his Father. This leads us to the second new element in 17:22–23 compared to the preceding verses: Jesus' role as mediator. And it is here that we finally see how the unity of the believers developed

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<sup>189</sup> On this theme, see especially Peter J. Riga, "Signs of Glory: The Use of 'Sēmeion' in St John's Gospel," *Interpretation* 17, no. 4 (1963).

<sup>190</sup> Brown, *John*, 1:486–87. Barrett notes that the glory given to the believers is not an entirely positive gift: Just as Christ was glorified on the cross, so the glory is given to the believers when they live in the community of love, where they are willing to give their lives for one another. Barrett, *John*, 513.

<sup>191</sup> Aalen, "Glory," 2:45. According to Aalen God's glory is in the Old Testament above all expressed in salvation history and God's great acts (Ex 14:17–18; Ps 96:3), and is especially connected to God's presence in the sanctuary (Ex 40:34–38; 1. Ki 8:10–11; Ps 26:8; Ez 10). This provides a striking parallel to the Gospel of John where, Jesus glory is especially connected to his signs (2:11; 11:40) and his passion – where his Body becomes a new temple (2:21).

<sup>192</sup> Brown, *John*, 1:503.

<sup>193</sup> For an overview, see Hera, *Christology*, 159.

<sup>194</sup> Moloney, *John*, 474.

in the preceding verses is connected to the parallel relations of Father/Son and Son/disciples.

Jesus' role as mediator shows up twice in the two short verses we here discuss. First, Jesus is the mediator of glory. God does not give his glory directly to the believers, but rather gives it to Jesus who then passes it on to those who believe in him. Second, Jesus is the mediator of unity. When Jesus in 17:23a defines the unity described in 17:22b more closely, he uses the expression "ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί." Thus, in the last description of the unity of Father, Son and believers in 17:20–23, Jesus presents himself as the one who brings the unity of the Father and Son to the believers. By becoming a mediator of glory and unity, Jesus establishes his relation to the believers as a parallel to his relation to the Father.

This is not the first instance in which Jesus acts as a mediator between believers and God. Rather, as Jesus repeatedly insists that his words and actions come from the Father, everything he says and does can be properly understood as the Father's words and actions mediated by Jesus. This is the view of Neyrey who claims that the most important role of Jesus in the Gospel is that of a mediator or "broker" in a patron/client relation. Jesus belongs both to the realm of the patron (God) and the realm of the client (believer), and as such is able to move between them and mediate where the distance between patron and client would otherwise be too great.<sup>195</sup>

Jesus role as mediator is however particularly clear in certain instances. Several of the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationships mentioned in chapter 2 could be interpreted in this way: Jesus mediates the life he himself has received (6:57), he mediates the love of the Father to the disciples (15:9), he mediates the Father's words to the believers (17:8), and passes his own mission on to them (17:18 cf. 20:21). But clear examples of Jesus role as mediator can also be found outside of these statements, especially in his mediation of the Spirit (3:34; 19:20; 20:22).<sup>196</sup>

In 17:22–23 Jesus role as mediator is applied to the concepts of unity and glory. While Jesus role as mediator of unity is only mentioned in 17:23a, we see now, in light of the above discussion, that this theme is well prepared: The unity of the believers consists of

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<sup>195</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, "'I Am the Door' (John 10:7, 9): Jesus the Broker in the Fourth Gospel," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>196</sup> See page 23.



their loving relation with God and each other, established through God's love for them. This love is mediated through Jesus, who through word and action displays God's love for the world in general (3:16) and the believers in particular. In the previous chapter we saw how Jesus includes the disciples in the love that established his own relation to the Father. When chapter 17 speaks of these same relations by applying the language of unity, it is only to be expected that Jesus' role as mediator is once again present: His mediation of glory and unity leads to the oneness of the believers with each other and with the Father and Son.

Thus the parallel relations of Father/Son and Son/disciples are at the heart also of the unity of the believers developed in 17:20–23. The unity of believers, which Jesus prays for is a consequence of the parallels between their relation to Jesus and Jesus' relation to his Father. It is through Jesus being in them as the Father is in Jesus, that the believers become "fully one" (τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν). We can once again quote Dodd who describes the parallel:

"At every point the unity of Father and Son is reproduced in the unity of Christ and believers. As the love of the Father for the Son, returned by Him in obedience, establishes a community of life between Father and Son, which exhibits itself in that He speaks the Father's word and does His works, so the disciples are loved by Christ and return His love in obedience; in doing so, they share His life, which manifests itself in doing His works; it is really He who does them (just as the works of Christ are done by the Father), and by the doing of them the Father is glorified in the Son."<sup>197</sup>

In summary then, the oneness of the believers consists of being in a loving community, where they share the life and love they themselves have received from Jesus. By abiding in this love (using the language of John 15) and becoming one through love for one another, they are also included in the oneness of Father and Son. The whole complex builds upon Jesus central role as mediator.

We see now clearly how the prayer for unity in chapter 17 is connected to the themes of abiding and loving in chapter 15. Chapter 15 begins by introducing the foundation for the disciples' love, by focusing on Jesus' love for them, which is what establishes the

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<sup>197</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, 195-96.

parallel relation. The love between the disciples is as such seen as the final result of the chain of love which starts with the Father, and reaches the disciples through Jesus.

Chapter 17 on the other hand takes the form of the prayer, and is as such centered upon the telos of the relationships, which here is identified as the unity of the believers as a witness to the world. Thus the relationship between the believers becomes the starting point for the development of the unity between Father, Son and believers in this text. However, as is made clear by the context of chapter 17 as a prayer, and especially by 17:23a, the unity of the believers is ultimately a result of God's love for them, and is established through their relation to the Son. By Jesus loving the believers, their relation to him becomes an image of his own relation to the Father.

### 5.6.3 The Love of God

In 17:21, Jesus states that the goal of the unity of the believers is that the world might believe that the Father has sent Jesus. In 17:23 the same claim is made, but Jesus adds “καὶ ἡγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἡγάπησας.”<sup>198</sup> This is the final new element in 17:22–23, compared to 17:21, and it gives strong support to my interpretation above: The believers are one with each other and with God, through God's love for them mediated through Jesus. This includes them in the unity which unites Father and Son, and makes them a witness to the world as a new revelation of God. The world recognizes the truth of their message through their unity, which has its root in God's love, and thus makes clear that God loves them as he loved his only Son.

## 5.7 Summary

John 17:20–23 is the climax of Jesus' final prayer, where he widens the scope of his prayer to include all present and future believers in the unity that establishes his relationship to his Father and disciples. The unity of the believers takes the form of a loving community where the believers share the life they have received from Jesus, and love one another so that they are willing to give their lives for their friends when necessary. The roots of this loving community are found in the Father's love for the believers, mediated through Jesus.

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<sup>198</sup> There is also another minor change made in this clause, as the πιστεύη of 17:21 becomes γινώσκη in 17:23. This, however, is likely just stylistic variation. “To believe” and “to know” are often interchangeable in John. Brown, *John*, 1:513. And John often uses synonymous verbs for stylistic variation. Moloney, *John*, 559.

The parallel relationship between Father/Son and Jesus/believer is as such the center point of the relational complex between Father, Son and believers.

Thus the structure of the relations in John 17 is parallel to those presented in John 15, though viewed from another angle, starting with the unity of the believers as the telos of the parallel relations, rather than with the parallel relations themselves. John 17 also presents the missional nature of the believers' unity: They are to be a witness to the world, displaying through their unity the truth of Jesus message and God's love for them.

## Chapter 6: Sending in John 17:18 and 20:21

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### 6.1 Introduction

The final parallels I will interpret in this are two nearly identical texts on the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples. The parallel is first introduced in the final prayer in John 17:18:

As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ γὰρ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον

It is then repeated after the resurrection, when Jesus first appears to the group of disciples in 20:21:

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

εἶπεν οὖν [ὁ Ἰησοῦς]<sup>199</sup> πάλιν· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν· καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς.

There are some immediate differences between these two verses. First, the verses have different addressees. 17:18 is addressed to the Father as part of Jesus’ final prayer while 20:21 is addressed directly to the disciples. Second, 17:18 specifies that the disciples are sent into the world, while 20:21 does not. Third, 20:21 uses two different verbs for sending, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, for Jesus and the disciples respectively, while 17:18 uses ἀποστέλλω in both cases.<sup>200</sup> Fourth and finally there is a difference in the use of tenses: 17:18 uses aorist indicative in both verbs, while 20:21 uses perfect indicative concerning the sending of Jesus and present indicative concerning the sending of the disciples.

It is nevertheless clear that the basic claim of both texts is the same: Jesus sends the disciples, and in doing so parallels the Father’s act of sending Jesus. However, while the texts

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<sup>199</sup> Several important witnesses (most notably Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Bezae) omit the bracketed words from the text. Metzger et al. find the longer reading most likely, but considers it to be a difficult decision. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 219.

<sup>200</sup> Some have argued that the two words for sending have different meanings in John. However, this seems unlikely, and their pattern of use in John can be explained as grammatical preferences and stylistic variations. For a discussion, see Köstenberger, *Missions*, 97-106.

are nearly identical in content, the themes connected with them in their contexts are different and give each verse its distinct meaning. In the first two sections of this chapter I will therefore interpret the texts separately, emphasizing how the meaning of each verse is shaped by its context. In the final section of the chapter I will draw together the conclusions of the first two sections, in order to summarize what the Gospel of John says about the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples.

## 6.2 John 17:18

### 6.2.1 The Closest Disciples as Objects of the Prayer

In the previous chapter we saw that John 17 is Jesus' final prayer, which concludes the farewell discourse, and that the prayer can be divided in three sections according to whom Jesus prays for: 17:1–8 concern Jesus and his own mission, 17:9–19 concern the disciples and 17:20–26 concern all believers.<sup>201</sup> It is natural that the sending of the disciples is found in the second section of the prayer: The wider community of believers is the result of the missionary activities of the first disciples (17:20). Thus the sending of the disciples is a prerequisite for the larger community Jesus prays for in 17:20–26.

While 17:18 primarily concerns the first disciples, there are several reasons why one should not distinguish too sharply between the first disciples and future believers. First, as we have seen, the disciples in John function as role models for the reader, who is a member of the community of believers.<sup>202</sup> Second, many of the most significant elements in the prayer for the disciples are repeated for the whole community of future believers: Both disciples and community are given by the Father to the Son (17:6; 24). They both believe in Jesus and know that he comes from the Father (17:7–8; 25–26). They are both to be one (17:11; 22–23). And as the disciples are sent to the world (17:18) the community is to be a witness to the world (17:21; 23).

When Jesus speaks of the sending of the disciples, the reader, as a member of the wider community of believers, will therefore understand himself to be included amongst the

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<sup>201</sup> See my discussion on the structure of John 17 on pages 58–59 above.

<sup>202</sup> See pages 16–17 above. On the theme see also Farely, *Disciples*, 190–95; Alicia D. Myers, "The Ambiguous Character of Johannine Characterization: An Overview of Recent Contributions and a Proposal," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 39, no. 3 (2012).

sent. He is one who has come to faith through the words of the first disciples (17:20).<sup>203</sup> But like them, he is also sent to spread the word further.<sup>204</sup> “What is *primarily* true for Jesus’ original followers, extends *derivatively* also to later believers.”<sup>205</sup>

### 6.2.2 Structure and Initial Analysis

While I have already discussed the general structure of Jesus’ final prayer, a closer examination of 17:9–19 will be helpful for the following interpretation. Formally, 17:9–19 could be divided in two or three sub-sections. Brown divides it in two after 17:16, seeing 17:9–16 as a prayer on the disciples and the world and 17:17–19 as a prayer for consecration of Jesus and the disciples.<sup>206</sup> Moloney supports a thematic break at 17:16, but also inserts a structural break after 17:11a, where Jesus addresses God anew with the phrase *πάτερ ἅγιε*.<sup>207</sup>

I find Moloney’s three part structure to be convincing. 17:9–11a presents the disciples as the objects of Jesus’ prayer, and summarizes their situation. His petitions for the disciples in the world, which were expected after the *ἐρωτῶ* in 17:9, are then found in 17:11b–16. Finally there is a clear break from separation from the world, to sanctification and sending *into* the world presented in chiastic structure (sanctification / sending / sanctification) in 17:17–19.

While this structure illuminates the internal logic of 17:9–19, I will in the following interpretation take a more thematic approach to the text. In its immediate context, the sending of the disciples in 17:18 is connected to three themes: The *καθὼς*, connects the sending of the disciples to the sending of Jesus, which was presented in 17:1–8. The disciples are sent into *the world* (*κόσμος*) which is the theme of 17:9–16. And through the chiasm in 17:17–19 the sending of the disciples is connected to their consecration.

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<sup>203</sup> Moloney, *John*, 473.

<sup>204</sup> That the wider community of disciples is included in Jesus’ missionary vision is also reflected by 17:20–23: Just as the love among the disciples will be a witness to the world (13:35), so the unity of the believers will be a witness to the world (17:21, 23).

<sup>205</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 152. Emphasis original. See also Köstenbergers full discussion on the relation between the first followers and later believers on pp. 149-153

<sup>206</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:763-67.

<sup>207</sup> Moloney, *John*, 465-66.

Thus, the entirety of 17:1–19 can be divided thematically in three, with each theme being connected to the sending of the disciples in 17:18. I will now examine these themes and how they impact our understanding of the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples.

### 6.2.3 The Mission of Jesus in 17:1–8

The first section of Jesus' final prayer has a two-directional outlook. It looks forward to the impending glorification of Jesus (17:1, 5), and backwards to his mission during his earthly life (17:2–4, 6–8).

In these verses, Jesus' mission is primarily connected to those who believe in him: He has given them eternal life because they know and believe in God and in Jesus as sent by God (17:2–3, 6–8). He has done this by giving them the words he himself received from his Father (17:8a). And in doing so Jesus completed the work (ἔργον) his Father had given him, and glorified the Father (17:4).<sup>208</sup> This view of Jesus' mission corresponds well with how his mission is presented in the first half of John (1:12; 3:16; 6:40 etc.): Jesus was sent by the Father to save those who believe in him.<sup>209</sup>

Jesus saves those who believe by acting as a revealer. Other texts in the Gospel emphasize the salvific function of Jesus' death and resurrection (3:14–17; 10:17–18; 12:24; 13:1–11; 16:5–7 etc.). But in 17:1–8 Jesus' death and resurrection is entirely secondary to the necessity for belief and understanding.<sup>210</sup> To receive eternal life one must believe in God, and Jesus. And to believe is to see Jesus as the true agent of God who acts and speaks on God's behalf. (17:7). As Brown notes, this knowledge on the part of the believers is not purely intellectual but involves both obedience to Jesus' commandments and community with both him and other believers.<sup>211</sup> But it is clear that John 17:1–8 presents revelation of God which causes faith and knowledge as the primary facet of Jesus' mission.

As Jesus' role as a revealer is emphasized in John 17, it is this aspect of Jesus' mission which is at the forefront of the reader's mind when the disciples are sent in parallel with

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<sup>208</sup> Of course, Jesus work is not truly completed at this point but includes his death and resurrection which is still forthcoming (compare 17:4 "τὸ ἔργον τελειώσας ὃ δεδοκάς μοι" to 19:(28–)30: "τετέλεσται". Brown, *John*, 2:742.

<sup>209</sup> See pages 30–31 above.

<sup>210</sup> That is not to say that Jesus' death and resurrection is out of the picture in these verses. It is present in the background as the focus on glorification in the initial verses makes clear.

<sup>211</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:752.

Jesus' sending in 17:18. As such, it seems that it is here we find the *tertium comparationis* of this comparison: When the disciples are sent, they are sent to continue Jesus' mission as revealers of God. This interpretation fits well with 17:20–23, where we saw that the unity of the believers has a revelatory function. However, the disciples' mission as revealers of God in John 17 is also modified by the themes of the world and sanctification.

#### 6.2.4 The Disciples and the World in 17:9–16

John's presentation of "the world" (ὁ κόσμος) is ambivalent. A pure devaluation of the world is contradicted already by the prologue: The world was created by God through his Logos, and several other texts affirm God's positive attitude toward the world he has created: God loves the world, and does not seek to judge it (3:16–17). Jesus is the one who takes away the sins of the world (1:29) and the savior of the world (4:52). He was sent to give life to the world (6:33, 51) and is light of the world (8:12).<sup>212</sup>

Thus, much of what John says about the world is positive. But despite this, the world is primarily a negative entity in John, and is associated with those who reject Jesus: The world did not know Jesus (1:10), Jesus testifies that the works of the world are evil, and for this reason the world hates Jesus (7:7). Jesus also judges the world, in a judgement that coincides with his "hour" (9:39; 12:31). Although judgement is not his primary mission: 3:16–17; 12:47). And Satan is "the prince of this world" (12:31: ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου) and the Father of those who reject Jesus (8:44).

The negative view of the world is especially clear in the farewell discourse. This is consistent with the gospel narrative, as until 12:20–50 Jesus' ministry was a public ministry directed towards the world. As such there was, at least narratively speaking, still some hope that the world would accept Jesus. But at 12:23 the "hour" is at hand, and the public ministry of Jesus is at an end. Jesus can therefore say that "now is the judgement of this world" (12:31), and from this point on the view of the world is nearly entirely negative.

In the farewell discourse, the world functions as a contrast to the community of disciples, and their benefits through their relation with Jesus: The disciples can receive the paraclete, but the world cannot (14:15–17). Jesus will reveal himself to the disciples, but not

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 1:509.



to the world (14:22). The peace Jesus gives is different from the peace the world gives (14:27). The world will hate the disciples just as it hated Jesus, because the disciples are chosen out of the world (15:18–19). The disciples have tribulations in the world, but Jesus has conquered the world (16:33). The contrast and hostility between the disciples and the world is especially noted in 15:18–16:4: Jesus says that as the world hates him, because it does not know him and his Father, it will also hate the disciples. Because of their relation to Jesus, the disciples share his relation to the world.<sup>213</sup>

When Jesus prays for the preservation of the disciples in the world in 17:9–16, the theme is therefore well prepared. The world hates Jesus and those who belong to him. But up to this point Jesus has been with his own and protected those his Father has given him, so that no one has been lost except “the son of destruction” (17:12: ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας – my translation).<sup>214</sup> After Jesus’ departure, however, the disciples will be left alone. Jesus therefore prays that the Father will protect them from the hostile world which surrounds them, but of which they are not part (17:14).

Despite the hostility between the believers and the world, Jesus does not pray that the Father remove the disciples from the world (17:15). In light of Jesus’ leaving the world it is perhaps somewhat surprising that he will leave “his own” behind. However, the reason that the disciples should remain in the world is explained in the following verses: While Jesus’ own mission is concluded with his glorification, the disciples are now sent to continue his mission as revealers. As such they cannot leave the world. For, although they are not “of the world” (17:16) and thus must be separate from it, the disciples are also sent to the world (17:18). “Like Jesus, their relation to the world involves both separation and engagement.”<sup>215</sup> Thus the *tertium comparationis* identified above is made clearer: The disciples are to act as revealers, specifically *in and toward the world which has rejected Jesus, just as Jesus witnessed to those who rejected him in his outward ministry.*

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<sup>213</sup> In chapter 2 I noted these interconnected relations to the world as a thematic parallel between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations. See page 24.

<sup>214</sup> Who is “the Son of destruction”? Moloney argues that it is Satan, who is described by the same phrase in 2 Thess 2:3; 8–9. Moloney, *John*, 467. This is however unlikely. Jesus says that, except for “the son of destruction”, none of those *given to him* were lost. The fact that the son of destruction was given to Jesus and then lost makes it clear that Judas, who becomes Satan’s tool in betraying Jesus, is referenced. Brown, *John*, 2:760.

<sup>215</sup> Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel : Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 277.

While the sending of the disciples is a continuation of Jesus' outward ministry, it stands in contrast to Jesus' attitude to the world in the farewell discourse. In light of this, Koester notes that the sending of the disciples to the world is an expression of the evangelist's hope: "The fourth evangelist understood that the world was corrupt, but he believed that change could occur when people were transformed by the power of God."<sup>216</sup> Though the world now rejects Jesus, God still has the power to change the world, and this will happen through the community of believers' witness to Jesus as his true son. However, this optimism should not be overemphasized: Though there is still hope, the hope is not for the world in itself. In the words of Barrett: "The only hope for the κόσμος is precisely that it should cease to be the κόσμος."<sup>217</sup> The disciples are not sent to save the world, but to be witnesses, so that those who are still "of the world" might come to faith and thus become part of the believing community.

#### 6.2.5 The Consecration of the Disciples in John 17:17–19

In addition to being placed in parallel to the sending of Jesus, and being connected to the theme of the world, the sending of the disciples in John 17:18 is connected to the theme of consecration. Jesus prays that the Father will consecrate the disciples in the truth, defined as the Father's word (17:17), and says that he consecrates himself, so that the disciples will also be consecrated in the truth (17:19).

Earlier in the prayer Jesus addressed God as "Holy Father" (17:11: πᾶτερ ἅγιε). Now he prays that the Holy Father may consecrate (ἁγιάζω – that is to "include a pers. in the inner circle of what is holy"<sup>218</sup>) the disciples. By referencing the holiness of both God and the disciples, John calls to mind several texts of Leviticus which state that Israel is to be holy because God is holy (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26).<sup>219</sup>

In the Old Testament, the concept of holiness (among its other uses) served to distinguish between different categories of for instance people, locations, objects or

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>217</sup> Barrett, *John*, 506.

<sup>218</sup> Danker, Bauer, and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, sv. ἁγιάζω.

<sup>219</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:765.

times.<sup>220</sup> As holy and secular were mutually exclusive terms, the two categories had to be separated from each other.<sup>221</sup> The separation of holy and profane, and pure and impure is especially emphasized by P (in particular in Leviticus) and Ezekiel.<sup>222</sup> This concept of holiness is the reason the Israelites must consecrate themselves before the theophany at Sinai (Ex 19:10–15) and that the camp of the Israelites must be holy, as God is present there (Ex 23:15). As God is holy, Israel must be a holy people to be associated with him (Lev 19:2) And some text emphasize that Israel, as a holy people, must be separated from the Gentile nations (see for instance Deut 7; Ezekiel 36.).<sup>223</sup>

There is however an important difference between the Old Testament concept of holiness, and Jesus' prayer: In the Old Testament texts (especially Leviticus) the holiness of Israel is closely connected to the commands they have to keep. In John 17, however, the consecration of the disciples is something God and Jesus are to do: No actions of the disciples are mentioned.<sup>224</sup>

Interpreting the consecration of the disciples on this background, we can see that the holiness of the disciples in John 17 has two clear implications in terms of separation and community. First, it implies that they are separated and distinguished from the surrounding world. As the disciples are made holy like God, they are distinguished from the world which opposes God. The prayer for consecration continues the theme of the preceding verses: Jesus prays that God may preserve the disciples in the world by distinguishing them from the world. Second, the consecration of the disciples implies communion with God. As a holy people, they are in community with their holy Father. "To be *hagios* means to be one with a *patēr hagios*."<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> D. A. deSilva, "Clean and Unclean," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2013), 142-45; David P. Wright and Robert Hodgeson, Jr., "Holiness," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 3:237-44.

<sup>221</sup> W. Kornfeld and Helmer Ringgren, "שָׁדָה," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988-1989), 12:522.

<sup>222</sup> Wright and Hodgeson, "Holiness," 3:246-47.

<sup>223</sup> deSilva, "Clean and Unclean," 143; Kornfeld and Ringgren, "שָׁדָה," 12:538-39.

<sup>224</sup> This is not to say that the consecration of others is absent in the Old Testament, or that keeping commandments is not required in John. Exodus 28:41 is an example of the former, and John 15:10 an example of the latter. See also Lev 20:8b, where both aspects is combined: The Lord is the one who sanctifies, but Israel must keep his commandments.

<sup>225</sup> Moloney, *John*, 468.

The holiness of the disciples thus encompasses much of what I have noted above regarding both the sending of the disciples, and their relation to the world: As consecrated the disciples are in the world, yet separated from it. Through their holiness they are in union with God. And just as Jesus' union with God was the basis for his mission, so the disciples' union with God, which is a result of their holiness, serves as the basis for their mission to the world (cf. 17:21–23). Thus the *tertium comparationis* in 17:18 is specified once more: In a parallel to Jesus, the disciples are sent to act as revealers. Just as it was for Jesus, the context for their mission is the unbelieving world. And just as was the case for Jesus, *the basis for the mission is found in the disciples' community with God*, here expressed through their sanctification.

Finally a brief note on two other elements of John 17:17; 19. In both verses Jesus prays that the disciples be sanctified in the truth, which in 17:17 is defined as God's word. As the Gospel has made clear, Jesus both speaks the word of God, and is in himself both Word and Truth incarnate (1:1; 14:6).<sup>226</sup> The message again seems to be the same: The disciples will be consecrated through Jesus, who through both his words and his person communicates God to them.

17:19 adds another element: Jesus says that he too sanctifies himself for (ὕπὲρ) his disciples, so that they may be sanctified in truth. This verse has clear sacrificial overtones, communicated by the use of ὕπὲρ, which John uses several times in connection with Jesus' death on behalf of his disciples (10:11; 11:51; 15:13).<sup>227</sup> When Jesus says that he consecrates himself, it should therefore be seen as him preparing himself for self-sacrifice on the disciples' behalf. "To consecrate oneself is the act of a servant of God, who makes himself ready for his divinely appointed task. [...] The language is equally appropriate to the preparation of a priest and the preparation of a sacrifice; it is therefore doubly appropriate to Christ."<sup>228</sup>

Thus the sanctification of the disciples is not only caused by God, but also by Jesus' giving his life for them and demonstrating his perfect love which the disciples are to imitate. As he prepares himself for his divinely appointed mission, the disciples are consecrated and

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<sup>226</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:765.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 2:766; Barrett, *John*, 511.

<sup>228</sup> *John*, 511.

prepared for their mission to the world. However, the passage underscores an important distinction between the missions of Jesus and the disciples: Jesus consecrates himself for his disciples, while the disciples are not to consecrate themselves. As noted above, the disciples are recipients of consecration, not active subjects. Jesus is to die for them, not the other way around (cf. 13:36–38.)

#### 6.2.6 Summary: The Sending of Jesus and the Disciples in John 17:18

In John 17:18 the sending of the disciples to the world is set in parallel to Jesus being sent to the world by the Father. Three themes are especially connected to the sending of the disciples in this chapter: The description of Jesus' mission as a revealer, the theme of the world and the theme of consecration. Each of these themes illustrates in its own way how the mission of the disciples is parallel to that of Jesus, and helps us identify the *tertium comparationis* of the parallel sending.

The first section of the prayer emphasizes Jesus' mission as a revealer who makes God known. The disciples are to imitate this role in their own mission. Jesus' role as revealer is based in his unity with God, so that he speaks God's words and does God's will. Therefore the disciples cannot be of the world, but must be protected from it as a distinct community: They are sent to the world, but are not of the world. Rather, they are consecrated: They are made holy, which sets them apart from the world and brings them into union with the Holy Father.

In the previous chapter we saw how Jesus prayed that the community of believers would become a witness to the world through their unity with him and each other in John 17:20–23. We now see how this prayer is in accordance with the sending of the disciples earlier in the chapter. The consecration of the disciples as a community distinct from the world, and in relation with God (through Jesus), serves as the basis for their sending, where they will continue Jesus' work of revealing God to the world. In the words of Moloney:

“As Jesus' association with the Father determined his life, the disciples' association with Jesus, who has revealed the truth to them, determines theirs. The disciples are to become sent ones of the Sent One. They are to make God known in the world. [...] The

revelation of a holy God calls for a holy Sent One. It is the mission to make God known that determines the demand for holiness.”<sup>229</sup>

### 6.3 John 20:21

#### 6.3.1 Context

The parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples is repeated in 20:21, during the first resurrection appearance to the disciples. The scene spans 20:19–23, and is clearly distinguished from the preceding and following scenes by both the characters present and chronological markers.

While the basic claim of the text are almost identical, 17:18 and 20:21 are distinguished by their contexts: 17:18 is placed before the passion narrative, and as such before the conclusion of Jesus’ mission and the proper sending of the disciples. 20:21, on the other hand is the sending itself. Here, Jesus has completed his mission and the mission of the disciples begins in earnest.

#### 6.3.2 Initial Analysis

The text of John 20:19–23 is as follows (the most significant text also quoted in Greek):

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (εἰρήνη ὑμῖν· καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, κάγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς.) 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>229</sup> Moloney, *John*, 469.

(λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον)<sup>230</sup> 23 If you forgive the sins of any (τινων), they are forgiven (ἀφέωνται) them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”<sup>231</sup>

As a whole, this first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection bears hints of theophany: Jesus’ appearance despite the doors being closed hints at the miraculous character of the appearance. And the twice repeated “Peace be with you” (εἰρήνη ὑμῖν) is a formula associated with divine manifestation in the Old Testament.<sup>232</sup>

We can immediately note several differences between this text and the parallel in 17:18, in addition to the major change in context noted above. Whereas 17:18 is a proleptic statement, presenting the future event as a past fact (ἀπέστειλα – I have sent), 20:21 describes a present event (πέμπω – I send). Furthermore 17:18 is directed towards God (although the disciples are also an intended audience)<sup>233</sup> while 20:21 is said directly to the disciples. Finally, the themes connected to the sending of the disciples are different: Whereas 17:18 connected the sending of the disciples to Jesus’ own mission, to the theme of the world, and to the consecration of the disciples, 20:21 connects the sending to the gift of the spirit (20:22) and the power to forgive or retain sin (20:23).

Before we examine these themes in detail, we must again answer the question of who the addressees of this text are: Who are sent and given the spirit and power over sin in this scene? We have previously noted that “the disciples” can refer to several different groups in John, and as Brown notes the identity of the disciples in 20:19–23 is important, “for it colors the discussion of those to whom the power to forgive sins (vs. 23) has been granted.”<sup>234</sup>

There is some indication that the disciples in question might be the eleven, sans Thomas, as 20:24 notes that Thomas was one of the twelve but not present when Jesus

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<sup>230</sup> Note the absence of the definite article in the Greek text, which translated literally says “receive a holy spirit.” But the meaning is clear: This is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise earlier in the gospel that he and the Father would give the Spirit to the disciples (14:15–20; 16:7–15). Barrett, *John*, 570. As such, the translation of NRSV, if somewhat idiomatic, translates the meaning well.

<sup>231</sup> There are some minor textual variants in this section, the two most significant of which are found in 20:23: Some manuscripts change both occurrences of τινων (any) in the verse to τινος (any one). And some manuscripts read the present ἀφιενται instead of the perfect ἀφέωνται in 20:23a. The text as it stands is probably correct, and the implications of these variants are in any case rather minor.

<sup>232</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:1035.

<sup>233</sup> As noted above on page 57.

<sup>234</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:1033.

appeared. However, while this indicates that the ten others were present, it does not imply that they were the only ones present, and the twelve in any case play a very limited role in John. To me, it seems more likely that John here is deliberately vague about precise identities of the disciples who are present. By letting the word “disciple” remain ambiguous, John allows the reader to enter into the wider group of Jesus’ disciples.<sup>235</sup> It is therefore likely that this reference to the disciples should be interpreted much as those gathered with Jesus during the last discourse: A small group (in this case, few enough to be gathered in a single room), but representative for all believers.<sup>236</sup>

### 6.3.3 20:22: Sending and the Spirit

Before we look directly at how the Spirit is connected to the sending of the disciples in 20:21, I will briefly note how the spirit in 20:19–23 is connected with creation motifs, and how the Spirit is presented in the farewell discourse.

#### 6.3.3.1 *Spirit and New Creation*

Directly after sending the disciples, Jesus breathes on (ἐμφυσάω) them and explains this action as giving the spirit. As πνεῦμα can mean both breath and spirit, the action fits the context well. “The image of breathing does not necessarily mean that the Spirit is understood in a material sense. It means rather that Jesus is personally communicating and committing himself to his disciples in the person of the Spirit.”<sup>237</sup>

But by noting that Jesus breathes on his disciples, John also connects the gift of the Spirit to a creational motif by reference to Genesis 2:7: On the first day of the week – the day of creation – Jesus’ breathes on his disciples, just as God breathed on the first man to give him life. Brown also notes the parallel to Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones which come to life through the spirit given to them by the lord (cf. Ezek 32).<sup>238</sup> As the new creation has begun by Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus appears to those who believe in him and breathes on them. He who has life in himself (5:26) and has come to give life to all who believe in him (10:28), now gives the community of believers, which is separate from the surrounding

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<sup>235</sup> See pages 16–17.

<sup>236</sup> This view is also shared by Brown, who emphasizes that the creation-motif in 20:22 (see below) implies that all who believe are in view of these verses. Brown, *John*, 2:1035.

<sup>237</sup> Barrett, *John*, 570.

<sup>238</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:1037-38.



world (both spiritually, and in the case of 20:19–23, also literally) a breath which gives them new life and includes them in the new creation.<sup>239</sup>

### 6.3.3.2 *The Spirit in the Farewell Discourse*

After breathing on his disciples, Jesus says “receive a holy Spirit” (my translation). Before analyzing the statement proper, I will briefly examine the presentation of the Spirit in the farewell discourse.<sup>240</sup> Brown notes how surprising it is that the Spirit is not at all mentioned in connection with the sending of the disciples in John 17 as it is one of the most important themes of the farewell discourse.<sup>241</sup> It is all the more appropriate that the Spirit is connected as closely as possible to the sending of the disciples in John 20.

The Spirit is introduced in the farewell discourse as “another paraclete” (14:16: ἄλλον παράκλητον), who will come to the disciples from Jesus and the Father after the departure of Jesus.<sup>242</sup> The precise meaning and background of the word paraclete in John is debated: In 1. John 2:1 it is clearly used to describe Jesus as an advocate, speaking the case of sinful Christians before God.<sup>243</sup> The role of the paraclete in the farewell discourse however seems to be more varied, as it acts not only on behalf of the disciples, but in relation to God, in relation to the disciples and in relation to the world. Though words such as helper, witness and advocate express part of this more complex role of the paraclete, Behm holds that “no single word can provide an adequate rendering.”<sup>244</sup>

In the present context it will therefore be more helpful to look more directly at the description of the paraclete in the last discourse, rather than its name, in order to determine its role. First, however, we should note that in the phrase “another paraclete” the word

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<sup>239</sup> On the theme of creation and new creation in the Gospel of John see also Ole Jakob Filtvedt, “Jesus Som Skaperordet: Jesu Gjerning Forstått Som Nyskapelse I Johannesevangeliet,” *Teologisk Tidsskrift* 2, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>240</sup> A full presentation of the Spirit in the farewell discourse is of course impossible within the confines of this thesis, and the following analysis can as such not do justice to the complex nuances of John’s pneumatology.

<sup>241</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:765–66.

<sup>242</sup> There is some discussion whether “the spirit” and “the paraclete” should be seen as identical. Dodd for instance regards “the paraclete” as the third divine person in John, “the term πνεῦμα being appropriated to Deity as such.” Dodd, *Interpretation*, 226. Cf. 4:24. I will however follow Brown in seeing the spirit as another name for the paraclete: “The Fourth Gospel ultimately identifies the Paraclete with the Holy Spirit, and so we cannot dissociate the promise of ‘the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit,’ in 14:26 from the words ‘Receive a holy Spirit’ in 20:22.” Brown, *John*, 2:1036–37.

<sup>243</sup> Johannes Behm, “Παράκλητος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:811–12.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 814. See the full text for a closer examination of the background and usage of παράκλητος in the Johannine writings.

“another” might be just as significant as the word “paraclete”, as it reveals the primary role of the Spirit in John: The Spirit is to continue the work of Jesus in the disciples and in the world. Jesus was the first paraclete, and the Spirit is the second.

There are extensive parallels between the roles of Jesus and the paraclete:<sup>245</sup> They both come forth from the Father (8:42; 15:26) and they are both sent by the Father (3:17; 14:26). Jesus is truth (14:6) and the holy one of God (6:69), and the paraclete is the spirit of truth (14:7) and the Holy Spirit (14:26). Both Jesus and the Spirit stay with and in the disciples (14:17; 14:20), and the disciples are privileged to know them (14:17; 14:7; 1:11–12). Both Jesus and the Spirit are teachers and witnesses to the disciples (the Spirit remind the disciples of Jesus’ words and is a witness to Jesus, while Jesus speaks the words of the Father and is a witness to him.)<sup>246</sup> And finally, Jesus and the paraclete both have a similar relation to the world: The world cannot know them, and they both bear witness against the world (7:7; 8:19; 12:48; 14:17; 16:8).

It is thus clear that the Spirit in some sense is to be the continuation of Jesus’ presence with the disciples: He is to be to the disciples what Jesus has been to them while he was on earth. While Brown’s designation of the Spirit as “another Jesus” might be debatable, he is certainly correct in claiming that John is more concerned with the similarity between Jesus and the Spirit than the distinction between them.<sup>247</sup> John 14:15–20 is instructive in this regard: The presence of the Son and Spirit is so intertwined that when Jesus sends the Spirit to the disciples, he follows it up by saying “I am coming to you” (14:18, emphasis mine. See also 14:20). The close connection with the previous saying indicates that it is not Jesus’ eschatological return which is in view, and a more lasting presence seems to be intended than the brief post-resurrection appearances.<sup>248</sup> Rather the presence of Jesus and the Spirit are connected. They are distinct characters, but at least in some sense, Jesus is present with the disciples through the Spirit.

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<sup>245</sup> A more extensive presentation of the parallels between Jesus and the Spirit is found in Brown, *John*, 2:1139–41.

<sup>246</sup> Brown notes that “in many ways the Paraclete is to Jesus as Jesus is to the Father”. *Ibid.*, 2:1140. As such the Father/Son relation in John is not parallel only to the Son/disciple relation, but also to the Son/Spirit relation. A comparison of the similarities and differences between these parallels would be interesting, yet I do not have the space for such a comparison here.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1141.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:645–47; Moloney, *John*, 401–03; 06–07.

6.3.3.3 *The Spirit as Jesus' Continued Presence in the Mission of the Disciples*

Returning to 20:21–22, we may now ask what role the gift of the Spirit plays in the sending of the disciples in this text. We can first consider the motif of new creation: By breathing on his disciples Jesus gives them a new life which is distinct from the life and existence of the surrounding world. The parallels to the prayer for sanctification in 17:17–19 are obvious: Both consecration and new creation implies separation from the world, and inclusion in community with Jesus and God. We can therefore agree with Brown: The gift of the Spirit leads to the sanctification of the disciples.<sup>249</sup>

When we take the presentation of the Spirit in the farewell discourse into account we see that the gift of the spirit emphasizes the disciples' continued unity with Christ even more than what is communicated by new life and sanctification. Through the Spirit Jesus is continually present in and with the disciples. In the words of Dodd, the gift of the Spirit is "the ultimate climax of the personal relations between Jesus and his disciples."<sup>250</sup>

It is now clear how the gift of the Spirit is connected to the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples: The most significant element of Jesus' sending and mission was his intimate connection to the Father who is with him at all times.<sup>251</sup> As has been noted repeatedly, the whole of Jesus' mission was marked by his perfect representation of the Father. And one of the first ways the narrative (after the prologue) describes this union and Father and Son is by means of the Spirit: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him." (1:32).<sup>252</sup>

In 20:21 the disciples are sent in a parallel to the sending of Jesus, to continue his mission. But this is only possible if they have an intimate relation to Jesus. Just as Jesus' mission was dependent on his relation to the Father, so the mission of the disciples is dependent on their relation to the Son, which is made possible by the gift of the Spirit.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Brown, *John*, 2:765–66; 1036.

<sup>250</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, 227.

<sup>251</sup> See above pages 27–31.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. also 3:34, where Jesus could be the recipient of the Spirit, given from the Father. This interpretation is however by no means certain. See Brown, *John*, 1:159–62.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1036.

Thus the gift of the Spirit helps us identify the *tertium comparationis* of the parallel sending in 20:21: The sending of Jesus and the disciples are both rooted in the relation and unity between sent and sender. Barrett states the point well:

“As Jesus in his ministry was entirely dependent upon and obedient to God the Father, who sealed and sanctified him [...] and acted in the power of the Spirit who rested upon him [...], so the church is the apostolic church, commissioned by Christ, only in virtue of the fact that Jesus sanctified it [...] and breathed the Spirit into it [...], and only in so far as it maintains an attitude of perfect obedience to Jesus (it is here, of course that the parallelism between the relation of Jesus to the Father and the relation of the church to Jesus breaks down).”<sup>254</sup>

#### 6.3.4 20:23: Sending and Forgiveness

The second theme connected to the sending of the disciples in 20:19–23 is the power to forgive and retain sin. A comparison to Matt 16:19 makes it obvious that Jesus’ words here are a variant of a traditional text.<sup>255</sup> By placing it in its context in 20:21, John does however give the saying a distinct Johannine meaning.<sup>256</sup>

John 20:23 is often given an ecclesiological interpretation, and historically speaking it is almost certainly correct to claim that John 20:23 was used to legitimize the forgiveness and retention of the sins of members of the Johannine community.<sup>257</sup> However, the Gospel connects the verse to a different context: The power to forgive and retain sin is given in connection with the *sending* of the disciples, and is therefore a power connected to their mission outside of the community.<sup>258</sup> In its Johannine context, John 20:23 is primarily missional, not ecclesiological.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Barrett, *John*, 569.

<sup>255</sup> See Brown, *John*, 2:1039-40.

<sup>256</sup> Though the saying is traditional, and the vocabulary somewhat unusual for John’s style (see Steven E. Hansen, “Forgiving and Retaining Sin: A Study of the Text and Context of John 20:23,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 19, no. 1 (1997): 24.), this should not cause us to regard the saying as a representation of theology foreign to John. As Dodd says “the placing of the incident is so directly congruous with Johannine ideas that it may fairly be treated as part of the evangelist’s theological interpretation.” Dodd, *Interpretation*, 430.

<sup>257</sup> See for instance Brown, *John*, 2:1043-45. Brown does not overlook the missional context of 20:23, but despite this he arguably overemphasizes the ecclesiological aspect of the verse in his interpretation.

<sup>258</sup> 20:21, in contrast to 17:18, does not explicitly mention the world as the location for the disciples’ mission, but the meaning is nevertheless the same.

<sup>259</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 193.

Three points can be made concerning how John gives the traditional saying in 20:23 a distinct meaning – the first two relating to the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples, and the third related to the Johannine interpretation of sin.

First, there seems to be a parallel transference of power to Jesus and the disciples. In John 5:19–23 Jesus made clear that the Father had transferred some of his authority to the Son (see especially 5:22: “The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son.”) Now Jesus transfers some of his authority on to the disciples: They are given the power to forgive or retain sin, and God will act in accordance with their judgement.<sup>260</sup> The disciples can thus act on Jesus’ behalf, just as Jesus acted on God’s behalf.

Second, the parallel to the sending of Jesus both modifies and limits the authority given to the disciples. Once again John 5 is significant. Although the Father has sent Jesus and given him his authority, this sending and authority is intimately connected to Jesus’ obedience to the Father. Jesus uses the authority he has received in complete accordance with the Father’s will. “The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing” (5:19). Thus when Jesus gives authority to his disciples, it is not an arbitrary power to forgive or retain sin, but rather the power to act in his stead in accordance with his will.

Finally the meaning of the saying is modified by John’s distinct concept of sin, which is closely connected to unbelief.<sup>261</sup> The close connection to the gift of the Spirit in the present text makes John 16:8–9 especially relevant: When the paraclete comes he will convict/convince<sup>262</sup> the world about, sin, righteousness and judgment: “περὶ ἁμαρτίας μὲν, ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ.” (16:9. See also 8:21–24 and 8:31–36).<sup>263</sup> Thus “the ultimate sin in John’s Gospel is the sin of unbelief.”<sup>264</sup> Note however, that those who do not believe only sin because they have rejected the revelation of Jesus: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.” (15:22. See also 9:41).

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<sup>260</sup> The passive forms in the verse (ἀφένονται/κεκράτηνται) are examples of the *passivum divinum*, implying that God is their unmentioned subject. Brown, *John*, 2:1039.

<sup>261</sup> Hansen, “Forgiving,” 28–30.

<sup>262</sup> ἐλέγχω: “to bring a pers. to the point of recognizing wrongdoing, convict, convince someone of someth.” Danker, Bauer, and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, sv. ἐλέγχω.

<sup>263</sup> However, John does not always connect sin to unbelief. See 1:29; 5:14 and 8:34.

<sup>264</sup> Hansen, “Forgiving,” 29.

In light of this Hansen holds that “Jesus has already given [the disciples] the categories for whose sins are to be forgiven and not forgiven.”<sup>265</sup> Jesus’ mission led to the salvation of those who believe, and the judgement of those who rejected both him and God (3:17–18. Cf. 9:39; 12:47–50). The mission of the disciples is the continuation of his mission, and as they continue to reveal God in their mission, they will forgive the sins of those who accept their message, and retain the sin of those who do not believe.<sup>266</sup>

These observations diminish several of the problems interpreters have had with the authority given to the disciples in this text. As the power to forgive or retain sin is generally seen to belong to God alone (Mark 2:7), several interpreters have sought to limit the scope of the text: Some by restricting the power to only the first disciples or only to ordained priests in the sacrament of penance, and others by claiming that the text applies specifically to granting/denying people access to baptism. Yet neither of these conclusions seems warranted in the Johannine context.<sup>267</sup>

The tendency to limit the verse to either the first disciples or ordained priests deserves an additional note. While I have argued that the disciples in John are primarily representatives and models for all believers, the idea of an apostolic office is clearly present in John, especially in 21:15–19, where Jesus passes his role as Shepherd on to Peter, singled out from the other disciples.<sup>268</sup> As such it is reasonable to ask whether the power to forgive or retain sin is also given not to all believers, but to the apostles, or a specific group.

However, there are several reasons to reject such an interpretation: First, while 21:15–19 singles out Peter, the group of disciples in John 20 is not defined. And it is difficult to believe that John intended to say that Jesus gave the power over sin to a specific subgroup of believers without properly defining the group in any way.<sup>269</sup> Furthermore, if the power to forgive sins is assumed to be granted only to ordained priests or other leaders of the community, an ecclesiological interpretation of the verse is generally implied. But as we

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 193; Hansen, “Forgiving.”; Moloney, *John*, 536.

<sup>267</sup> See Brown, *John*, 2:1041–45.

<sup>268</sup> See for instance Moloney, *John*, 554–56; Brown, *John*, 2:1110–17.

<sup>269</sup> On this point it should also be noted that John 21 is generally regarded as a later addition to the Gospel, and it is possible that it portrays a view of the apostolic office which differs from the rest of the Gospel. Ecclesiology and the roles of particular disciples are at least important topics in John 21. See *John*, 2:1077–82; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 392–418.

have seen above, a missional interpretation of the verse is to be favored. Finally, we noted above that the sending in 17:18 should likely include all believers, and this supports the view that all believers are in view also in 20:21–23.

In 20:21 therefore, all who believer are sent like Jesus was sent, and given the Spirit which ensures Jesus' continued presence with them. With this they are also granted the authority to act on Jesus' behalf in the world. But just as Jesus was sent to act in complete obedience with the Father's will, so the believers are to act in complete accordance with Jesus' will. Thus, Barrett writes, "it would be wrong to restrict the meaning of the saying to baptism. The authority conveyed implies an extension of the ministry of Jesus through that of the Holy Spirit."<sup>270</sup> Just as the gift of the Spirit prepared the disciples to continue the mission of Jesus by ensuring Jesus' continued presence with them, so they are now given the authority necessary to continue Jesus' mission. This is then the second element of the *tertium comparationis* in John 20:21: The gift spirit conveys that the mission of the disciples is a continuation of Jesus mission, based on their relation to him. And the authority over sin conveys that the disciples have received the authority necessary to act on Jesus' behalf in the world.

#### 6.3.5 Summary: The Sending of Jesus and the Disciples in John 20:21

In John 20:21, Jesus' mission has come to an end, and the disciples are sent to begin their mission. Two themes are especially linked to the sending of the disciples in this text: The gift of the Spirit, and the authority to forgive or retain sin. Each in turn illustrates how the mission of the disciples is parallel to, and a continuation of, the mission of Jesus.

The gift of the Spirit is connected both to new creation and to the presence of Jesus in and with the disciples: As the new "breath of life" (Gen 2:7), the Spirit gives new life to the community of believers. Where 17:17–20 spoke of the sanctification of the disciples, 20:22 presents them as a new creation, thus distinct from the world surrounding them and united with the resurrected Christ. Furthermore the Spirit was in the farewell discourse presented as the "paraclete" who would come to the disciples after Jesus' departure, and do what Jesus did while he was with the disciples: As such the gift of the Spirit is a promise to the disciples that Jesus will continue to be with the disciples in their mission, just as the Father

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<sup>270</sup> Barrett, *John*, 571.

was with Jesus in his mission. The mission of the disciples thus becomes a continuation of Jesus mission where he is in them and they act on his behalf.

In order to act on the behalf of Jesus, the disciples are given some of his authority, in the same way that the Father gave his authority to Jesus during Jesus' mission. But in light of the context, the power to forgive or retain sin is not an arbitrary power, but rather the authority to act on Jesus' behalf, in complete correspondence with his will (just as Jesus used his authority in correspondence with the Father's will). It is the power necessary to accomplish their mission, which Moloney succinctly summarizes: "They are to be to the world what Jesus has been to the world."<sup>271</sup>

#### **6.4 The Parallel Sending of Jesus and the Disciples**

We have now seen how the two texts on the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples are colored by their contexts, and we have noted five themes connected to the sending of the disciples: The description of Jesus' mission in John 17 emphasizes his role as revealer, and the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples means that the disciples too are to be revealers of God. The description of the world marks the disciples as a distinct community, separate from the world they are sent to. The sanctification of the disciples emphasizes this separation, and also emphasizes their community with God.

The relation between God and the sent disciples is again emphasized in 20:21–23 by the gift of the Spirit: The Spirit is to be to the disciples what Jesus was to them during his mission, and is as such Jesus' continued presence with the disciples. The gift of the Spirit also marks the disciples as a new creation: They share the new life of Jesus' resurrection. Finally, the power to forgive and retain sin conveys how the disciples have received the authority to act on behalf of Jesus in their mission.

Together 17:18 and 20:21 give a comprehensive view of how the disciples are sent in a parallel to Jesus sending: They are to continue Jesus' mission on earth, being his agents and representatives as he has been the agent and representative of the Father. It is worth to note how the discussion above sheds light on 4:38, which is the only other clear reference to

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<sup>271</sup> Moloney, *John*, 531.



the sending of the disciples in the Gospel of John.<sup>272</sup> Here, Jesus tells his disciples “I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”<sup>273</sup> This corresponds well with the interpretation of the sending of the disciples given above: With the completion of his mission, Jesus has given his life to save all who believe. The disciples are now to enter into his mission by witnessing to him. He has “labored”. They are sent to harvest. While their *task* is different from that of Jesus – the disciples are not to die for the salvation of the believers – they are part of the same mission.

These conclusions are similar to those reached by Andreas Köstenberger in his work *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*. Köstenberger’s work is much wider in scope than the present chapter: His aim is not only to present the parallel sending of the disciples and Jesus. Rather, through a semantic field approach, he seeks to give a comprehensive interpretation of the missions of Jesus and the disciples, of which sending is but a part.<sup>274</sup>

However, Köstenberger concludes his discussion with an examination of the sending of the disciples centered in particular on 17:18 and 20:21.<sup>275</sup> In this context he writes that “the sending theme [...] provides a major bridge between the missions of Jesus and of the disciples. It is the matrix of themes connected with the sending theme in the Fourth Gospel, especially the sent Son’s obedience, dependent relationship with his sender, the Father, that provides the proper informing context for the sending of the disciples.”<sup>276</sup>

I agree with this statement: The sending of the disciples, as a parallel to the sending of Jesus, should be seen in the context of the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in general. However, while Köstenberger connects the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples to the parallel relations of which they are a part, he does not pursue the development of these relations beyond the theme of sending.<sup>277</sup> Therefore, although my conclusions are similar to those of Köstenberger, I will also partially modify his presentation.

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<sup>272</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 180.

<sup>273</sup> See also my brief discussion of this text on pages 34–35 above.

<sup>274</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 37-41. On Köstenberger’s semantic field approach, see *ibid.*, 17-44.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-98.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>277</sup> See *ibid.*, 186.

Köstenberger's emphasis on sending in his discussion of the parallel relations partially obscures the general picture: When the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations are presented as parallel, this is not merely a background for understanding the sending of the disciples. Rather, the parallel relations mark the entirety of the believers' relation to Christ. Thus the emphasis is not on the sending, but on the *relation* of which the sending is but one expression and consequence. It is a relation established by Jesus, through his love for his disciples, expressed here in the gift of the Spirit and the consecration of the disciples. And it is expressed through the will of Jesus marking the disciples just as he was marked by the will of the Father.<sup>278</sup> Thus the sending of the disciples is a natural consequence of their relation to their master: They share his mission because they share his will and love for the world. Relation is the foundation for mission, not the other way around.

### 6.5 Summary

John 17:18 and 20:21 present the sending of the disciples as a parallel to the sending of Jesus. Each of the texts connects the sending of the disciples to different themes: In 17:18 it is connected to Jesus' role as revealer, to the presentation of the world in John and to the consecration of the disciples. In 20:21 it is connected to the gift of the Spirit, and the authority to forgive or retain sin, given to the disciples.

The central message of both texts is clear: The sending of the disciples is a continuation of the sending of Jesus to the world. It is based on the disciples' separation from the world and unity with Jesus who sends them. This is communicated through the sanctification of the disciples and the gift of the Spirit, which is parallel to the Father's presence in Jesus through the Spirit. Thus the disciples, like Jesus, are to do the will and work of their sender, so that they can become revealers, making Jesus known to the world around them.

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<sup>278</sup> Köstenberger does recognize that it is Jesus' relation with his sender which is paralleled in the sending of the disciples. However, he emphasizes primarily the obedience and dependence of the relation, and as such underemphasizes the larger relational construct centered on love. Ibid., 217.

## Chapter 7: Concluding Discussion

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### 7.1 Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis I remarked that the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John have often been noted, but have rarely received significant attention. But despite this the parallel relations are significant. They have the potential to impact our understanding of several aspects of Johannine theology, including Christology, theology of discipleship/ecclesiology, missiology and more, and are as such an important characteristic of the Gospel of John.

In the previous chapters I have examined four of the most central texts which present the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel. I will now draw together my observations from these chapters in order to conclude how the parallel relations impact our understanding of John.

To do this I will first summarize my conclusions from the thesis so far, and note several themes that are common to the parallels I have examined. I will then in two sections give my answer to my questions of research: How is the Father/Son relation illuminated by the parallels to the Son/disciple relation? And how is the Son/disciple relation illuminated by the parallels to the Father/Son relation?

### 7.2 The Parallel Relations in John's Gospel

In this section I will first summarize my conclusions so far. I will then note how the parallels I have discussed in chapters 4–6 have several elements in common, and how the parallel relations connect the themes of love, unity and sending. Finally I will suggest a *tertium comparationis* which can encompass all of the parallels I have discussed.

#### 7.2.1 Summary of the Parallel Relations

In chapter 2 I surveyed the textual evidence for the parallel relations in John. I presented several texts which explicitly present the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as similar, usually by means of the comparative καθὼς. I also noted some disconnected and thematic parallels between the relations. This chapter thus provided evidence *that* John presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationships as parallel, and formed the rationale

## Chapter 7: Concluding Discussion

for a further examination of *how* he describes this parallel, and how the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations illuminate each other.

In chapter 3 I gave an overview of the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as they are presented in the first half of John. Regarding the Father/Son relation we marked in particular the tension between unity and subordination, and how Jesus acts on behalf of the Father in accordance with his will. Regarding the Son/disciple relation we noted a difference between believing characters, and Jesus' teachings on discipleship: The characters in the narrative respond to Jesus in various ways, and his relation to his closest disciples is marked in particular by the disciples' commitment despite their misunderstandings. Concerning Jesus teachings, we saw how Jesus includes the disciples in his mission, how he presents his care for the believers, and how he requires commitment from those who wish to follow him.

Chapter 4 examined the parallels of 15:9–10, which concern the themes of love, obedience and abiding. Here we found what I consider to be the foundation for the relation between Jesus and his disciples: Jesus has loved the disciples as his Father has loved him, and thereby included them in a loving relation similar to his own relation to the Father. However, while Jesus' love towards the disciples is primary, the relationship also depends on the disciples abiding in Jesus' love by keeping his commandments: They must love one another as Jesus has loved them (15:12). We have repeatedly noted the complete unity of will and obedience which marks the Father/Son relation in John. The disciples are now encouraged to abide in Jesus love by becoming marked by this love, so that their will is in union with Jesus' will: They are to love each other as he has loved them, thus expanding the "chain of love" which is started in the parallel relations.

Chapter 5 examined John 17:20–23. While the parallels in these verses are less clear than those considered in chapters 4 and 6, they concern one of most significant topics in the parallel relationships, namely unity and indwelling. These themes are also touched upon by texts such as 14:20 and 15:1–17. And by connecting unity and mission, 17:20–23 creates a bridge between the preceding and following chapters. Finally, 17:20–23 is highly significant as it is a text which explicitly includes all believers and not only the first disciples in the parallel relations.

## Chapter 7: Concluding Discussion

As the discussion in chapter 5 made clear, the portrayal of unity in 17:20–23 resembles the unity and relation portrayed in chapter 15: It is once again a unity which is established by Jesus, and marked by love. However, 17:20–23 emphasizes the outward consequences of the parallel relations more than John 15 does: While 15:12 noted the loving community among the believers, the unity of believers is the center point of 17:20–23. This unity is established by Jesus, through his role as mediator, and functions as a witness to the world. In light of its function as a witness, we can further specify the unity of disciples in 17:20–23: It is a tangible unity of love, visible to the outwards world as a witness that Jesus' message is true.

Finally, chapter 6 discussed the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples, which is presented in two texts, 17:18 and 20:21, each connected to different themes. Chapter 17 connects the sending of the disciples to Jesus' mission as revealer, to the theme of the world, and to the consecration of the disciples. Chapter 20 connects the sending of the disciples to the gift of the Spirit and to the authority to forgive or retain sin. Together, these themes give a coherent picture of the disciples continuing Jesus' mission as a community separate from the surrounding world. Their mission is dependent on their relation to Jesus through the Spirit, just as Jesus' mission depended on the Father's presence with him. Thus the parallel relations are the basis for the parallel sending of Jesus and the disciples.

### 7.2.2 Common Themes

We can now note how the observations and conclusions of the three previous chapters relate to one another through similarities and connectedness. I will do so under four sub-headings: Interconnectedness, the direction of the comparisons, the primacy of Jesus' love, and outward purpose.

#### 7.2.2.1 *Interconnectedness*

Before we look at the themes common to the parallels, we can note how the individual themes of love, unity and sending are interconnected: The relationship between Jesus and his disciples is established by the love he first shows them (15:9), and it leads to the disciples being marked by the same love so that they love both Jesus and one another. Through their loving relation the disciples are united with both each other and with Jesus, just as Jesus is united with the Father (17:20–23). The unity of the disciples with each other

and with Jesus allows them to be witnesses to the world, because they are Jesus' representatives through their relation with him, just as he was a revealer because of his relation with God (17:21b; 23b). This relation and unity therefore forms the basis when the disciples are sent to the world in a parallel to Jesus' sending, to continue Jesus' mission of revealing God to the unbelieving κόσμος.

This connectedness indicates that the parallels we have discussed are not accidental parallels between two fundamentally distinct relations. Rather the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations seem to be parallel at a more fundamental level. This is especially clear when we note that love, unity and sending are perhaps the three most fundamental elements in John's description of the Father/Son relation.

This is of course not to say that the relationships are entirely identical. As the relation between Father and Son is a relation between two divine and preexistent entities, and the disciples are human beings, there are necessarily major differences between the relations. But there nevertheless seems to be a parallel structure between the relationships which extends beyond single features and beyond what is accidental. In other words, there is a high degree of *correspondence* in the comparison, and the relationships are similar in more ways than one.<sup>279</sup> Therefore it seems likely that the relation between the Father and Son *as such* is presented as a model for the Son/disciple relation. Thus the terminology I have applied throughout the thesis is justified: We are truly dealing with *parallel relations* and not distinct relations with single or accidental parallels.

### 7.2.2.2 *The Direction of the Comparison*

In the introduction we saw that one of the main characteristics of comparisons is their direction. And in chapter 2 we noted how all the explicit parallels in John seem to have the same direction, using the Father/Son relation as a background (vehicle) to describe the Son/disciple relation (tenor).<sup>280</sup> This observation holds true for the parallels I have examined in detail: In John 15:9–10 it is clear that Jesus abides in the Father's love through his obedience. He is as such presented as a role model for the disciples, who are to abide in Jesus' love by keeping his commandments. In 17:20–23 the present unity of the Father and

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<sup>279</sup> See chapter 1, page 16.

<sup>280</sup> See page 22 above.

Son is presented as the model for the unity of the future community of believers, mediated through the unity of that community with Jesus. And in 17:18 and 20:21 the sending of Jesus is presented as the model for the sending of the disciples who are to continue his mission.

This implies that it is primarily the relationship between Jesus and the disciples that John seeks to illuminate by describing it as parallel to Jesus' relation to his Father. In other words, the parallel relations help the readers understand their own proper role in their relation to Jesus. One might say that the focal point of the parallel relations is discipleship, not Christology.<sup>281</sup>

However, while the Son/disciple relation is the focal point of the parallel relations I would argue that the Father/Son relation is also illuminated by the comparisons. This is for two reasons: First, as we noted in the introduction, neither of the relations in question are entirely known to the reader.<sup>282</sup> Therefore the comparisons between them are not simply describing the unknown by use of the known. Instead, what we know of the individual relations help us understand the comparisons, and the comparisons in turn partially illuminate both of the relations involved.

Second, I would argue that the comparisons between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations are a central part of the context in which the Father/Son relation must be interpreted. This means that we are in danger of missing the mark if we, for instance, consider the unity which marks the relationship between Father and Son without taking into consideration that the disciples are also included in this unity through their relation to Jesus. However tempting it might be for post-Nicene theologians to treat John's Gospel as a treatise on the Father/Son relation as an isolated topic, the parallels we have examined imply that the Father/Son relation in John should not be treated in isolation, but rather as one half of two interconnected and parallel relations.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Although, as I just noted, the parallels themselves show us how interconnected Christology and discipleship are in John.

<sup>282</sup> See page 14.

<sup>283</sup> On the tendency to treat John's writings as primarily answers to later Christological debates, see Dunn, "Let John Be John," 311-12.

### 7.2.2.3 *The Primacy of Jesus' Love for the Disciples*

The fundamental function of Jesus' love for his disciples in the parallel relation is perhaps the most significant common theme of the previous three chapters. Jesus' statement in 15:9a is of foundational importance: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you."

We noted in chapter 4 how Jesus' love establishes the relation between him and the disciples: Though the disciples must obey Jesus' commandment, it is not a requirement to *enter* into a relationship with Jesus. It is rather a requirement to *abide* in a relationship Jesus has already established. The relationship is in this way parallel to the Old Testament covenants: The covenants are established not by obedience, but by God's commitment to Israel. But once they have entered into the covenant, Israel is committed to keep God's commandments. Similarly the disciples' relation to Jesus is established by his love for them, but requires their obedience.<sup>284</sup> At the same time, the disciples' relation to Jesus enables the disciples to abide in his love: He has given them an example to follow (13:15) and is the vine which enables the disciples to bear fruit (15:5).<sup>285</sup>

It is Jesus' love for the disciples (which parallels the Father's love for Jesus) which established the parallel relations. And in chapter 17 we noted how the believers' relation to Jesus, established by his love for them, is what in turn establishes the oneness of the believers with each other. This oneness then becomes a witness to the world: The oneness is visible a relation of love, which makes the world recognize God's love for the community of believers through Jesus.

And finally the disciples' relation to Jesus is the basis for their sending. Just as Jesus' mission depended on his relation to the Father, so the disciples' mission depends on their relation to Jesus. Thus Jesus prays that they must be preserved in the world as a distinguished community (17:9–16), and *gives* (note again the priority of Jesus' action towards the disciples) them the Spirit, which is the ultimate expression of the disciples' relation to Jesus.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 66; 116–18.

<sup>285</sup> See my conclusions regarding the role of obedience in Johannine discipleship below on pages 110–112.

<sup>286</sup> See above, page 90.



In summary, the disciples' loving relation to Jesus and in particular Jesus' love for them is the first and essential element of that relationship (cf. 1. John 4:1–21). It is the love between Jesus and the disciples which establishes all of the elements which makes their relation parallel to the relation between Jesus and his Father. And it is the love between Jesus and the disciples which ensures that the parallel relations result in the unity of the community of believers and the mission towards the world.

### 7.2.2.4 *Outward Purpose*

Each of the texts I have discussed has also emphasized how the purpose and consequences of the parallel relations extend beyond the relations themselves. The parallel relations are directed outwards to other believers and the world. In 15:9–10 this pattern is clearly presented: The disciples who are marked by Jesus' love (which is parallel to the Father's love for Jesus) will not only love him in return, but they will also follow his example and love each other as he has loved them.

In 17:20–23, the outward purpose of the parallel relations is emphasized even more: First through the fact that the unity of the disciples with each other is heavily emphasized (to the point that the parallel relations take more of a supporting role in presenting this unity), and second through the description of the missionary purpose of unity of the disciples as a witness to the world.<sup>287</sup>

Finally 17:18 and 20:21 center on the mission of the disciples to the world. They are sent to the world as Jesus was sent. Here the unity of the disciples with each other is left in the background, as the ultimate outward purpose of the parallel relations is presented: That the disciples through their relation to Jesus are able to continue his mission to reveal God to the world.

### 7.2.3 Eccentric Love as the *Tertium Comparationis*

In chapter 1 I introduced the concept of *tertium comparationis* – that is the specific element that forms the basis for a comparison. In chapters 4–6 an important part of the interpretation has been to locate the *tertium comparationis* of the parallels I have discussed,

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<sup>287</sup> The missionary purpose of the unity of the disciples is not outside the scope of John 15 either. Cf. 15:12 with 13:34–35.

and answer the question of how each text presents the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel. Having now summarized and looked at common themes in the preceding chapters, we can finally ask if there is a common ground for all the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations we have examined. Is there a single *tertium comparationis* which encompasses the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in John?

In this thesis I have only examined selected texts in detail, and as was made clear in chapter 2, there are several other texts and themes which further describe the parallel relations. As such, I can only suggest a provisional candidate for a *tertium comparationis* for the relations entire. But nevertheless, I will suggest a *tertium comparationis* which can encompass the parallel love, abiding, oneness and sending of the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations in the texts I have discussed.

Above we saw that Jesus' love for his disciples is at the heart of the parallel relations, as the establishing elements which connects the disciples with Jesus and his Father. I will contend that this same love is also the best candidate for a common *tertium comparationis*.

This love is an eccentric love which extends beyond the loving relationship itself, and out to others.<sup>288</sup> The love between Father and Son extends to the world, so that the Father sends the Son. And the Father's love for the Son is displayed in the Father giving the Son his authority. During his mission the Son remains in the loving relation to his Father, acting on the Father's behalf, and speaking his words in complete obedience to the Father who loves him and sent him.<sup>289</sup>

In the world the Son gathers disciples whom he loves as the Father has loved him. By abiding in Jesus' love the disciples are included in a loving relation which imitates the relation between Father and Son. They are loved as Jesus was loved and they are thus included in a unity of love which imitates the unity that exists between Father and Son. And

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<sup>288</sup> The expression is borrowed from Alexander Gusa. See especially his conclusion in Gusa, "Excentriske Venner," 289-94. Though our emphases are different, the love I here describe is very similar to his description of the difference between the love of family and the love of friendship: Family unites only inwards with the members of the family. Friendship (which is eccentric love) unites *outwards*.

<sup>289</sup> This interpretation of the relationship between Father and Son is similar to an observation made by Appold: The oneness of Father and Son is revelational, and therefore always directed towards men. Appold, *The Oneness Motif*, 46.

as the love between Father and Son is an eccentric love, which is extended to the disciples and the world, so the love between Son and disciples is extended, first to the community of believers which is united through love, and second to the world as the Son sends the disciples as the Father sent him.

Thus eccentric love encompasses the Father's initial love for Jesus, and Jesus' initial love for the disciples (15:9). It encompasses the obedience of the disciples, achieved through abiding in love, which is the result of them being marked by eccentric love like branches on a vine (15:1–8), so that they too can have perfect love for one another (15:10, 12–17). Through their loving relation with Jesus, they are united with Jesus as Jesus is with his Father (17:22–23a). And as the loving relation between Son and disciple is also an eccentric relation, it is displayed in the unity of believers (17:21b; 23b). The eccentric love between Jesus and the disciples is also the foundation when they are sent as he was sent (17:18; 20:21): Their sending is rooted in their relation to Jesus, just as Jesus' sending was rooted in his relation to the Father. And it is the result of the eccentric nature of the love between Jesus and disciples, which ensures that the relation can never be a closed relation, existing only for its own sake. Rather the eccentric love of the Son/disciple relation is extended to the world, just as the relation between Father and Son was extended to the world.

In summary the concept of an eccentric love, which extends beyond the relation itself encompasses all the major parallels I have discussed between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations, and is therefore a fitting candidate for a common *tertium comparationis*.

### **7.3 Implications for the Relationship between Father and Son**

Having drawn together my conclusions from the previous chapters in the sections above, I will now move on to specifically answering my questions of research. First I will examine how John's presentation of the Father/Son relation is illuminated by the parallels to the Son/disciple relation.

As we have seen, the direction of comparison tells us that it primarily the Son/disciple relations which is described by the parallels we have examined. Nevertheless, as I argued above, the parallel relations also impact our understanding of the Father/Son

relation, and below I will present two ways in which the Father/Son relation is illuminated by the parallels to the Son/disciple relation.

### 7.3.1 Love in the Father/Son Relation

The first area where the parallel relations impact our understanding of the Father/Son relation is related to the *tertium comparationis* identified above. For any comparison to be effective the *tertium comparationis* must in some way be central to the known element/vehicle (in this case the Father/Son-relation) in order to effectively describe the unknown element/tenor (in this case the Son/disciple relation). For instance the comparison between the Kingdom of God and the mustard seed in Luke 13 would be ineffective if the *tertium comparationis* was found in some peripheral characteristic of the mustard seed, such as its color or location. Rather the *tertium comparationis* is immediately assumed to be located in the central characteristics of the mustard seed: Its size, and its ability to grow.<sup>290</sup>

If we are correct in identifying eccentric love as the *tertium comparationis* between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relationships, we can therefore conclude that this love is central to John's understanding of the Father/Son relation. To the attentive reader of John this is of course nothing new: John repeatedly mentions the loving relation between Father and Son, both explicitly (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9; 14:31; 17:23, 24, 26) and implicitly. Despite this, however, modern interpretations of the Father/Son relation often centers on the *role* or *function* of the Son in relation to the Father: The question which is asked is often whether "son", "agent", "wisdom" or some other role best describes Jesus' function in relation to his Father in John. The love between Father and Son is of course not completely overlooked, but the emphasis often is placed on the function of the relation, rather than the loving nature of the relation.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> As I discussed in chapter 1, this assumption can be altered by context: Where context requires it the *tertium comparationis* can be a rather peripheral characteristic of the first element in the comparison. See page 15. In the case of the parallel relations in John there is however no indication that we are dealing with a peripheral *tertium comparationis*.

<sup>291</sup> For instance Dunn, although he elaborates on the close relation between Father and Son, does not mention the love which marks the relation between Father and Son at all in his most significant essay on the topic. Dunn, "Let John Be John." Similarly, Thompson mentions it only in passing in Marianne Meye Thompson, "'The Living Father'," *Semeia* 85 (1999). Neyrey, on the other hand, emphasizes the love between Father and Son (and Son and believers) in his presentation. But even to him, this love is a secondary element to the description

The reason for this emphasis might very well be that the precise role of Jesus plays in relation to the Father is more disputed than the nature of the relation as a loving relation. But even so, there is a noticeable change in emphasis in the description of the Father/Son relation in the Gospel and how it is described by many scholars. While the Gospel emphasizes the *relation as such* scholars emphasize the *function of or model for the relation*. Changing the emphasis in this way puts one in danger of misrepresenting the Gospel. My conclusions above are therefore a reminder to place primary emphasis on the loving nature of the Father/Son relation rather than the precise function of the Son in relation to the Father.

### 7.3.2 Jesus' Two-Directional Role

While the loving nature of the Father/Son relation must be given priority and adequate emphasis, the question of the "role" of Jesus is still important. And the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations are significant also in this discussion, as they emphasize the two-directional aspect of Jesus' role in John: As the center point of the parallel relations he is in relation with both his Father and his disciples. He is both sent and sender. He is both loved by his Father and loving his disciples. And these two aspects of Jesus' role should not be separated, as they are intimately connected: It is Jesus' relation to his Father which determines his relation to the disciples.

Thus any model for Jesus' role in relation to his Father must also encompass and explain his role in relation to the disciples. And interpretations which encompass both directions of Jesus' relations should be given special attention. While I do not have room for an extended discussion of which model best can encompass this two-directionality, I will draw attention to Jerome Neyrey's presentation of Jesus as broker which is exemplary in this regard:<sup>292</sup> As broker Jesus' belongs to both the world of God and the world of the disciples, and he is able to move between the them, in order to relate to both God and the disciples.

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of Jesus as broker, rather than the central motif of the Father/Son relation. Neyrey, "'I Am the Door' (John 10:7, 9): Jesus the Broker in the Fourth Gospel." Larger studies such as Appold and Köstenberger and Swain can of course not avoid mentioning the theme of love in their discussions, but even these can fairly be accused of underemphasizing it. Appold barely mentions love as a significant element of the Father/Son relation in his conclusion, and Köstenberger and Swain hardly emphasize the topic in any of the chapters specifically devoted to the Father/Son relation. Appold, *The Oneness Motif*; Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit : The Trinity and John's Gospel*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 24 (Nottingham, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2008).

<sup>292</sup> Neyrey, "'I Am the Door' (John 10:7, 9): Jesus the Broker in the Fourth Gospel."

Though this model is less commonly applied to Jesus than those of agent, son or wisdom, it arguably encompasses Jesus' two directional mission and relations better than any of the more popular models.

### **7.4 Implications for the Relationship between Son and Disciples**

As we noted above, the parallel relations in John primarily serve to describe the Son/disciple relation. Below I will note three ways in which the Son/disciple relation is illuminated by the Father/Son relation: One general and two related to the specific themes I have discussed.

#### **7.4.1 The Christological Character of Johannine Discipleship<sup>293</sup>**

The first and most significant implication of the parallel relations for the Son/disciple relation concerns how discipleship and Christology are connected in John: John's presentation of Jesus – and in particular how Jesus relates to his Father – is the basis and foundation for his presentation of discipleship. Thus any description of Johannine discipleship or ecclesiology is suspect if it is not rooted in a firm understanding of John's Christology. Just as one cannot understand the Johannine Jesus without centering in his relation to his Father, one cannot understand Johannine discipleship without centering on the disciples' relation to Jesus.

Marianus Pale Hera has examined the connection between discipleships and Christology in John in general and in John 17 in particular, and sees in almost every section of the Gospel what he calls a "movement from Christology to discipleship."<sup>294</sup> He wishes to show "that the Johannine teaching on discipleship has its basis in the Gospel's Christology and that Johannine Christological teachings leads to teachings on discipleship."<sup>295</sup> Though he does not emphasize the concrete textual parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as I have done, his conclusions are very much in line with my discussion here, in seeing discipleship (which by necessity implies a relation of the disciple to the master) as a result of Christology (which cannot be discussed without centering on Jesus' relation with

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<sup>293</sup> This heading is borrowed from chapter 2 of Hera, *Christology*.

<sup>294</sup> This phrase is for instance used at *ibid.*, 168. as well as in several subheadings in previous chapters.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

the Father). Thus, this thesis can be seen as one answer to Hera's call for the study of further texts in John placing emphasis on the connection between discipleship and Christology.<sup>296</sup>

At the same time, the present study presents a slight modification, or change of emphasis to Hera's general thesis that, for John, Christology leads to discipleship: While Hera's presentation of this general claim is convincing, the present study has shown that several explicit parallels between Jesus and the disciples focus not on the parallels between them as characters, but at the parallels between the disciples in relation to Jesus and Jesus in relation to his Father. I therefore emphasize the parallel *relations* more than Hera does. The connection between Johannine Christology and Johannine discipleship is centered upon how Jesus establishes a loving relation to the disciples which imitates his own loving relation to his Father.

### 7.4.2 Loved as Jesus was Loved – Sent as Jesus was Sent

The concrete parallels examined in the preceding chapters, connected to the themes of love, oneness and sending, also illuminate the Son/disciple relation in John. Below I will present how the parallel to the Father/Son relation allows us to understand the place of obedience in Johannine discipleship, and how it emphasizes the communal and eccentric nature of Johannine discipleship.

#### 7.4.2.1 *Unity of Will: Obedience as the Consequence of Relation*

Above, we noted that it is Jesus' love which establishes the initial relation between Jesus and the disciples. However, as we saw in chapter 4, John also claims that the relation between Jesus and his disciples is dependent on their obedience: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (15:10a. Cf. 12:26; 13:34; 14:15, 21). On the basis of these observations we have already noted the basic pattern of Johannine discipleship: It is established by Jesus love, but maintained by the obedience of the disciple.<sup>297</sup> But by examining the parallel relations we can gain a more precise understanding of the role of obedience in Johannine discipleship.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> See *ibid.*, 176.

<sup>297</sup> See the discussion in chapter 4 above, especially pages 50–52.

<sup>298</sup> On the basis of texts such as John 6:29 ("This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.") some might claim that in John, faith and obedience is synonymous. However, John 15 challenges this

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I have repeatedly noted what I have called the unity of will between Jesus and his Father during his mission: Though Jesus has been given the power to act freely (5:21; 10:17–18a), his will is to do the will of the Father, so that he acts in complete obedience to the Father (4:34; 5:19; 10:18b; 17:4). The relation between Father and Son is more than a oneness of “power and operation”.<sup>299</sup> But noting how the Father and Son is united in will and action is important as during the Son’s mission the unity and relation of Father and Son is primarily displayed through the Son acting in complete obedience to the Father’s will. The unity of Father and Son is therefore inseparable from the Son’s obedience: They are two sides of the same coin as the Son’s obedience to the Father is the practical consequence of their unity of will, which is part of the oneness which encompasses the whole relation.

Returning to the relation between Jesus and his disciples, we can now see how the parallels to the Father/Son relation allow us to better understand Jesus’ requirement that the disciples keep his commandments: John 15:9–10 presented the disciples’ relation to Jesus (including the requirement that they keep his commandments) as a parallel to Jesus’ relation to his Father. John 17:20–23 developed this relation as a unity between Jesus and the believer parallel to the unity of Father and Son, and connected it to the believers as witnesses to the world. And John 17:18 and 20:21 presented the mission of the disciples as a parallel to the mission of Jesus.

In light of these parallels, the role of obedience in the disciples’ mission and relation to Jesus should be the same as the role of obedience in Jesus’ mission and relation to the Father. Thus, just as Jesus’ obedience to his Father was a natural consequence of their oneness and relations, so the disciples’ obedience to Jesus is a natural part and consequence of their relation to him. As Jesus’ disciples the believers will be one with him and united with him, so that also their will is united with his. Thus obedience is the visible sign of the relation between believers and Jesus, just as Jesus’ obedience was the visible sign of his oneness with the Father.

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interpretation: As we saw in chapter 4, obedience is here defined as loving others to the point of death. This love is not synonymous with faith, but rather a consequence of the disciples’ relation to Jesus. See pages 52–53 above, as well as the preceding discussion.

<sup>299</sup> This expression is used by Brown. See the discussion of 10:30 in Brown, *John*, 1:407; Moloney, *John*, 315–16; 20.



7.4.2.2 *Communal and Eccentric Discipleship: The Connectedness of Community and Mission*

Finally I will note how the parallel relations connect the outward mission of the disciples with their relation and union with Jesus and each other. As we saw in the interpretation of 17:18, John advocates both the separation of the disciples from the world and the sending of the disciples into the world. However, we also saw that this does not imply a contradiction: Rather the sending of the disciples into the world depends on their relation to God through Jesus, which implies their separation from the world. In light of the connectedness of the parallels we have discussed and their common *tertium comparationis*, we can now expand this conclusion into a more general observation about the Son/disciple relation: It is an eccentric relation which results in mission.

In his interpretation of John 17:18 and 20:21, Köstenberger discusses the relation between mission by attraction (or “centripetal mission”) and mission through sending in John: Is mission in John achieved primarily by believers being attracted to the believing community (similar to the Old Testament concept of the nations being attracted to Zion as in Is 2:2–3 and similar texts), or is it achieved by the active work of the disciples who are sent?<sup>300</sup> Köstenberger rejects the notion that mission in John is primarily centripetal.<sup>301</sup> While he admits that the believing community has an appeal for the world, “love and unity are not in and of themselves the mission as if the revelation of the nature of God were merely an existential component of the believing community. The disciples are rather sent into the world with a message to proclaim”.<sup>302</sup> Thus Popkes’ claim that “the disciples’ internal relationships are more important than their external relationships” must be rejected.<sup>303</sup> Köstenberger rather claims that the “internal relations” of the disciples to each other and to Jesus and God form *the basis* for their external relations. The love and unity which marks the disciples relation to Jesus and each other is the foundation upon which their mission is built.

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<sup>300</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 189-90.

<sup>301</sup> Köstenberger cites Popkes as the primary proponent of seeing John’s missiology as a mission through attraction. Wiard Popkes, “Zum Verständnis Der Mission Bei Johannes,” *Zeitschrift für Mission* 4 (1978).

<sup>302</sup> Köstenberger, *Missions*, 189.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

As in my interpretation of 17:18 and 20:21, I largely agree with Köstenberger: There is too great a focus on sending in John to see Johannine mission as merely based on attraction, and as concluded in the previous chapter, the sending of the disciples is based on their relation to Jesus. However, in light of the parallel to the Father/Son relation, and especially the *tertium comparationis* identified above, this conclusion should be specified further.

Jesus' mission is, as we have seen repeatedly, firmly rooted in his relation to the Father. And in particular, Jesus' mission is the consequence of the Father's love, which encompasses not only Jesus, but also the world (3:16). Therefore, Jesus' mission to the world is based in his loving relation to the Father, and is an expression of this love towards the world.

Similarly the mission of the disciples is based in their loving relation to Jesus, and this love is expressed both in their relation to each other and in their mission to the world. Thus just as love and obedience should properly be seen as two sides of the same coin, so the disciples' relation to Jesus and their mission to the world are intimately connected: The same love which establishes the relation between Jesus and disciples is expressed in the mission of the disciples to the world and in the disciples' relation to one another.

Therefore Johannine discipleship is both communal and eccentric, as the love which the disciples receive from Jesus is the foundation for their community with God and for their community with each other, but also the foundation for their mission in the world, where they function as Jesus' representatives. Köstenberger's view on the internal and external relations of the disciples should be modified somewhat: He is correct in understanding the mission of the disciples as a parallel to Jesus' mission, and based on their relation to him. But the connection between community and mission goes even further: They are two consequences of the same loving relation established by Jesus' love for his disciples.

### **7.5 Conclusion and Questions for Further Study**

As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, the presence of the parallel relations in John could have implications for a wide array of topics in Johannine theology. As the parallel relations include God, Jesus and the believers, they have implications for areas ranging from

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Johns understanding of God (theology) and Jesus (Christology) to his understanding of the believing community (ecclesiology), and how one becomes part of this community by faith through its mission.

Through my discussion I have touched upon several of these themes as I have examined how the texts I have discussed present the parallel relations as relations of eccentric love: The parallel is established by Jesus loving the disciples as the Father loves him. Through Jesus love they are included in a relation and unity with him, which results in them sharing his love and his will. Therefore they are sent as Jesus himself was sent, as his representatives in a hostile world. The parallel sending is the practical consequence of the parallel relations. The eccentric love centers not on the relations themselves but always results in the expansion of the love of the Father to others.

While I have touched upon many of the most important topics connected with the parallel relations, the topic itself is far from exhausted. In my second chapter I identified several texts and themes which present the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations as parallel. In this thesis I have examined four of these texts in more detail: 15:9–11; 17:20–23; 17:18 and 20:21, and discussed the parallel relations in particular as they relate to the themes of love, unity and sending. However, several other texts and themes related to the parallel relations remain, and a closer examination of these texts would be of help to strengthen or alter my conclusions in this thesis.

But the parallel relations also have a role to play in the more general study of the Gospel of John. As mentioned, the parallels between the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations have often been noted, but rarely emphasized in scholarly literature. It seems to me that an increased awareness and study of the parallel relations would be a fruitful area of research in Johannine studies. Of particular importance are the restrictions these parallels provide for the interpreter. While coherence with the larger theological constructs of the text is important in the study of any topic in John's Gospel, the parallel relations emphasize that the Father/Son and Son/disciple relations can never be discussed in isolation. They are not separate entities but intimately connected. Thus any Johannine Christology must be tested by its implications for Johannine discipleship, ecclesiology and missiology, and vice

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versa: When interpreting John's Gospel, the connectedness of discipleship and Christology cannot be ignored.

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