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## Relationality in the Fourth Gospel

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## INTRODUCTION

It all started with a curiosity. When the requirement for Practicum Paper was announced I was at that time enrolled in the module “Johannine Literature.” Initially I wanted to do a paper related to the Social Teachings of the Church. But I was so intrigued with an item in the Johannine syllabus handed to us. It reads, “Relationality in John’s Gospel.” It sounds new to me. Yet, the Fourth Gospel is bursting with passages like, “As the Father has loved me so I have loved you”; “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower”; “The Father and I are one”; “I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.” These are all relational passages. After so much thought, I decided to settle down with this topic. But why? On one hand, this topic gives me an opportunity to go into a deeper study of John’s Gospel – a Gospel so theological and spiritual. On the other hand, it is challenging because then I would be forced to apply the meticulous methods learned in biblical studies to this theme in John’s Gospel. I am of the conviction that writing a thesis on this interesting topic awakens in me both informative and transformative capacities of the word of God. The topic does not merely intellectually inform me, but more importantly spiritually transforms me as a believing Christian.

To achieve the goal I have set for myself, I intend to tackle the theme of “Relationality in John’s Gospel” in three parts: In the first Chapter I shall try to situate the topic within the wider context of the whole Gospel. Hence, questions about authorship, date and place of composition, purpose and setting of the Fourth Gospel, theological themes in the Gospel are the contents of Chapter One. The second Chapter is

the main section of the study where I shall zero in on the topic of Relationality. Here I shall examine the language and networks of relationships that can be derived in the Fourth Gospel. Three levels of relationships present in the gospel are to be identified, namely, intra-divine, divine-human, intra-human. Each level shall be explained using some key texts/passages from the FG. The third Chapter extends the discussion by identifying some theological repercussions of Relationality in John's Gospel. What does Relationality in John's Gospel say about the Trinity? What Christological, soteriological and ecclesiological insights can be unfolded from the topic?

The research is an exercise in historical-critical method. I shall heavily rely on library books, commentaries, and articles on John's Gospel available in the University of St. Joseph Library, Dominican Priory Library in Macau, book collections of Prof. Arnold Monera, my supervisor, and online sources.

Quotations from the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN IN A NUTSHELL

#### Introduction

The Gospel according John is also known as the “Fourth Gospel”(FG) because it is placed after the other three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. All four canonical Gospels tell the story of Jesus’ life and death. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have much in common. The first similarity can be seen in the literary structure.

<b>Synoptics</b>	<b>John</b>
Jesus baptized by John(Mark 1:9-11 par.)	John the Baptist (1:29-34)
Choosing disciples (Mark 1:16-20 par.)	Call of first disciples (1:35-51)
Preaching the Kingdom in Galilee (Mark 1:14-15 par.)	Public Ministry in Galilee (4:1-3, 43-46a)
Making trip to Jerusalem (once) (Mark 11:1-11 par.)	Jesus goes to Jerusalem (thrice) (12:12-16)
Dying (Mark 15:33-41 par.)	Dying (19:28-30)
Rising/Empty Tomb (Mark 16: 1-8 par.)	Rising/Empty Tomb (20:1-10)

Aside from this, the four Gospels “contain stories of miraculous healings and a miraculous feeding; the gathering of the disciples and Jesus’ teachings to them; Jesus’ conflicts with the religious leaders of his day.”<sup>1</sup>

But a closer study of the Fourth Gospel shows that it is very different from the Synoptic Gospels. PHEME PERKINS succinctly summarizes the difference in this way:

The Johannine Gospel differs from the Synoptics in the style and content of Jesus’ words which no longer focus on the kingdom of God,

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<sup>1</sup> Gail R. O’Day, “The Gospel According to John,” in *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1905.

use proverbs and parables, or appear in apophthegms. Instead, Jesus speaks in symbolic discourses, which often refer to his relationship to the Father.<sup>2</sup>

There are narratives in the Fourth Gospel that are not found in the Synoptics, like the foot-washing narrative, the miracle at the wedding at Cana, the raising of Lazarus, the healing of a man born blind, as well as long speeches and discourses of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the Synoptic gospels focus more on what *Jesus taught and did*, while John focuses more on *who Jesus is*. The Synoptic gospels are interested to show *about* Jesus, while the FG is concerned about *Jesus himself*. Unique to the FG has always been its distinctive portrayal of Jesus, e.g., “Lamb of God”, “the Word”, “I am.” As Bart Ehrman aptly explains, “Whereas in the other New Testament Gospels Jesus refuses to prove his identity by performing miraculous signs, here that is precisely what he does: his signs are performed and narrated to reveal his identity so that others might believe (cf. 2:10; 4:48; 20:30-31).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the central theme of John’s Gospel is the revelation of the mystery of the person of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God (20: 30-31). The evangelist gives us a glimpse into his eternal origin and divine nature.

The Johannine Jesus is unique because “‘he was in the beginning with God,’ active in creation, the source of life light and life (1:2-4). Hence, when he became incarnate in human

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<sup>2</sup> Pheme Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Student Edition, eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer & Roland E. Murphy (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993): 942-985, esp. 942. Apophthegm is a brief pointed saying, embodying an important truth in a few words.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Makati City, Philippines: St Pauls, 1994), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 92. In the Synoptics we are given the perception that “Jesus is Messiah the climax of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Mark 8:31), whereas the disciples in John have confessed this truth from the beginning (John 1:41-49).” See Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” 942.

flesh, he made known the eternal God, whom ‘no one has ever seen’ (1:14, 18).”<sup>5</sup> In short, the FG makes it clear that Jesus is not just a man; he is first and foremost the eternal Son of God. The FG can be best viewed as a supplement to the other Gospels where Jesus is presented as the only way to God.<sup>6</sup>

Even in Christian art, each of the canonical gospels portrays Jesus differently:

Matthew, for instance, is represented by a man, symbolizing Jesus’ humanness, because his gospel begins with the human ancestry of Jesus; Mark is represented by a lion, which lives in the wilderness, because his gospel opens with the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the lion symbolizes Jesus’ mighty power; Luke is represented by an ox, a sacrificial animal symbolizing Jesus’ sacrificial death, because his gospel starts with Zechariah entering the temple to burn incense before the daily sacrifices; John is represented by an eagle, a bird that can soar higher than any other bird, because the first words in his gospel are “in the beginning” meaning “in the heavens,” which symbolizes Jesus’ divinity.<sup>7</sup>

Because of these foregoing differences, many scholars, especially after 1938 until 1985 suggested that the Fourth Gospel originated from an independent tradition and hence independent from Synoptics. In effect, that means the Fourth Evangelist did not read, nor use the three other earlier Gospels. The stories that are found in John’s Gospel came to the community of John through a different line of tradition. In the words of Brown, “*John draws upon an independent and different tradition (or traditions) of Jesus’ deeds and sayings...* there is no convincing evidence that the fourth *evangelist* knew the present form of the

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<sup>5</sup> Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (eds.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha / Deuterocanonical Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 124 NT.

<sup>6</sup> Paul D. Wagner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1999), 56.

<sup>7</sup> John Edward Schwarz, *A Handbook of the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2004), 95-96.

Synoptic Gospels.”<sup>8</sup>On the other hand, most scholars now reject the view that the FG was a late theological reworking of the original tradition. As Frank Kermode asserts, “It is now commonly thought that the Fourth Gospel has sources as old as, though largely independent of, those available to the Synoptics.”<sup>9</sup>It is, however, difficult to determine which materials have been taken from sources available to the evangelist and what has been composed to him.

The focus in this chapter is to provide background information about the FG, like authorship, place and date of writing, historical setting and purpose, and more importantly, to delve on the theological themes that are *sondergut* or unique in the Johannine Gospel.

## 1. Question of Authorship

Like the other Synoptic Gospels, the FG itself is formally anonymous. Nowhere in the whole Gospel does the author mention his name. The attribution “According to John” was probably added two or three decades after the book was published.<sup>10</sup>

**External Evidence.**The FG has been traditionally attributed to John, the son of Zebedee. The first Christian writer to quote unambiguously from the FG and to ascribe the work to John is Theophilus of Antioch (c. 181 C.E.).<sup>11</sup> But we can go even earlier to Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon (ca.125-202) who can be considered one of the earliest defenders of “the apostolicity of John and its inclusion in the Christian canon of the four Gospels by

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<sup>8</sup> Brown, *The Gospels and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*, 12. Italics are from Brown.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Kermode, “John,” *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987): 440-465, esp. 440.

<sup>10</sup> See D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 138.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

appealing to the tradition that was circulating in Asia Minor in his time.”<sup>12</sup>Irenaeus remarked: “... John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.”<sup>13</sup> Most scholars recognize that as far as Irenaeus is concerned this “John” whom he emphatically insists as the fourth evangelist is certainly a reference to John the apostle, the son of Zebedee.<sup>14</sup>Inappropriately, “Irenaeus also appears to have confused the apostle, John the son of Zebedee, with the presbyter from Asia Minor known as John.”<sup>15</sup>Irenaeus has heard that John had lived until the time of the Roman Emperor Trajan, i.e., the beginning of the second century, C.E.<sup>16</sup>Irenaeus’ source of information as a child was Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna (d. 156), who in turn knew John the apostle. Irenaeus recalls, “I can remember precisely how Polycarp told of his association with John and with the others who had seen the Lord...he heard from the Lord concerning his miracles and his teachings.”<sup>17</sup>Even “Eusebius also recognized that Irenaeus had confused two different persons known as ‘John’.”<sup>18</sup>That confusion of identifying “John, the disciple of the Lord” with “John, the son of Zebedee” seems to be current belief in the early church.

Besides Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Papias, Tertullian, and Hippolytus of Rome likewise provide firm, second century evidence for the conviction that the apostle John wrote

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<sup>12</sup> Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” 946.

<sup>13</sup> Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 3.1.1. Translation is taken from Christian Classic Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.iv.ii.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Carson, Moo, Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 139.

<sup>15</sup> Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” 946.

<sup>16</sup> See Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 3.3.4; 2.33.3; also Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.23.3; 5.20.4-8.

<sup>17</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Revised Edition, trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), 239.

<sup>18</sup> Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” 946. It is said that Christians at Ephesus venerated John, the son of Zebedee, in the second century.

the FG. The Church historian Eusebius narrates that Clement wrote, “But that John, last of all, conscious that the outward facts had been set forth in the Gospels, was urged on by his disciples, and, divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.”<sup>19</sup> In brief, “from the end of the second century on, the writing of John by John the son of Zebedee is undisputed.”<sup>20</sup> Affirming John, the son of Zebedee, however, as the author of the FG is not without difficulties and objections. For one, the “development in Christology and the realized eschatology of the FG are well beyond what would be likely for a Galilean fisherman.”<sup>21</sup> In Acts of the Apostles (4:13), Peter and John, son of Zebedee, are described as *anqrwpoi ajgravmmatoi kai ijdiw`tai* (“uneducated and ordinary men”). Moreover, John 21 never identifies the Beloved Disciple with John the son of Zebedee. Are there other clues within the Gospel itself for the identity of the author?

***Internal Evidence.*** As with the Synoptic Gospels, it is problematic to be precise about the identity of the author. Like all the Gospels, the actual author is anonymous or unknown.<sup>22</sup> The *inscription* GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN first appearing in papyri 66 and 75 are second- and early third-century manuscripts respectively. Yet, based on the text, the FG provides us some information about the traditions that lie behind its composition.<sup>23</sup> O’Day explains,

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<sup>19</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.14.7.

<sup>20</sup> Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 240. See also Carson, Moo, Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 140.

<sup>21</sup> Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” 947.

<sup>22</sup> Scott M. Lewis, “The Gospel According to John,” *New Testament*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary, ed. Daniel Durken (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 309.

<sup>23</sup> O’Day, “The Gospel According to John,” 1905.

Both 19:35 [(‘He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.’)] and 21:24 [‘This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.’] refer to an eyewitness whose testimony forms the basis of the gospel story, and 21:20 identifies this witness as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved.’<sup>24</sup>

Granted that this witness is the beloved disciple, the identity of this beloved disciple is, however, still anonymous. The FG does not name him in the story, but merely as the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (see 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20).<sup>25</sup> It seems that for the writer of the FG what was important was not the name of the disciple, but his relationship to Jesus and the subsequent community. The beloved disciple as presented in the FG stands as a model of love and witness. As Keener says, his anonymity “allows him to stand in an idealized way for disciples in general, hence as a model for the implied audience (cf. 13:35; 15:8-10).”<sup>26</sup>

In short, we should refrain from identifying a single person as the author of the FG. We have to understand that, as Perkins rightly explains, “the ‘writing down’ of Johannine traditions was clearly part of the ongoing life of the community. It may have been the result of a ‘Johannine school’ of disciples of the Beloved disciple and teachers within the Johannine churches.”<sup>27</sup> In a similar fashion, Lewis states, “the text as we have it went through at least three stages of development and represented the tradition and teaching of the Johannine community rather than just one individual.”<sup>28</sup> Regarding this, Brown concludes,

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Interestingly, the Beloved Disciple (BD) appears occasionally but importantly at the crucial moment of Jesus’ life: at the Last Supper (13:23-25); at the foot of the cross together where Jesus entrusts his mother to the BD (19:26-27); the BD testifies that blood and water flowed from Jesus’ side when he was pierced with a spear (19:35); at the finding of the empty tomb (20:2-8); and at the resurrection appearance of the risen Lord in Galilee (21:7 and 21:20-23).

<sup>26</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Volume 1 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 87.

<sup>27</sup> Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” 946.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, “The Gospel According to John,” 309.

“Accordingly the present Gospel is thought to involve the work of two hands, an evangelist who composed the body of the Gospel and a redactor who later made additions.”<sup>29</sup>

But why did the early church pursue the question of apostolic authorship of the FG?

According to Perkins,

Appropriation of John by gnostics made it important for the ancient church to pursue the question of apostolic authorship. Some Christians were suspicious of John because it was so popular with heretical groups and was so different from the other Gospels. If it could be shown that the Gospel had apostolic origins, then orthodox Christians could adopt it. ...Once this apostolic identification was made, the place of the FG in the orthodox Christian canon was assured.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Place of Writing

Again, it is difficult to be precise about the place of writing of the FG. There are mainly five possible places proposed by both ancient and modern scholars: Ephesus, Antioch of Syria, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Transjordan. Irenaeus in his *Adversus haereses* (3.1.1) says that John, the disciple of the Lord, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.<sup>31</sup> Raymond Brown agrees that Ephesus is the best proposal because it fits the internal evidence of John and is “the only site that has ancient attestation.”<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, it is still hard to judge whether the FG was written in Ephesus in Asia Minor because the Gospel itself does not say anything about its origin in Asia Minor. Kümmel favors Antioch of Syria as the best possible locale because Ignatius of Antioch was

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<sup>29</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 366.

<sup>30</sup> Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” 946-947.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/fathers/view.cfm?recnum=1622> (accessed on January 20, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Raymond E. Brown and Francis J. Maloney, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 206.

the first person to have used John.<sup>33</sup> For C. K. Barrett the possible location is in Egypt because of the discovery of the Rylands and Egerton papyri in that place.<sup>34</sup>

All of the above-mentioned places of writing are just possibilities and scholars are not really sure about where the Gospel was written. The search for the place of the gospel's writing is not the main goal of the Gospel, as Brown puts it: "the Gospel's appeal to believers in 20:30-31 transcends place."<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Date of Writing

Scholars are now able to establish with reasonable ease the date of composition of the FG.<sup>36</sup> The FG itself reflects the tensions and pressures of the time in which it was written. It is widely accepted that the date of writing have been between 90 and 100 C.E.

The *terminus post quem* (i.e., the earliest time the event may have happened) is the expulsion of the Jewish Christians from the synagogue about 80 C.E. Although in John it

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<sup>33</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Revised edition (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1975), 247.

<sup>34</sup> The Rylands Library Papyrus 52 is also known as the St. John's fragment containing a few verses of John 18 (31-34, 37-38). It dates around 110-125 C.E. The Egerton Papyrus was discovered in Egypt and bought by the British Museum in 1934. It is dated to the early part of the 2nd century, making its composition fall somewhere between C.E. 50 and 100. One of the stories found in Egerton papyrus is very similar to that found in John 5:39-47 and 10:31-39. See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 128-129.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel*, 206.

<sup>36</sup> See Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 246; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 61; Lewis, "The Gospel According to John," 310.

seems that this expulsion may have already been some years past, yet the FG reflects “evidence of conflicts and disagreements between Jesus and the Jewish religious of his day.”<sup>37</sup> This manifest hostility between Jesus and his disciples *and* the Jews is best reflected in the term *aposynagōgos* (ἀποσυναγωγος-- “put out of the synagogue”) used thrice in the FG: 9:22, 12:42, and 16:2.<sup>38</sup> Scholars have suggested that ἀποσυναγωγος~refers to a formal ban on Christian participation in synagogue worship after 70 C.E.”<sup>39</sup> This ban goes to show that the [Johannine] “community was involved in acrimonious polemics with fellow Jews.”<sup>40</sup> In brief, Christians’ relationships with the synagogue and its leadership was a shaping concern for the FG.

The *terminus ante quem* (i.e., the latest possible date) is determined by Papyrus 52, the oldest textual witness of the NT that was discovered in Egypt (and published in 1935 by C.H. Roberts). This fragmentary papyrus is dated ca. 110-125 C.E. by many paleographers and it contains John 18:31-33, 37-38.<sup>41</sup> If Papyrus 52 is dated ca. 110-125 C.E., this

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<sup>37</sup> O’Day, “The Gospel According to John,” 1906.

<sup>38</sup> The term ἀποσυναγωγος~is unique in the FG. It is without parallels in contemporary Judaism. John 9:22, according to Edwin D. Freed, “reflects a time after the Jews introduced the benediction against the heretics into the synagogue service” (*The New Testament: A Critical Introduction*, Third Edition [Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001], 340). This benediction is rendered by the Hebrew phrase *Birkat ha-minim*, which means “Blessing of the heretics” – a euphemism for the curse of the heretics which are called *minim* in the original text. It is one of the Eighteen Benedictions of the Jews. It is a prayer to God that He may cause Christian Jews to be destroyed and excluded from the Book of Life. This benediction is directly related to the Christian movement. According to J. Louis Martyn (*History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, Third Edition [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003], 46-68), when John 9:22 speaks of a decision of “the Jews” to put those who believe in Jesus out of the synagogue, this is a direct reference to the addition of the *Birkat ha-minim* to the Eighteen Benedictions which used to be dated in 85 CE. The *Birkat ha-minim* shows that the Jews regarded Jewish Christians as a menace. See also Arnold Monera, “Purpose and Theology of the Fourth Gospel,” (Lecture Notes, USJ Macau, First Semester, Academic Year 2012-2013).

<sup>39</sup> O’Day, “The Gospel According to John,” 1906.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis, “The Gospel According to John,” 310.

<sup>41</sup> Philip W. Comfort, “Text and Manuscripts of the New Testament,” in *The Origin of the Bible*. ed. P. W. Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 179-207, esp. 194.

indicates that John's Gospel was already known in Egypt in the first quarter of the second century. Hence, the FG cannot be dated much later 100 C.E.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. The purpose of the Gospel

Of the four canonical gospels, John is the only one that articulates the purpose of its writing. It is also the central message that the evangelist wants to offer. This message/purpose is found in John 20:31 "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." Is it fair to limit the FG to one purpose or motive?

Most scholars argue that the FG exhibits different motives or purposes prompting its writing. Brown, for instance, proposes that John "in whole or in part was written with an apologetic, polemic, or missionary motif in regard to one or all of those groups."<sup>43</sup>

***Apologetic.*** John's Gospel as an apologetic against adherents of John the Baptist is elucidated by Brown in this way: Apparently the followers of John the Baptist might have placed their master higher than anyone else, even higher than Jesus.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the Synoptics identify John the Baptist as the greatest among those born of women (Matt 11:11 and Luke 7:28). The role of John the Baptist in the FG is so important that his place must be properly defined, e.g., his task is to reveal Jesus to Israel (1:31; 3:29), he was not the Messiah (1:20; 3:28), he came to testify to the light (1:6) since he himself was not the light (1:8), the one coming after him ranks ahead of him (1:15), he is not worthy to untie Jesus' sandals (1:27), and "He must increase but I must decrease" (3:30). Melvyn R. Hillmer explains, "This

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<sup>42</sup> Before the discovery of Papyrus 52 it was believed that the FG was composed in the second century.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 152.

<sup>44</sup> It is worthy to note that based on Acts 19:1-7, a group of disciples of John the Baptist continued to exist in the time of the early church.

emphatic affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, not John, and the sharpness of the denials suggest that there was a tension between the Johannine community and the followers of the Baptist when the Gospel was being written.”<sup>45</sup> The evangelist of the FG wants to emphasize the inferiority of John the Baptist to Jesus.

Scholars also see in the FG an *apologia* against an earlier form of Gnostic heresy that flourished during the second century. There is tradition that goes back to the second century and Irenaeus saying that the FG “was written against Cerinthus, a heretic of Asia Minor with Gnostic leanings.”<sup>46</sup> Gnosticism regarded the material world as evil, and equated creation with the Fall.<sup>47</sup> Thus, for the Gnostics, the world was created by a demiurge rather than by God. For Cerinthus, *Jesus* was “the son of Joseph, while *Christ* was a celestial aeon who descended on Jesus in the form of a dove for a while at the time of his baptism and left him before his death.”<sup>48</sup>

By the time the FG was written, believers held diverse views about Jesus.<sup>49</sup> Some believers doubted that Jesus had ever been truly human. Consequently, some scholars believe that the FG might have also been directed against Docetism. This heretical teaching contends that “Jesus Christ did not truly come in the flesh, for his flesh was only an

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<sup>45</sup> Melvyn R. Hillmer, “They Believe in Him: Discipleship in the Johannine Tradition,” *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 77-97, esp. 80.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 175.

<sup>47</sup> The earliest known commentary on the FG was written by a mid-second century Gnostic named Heracleon. See Dwight Moody Smith, “The Gospel According to John,” in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), 498-499.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 175.

<sup>49</sup> Freed, *The New Testament*, 341.

appearance—he only seemed to be a man.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, John’s Gospel is written to reassure these people of the reality of Jesus’ human, earthly existence. While an anti-docetic motif may be present in the FG, however, it is not as prominent as in the First Letter of John.

**Polemic.** The FG is likewise seen as a polemic against “the Jews” who were hostile to Jesus and his believers.<sup>51</sup> It was written to respond to the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:41; 20:31) and Son of God (John 10:34-36; 20:31). Jesus “came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him” (1:11). Freed notes, “Jesus’ own people are those Jews who reject him, and throughout the gospel they are categorized as ‘the Jews’.”<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, the term *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* in the FG has become “almost a technical title for *the religious authorities, particularly those in Jerusalem, who are hostile to Jesus.*”<sup>53</sup> Positively, a partial goal of the FG was to persuade Jewish crypto-Christians (inspired by the stories of Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, the man born of blind) in the 80s and 90s to confess Jesus publicly as “the Messiah, the Son of God” (John 20:31), even if they have to be “put out of the synagogue.”<sup>54</sup>

**Missionary.** The missionary purpose of the FG is to evangelize believers, both Jews and Gentiles, and to convince them of the true identity of Jesus as the incarnate God-man

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<sup>50</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, LXXVI.

<sup>51</sup> The Jews (*οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι*) occurs 71 times in John, see Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel*, WUNT, 220 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 93. The Jews in John are portrayed as the enemies of Jesus (8:31-59), but this refers only to those who are hostile to Jesus. It is for this reason that some scholars regard John’s portrayal of “the Jews” as anti-Jewish, the foundation for medieval and modern Christian anti-Semitism. See Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 215; Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 213.

<sup>52</sup> Freed, *The New Testament*, 340.

<sup>53</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), LXXI. Italics are Brown’s.

<sup>54</sup> E. L. Allen, “The Jewish Christian Church in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74/2 (1955): 88-92.

whose divine and human natures were perfectly united into one person who was prophesied “Messiah” and “savior of the world” (1:41; 3:16; 4:25-26; 8:58).<sup>55</sup> The signs performed by Jesus in John’s Gospel reinforce his true identity.<sup>56</sup> The summary statement in John 20:31, therefore, was intended to confirm believers in their faith, that they would continue in Jesus’ message and thus be his disciples indeed: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32). The evangelist’s foremost concern was to intensify the believer’s faith and to make it more profound.<sup>57</sup> But why should they be intensified? Because, as Brown concludes, “they have been challenged and attacked by those who do not accept Jesus and they have undergone traumatic expulsions from the synagogue/s.”<sup>58</sup>“That is where,” adds Brown, “the apologetics and polemics visible in the Gospel enter the picture.”<sup>59</sup>

By way of summary, Johannine commentators appreciating the richness of the FG have identified diverse purposes/motives in the gospel. Indeed, the Gospel may have had several aims so that it would be a mistake to over-emphasize one particular motive over the others. The apologetic, polemic and missionary motives proposed are not mutually exclusive.

## **5. Theological themes in the FG**

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<sup>55</sup> John MacArthur, *John: Jesus-the Word, the Messiah, the Son of God* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007), 2-3.

<sup>56</sup> See Warren Carter, *John: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publisher, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> Talbert, *Reading John*, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 152; also Talbert, *Reading John*, 62.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

Of the four canonical gospels, the FG is deemed as “the most spiritual” and “the most theological.”<sup>60</sup> In Christian art, the eagle symbolizes the FG. The eagle is believed to be the only animal that could gaze straight into the light of the sun. The lofty and deeply spiritual Gospel according to John soars into the mystery of the Incarnation of God and contemplates it so profoundly that the evangelist seems like an eagle flying toward the sun. Indeed, the portrayal of Jesus and his identity in the FG exceeds that of the Synoptics. Of Jesus, Dicharry says, “is clearly presented in a way quite different from that of the Synoptics, one in which he explicitly emphasizes his divinity, royalty, and exaltation throughout his life, above all at his death and resurrection.”<sup>61</sup> In the FG alone do we find Jesus proclaim, “I am the light of the World,” “I am the Bread of Life,” “Before Abraham was, I am,” and “I and the Father are one.” The formula  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  (“I am”) used in the absolute sense without a predicate corresponds to the name Yahweh, God’s own name (Exod 3:6, 14). While in the other [Synoptic] Gospels “Jesus refuses to prove his identity by performing miraculous signs, here [FG] that is precisely what he does: his signs are performed and narrated to reveal his identity so that others might believe (cf. 2:10; 4:48; 20:30-31).”<sup>62</sup>

It is interesting to note that in John the human origin of Jesus Christ is absent. Instead he is presented as the Word ( $\log\acute{o}\varsigma$ ) who preexists with the Father at the beginning of time (1:1), source of light, life and love, who becomes a historical person, living, ministering, dying, and rising as the triumphant King and Son of God. Being  $\log\acute{o}\varsigma$  Jesus makes himself more accessible to humankind by revealing God to the world. He came in our midst and identified with us as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). When

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<sup>60</sup> Warren Dicharry, *Paul and John*, Human Authors of the New Testament, Vol. 2 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 162.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>62</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 92.

the Word incarnated into the flesh (1:14) humankind can behold the glory of God the Father. Indeed, Jesus is the one who truly reveals God; he is the embodiment of God's very Word through which the world was made and by which all things have life (1:1-18). Jesus reveals the Father as creator and his own unique Father. He reveals what he sees and hears from the Father (3:11, 32; 8:26, 38, 40; 15:15); he reveals his [Father's] glory (2:11); the works of God (9:3); God's name (17:6, 26). He speaks what he was taught by the Father (3:34; 8:28; 12:49). Thus the role of Jesus as the "Son" and "Revealer" depends much on his intimate relationship with the Father. This is the reason why Bultmann dares to say "Jesus' words never convey anything specific that he has seen with the Father... for he speaks and acts constantly from within his oneness with God."<sup>63</sup>

Whatmore makes the Johannine Jesus distinctively unique? In John's Gospel, we see Jesus in an especially personal and relational frame. Jesus is the begotten Son of God (1:18), who at the same time is God (cf. 1:1-2; 5:18; 8:58). He became human (1:14) to provide humanity fullness of life (10:10), and to unite believers by dying on the cross (19:30). Believers can gain this fullness of life by remaining in him (17:3), which is also seen as personal relationship with him (15: 1-17). This intimate relationship implies believing and receiving him, in one another, and in the Holy Spirit. To receive Jesus is to receive the Father who sent him. To receive Jesus also means sharing his love to our neighbors even to the point of laying down one's life for one's friends (neighbors) (13:34-35; 15:12-13). Thus, in the FG one of the most interesting theological themes is the sharing or communion of life: sharing the life among the Son, Father, and Holy Spirit; sharing the life of the Son among believers, and sharing life among believers. This reciprocal sharing of life can be termed as "Relationality" which is this paper's main concern.

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<sup>63</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, with a New Introduction by Robert Morgan (New York: Scribner, 2007), 62.

## Conclusion

The author of this very spiritual and theological gospel, although traditionally ascribed to John, the son of Zebedee, is anonymous. The scholarly consensus is that the author was a Greek-speaking Christian who lived outside Palestine. In writing the FG the author utilized several written sources, plus the testimony of one of Jesus' closest followers (19:35; 21:24), whom he simply described as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (21:7).<sup>64</sup> It is possible that these various sources came from within the author's own community who started as a group of Jews who came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God and were in due course expelled from the synagogue as a result of their belief. Consequently, the expulsion led them to organize a worshipping community of their own. The deep theological reflections about the meaning, identity and importance of Jesus gleaned in the FG mirror the various conflicts that the Johannine community experienced sometime near the end of the first century.

As we have seen in the preceding pages, the FG has been written from a different perspective. While in the three synoptic gospels we learn *about* Jesus, in the FG the focus is on the person of *Jesus himself*. Rather than relating the synoptic parables describing the Kingdom, the FG presents Jesus' own descriptions of Himself, including the seven "I am" statements beginning in John 6. In John's Gospel, Jesus is *not* only the Son of God, but *also* God. The Johannine distinctive portrayal of the divine figure of Jesus exceeds that of the Synoptics. Reading the FG, we see Jesus in an especially personal and relational frame. Jesus is the unique revealer of the Father. Jesus is the embodiment of God's very Word. He is God's very presence on earth.

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<sup>64</sup> Erhman, *The New Testament*, 92.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE LANGUAGE OF RELATIONALITY IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

#### Introduction

We begin this chapter with the assumption that a distinctive feature of the FG is relationality. Examining closely John's Gospel one will not fail to notice that people are characterized by the network of relationships to which they belong. Relationships are usually determined by town of origin, ethnic or religious background, family relationships, status or function within the community. To cite some instances: Jesus is presented as the son of Joseph of Nazareth (John 1:45); the first disciples Simon, Andrew and Philip are described as from Bethsaida (1:43); Simon is called "son of John" (21:15); the nameless woman in John 4 is described as a woman of Samaria; Lazarus, Mary and Martha are from Bethany (11:1); the people are characterized as Ἰουδαῖοι ("Jews"); some "Greeks" wish to see Jesus (12:20ff.); the three Mary in the FG are described as Mary, mother of Jesus; Mary, wife of Clopas, and Mary from the town of Magdala; Caiaphas is introduced as high priest, while Nicodemus as a leader of the Jews; and finally, some nameless persons who are merely described as sick, as blind from birth (9:1ff.).

All of the above examples show the variety and network of relationships at work in the FG. But these relationships play a subordinate role in the FG. The major focus of the evangelist is on the person of Jesus and on how he relates to both God and human beings. This is what this present chapter hopes to elucidate.

## 1. Relationality as a distinctive theology of the FG

One of the most fascinating themes in the Fourth Gospel is the language of relationality. Surprisingly, nowhere in the NT do relational language appear as often as they do in the Gospel of John. In order to characterize these relationships, the evangelist uses a wide variety of images: father–son–brother, bridegroom–bride–friend of the bridegroom, friend–friend, teacher–disciple, healer–healed, sender–messenger, king–subject, lord–servant/slave, shepherd–sheep/lamb, vine-grower–vine-branches.<sup>1</sup> The images are taken from the various spheres of family life, friendship, politics, economy, religion, as well as what can be called today as health care, life stock, and agriculture.

When one analyzes these models of relationships that the FG uses, one notices that the relationships are consistently located on three levels: (a) God–Jesus, (b) God/Jesus–believers, and (c) believers–believers. These relations can also be termed as **intra-divine, divine-human, and intra-human relations**. “These three sets of relationships,” according to Bieringer, “are frequently described in very similar or even identical images and terminology.”<sup>2</sup> In all of these relations, the major focus of the evangelist is on the person of Jesus and how he relates to both God and human beings. The Johannine Jesus is presented as the true center and authentic revelatory bridge between God the Father and humans. It is the Son Jesus who truly reveals the Father; he is the one who clearly functions as the protagonist in the gospel. This is the first and foremost reason why the Johannine Jesus says, “If you know me, you

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<sup>1</sup> Reimund Bieringer, “Course Notes on Introduction to the Study of the Gospel of John,” (Faculty of Theology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), see <https://perswww.kuleuven.be/~u0007546/IPS414John/notes/introduction06.htm>. Accessed on 04 March 2013.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

will know my Father also” (14:7) because the Father is in Him and He is in the Father (10:38; 14:10, 11). This is exactly what John means when he says that “to see Jesus is to see the Father (14:9). In short, Jesus offers humanity a share in the relationship characterized by the same qualities which are true of Jesus’ relationship with God the Father. And after Jesus’ return to the Father, the believers are to share among each other the relationship that Jesus shared with them.

## **2. Intra-Divine Relations**

The Father and I are one (John 10:30).

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one (John 17:11).

The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one (John 17:22).

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son (John 1:14).

No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known (John 1:18).

I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God (John 20:17).

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate [παράκλητος], to be with you forever (John 14:16)

***Father-Son Relationship.*** The first movement of relationship that one finds in the FG is the reciprocal relations between the Father and Son. According to Harold F. Carl, this relational language

may come in the form of names or titles, prepositional, directional or spatial language, oneness motifs or reciprocity statements, personal, reflexive and possessive pronouns, or

parallel language used in describing two or more of the persons of the Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

The best way to describe the relationship between Jesus and God is the use of proper names “Father” and “Son” (parent-child relationship). The significance of the Father/Son relationship in John’s Gospel cannot be undervalued.<sup>4</sup> This theme is clearly shown in the Prologue where God and Jesus are presented as Father and Son. The commentator Mark L. Appold calls it “one of the most constitutive and significant features of Johannine theology.”<sup>5</sup> In the FG the word “Father” (in Greek *pathvr*) in reference to God the Father appears about 120 times, more than the three Synoptics combined; while “Son” (*υιου*) in its absolute form occurs eighteen times.<sup>6</sup>

A short excursus on the usage of God as *Father* and Jesus as *Son* is in order.

**God as Father.** The picture of God as Father is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. The relationship between God and Israel is often described in the metaphor of father and son, as shown in its meaning in Psalm 103:13, Proverbs 3:12.

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him. (Ps 103:13)

... for the Lord reproves the one he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov 3:12)

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<sup>3</sup> Harold F. Carl, “Relational Language in John 14-16: Implications for the Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Global Journal of Classical Theology* 02/1 (Dec 1999): 1-19, see <http://www.galaxie.com/article/gjct02-1-02>. Accessed on March 05, 2013. Carl demonstrates that in John 14-16 there is a strong relational language showing the unity and oneness of God in will, mind, action and essence.

<sup>4</sup> The Father-Son relationship appears as one of the most constitutive and significant features of Johannine theology.

<sup>5</sup> Mark L. Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, WUNT, Reihe 2, 1 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr & Paul Sieback, 1976), 55.

<sup>6</sup> Of the 414 times the NT uses *pathvr*, more than 250 times the term is used of God. The greatest number of occurrences of *pathvr* is in the FG (136 times). Jesus himself speaks of God as Father three times in Mark, four in Q, thirty-one in Matthew, and 100 in John. See O. Michel, *pathvr*, in *EDNT* 3 (1993): 53-57, esp. 53; also Jarl Fossum, “Son of God,” in *ABD* 6 (1992): 128-137, esp. 136.

Interestingly, Mark, the earliest to be written, is also believed to be the first gospel to use the Aramaic word *Abba* (“Father”) as a reference to God (Mark 14:36).<sup>7</sup> The evangelist Mark, however, employs the word Father four times only (8:38, 11:25, 13:32, 14:36). In contrast, the FG uses this title constantly and is central to his Christology. The table below shows John’s various forms of the usage of Father:

Titles	Frequency of Usage
The Father	83
My Father	27
Father	9
Holy Father	1 (17:11)
Your Father	1 (8:42)

As can be gleaned above, “Father” is a common name for God in the FG. Already in the Prologue, God as the Father appears twice where he is portrayed as the Father of Jesus, the only Son (1:14, 18).<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, Jesus refers to God as “my Father,” (οἰ πατηρ μου, e.g., 2:16; 6:32; 8:54; 14:23) or as “the Father,” (οἰ πατηρ, e.g., 1:14; 3:35; 15:16; 16:15) and most typically as “the Father who sent me” (e.g., 8:18; 14:24; 20:21). In John, God as Father is a motto for Jesus. It is interesting to note that the FG never uses the phrase “our Father.” Marianne M. Thompson nicely explains why: “...in the Gospel Jesus does not speak of God as ‘our Father’ in a way that includes the disciples with him in such a designation, or in a form of address

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<sup>7</sup> See Daniel L. Akin, David P. Nelson & Peter R. Schemm (eds.), *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 203.

<sup>8</sup> Moody Smith, *John*, 62. The word *monogenhv* in both passages refers to Jesus as the only Son of the Father.

commended to the disciples as their own.”<sup>9</sup> Only the Johannine Jesus can exclusively call God as “my father” and Jesus alone deserves to be called the υἱοῦ. By calling God specifically his own Father, Jesus was claiming equality with God the Father. This unique relationship of equality between the Son and the Father is also expressed in the identification of Jesus as God’s “one-and-only (μονογενῆ) Son.”<sup>10</sup> As Carl describes, “Because the Son belongs to the Father (is from the Father) he is what the Father is.”

Going back again to John 3:16-17, the role of the Father to the Son can likewise be seen from the perspective of missionary enterprise: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son...For God sent the Son into the world...” It is interesting to note that “giving” (ἐ [δωκεν]) in v. 16 stands parallel to “sending” in the next verse.<sup>11</sup> The passage shows the sending Father as the origin or initiator of the missionary enterprise in the FG; he is the unsent sender of the Son, of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Okure further notes, the Father’s “sending of his ‘uniquely beloved Son’ reveals his supreme love for humanity.”<sup>13</sup> With regard to the promised Spirit, it is sent by the Father and the Son, in close cooperation (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). In John’s Gospel, this “sending / giving of the Spirit takes place at the return of Jesus to the

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<sup>9</sup>, Marianne M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 57.

<sup>10</sup> D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 129-130.

<sup>11</sup> Martin de Jonge, “Christology and Theology in the Fourth Gospel,” in *The Four Gospels. Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, Vol. 3 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1835-1853, esp. 1846.

<sup>12</sup> Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, WUNT, Reihe 2, 31 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), 23.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Father at the completion of his mission.”<sup>14</sup> John McPolin sums this up by calling the Father “the mission, the source from which all missions derive.”<sup>15</sup>

Another interesting point to notice is the portrayal of Jesus in 6:40 as doing the will of the Father, rather than the will of God.<sup>16</sup> Observe also that in John’s Gospel believers are born not of the “Father” but of God (1:13). It becomes clear, then, that the term Father in the FG traces back its meaning in his relationship with the Son Jesus, since Jesus is the one who reveals this title from heaven.<sup>17</sup> The “Father” terminology provides us the idea that only Jesus deserves to be called the “Son.”<sup>18</sup>

***Jesus as the Son of God.*** In Jewish traditions the title “son of God” applies to those who belong to God, the people of God. Thus, Israel is called God’s son (Exod 4:22-23; Jer 31:9) because he is God’s chosen and protected people. Moses could also be called God’s son. The Rabbi was called heavenly son. The heavenly hosts (angels) too were called sons of God.<sup>19</sup> The King could be called “Son of God” (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps 2:7). This was a royal title throughout the Ancient Near East.<sup>20</sup> In the NT, the title “Son of God” is a clue to the identity of Jesus.

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<sup>14</sup> De Jonge, “Christology and Theology in the Fourth Gospel,” 1846.

<sup>15</sup> John McPolin, “Mission in the Fourth Gospel,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 36 (1969): 113-122, esp. 114, 121.

<sup>16</sup> Carl, “Relational Language in John 14-16,” 2.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 57. Thompson warns that the (frequent) use of “Father” in the FG is not meant as a substitute term of “God” just like one of the many epithets for God.

<sup>18</sup> See also Jouette M. Bassler, “God in the NT,” in *ABD* 2 (1992): 1049-1055, esp. 1054-1055.

<sup>19</sup> Kenner, *the Gospel of John*, 294

<sup>20</sup> Fossum, “Son of God,” 128-129.

In Fossum's counting, Jesus is called "(the) Son" / "Son of God" twenty-seven times in John's Gospel.<sup>21</sup> The title "Son of God" appears especially in confession-like formulas, for instance:

... And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God (1:34).

Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (1:49)

But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name (20:31).

Again, Fossum succinctly observes,

While 'Son of God' is associated with "the Father" only twice (15:25; 10:56), 'the Son,' which is found 18 times is virtually always correlated with the idea of God the Father. The intimacy between the Father and the Son is thereby emphasized (1:18; 3:35-36; 5:19-26; 6:40; 8:35-36; 14:13; 17:10). The Son does only what the Father wants him to do; he is thus a true revelation of God.<sup>22</sup>

In the FG Jesus is conceived as the preexistent "Son of God" who had been "sent" by the Father into the world in order to bring salvation to humankind (3:16-17). The expression  $\text{ο}ϯ \text{πε}ν\mu\gamma\alpha\sim \text{με} \text{πα}θ\eta\upsilon\rho$  is key to Jesus' self-consciousness. The one who was sent came "from above," "from heaven" (3:13, 31; 6:31-58; 8:23), that is "from God" (6:46; 8:42, 47; 9:16, 33; 13:3; 16:30). All "these expressions underscore the divine origin and the unique authority of Jesus' words (and actions)."<sup>23</sup> Because of this consciousness, according to Okure, "Jesus does not his own will but

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> De Jonge, "Christology and Theology in the Fourth Gospel," 1846.

the Father's (5:30), seeks not his own glory but the Father's (7:18; 8:50, 54).<sup>24</sup> Jesus' mission, therefore, is to reveal the Father to those who believe in him.

One passage worth mentioning, because it makes use of what Carl labels as prepositional/directional/special language<sup>25</sup>, is John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through [διὰ] me." It is through (διὰ) or by means of the Son that one reaches the Father. The Son "alone is the link between God and humans, and there is no access to God independent of him."<sup>26</sup> F. F. Bruce says that Jesus can say this because he is the embodiment of God's self-revelation.<sup>27</sup> The Son Jesus reflects the very nature of the Father that he is the only way to the Father and that to see him is to see the Father. How does Jesus, God's word and wisdom, reveal the Father to us? He does so through his words, and above all through his signs, his miracles, his actions, and his way of life.

Besides Father-son terminology, the evangelist uses other motifs to express intra-divine relationship. In John 15:1, Jesus remarks, "I am the true *vine*, and my Father is the *vine-grower*." In John 1:29, 36 Jesus is described as "the *lamb* of God who takes away the sin of the world." The evangelist himself testifies to Jesus' unique relationship to God: "And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God" (1:34).

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<sup>24</sup> Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Carl, "Relational Language in John 14-16," 2.

<sup>26</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Second Edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 72.

<sup>27</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 299.

Another text that perhaps best expresses the unique relationship between God and Jesus is found in John 5:26: “For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” This is important to understand, according to Bieringer, because human persons do not have life in themselves; they are rather born out of God and receive life as a gift, when they believe and when they are raised.<sup>28</sup> To substantiate this point, take a look at these passages:

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God (1:12-13).

Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above (3:3).

Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes (5:21).

Summing up the intra-divine relationality: The sheer frequency of the use of relational terms “Father-Son” in John simply indicates “the importance of the relationship between the Father and the Son for him.”<sup>29</sup> Historically, the terms “Father” and “Son” have been understood to express two concepts: equality and differentiation. Augustine has a beautiful way of explaining this by saying that the Son is not the Father, but that the Son in no respect disagrees with the Father in likeness. There is an “all-sided likeness subsisting between the Father and the Son.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Bieringer, “Course Notes.”

<sup>29</sup> Carl, “Relational Language in John 14-16,” 2.

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, trans. John Gibb, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol. 7 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 327.

Tertullian argued that a Father must have a Son to be a Father and vice-versa. The two terms are reciprocally related and hence imply differentiation and relationship.<sup>31</sup>

Already in John's Prologue (1:14, 18), God and Jesus are presented as Father and Son. This relationship finally culminates in the message the risen Christ gave to Mary Magdalene: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (20:17). According to De Jonge, "The Son does nothing "on his own" (5:19, 30; 7:17, 28; 8:28, 42; 12:49; 14:10); he does God's will (4:34; 5:30; 6:38-40) ... In fact, his works are the works of the Father and the Father works through him (14:10).<sup>32</sup> The Son is not an independent figure but intimately one with the Father. The Son has meaning only in relation to the Father. This "mutual indwelling" of God and Jesus becomes then the model and the basis for the Jesus-believers relationship.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. Divine-Human Relations

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life (3:16).

On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, I in you (14:20).

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing (15:5).

Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God' (20:17)

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever

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<sup>31</sup> Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 9. 1-2, trans. Peter Holmes, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 604.

<sup>32</sup> De Jonge, "Christology and Theology in the Fourth Gospel," 1847.

<sup>33</sup> A very good passage that shows the idea of "mutual indwelling" is John 10:38 – "Believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come (16:13)

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples (15:8).

The second major reciprocal relationality found in the FG centers on the relation between divine and human, that is, between God/Jesus/Spirit and believers. John's Prologue affirms that Jesus is the divine Son of God eternally existing with the Father who assumed human flesh (1:14) so that he might become both the Son of God and Son of Man and through him humans can relate to God. Of this Augustine (354-430 C.E.) once wrote:

God made his Word, through whom he created all things, head over them and joined them to him as his members, so that he might be Son of God and son of man, one God with the Father, one man with men. So when we turn to God in prayer, we do not separate the Son from him, and when the body of the Son prays, it does not separate its head from itself: it is the one Savior of his body, our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, who prays for us and prays in us and is prayed to by us.<sup>34</sup>

Irenaeus, an early church Father who lived around 140-204 C.E., explains this relationship from a soteriological point of view: Jesus, the Word, "became man among men so that he might unite the end with the beginning, that is, Man with God." He goes on to explain that "Man does not see God by his own powers; but God of his own will appears to men, to whom he wills, and when he wills, and as he wills."<sup>35</sup> Similarly Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 C.E.), in his *De Professione Christiana*, professed that "the zenith of the Lord's glory is that He gives to sinners a share in His

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<sup>34</sup> Augustine *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, 85, I. See: [www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf108txt](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf108txt) as cited in *Divine Office*, Vol. 2 (London: Collins, 2006), 224.

<sup>35</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* Book 4. 20, 4-5; as cited in *Divine Office*, Vol. 1 (London: Collins, 2006), 109;

own divinity” and so “man can reach the perfection which God demanded” just as “earthly can become heavenly” but only through the divine initiative.<sup>36</sup>

In this divine-human relationality Jesus, who is both divine and human, “offers human beings a share in a relationship characterized by the same qualities which are true of Jesus’ relationship with God.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, one sees the movement from the Father-Son relationship to the Jesus-believers relationship. The Father-Son relationship does not exist for its own sake. It is neither self-sufficient nor closed. It is open to include others. It has to be shared with humans, with the Father-Son relationship serving as source and model. In the divine-human relations Jesus invites believers to share the same kind of relationship that he has with his Father. Thus, Jesus says, “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love” (15:9). The love of the Father for the Son is the model of love the Son has for the believers. It becomes clear in the FG that believers can only relate to God the Father through the mediation of Jesus, as Anderson says: “humanity can be drawn to the Father through the revealing initiative of God”<sup>38</sup> through Jesus. It is only Jesus, the unique Son of God, who can truly reveal the Father to humans: “If you know me, you will know my Father also” (14:7). Jesus, according to Ehrman, “is the embodiment of God’s every Word, through which the world was made and by which all things have life (1:1-18).”<sup>39</sup> Those who see and accept Jesus have seen and accepted the Father: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9). Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life, and those who reject

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<sup>36</sup> A. S. Dunstone, *The Atonement in Gregory of Nyssa*, Paperback edition (London: The Tyndale Press, 1964), 6-31.

<sup>37</sup> Bieringer, “Course Notes.”

<sup>38</sup> Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 218.

<sup>39</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 92.

him are subject to the wrathful judgment of God (3:36). “Jesus is the tangible presence of God in the world.”<sup>40</sup>

***Abiding in the Son.*** The evangelist John presents Jesus as being sent by the Father for the redemption of the world. Behind God’s sending of the Son lies his love for sinful humanity living in darkness. This is clearly seen in John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life.” “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; *abide* in my love” (15:9). In another obvious text, “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” (15:10). It is interesting to note the FG’s use of the Greek verb *mevnw* (“to remain,” “to abide”) in order to emphasize how believers should relate and respond to Jesus’ invitation. In John 15 Jesus is challenging his followers to *abide* in him, as he also abides in them.<sup>41</sup> This means that the mutual relationality between God/Jesus and believers is one of presence and mutual indwelling. Jesus and the believers relate like the vine and the branches (15:2, 50) mutually abiding in each other. The branches cannot survive when cut off from the vine. As believers, Jesus is the source of our life. All the fruits we bear for the kingdom of God come from our union with him.

***Knowing and Seeing the Son.*** The intimate relationship between Jesus and the believers also has implications for the “knowing” and the “seeing”. Jesus identifies himself as the “good shepherd” who knows very well his sheep and is willing to die for them: “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father

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<sup>40</sup> O’Day, “The Gospel According to John,” 1937.

<sup>41</sup> H. Hübner, art. *mevnw*, *EDNT* 2 (1991): 407-408. See the use of *mevnw* in 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16.

knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep” (10:11-15). Jesus’ sacrificial death is the ultimate expression of the love relationship that exists between God and Jesus. This mutual love relationship is now extended to his followers: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (15:13). Jesus here uses another relational term by referring to his followers as “friends.”

Because only Jesus has seen the Father, thus only through Jesus would the disciples / believers know and see the Father: “If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” It is humanity’s close encounter with Jesus the Son that makes it possible for them to have a new experience of God as Father. Philip’s statement to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied” (14:8), confirms that he did not understand that Jesus’ very presence in the world as the incarnate Word, and all that he says and does, reveal God to them. When Jesus asked them the question, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” (14:10), he is intimating to them that divine-human relationship requires faith. We have seen in Chapter One that the evangelist’s purpose in writing the FG was to evoke faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. This faith is a living bond. It is another name for love and life. To believe is to have life from the Son; to refuse to believe is to choose death. The believers need have no fear for Jesus is the divine presence.

***Jesus as the Son of Man.*** We end with a brief excursus on *Son of Man* used in the FG – a title of Jesus that best expresses the divine-human relationality.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The expression “the Son of Man” has been a central issue in New Testament studies since the beginning of modern scholarship. The fact that Jesus uses this title almost exclusively gives the scholars the clue that this term is a key to Jesus’ own consciousness of self. See Carmelo B. Sorita, *The Son of Man as Jesus and His Messianic Community* (Naga City, Philippines: Ateneo de Naga University Press, 2005).

According to Oscar Cullmann, οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, “the Son of man” is the slavish rendering of an original Aramaic expression *barnāshā* which means “one who belongs to the human classification.”<sup>43</sup> But this specific human being is one and the same with “the Word that preexists with God in the very beginning of time existing with him as his image which is by his very nature divine Man.”<sup>44</sup>

The Son of Man occurs 69 times in the Synoptic Gospels, while it appears only 13 times in John.<sup>45</sup> Only in John, however, can one find Jesus personally designating himself as the Son of Man: “So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me’” (8:28). In the Synoptic Gospels “the son of man” title could mean three things:<sup>46</sup> (a) the Son of Man in his present activity on earth (e.g., Mark 2:10, 27); (b) the Suffering Son of Man (e.g., Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34); and (c) the apocalyptic/eschatological Son of Man (e.g., Matt 24:30ff; 25:31ff). The Johannine Son of Man sayings, however, “are stripped of their otherwise characteristically apocalyptic features.”<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the basic orientation of the title “Son of Man” remains the same. It expresses the true nature of Jesus as both divine and human. Jesus is the Son of God that comes to earth as Son of Man. Let us take a look at some of the Son of Man passages in John’s Gospel.

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<sup>43</sup> Oscar Cullmann *The Christology of the New Testament*, Revised edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 137. The title “son of man” is inspired by Daniel 7:13-14 where the expression describes a cloud-borne humanlike figure which has become in Jewish traditions a designation for “a transcendent eschatological agent of divine judgment and deliverance.” See George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Son of Man,” *ABD* 6 (1992): 137-150, esp. 137.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Kohlenberger, Goodrick, Swanson, *Greek English Concordance*, 735, 737.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 253.

<sup>47</sup> Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, 48.

And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’ (1:51).

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life (3:13-14).

For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man (5:26-27).

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal (6:27).

Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified’ (12:23).

“The Son” of Man sayings in the FG are “associated with judgment and with Jesus’ humanity and his death.”<sup>48</sup> It can be observed that the FG uses two verbs mainly in relation to the term “Son of Man”:  $\alpha\gamma\iota\omega\nu\omega$  (“lift up,” “exalt”) and  $\delta\omicron\chi\alpha\upsilon\zeta\omega$  (“to glorify”). According to Nickelsburg, “Both verbs denote a status traditionally ascribed to the son of man in the future, but both are also used of the servant of the Lord in the LXX of Second Isaiah.”<sup>49</sup> This means that the evangelist in his use of “Son of Man” has conflated several Jewish traditions to imply that the exalted [glorified] one is identical with the persecuted one [the suffering servant of the Lord of Deutero-Isaiah].<sup>50</sup> The “lifting up” does not only explicate the Revealer’s [Jesus]

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<sup>48</sup> Nickelsburg, “Son of Man,” 146.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* The evangelist John has conflated the Enochic term “son of man” with the notion in Wisdom 2 and 5 to arrive at the nuance that the exalted Christ is identical with the persecuted Christ.

return from the world to his heavenly home, but it is likewise applied to the cross.<sup>51</sup> Appold argues that contrary to its usage in the Synoptic Gospels where  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$  refers to the ascension and the exaltation of Christ into power and glory, in John the “lifting up” theme is made to refer already to the cross; he considers the passion and death of Jesus as moments of glory and exaltation.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, the glory that applies to the Son of Man applies simultaneously to the Father since the Son of Man is also the heavenly Son of God.<sup>53</sup> This interpretation is possible because the Son of Man is consistently understood as a heavenly being who is one with the Father. This makes sense because of what Jesus says in John 6:62, “Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?”

In John 6:27 the “Son of Man” is the functionary of “the Father”: “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the *Son of Man* will give you. For it is on him that *God the Father* has set his seal.” Jesus is the one who gives “food” for life and the “bread” of life itself that has descended from heaven (John 6:35-38).

In summary: The title “Son of Man” bespeaks of divine-human relationship. Jesus as the Son of Man is not simply a human being but the one who comes from heaven and is returning to heaven. The Son of God became Son of Man in order to reveal the Father. In and through him we, believers, can relate to the Father because

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<sup>51</sup> Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, 52. See also Frank Kermode, “John,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter & Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 440-466, esp. 458.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> That Jesus is both son of God and son of Man is clearly seen in John 1:49, 51; 5:25-29.

he says: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus is the revelatory bridge between God and humanity; he is the intersection between heaven and earth and to know him is to know the Father. As branches united to Jesus, believers are expected to bear much fruit pleasing to God, the vinedresser<sup>54</sup>: “My father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples” (John 15:8). The return of the Son to the Father ends the Son’s mission on earth. This is followed by the sending of the Holy Spirit as another Advocate to the community of believers (14:16; 15:26; 16:7). Just as the Son is dependent on the Father, the Spirit is dependent on the Son. “The Spirit will bring about a more intense and more complete understanding of Jesus’ words and actions on behalf of the Father.”<sup>55</sup>

#### **4. Intra-Human Relations**

The glory of the Son and Father is the inclusion of broken humanity in the Triune fellowship of the Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>56</sup> As T. E. Pollard expounds, the “Trinity’s mutual interpenetration,” implicit in the Johannine passages, “must be reflected in the One Church in whose common life all the distinct churches share by intercommunion, mutual recognition, and interchange of ministries.”<sup>57</sup> The Godhead invites humanity into its own communion. The love and unity that characterize the Triune God becomes the model for the love the believers are to have

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<sup>54</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 354.

<sup>55</sup> De Jonge, “Christology and Theology in the Fourth Gospel,” 1850.

<sup>56</sup> This is a theme prominent in the so-called Farewell Discourse (13:31-17:26).

<sup>57</sup> T. E. Pollard, “That They All May Be One” Jn xvii.21 and the Unity of the Church,” *Expository Times* 70/5 (1959): 149-150.

for one another. This is the inner dynamic of the three levels of relationships in the FG. Again, relationships never end in themselves. It is always an invitation to reach out to the other. It is open to include others. We have seen above the dynamic movement from the Father-Son relationship via the Jesus-believers relationship to the believer-believer relationship. Neither the Father-Son nor the Jesus-believer relationship exists for its sake. Talking about the three relational movements, Bieringer explains, “Each in its own way becomes the source and the model of another relationship which one of the partners of the relationship initiates with a new party.”<sup>58</sup> It is not enough for Jesus to have only said, “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.” After Jesus’ return to the Father, the believers are tasked to share among each other a relationship similar to the one Jesus shared with them. Hence, the Lord says:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

“I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another” (John 15:17).

Indeed, the capacity for love gives depth to the inner relation among the believers; it brings people closer to each other. There is no doubt that the fourth evangelist’s intention goes beyond simply the believer-believer relationship but that it extends as an open invitation to people outside of the believing community in order that they too may come to faith. To be engaged continually in mutual love is the necessary consequence of life in faith. After all, John 3:16 insists on God’s love for “the world,” not just within the believing community.

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<sup>58</sup> Bieringer, “Course Notes on John.”

Let us now identify some passages in the FG that portrays the intra-human relationality:

*Jesus entrusted his mother to the beloved disciple*(John 19:26-27). All of the four canonical gospels mention the presence of women at the foot of the cross but in different ways. The table below is helpful.

<b>The Fourth Gospel</b>	<b>Synoptic Gospels</b>
<p>When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home (19: 26 27).</p>	<p>There were also women looking on from a distance... These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem (Mk15:40-41).</p> <p>Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matt 27:55).</p> <p>But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things (Lk 23:49).</p>

It is interesting to note that only the FG has this account; only here is there a mention of Jesus’ mother at the foot of the cross escorted by the “Beloved Disciple.” In the Synoptics there were women mentioned but they were watching Jesus from a distance.

On that first Good Friday afternoon the dying Jesus entrusts his mother and the beloved disciple to each other as mother and son (John 19:26-27). During his

earthly life Jesus and Mary were related to one another as son and mother. Now at his death, he invites his mother, whom the gospel presents as a disciple, to relate to the Beloved Disciple in the way she had related to Jesus. In same manner, the disciple is invited to relate to Jesus' mother the way Jesus had related to her. As Mary stood beneath her son's cross, she becomes the mother of humanity (19:25) when the "disciple took her into his own home (19:27).

In the Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* by Pope John Paul II there is an explanation of εἰς τὰ ἰδία: "Clearly, in the Greek text the expression 'eis ta idia' goes beyond the mere acceptance of Mary by the disciple in the sense of material lodging and hospitality in his house; it indicates rather a communion of life established between the two as a result of the words of the dying Christ...."<sup>59</sup> The entrusting of Mary to the disciple indicates not only the mutual care between the two followers of Jesus, Mary and the Beloved Disciple; it also interprets a totally new form of "interpersonal relationship - a communion of life between the apostle and the mother of God."<sup>60</sup> Thus "it constitutes a new intimate relationship of a child with its mother."<sup>61</sup> Now, the "woman" of both the wedding feast at Cana and at the foot of the cross has become mother of all the disciples, mother of all the "children of God" (1:12-13).

At the heart of Jesus' ministry is the creation of a new family of God. The creation of this family is symbolized here when the beloved disciple takes Jesus' mother to his own home (19:27). In many of the stories from the FG, the heart of the

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<sup>59</sup>See Footnote #130 of *Redemptoris Mater* where is explanation is to be found. See: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents).

<sup>60</sup> Sławomir Biela, and Jarosław Zaniewski, *In The Arms of Mary*, Revised Second Edition (Orange, CA: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2005), 136.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

gospel is lodged in language of intimacy and family. Jesus' mother, the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and the beloved disciple are all bound to Jesus with the intimate bonds of love.

***That they may be one, as we are one***(John 17:11). The oneness motif is one of the many expressions of relationality in the FG.<sup>62</sup>That "they may be one" was Jesus' prayer for his believers. Jesus' prayer for unity is grounded in the unity of Jesus and the Father. The community of believers is one because they share together in the relationship of God and Jesus. It is only in unity that believers encounter Jesus, the Revealer of God, in the Christian community. In return, the community's oneness serves as a witness to the world.<sup>63</sup> The world will know that believers are one in the Spirit by their love. Love defines the community's relationship to one another and with God and Jesus. In short, using his own oneness with the Father as the paradigm (see 17:11, 23), Jesus is asking that the believers be integrated into this relation so that they may be one. Divorced from that context, believers' desire for oneness becomes fundamentally misdirected and harmful.

***Believers need the Paraclete.*** The believing community will find it difficult relating to each other (e.g., loving each other) as Jesus related to them out of their own strength. Thus, Jesus has promised them the coming of the Spirit, the Advocate, to work within them forever (14:26). The Spirit will "teach you everything, and remind you of all I have said to you" (15:26); "the Spirit will guide you into all the truth" (16:13). The Johannine community will experience the hatred of the world and

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<sup>62</sup> According to Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, 285, "oneness is the distinctive feature of the Johannine church. It is a oneness, however, which can only be understood within the context of Jesus' oneness with the believers and his prior oneness with the Father."

<sup>63</sup> O'Day, "The Gospel According to John," 1942.

thus have to remain faithful. With the Spirit in their midst there is no need for them to fear the world (16:2, 33). The Spirit will be their defender and consoler. He is the continued presence of God with the disciples. The Johannine community is called to witness to the world that “true life consists in living in communion with the Son and the Father.”<sup>64</sup>

*Feed my lambs.* After the footwashing narrative in John’s Gospel, Jesus says: “So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (13:14-15). Love in the community manifests itself in serving one another. The disciples cannot love Jesus without acknowledging their fellow disciples. Jesus has proven to them that the greatest expression of love is to serve one’s fellow, even if it entails the sacrifice of one’s life (15:13). Thus, Jesus asks Simon Peter thrice, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? Every after Peter’s answer, Jesus tells him, “Feed my lambs,” “Tend my sheep.” Love is not just emotion; it is never abstract. Love entails corresponding action and responsibility. Authority is not lording it over others; it is servant-leadership. No one can truly love Jesus without loving the “sheep / lambs” that Jesus loved so much with his whole life.

## **Conclusion**

In our foregoing discussion and analysis we have attempted to demonstrate how deeply relationality is embedded in the FG. The “oneness motif” is a distinctive feature and concern of John’s Gospel. The evangelist in order to demonstrate the “oneness motif” uses a network of relationships which are taken from various spheres of family life, friendship, politics, agriculture, etc. Thus, we see images and motifs,

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<sup>64</sup> De Jonge, “Christology and Theology in the Fourth Gospel,” 1853.

like Father and Son, mother and son, vine and vine-grower, sheep and shepherd, employed by the evangelist to show mutual relationships.

But the most important highlight of relationality in the FG is to be located on three levels: intra-divine (i.e., God—Jesus/Spirit), divine-human (God/Jesus—believers), and intra-human (believers—believers) relations. In all of these relations, Jesus is presented by the evangelist as the true center and revelatory bridge between God the Father and humans. It is Jesus, the preexistent Son of God, who is the true revealer of the Father to humanity. Jesus, the one and only Son, is the way to the Father because he belongs to the Father and he is whom the Father has sent to the world to be its savior. Jesus, both human and divine, offers believers a share in a relationship he has with his Father. Believers are called to abide/remain in Jesus' love. Mutual relationality involves presence and mutual indwelling. Genuine relationships are never closed. They have to be shared to bear fruits. Believers in return are called upon to share that relationship with fellow humans, with the Father-Son relationship serving as source and model. The Trinity's mutual interpenetration ought to be reflected in the believers' lives. Love of God entails corresponding action and responsibility towards the neighbor. Oneness or unity is what Jesus prayed for before his crucifixion. Jesus, upon his return to the Father, sent the Spirit, the paraclete, to be the believers' defender and consoler.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF JOHANNINE RELATIONALITY

In the previous chapter we have discussed the three levels of relationships in the Fourth Gospel: intra-divine (God-Jesus/Spirit), divine-human (God/Jesus-believers) and intra-human (believers-believers). What is striking is that these sets of relationships are frequently described in very similar or even identical images and terminology. At the center of these levels of relationality is Jesus who is the revealer of the Father, the mediator between God and humans. Our discussion of relationality shows that unity and oneness are main concerns of the FG. This motif of reciprocal relationship can have far-reaching repercussions in different theological disciplines. Though not claiming to be exhaustive, let us highlight some of its implications.

#### 1. *Deo Uno et Trino*

The mutual relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit –the three persons of the Blessed Trinity - is presented to Christians as the model or exemplar of community life. In the FG the Trinitarian relationship is dealt with in chapters 14-16. The persons of the Trinity are distinct in John's Gospel. They may act in parallel ways, but they interact with one another. They exist in a relationship of unique oneness and equality. The Father sent the Son into the world for our salvation. After Jesus' return to the Father for his glorification (John 7:39), the Holy Spirit is sent to the community to be their "paraclete," "advocate," "counselor." The Spirit whom the Father and Son send is holy like them. The indwelling of the Spirit is a manifestation of the ongoing presence of God and Jesus with the believing community. Jesus says: "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf" (15:26). Again

John mentions about the Father giving Spirit (14:16-17) or sending the Spirit (14:26) in Jesus' name. Moreover, the Spirit witnesses to Jesus (15:26) and gives new birth and life (3:5-8; 7:37-39). This is the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive (14:17), he will teach (14:26), he guides believers to the truth (16:13-15), and lead them to the forgiveness of sins (20:22-23). In short, the Jesus, the Son eternally comes from the Father and they share the Spirit. All three act together.

The Christian community, therefore, is Trinitarian. Every Christian is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian life becomes the pattern of Christian discipleship. Christian unity is not uniformity. In the union of the Father and Son there is still a distinction between the two. Similarly, the oneness of believers implies unity amidst diversity, just as in God, as St. Thomas says, belongs unity and plurality at the same time.<sup>1</sup>The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct, yet all three are equally and truly God. Thus, in ecclesiological oneness, unity allows diversity - one that does not connote the meaning of uniformity. Summing up: The relationships in the Trinity, in marriage and between Christ, his Church and individual believers are analogous to each other, and point to the unity of the individual believers and the Church with Christ and with the Father.

## **2. Ecclesiology**

The Johannine church is called to unity. The Johannine community's relationships with the synagogue and its leadership was a shaping concern for the FG.<sup>2</sup>Conflicts and disagreements between Jewish Christians and the Jewish synagogue people have become intense which may have led to their expulsion from the synagogue. Moreover, the Johannine

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<sup>1</sup>*Summa Theologica*, I, q. 31, a. 1. English Translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981: 164-165.

<sup>2</sup>O'Day, "The Gospel According to John," 1906.

church was also experiencing conflicts from within the community in the person of apostate Christians who were now renouncing their discipleship of Jesus (see John 6:66; 8:30-31) in favor of that of Moses (9:28-29).<sup>3</sup> Given these external factors and internal conflicts, the evangelist is calling the Johannine community to be one. Jesus, Son of God, becomes the channel and mediator for the divided humanity to become one. Thus Jesus prays in John 17:

As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 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 even as you have loved me” (John 17:21-23).

Believers are the children of God by faith if they dwell in God and He dwells in them. There is then essential oneness, between the believers and God, and also between one believer and fellow believer. If only believers are one, then they perceive the glory of God: “Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). Jesus loves the Church he founded. He prays for the church so that she may be united in love in the image of the consubstantial trinity. The love of Jesus and the Father will dwell in the community. United in Christ the people of God ought to be united in his truth and love. Divisions among believers may often be traced to a spirit of vanity, pride, and ambition which are all workings of human corruption.

Mutual relationship with Jesus is not merely in a spiritual, invisible form. Rather, it should be manifested in concrete, perceivable ways among believers. The main goal of the church is to realize the full presence of the divine-man Jesus. For John, the church is the place where the glory, manifestation, and demonstration of God can be found. Therefore,

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<sup>3</sup>Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, 288, n. 1. According to Okure, “the situation of the Johannine audience also helped to explain the predominantly forensic, polemical and hortatory thrust of the Gospel” (289).

Jesus says, “the glory which you have given me I have given to them that they may be one” (cf. 17: 22). Brown has this to say, “For John the sacraments are continuations of the power that Jesus manifested during his ministry when he opened the eyes of the blind (baptism as enlightenment) and fed the hungry (Eucharist as food).”<sup>4</sup> Believers are invited to live in this present power of the real presence of Jesus which is “the only criterion of their life in community.”<sup>5</sup> The *ejkklhsiva* therefore is the living manifestation of the Triune God’s presence in the world. It is also the visible sign of a united community amidst diversity. The one true church is missionary in the sense that it is to bring the world into confrontation with judgment and life as the outcome of an encounter with the presence of Christ. The intrinsic missionary nature of the church is dynamically rooted in the Trinitarian missions themselves. The Church is called by her nature to proclaim the person of Jesus Christ crucified and risen, and to address the whole humanity in accordance with the command she received from the Lord: “Go d into the world and preach the Godpel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). In John’s Gospel it says: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (20:21) so that the world may know and believe that Jesus is sent from God (17:21, 23).

### **3. Christology: Son, the revealer of the Father**

While the Christology of Jesus’ earthly ministry in the Synoptic Gospels may be considered implicit or indirect, the Johannine Christology is definitely a “high, descending” Christology. This is clearly expressed in the prologue found in the first chapter of the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14).

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<sup>4</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 88.

<sup>5</sup> Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, 286.

From the prologue itself one finds the portrayal of the superiority of Jesus by using the images of pre-existence and descent of the divine Word. Johannine Christology, according to Joseph Fitzmyer,

...insists on understanding Jesus as one in whom God is seen among human beings and in whom God's salvation is now concretized in a totally new way. Jesus in his person replaces the presence of God-among-men of old (the *shekināh*-idea) and the institutions of Judaism (the temple, the ritual washings, the manna as the bread of life). Johannine Christology is 'high,' including the incarnation of the Word, the identification of the Son with the Father in their concern for the world, and even elements of a relational, ontological christology (the Word was not only with God, but was God, 1:1).<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the whole FG uses the strongest words to express the unity between Jesus and God, while at the same time affirming that Jesus does not act on his own. Jesus is always agent and revealer of the Father (e.g., 8:28; 10:29-30, 34-39; 12:49-50). As reflected in the prologue, Jesus is the divine  $\text{λογος}$  and the Son, revealing the Father in a unique way which supersedes all others.<sup>7</sup> The Jesus of the FG, even during his earthly ministry, speaks as if he were already in glory. The revealer is never detached from his heavenly status since he is "the Logos."<sup>8</sup> His identity with God reaches its fullest expression in claims like "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58); "I and the Father are one" (10:30), and in all the divine "I AM" statements. Who else can categorically have the exclusive claim of the absolute "I AM" except he who is one with the Father? "These statements," Fitzmyer explains, "put on Jesus' lips by the fourth evangelist, are precisely the building blocks of the 'high' Christology that one meets in the Johannine writings and that make it so different from that of other New

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<sup>6</sup>Joseph Fitzmyer, *A Christological Catechism: New Testament Answers*, Second Edition (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 84.

<sup>7</sup>Jose M. de Mesa & Lode L. Wostyn, *Doing Christology: The Re-Appropriation of a Tradition* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2005), 257.

<sup>8</sup>Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, 81.

Testament writings.”<sup>9</sup> They make the uniqueness of Jesus’ relation to the Father clear, and “are the basis of the claim that saving revelation of God can be found only in Jesus.”<sup>10</sup>

In brief, the Johannine Jesus can only be affirmed as “truly the Savior of the world” (John 4:32) if he is recognized as God-for-us, as God’s unique revealer and agent, as one in whom God is visible and made known (John 1:18). The original Johannine community and the believers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are being challenged to recognize him as the Holy One of God who has a message of eternal life and invites all to follow him. Like Simon Peter, we can likewise say, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69).

*Other titles of Jesus in the FG.* Alongside the “high, descending” Christology, there co-exist a number of explicit titles used of Jesus in the FG: Messiah (1:41), Son of God (1:34), teacher/rabbi (1:38), Son of Man (1:51), Savior (4:42), prophet (4:19). These titles are shared with other earlier gospels. But the FG has a number of its own titles: “Lamb of God” (1:29, 36); “Good Shepherd” (10:11); “bread of life” (6:35, 51). “These exclusively Johannine titles,” says Fitzmyer, “are more expressive of soteriology than of Christology.”<sup>11</sup>

#### **4. Soteriology: Jesus, the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd**

*The Lamb of God* (οἰαῖ μνοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ). Only in John’s Gospel is Jesus called “the Lamb of God” (1:29, 35). At the beginning of the Gospel John the Baptist had witnessed to Jesus as the “lamb of God” who takes away the world’s sin. Already in the OT the lamb had been associated with sacrificial offering. Most notable of this is the Passover

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<sup>9</sup>Fitzmyer, *A Christological Catechism*, 84.

<sup>10</sup>De Mesa & Wostyn, *Doing Christology*, 257.

<sup>11</sup>Fitzmyer, *A Christological Catechism*, 85.

lamb of Exodus 12. This is precisely what John the Baptist was trying to portray in John 1:29, i.e., Jesus is the paschal lamb described in Exodus 12, “although the paschal lamb of Exodus did not take away sin but was a sign of reconciliation.”<sup>12</sup> Pheme Perkins explains that John the Baptist’s affirmation of Jesus as the “Lamb of God” probably represents a primitive Christian combination of two images: “(a) the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13–53:12, who is led to slaughter like a lamb (53:7) and bears (*pherein*) our sins (53:4); and (b) the death of Jesus as that of the Passover Lamb (John 19:36).”<sup>13</sup> The evangelist seems to deliberately link Old Testament passages and motifs that were originally separate: the lamblike Suffering Servant (of Isa 53) and the Paschal Lamb (of Exod 12). Another observation worth considering concerning the FG’s use of “lamb of God” is the time of Jesus’ death. Jesus died on the afternoon before the Feast of Passover began, at the time that Passover lambs were slain. Clearly the evangelist wants to portray Jesus as the “paschal Lamb of the Christian Passover who by his death delivered the world from sin, as the original paschal lamb’s blood delivered the Israelites from the destroying angel.”<sup>14</sup> The evangelist likewise emphasizes that Jesus’ bones, like those of the Paschal Lamb (Exod. 12:46), are not broken (John 19:36). It is no exaggeration to say that the evangelist interpreted Jesus’ death in terms of “the Servant of God described in Isaiah [52:13–53:12] as being led without complaint like a lamb before its shearers, a man of sorrows who ‘bore the sins of many and made intercession for

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<sup>12</sup> Scott M. Lewis, “The Gospel According to John,” in *New Testament*, New Bible Collegeville Commentary, ed. Daniel Durken (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 309-368, esp. 314. It is worthwhile to note that in the Book of Revelation, the “lamb” has clearly been slain as a ransom for sin(5:6-14).

<sup>13</sup> Pheme Perkins, “The Gospel According to John,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 942-985, esp. 952.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 25. We can say that the FG interprets the death of Jesus as a re-enactment of God’s redemption of Israel out of captivity in Egypt.

the transgressors.’”<sup>15</sup> In brief, the FG therefore sees Jesus’ death as an expiatory sacrifice, that is, for the salvation of the world.

*The Good Shepherd* (ποιμηνὸς καλὸς). In John 10:11 Jesus says, “I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Jesus is here appropriating to himself the image of the shepherd of the flock of the OT, which is actually one of the prophetic images of the Messiah. By referring to himself (“I AM”) as the shepherd of the flock he is appropriating further divine language. That Jesus is asserting his own divinity is clearly seen in the surrounding context of the Good Shepherd pericope in John 10:22-30. The reaction of the Jews listening to Jesus in the Temple was they picked up stones intending to stone him since they considered what Jesus was saying as sheer blasphemy. Leviticus 24:16 clearly states whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death.

The Old Testament informs us that the leaders of the people are called shepherds: Moses (Ps 77:20), David (Ps 78:70-72; Ezek 34:23). The ideal king is pictured as a shepherd and the people the flock. Indeed, in a cultural world where they knew about the intimate contact and trust between shepherd and sheep, this became the preferred way of talking about kingship. But God is the shepherd par excellence (e.g., Ps 23:1-6; 80.1). The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel in particular develop the ‘shepherd motif’ to express how God cares for his people and his condemnation of false and evil rulers. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied that the coming Davidic Messiah would be God's shepherd for his flock (Ezek 34:23-24), a prophecy given in the context of God's announcement that he himself will come to shepherd his flock.<sup>16</sup> He will search for his scattered flock, gather them from the nations and lead them

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<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See Francis J. Moloney and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 301.

to good pasture on the mountains of Israel. He will tend to the weak and injured but will judge those sheep who only look after themselves and harm the others (Ezek 34:11-22).<sup>17</sup>

Jesus in John 10 is precisely claiming such a role for himself, but in a way unlike anything seen before. When Jesus says that he is the good shepherd he is claiming that the Messiah has come and in him God himself has come to shepherd his people. The ‘shepherd motif’ in the FG expresses the mutual relationship between Jesus and his sheep/flock. As a good shepherd Jesus knows his sheep and his sheep know him (10:14). The basis of this mutual relationship is the fundamental mutuality between the Father and Jesus. Just as the Father knows his Son so well, Jesus knows the Father intimately. In the same manner, Jesus knows his own sheep intimately that they respond to him instantly. Usually the shepherd has a name for each sheep, a name that says something about the individual’s sheep character and mannerisms. The sheep know the shepherd’s voice – the voice they can only trust – so that when they are called they respond to him without hesitation (10:4-5). They do not follow strangers; indeed, they flee from them, because they do not recognize a stranger's voice (v. 5). In Greek the words for *know* and *recognize* are represented by the same word (οἶδα), hence the sheep will be recognized by whom they know. Jesus’ call to his true sheep is to listen to his voice, and to find in him and him alone the fullness of life. Jesus, the one and only shepherd, calls the sheep into a flock. Following Jesus means refusing to follow others who are claiming to be shepherds. As Appold explains, “Their existence and the nature of their togetherness are contingent on the one shepherd.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the flock of Jesus is neither an aggregate of isolated, autonomous individuals nor a faceless corporation, but a community in which each member is taken up into the life of God to form with others a single whole as

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<sup>17</sup> “John 10,” in *Inter Varsity Press New Testament Commentaries*, see <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/John/Jesus-Good-Shepherd-Who-Flock>. Accessed on 11 May 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, 270.

branches on a vine (15:1). By referring to himself as the shepherd Jesus is claiming to be the leader of this new community.

The most important role of a good shepherd, one who is worthy of admiration (καυλο~), is to keep the flock safe and to look for their interest. The true shepherd's priority is the sheep, not his own interests. He is so committed to them. In the evening the shepherd lies down in the gateway to stop the sheep from getting out and to prevent predators from getting in. Jesus by being the gatekeeper provides access to God by being the gate, the mediator between God and humanity. Believers who enter through the gate will have life in abundance. And when the flock is facing danger, Jesus says, "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11). The shepherd is willing to risk his life in defense of his sheep. But Jesus does not merely risk his life; he consciously gives his life for the sake of his sheep (υἱπε;rtw`nprobavtwn 10:11, 15, 17-18). The use of the genitive preposition υἱπεvr can connote the idea of a voluntary and vicarious death for the sheep. Although this idea is absent in the OT, but in John it is present as a sacrifice. In every place the preposition υἱπεvr ("for") is used in John (6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50-52; 13:37-38; 15:13; 17:19; 18:14), with two exceptions (1:30; 11:4), it is used of sacrifice for the sake of the other. The commentator D. A. Carson nicely puts it,

The words "for (*hyper*) the sheep" suggest sacrifice. The preposition, itself ambiguous, in John always occurs in a sacrificial context.... In no case does this suggest a death with merely exemplary significance, in each case the death envisaged is on behalf of someone else. The shepherd does not die for his sheep to serve as an example.... No, the assumption is that the sheep are in mortal danger; that in defence the shepherd loses his life; that by his death they are saved. That, and that alone, is what makes him *the good shepherd*.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 386. Italics are the author's.

It becomes clear, then, that Jesus' death for the salvation of his flock is central to his task. The salvation he brings is personal, not merely individual: he knows each sheep by name. Jesus' salvation is membership in a community, the community that is called, pastured and provided for by him. It is in his saving death that he will draw all men to himself (12:32). It is in his death and resurrection that the Father's plan of salvation is fulfilled. Jesus, the good shepherd, dies and rises to save his sheep, both Jews and Gentiles (10:16) from their sins.

**Conclusion:**The deep-rootedness of the theme of relationality in the Fourth Gospel has led us reflect on its theological implications. So much lessons and realizations can be obtained from such discussion. Our biblical study of the oneness motif in John has given us some refreshing insights on the Trinity, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and even Spirituality. At the center of the study is Jesus' oneness with the Father. The confession that Jesus and the Father are one is the FG's Christological abbreviation. From this Christological motif is derived and unfolded along analogous lines soteriology and ecclesiology. Jesus is both Son of God and Son of Man. At the same time, he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep for their salvation. It is through his death and resurrection that the scattered children of God are gathered into one. The oneness of the gathered children of God must mirror Jesus' relation to the Father. God is never apart from Jesus and Jesus is never apart from God (Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Jesus). Therefore, the believing community can never be apart from Jesus, for he says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Lastly, the reciprocity statements in the FG have implications in Missiology. Because of the Son's oneness with the Father, he is sent to the world to become the manifestation of God among men, the church's mission is to bring the world to know and believe that Jesus is sent from God (17:21, 23). In other words, the church today is likewise

being sent to the world to continue Jesus' mission (20:21) and to bear witness to the truth about him. As Jesus followed the way of the cross, so the "Church, prompted by the Holy Spirit, must walk in the same path on which Christ walked: a path of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice to the death, from which death he came forth a victor by his resurrection" (*Ad Gentes*, 5).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Second Vatican Council. Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes* (1965). [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html).

## CONCLUSION

Every good work comes to an end. After devoting substantial pages on the theme under scrutiny the study must end with some concluding remarks.

In order to situate our particular study of Relationality in the Fourth Gospel, it was necessary to look at John's Gospel in a nutshell. We have tried to compare it with the Synoptic Gospels and discovered that the FG is focused on the person of *Jesus himself*. Only here in the FG does one find Jesus' characteristic formula of self-revelation/description in the form of the divine name "I AM" which is usually followed by a noun ("I am the bread of life" – 6:35; "I am the light of the world" – 8:12; "I am the Good Shepherd" – 10:11). According to O'Day, "These nouns are common symbols from human and religious experience, and the 'I am' identifies Jesus as the one who meets basic human needs and desires."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, when Jesus speaks this way, he is making a direct connection with the divine name (as in Exod. 3:14), in order to identify himself as the one in whom God is visible and made known (1:18).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, we have seen in Chapter One, that the Johannine Jesus provides unique and unprecedented access to God because he shares in God's character and identity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the World was God" (1:1). The Johannine Jesus is the unique revealer of the Father. The distinctive portrayal of the divine figure of Jesus in John has something to do with particular historical circumstances the Johannine community was facing in the late 90s. We have identified several reasons that prompted the writing of the FG (polemic,

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<sup>1</sup>O'Day, "The Gospel According to John," 1915.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

apologetic, and missionary). But surely the Johannine community wanted to preserve a tradition about Christ for future generations in the face of the diverse views circulating about him, e.g., the denial of the human, earthly Jesus and Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Given these circumstances, the evangelist's foremost concern was to strengthen the believers in their faith.

In Chapter Two, which is the main focus of our study, we turned our attention to the theme of Relationality in the FG. This theme cannot be isolated from the historical reality of the Johannine community. In order to strengthen the faith of the believers who were being confused about the different views circulating about Jesus, the evangelist took pains to elucidate on the true nature and identity of Jesus. One effective way to show this is to prove the unique relationship of Jesus with the Father. Thus, we have seen in Chapter Two that the evangelist used a network of relationships that are taken from various spheres of family life, friendship, politics, agriculture, etc. These network of relationships can be summarized or categorized into three levels: intra-divine (within the Godhead), divine-human (God/Jesus – humans), and intra-human (among fellow human beings). At the heart of these three levels is Jesus, the Son of God who is the perfect revealer of the Father and the perfect bridge between the Father and humans. Jesus makes the Father accessible to humans. At the same time, Jesus is humankind's way to the Father. This mutual relationship does not end up with simply humans loving God/Jesus. Relationality is always an invitation to be open for the face of the other. In John's Gospel human life is seen in relation to Christ and to the God who sent him. Humanity must mirror the uniqueness of the God-Jesus relationship. Humans are tasked to love and serve one another, just as Jesus has loved and served them to the point of death. Our love for another ought to mirror the mutual interpenetration of the Blessed Trinity. For Jesus, humanity is

worth dying for. In same manner, for every believer is worthy loving and dying for. This is what relationality in the FG is all about.

What theological insights can be gained by our study of Relationality in the Fourth Gospel? This question was the focus of the last Chapter. We have come to the realization that the Johannine theme of Relationality can offer fresh insights in the theological fields, like Trinity, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology. If there is one thing that is so striking to learn it is that people are to be understood relationally. Just as the Johannine Jesus is framed personally and so relationally, so humans must be seen in the same way. Just as Jesus was always conscious of being one with God, Christians in like manner ought to be conscious of our oneness, not only with the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, but with one another. This researcher believes that further research work could still be done on the far-reaching theological implications of Relationality in John's Gospel. Our humble attempt is just an initial step.

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