

John's Trinitarian Mission Theology

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“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). John’s entire Gospel is pervaded by this divine mission: God, the Father, in his love sending Jesus, his Son, to save all those who believe in him, for eternal life. The Spirit, too, is shown to play an important part in Jesus’ mission as well as in the mission of his followers, jointly witnessing with them (15:26–27) and empowering the community’s proclamation of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus (20:22–23).

In the following essay, I will seek to demonstrate the following dual thesis: (1) John’s mission theology is an integral part of his presentation of Father, Son, and Spirit; and (2) rather than John’s mission theology being a function of his Trinitarian theology, the converse is in fact the case: John’s presentation of Father, Son, and Spirit is a function of his mission theology.¹

In order to demonstrate this thesis, I will proceed as follows. After a brief treatment of John’s references to *theos*, God, I will first trace John’s presentations of Father, Son, and Spirit one at a time, with particular attention to their role in mission. Subsequently, I will discuss the way in which John’s Trinitarian theology culminates in several strategic references to mission involving the persons of the triune Godhead toward the end of the Gospel. Hence, it will be shown that Father, Son, and Spirit alike contribute to the one great cause of the mission of God to the world.

Theos God

Apart from three major references to Jesus as *theos* in John 1:1, 18, and 20:28 (on which see further below), the usual referent of *theos* is God the Father. On the whole, God as a character remains in the background. As Culpepper observes, “God is the reality beyond, the transcendent presence.”² References to God’s actions are limited to him loving the world (3:16) and sending (3:17) and approving of his Son (6:27); to him hearing righteous prayer (9:31; 11:22); and to him glorifying the Son (13:32).³

In semantic, though not ontological, contrast, the Father is characterized in considerably more active terms in John’s Gospel.⁴ While the fourth evangelist therefore stringently maintains God’s transcendence, he also portrays God as a loving Father who gives and draws individuals to Jesus.⁵

References to God’s nature or essential attributes, stating that God is eternal (1:1, 2), invisible (1:18), true (3:33; 17:3), spirit (4:24), and the only God (5:44; 17:3), further accentuate God’s distance or otherness.⁶ Overall, God is the great Given, Known, Accepted, and constant Assumed in the controversy concerning Jesus whose support is sought and invoked by both sides in the escalating debate.⁷

Jesus

As mentioned above, in three exceptional instances the referent of *theos* in John’s Gospel is not the Father, but Jesus. While various Christological titles—

including “Son of God”—are applied to Jesus by his followers, the most striking designation for Jesus in the Gospel is the term *theos*, which occurs in the opening and closing verse of the prologue and in the final pericope of the Gospel proper (20:28). This literary inclusion, whereby Jesus is affirmed to be God at the beginning and at the end of the Gospel (and nowhere else in those terms) is startling in that it takes a designation, *theos*, which is universally applied to the God of the Hebrew Scriptures in the entire body of the Gospel, and changes the referent to Jesus.

Remarkably, this is done without any sustained attempt at adjudicating the issue of how the God of the Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus can both be called *theos*.⁸ The major exception is found at the inception of the Gospel, where the Word—himself *theos*—and *theos* are said to have existed eternally in close proximity to one another.

At the same time, even the risen Jesus still refers to the God of the Hebrew Scriptures as “my God” in 20:17 and earlier in the Gospel affirms that the Father is greater than him (14:28; cf. 10:29-30). This hints at a resolution of an apparent ditheism: While there is more than one referent of *theos* in this Gospel, these two persons sustain a complementary relationship which, as will be explored more fully in the pages below, is most frequently described in the Johannine narrative as that of “Father” and “Son.”

The Father

The notion of God as Father is not a common one in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁹ On the whole, “Father” tends to be applied to Israel as a nation rather than to individual Jews.¹⁰ The situation is very

different in John’s Gospel where Father-Son is the dominant, controlling metaphor used for Jesus’ relationship with God. The two persons of God the Father and the Son are thoroughly and inextricably intertwined.¹¹ Jesus derives his mission from the Father and is fully dependent on him in carrying it out.¹² The imagery of “father” and “son” plainly draws on Jewish cultural expectations related to father-son relationships, especially those pertaining to only sons.¹³

Of the 136 instances of *patēr* (“father”) in John’s Gospel, 120 have God as a referent.¹⁴ The references to God as *patēr* are pervasive, but not evenly spread.¹⁵ Major clusters are found in the “festival cycle” (chapters 5, 6, 8, and 10) and the Farewell Discourse (chapters 14–16). Virtually all references are found in discourse material.¹⁶ This strongly suggests that John’s “Father” language is rooted in the terminology of Jesus himself.¹⁷ The emphasis on the Father as the one who sent Jesus¹⁸ and who witnesses to him portrays him as the Authorizer and Authenticator of Jesus.¹⁹ Emphatically, it is Jesus himself who refers to God as “the” Father and in close to twenty instances even as “his” Father.²⁰ “The Father” is Jesus’ natural—almost unselfconscious—way of referring to God.

The prologue refers to Jesus as the *monogenēs* or “one-of-a-kind Son” from the Father (1:14) and stresses his unique relationship with him (1:18).²¹ At the temple clearing, Jesus calls the sanctuary his “Father’s house” (2:16; cf. Luke 2:49).²² In 3:35, the evangelist speaks of the Father’s love for the Son, which led him to entrust all things to him. This passage, together with 1:14 and 18, suggests that “Father and Son” is the evangelist’s preferred way of conveying the nature of Jesus’ relation-

ship with God. John 4:21–23 shows Jesus on a mission recruiting true worshipers for God.

References to God as Father abound in 5:17–47, the “Sabbath controversy” between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. In 5:17, Jesus asserts that his Father is at work until the present, and so Jesus is at work as well, by virtue of his unique relationship with God (5:18). In the face of mounting opposition, Jesus elaborates on the Father-Son relationship. As in the case of human fathers, where sons customarily followed in their fathers’ footsteps by learning their trade, Jesus claims to take his cue from his Father (5:20, echoing 3:35; see also 1:18). Both the Father’s giving of life and all judgment are said to be reproduced in and delegated to the Son (5:21–22). Thus whoever fails to honor the Son fails to honor the Father (5:23; cf. *mishna Berakot* 5:5). In 5:36 Jesus’ works are cited as evidence that the Father sent him (cf. 5:19–20), and in 5:43 Jesus states plainly that he came in his Father’s name.

Jesus’ mission in relation to the Father is further elaborated in the aftermath of the feeding of the multitude. Most pronounced are references to the Father as “giving” people to Jesus or as “drawing” them to him. All those whom the Father has given to Jesus will come to him (6:37). It is the Father’s will that all those who believe in the Son have eternal life (6:40). No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him (6:44–45; reiterated in 6:65). In his ministry the Son is totally dependent on the Father. In the remaining references to *patēr* in the present discourse, Jesus claims that he alone has seen the Father (cf. 1:18) and that “the living Father” sent him (6:57).

At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus once again affirms his close association with

his sender, the Father (8:16, 18). When challenged about his “father,” Jesus responds that his opponents do not know the Father or else they would acknowledge Jesus (8:19). The Father is known through Jesus and him alone; Jesus is the sole point of access to God (cf. 10:7–9; 14:6). In the ensuing paternity dispute, Jesus maintains that the Father is the origin of his teaching (8:28, 38). Those who deny this thereby prove that their true spiritual father is not God, but the devil (8:44).

In John 10:14–15, Jesus states that he knows his own and they know him, just as the Father and he know each other. The Father loves Jesus because he is willing to sacrifice his life for those in need of salvation (10:17–18). In 10:25, Jesus once again points to the witness of his works done in the name of the Father (an inclusion with 5:36). In keeping with previous assertions (cf. esp. 6:37, 44), Jesus maintains that no one can snatch those the Father has given him out of his hand; for the Father is greater than all (10:29).

Jesus proceeds to affirm his unity of purpose and mission with the Father by saying, “I and the Father are one” (*hen*, neuter singular; 10:30; cf. 5:17–18). For Jesus to be one with the Father yet distinct from him amounts to a claim to deity. To be sure, the emphasis here is on the unity of their works, yet an ontological (not just functional) unity between Jesus and the Father seems presupposed.²³ Jesus’ unity with the Father later constitutes the basis on which Jesus prays that his followers be unified (17:11, 21–23; note again the neuter *hen*; see further below). Again, Jesus refers to his “many good works from the Father” and affirms that the Father set him—the Son of God—apart and sent him into the world (10:36). His works are offered as evidence that the Father is in him and he

in the Father (10:37–38).

Later, when instructing his followers on discipleship, Jesus promises that the Father will honor anyone who serves him (11:26). In a struggle reminiscent of the Synoptic portrait of Gethsemane, Jesus asks, rhetorically, whether he shall ask the Father to rescue him from the hour of death, only immediately to discard the idea: “No—Father, glorify your name.” His prayer is promptly answered by a voice from heaven, the only direct utterance by God in this Gospel (12:27–28). Hence the intimacy between Jesus and the Father continues unabated even with the crucifixion rapidly approaching (cf. 12:24). “Father” is also Jesus’ customary address to God in prayer in 11:41 at Lazarus’s tomb (cf. 12:27–28; 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25). As the ensuing events make clear, the Father hears and answers Jesus’ prayer. The chapter and the entire Book of Signs (chapters 1–12) conclude with Jesus’ emphatic affirmation that his teaching is in keeping with that of the Father who sent him and that the purpose and end of his Father’s command is eternal life (12:50).

The Farewell Discourse notably shifts the perspective from the vantage point of Jesus’ earthly ministry to the Jews to that of anticipating his exaltation with the Father.²⁴ At the very outset of the Book of Glory (chapters 13–20) the evangelist makes clear that Jesus was about to return to the Father and that he faced the ensuing events in the full awareness that the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God (13:1–3; note the clear verbal echo of 3:35, also by the evangelist).

There are a total of forty-four references to God as Father in the Farewell Discourse

proper (chapters 14–16) plus six in Jesus’ final prayer in chapter 17. This speaks of the intimate nature of Jesus’ disclosure in these final moments of his earthly ministry.²⁵ Tolmie provides two lists of references to God as Father in the Farewell Discourse, one that demonstrates the intricate linkage between the Father and Jesus and the other featuring passages that emphasize the benefit of this relationship for human beings.²⁶ With regard to Jesus, the Father

- hands all things over to him (13:3; 17:2);
- has sent him (13:3, 20; 15:21; 16:5, 28, 30; 17:3, 8, 18, 25);
- glorifies him (13:31, 32; 17:1, 5, 22);
- reveals himself through him (14:6–11; 17:6, 11, 14, 26);
- is in him (14:10–11, 20);
- instructs him what to say and do (14:10, 24, 31; 15:10, 15);
- grants his requests (14:16);
- is greater than him (14:28);
- loves him (15:9; 17:23, 26);
- gives people to him (17:6, 9); and
- is one with him (17:10, 11, 21–22).

With regard to believers,

- there is adequate space for them in his “house” (14:2);
- he will send the *paraklētos* to them (14:16, 26; 15:26);
- he will love them (14:21, 23; 16:27);
- he will come and stay with them (14:23);
- he will prune the branches in order that they may bear more fruit (15:2);
- he will grant their requests (15:16; 16:23);
- he will protect them from the evil one (17:15);
- he will enable them to be one (17:21–22).

In 14:2, Jesus tells his followers that he is going to prepare a place for them in his “Father’s house.” This is the same expression as in 2:16, which is why some have

suggested that here, too, the temple is in view. However, owing to the lack of contextual indicators in the present passage, heaven is a more likely referent.²⁷

The densest concentration of references to God as Father is found in 14:6–13, where twelve references occur in a span of eight verses. Thomas first asks Jesus to show the disciples the way (14:5). Jesus tells him that he *is* the way and that no one can come to the Father except through him (14:6). Philip follows up by asking Jesus to show them the Father (14:8). Jesus replies that having seen *him* is having seen the Father (14:9)—an amazing statement in light of the fact that no one can, or ever has, seen God. Jesus has made the invisible God visible (cf. 1:18).

In 14:10–11, Jesus elaborates further on the closeness of his relationship to the Father, maintaining that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. Clearly, this indicates a very close personal family relationship. What is in view here is not an identity of persons, but a unity of purpose. The “in” language should not be taken to suggest a “mystical” relationship between Jesus and the Father. Rather, their relationship is one of intimacy, love, and trust. Hence Jesus’ words come from the Father who does his works in Jesus (14:11).

Jesus’ return to the Father will enable his followers to do greater works than Jesus did during his earthly ministry.²⁸ This promise of “greater works” is predicated upon Jesus’ exaltation with the Father (14:12c). Once exalted, Jesus will answer prayer so that the Father will be glorified in the Son and the disciples’ mission accomplished (14:13). At Jesus’ request, the Father will also send the Spirit (14:16). Once Jesus has risen, his followers will know that he is in the Father (14:20). Those who obey Jesus will be loved by his

Father (14:21).

In fact, both Jesus and the Father will come and make their home in the believer (14:23). Since the Spirit is said to be in the believer as well (14:17), this means that in a sense the entire triune Godhead will be present in that individual, though perhaps more precisely it is the indwelling Spirit who is sent by the Father in Jesus’ name (cf. 14:16, 26). Jesus’ message is not his own but the Father’s (14:24). The promise of the Father’s sending of the Spirit in Jesus’ name is reiterated in 14:26. As Jesus came in the Father’s name, the Spirit will come in Jesus’ name.

The disciples ought to rejoice that Jesus is returning to the Father, for the Father is greater than he (14:28). This is only an apparent contradiction with 10:30. There the reference is to the Father’s and the Son’s unity of purpose. In 14:28, the reference is to the Son’s subordination to the Father, which is consistently affirmed in the Gospel: The Father is the sender of Jesus; Jesus obeys and depends on the Father; he originates with and returns to the Father; and it is the Father who does his work and speaks his words through him.²⁹ Jesus concludes this portion of the Farewell Discourse by affirming that he is committed to obey the Father in order to show the world that he loves him (14:31).

The entire ensuing allegory of the vine is told by Jesus in personal terms depicting his Father as the vinedresser and himself as the vine (15:1).³⁰ The Father is glorified when Jesus’ followers bear much fruit (15:8; note the verbal allusion to Jesus’ bearing of fruit in 12:24). Critically, the disciples are the next link in the chain that connects the Father and Jesus. Just as the Father has loved Jesus, so he loves the disciples (15:9). And just as Jesus has

obeyed the Father, so his followers ought to obey him (15:10; see 20:21 below).

No longer does Jesus call his disciples his “servants” (13:16; cf. 12:26). Rather, they are his friends, because he has made known to them all the things he has heard from the Father (15:15; cf. 5:19–20). Hence Jesus’ followers are included into his close familial relationship with the Father. And once again, the disciples are enjoined to petition the Father in Jesus’ name (15:16; cf. 14:13–14).

Jesus proceeds to state that whoever hates him also hates the Father (15:23–24). For the third time, he refers to the coming of the Spirit, this time by affirming that he himself will send the Spirit from the Father. This Spirit of truth is said to proceed from the Father (15:26). Jesus’ followers are warned that the world will persecute them, because they have known neither the Father nor Jesus (16:3).

The Spirit’s convicting work will include convicting the world of righteousness because Jesus was about to return to the Father (16:10). This may mean that the world will be convicted of its *unrighteousness*—parallel to being convicted of its sin of unbelief in Jesus and Satan “the ruler of this world” being judged—or that the world will be convicted on the basis of *Jesus’* righteousness, which will be apparent when he is raised from the dead subsequent to his crucifixion.³¹

The Trinitarian interplay between Father, Son, and Spirit is evident in the Spirit’s ministry of taking from what is Jesus’ and revealing it to the disciples, even as all things that are the Father’s are Jesus’ as well (16:14–15). At the present time, however, the disciples do not yet understand even what Jesus means when he says he is returning to the Father (16:17). Yet once again Jesus raises the

specter of answered prayer to the Father in his name (16:23; cf. 14:13–14; 15:16). At that time Jesus’ words to his followers were still unclear to them; later, subsequent to Jesus’ departure and return to the Father, they will understand (16:25–28). As the Farewell Discourse draws to a close, Jesus anticipates his disciples’ wholesale defection. Yet he reaffirms his assurance that the Father will still be with him (16:32).

Six times in his final prayer in John’s Gospel, Jesus addresses God as Father. He asks that the Father glorify the Son, so that the Son may glorify him (17:1), with the glory that he had with the Father prior to the world’s creation (17:5). He asks the “holy Father” to keep his followers who remain in the world unified in his name, as he and the Father are unified (17:11). The purpose for this is that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus (17:21). Harking back to 17:5, Jesus petitions the Father that his own see the glory he had with the Father prior to the world’s creation (17:24). Jesus concludes by referring to God as “righteous Father” (17:25).

In the only reference to the Father in the passion narrative proper, Jesus expresses his resolve to drink the “cup” the Father has given him to drink (18:11). This indicates that Jesus viewed the cross as part of God’s will for him. Subsequent to the resurrection, he speaks of returning to “my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (20:17). Hence a distinction is maintained between the Fatherhood of God in relation to Jesus and in relation to believers.³² The final reference to God as Father is found in 20:21 where Jesus sends the disciples as the Father sent him.³³

The Son

The term “Son” occupies a central role

within the Christology of the Fourth Gospel.³⁴ Most frequent is the name Jesus itself (240 times). The term *logos* (“the Word”) is limited to the prologue. Throughout the Gospel Jesus is repeatedly addressed as *kyrios* (“sir” or “Lord”) and *rabbi* (“teacher”).³⁵ But it is the term “Son” (*huios*) that pervades the Gospel, both absolutely and in combination with various Christological titles applied to Jesus.

The expression *huios* is found fifty-four times in John’s Gospel, of which forty-one refer to Jesus. Twice Jesus is called the “son of Joseph” (1:45; 6:42; cf. Luke 3:23; 4:22). In two passages the evangelist also calls Jesus the “one-of-a-kind Son” (3:16, 18; cf. 1:14, 18). The term “Son of God” is applied to Jesus eight times in this Gospel: by Nathanael (1:49); the evangelist (3:18); Jesus himself (5:25; 10:36; 11:4); Martha (11:27); negatively by “the Jews” (19:7); and again by the evangelist (20:31). Another set of instances involving *huios* are Jesus’ thirteen references to himself as the “Son of Man.”³⁶ Finally, there are eighteen references to Jesus as “the Son,” virtually always in relation to God “the Father.”³⁷

When compared with “Father” language in John’s Gospel, one notes that references to God as Father are considerably more frequent than references to Jesus as the Son. It appears that Jesus speaks quite a bit more about the Father than he does about himself. Most critical for our purposes here is the unity Jesus affirms to exist between him and God the Father (10:30; *hen*).³⁸ In the context of the remainder of the Gospel, this unity, which is essentially a unity of purpose and mission, is said to form the basis for the unity of Jesus’ followers in their mission to the world, which has as its purpose that the

world may come to recognize and believe that the Father sent Jesus (17:11, 21–23; *hen*; cf. 20:21). This firmly establishes the thesis of this essay that Jesus’ relationship with the Father is presented, not in and of itself, but within the larger scope of mission.

As I have developed in monograph-length in *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*, John presents Jesus’ mission in three distinct yet related ways: (1) Jesus as the sent Son; (2) Jesus as the one who comes into the world and returns to the Father (descent-ascent); and (3) Jesus as the eschatological shepherd-teacher.³⁹ Jesus’ work in the Fourth Gospel is described in terms of “signs” performed as part of his ministry to “the Jews” (chapters 1–12) and of “works” done “from the Father.” Everything Jesus says and does is presented under the rubric of revelation of God and of his glory, including even the cross itself.

With regard to the first aspect of his mission, Jesus’ mission as the sent Son significantly entails the gathering of the new messianic community and its commissioning for its mission to the world (20:21). As mentioned, in this respect Jesus’ union with the Father forms the basis for believers’ union in their mission, which places the Father-Son relationship under the rubric of mission as well. Especially in the Farewell Discourse, it becomes clear that the disciples are taken into the love and unity of the persons of the Godhead as responsible agents and representatives of Jesus the sent Son.

With regard to the second aspect of Jesus’ mission, Jesus as the one who comes into the world and returns to the Father (descent-ascent), this marks out Jesus as uniquely being the Word coming into the world (the incarnation, 1:14) and being

sent by God on a mission, accomplishing this earthly mission, and as returning to his sender (e.g., 13:3; 16:28; 17:4; cf. Isa 55:11–12). While the first aspect, the mission of the sent Son, focuses more on the horizontal dimension, the second, Jesus as coming into the world and as returning to the Father, lays more stress on the vertical dimension of Jesus' descent and ascent (cf., e.g., the "Bread of Life" in chapter 6 or the "Son of Man" in the lifted-up sayings, 3:13; 8:28; 13:32).

With regard to the third aspect of Jesus' mission, Jesus as the eschatological shepherd-teacher, this accentuates his role as the messianic shepherd and teacher who gathers the new messianic community, cleanses it (viz., the footwashing and the removal of Judas the betrayer in 13:1–30), and prepares it for its mission. This aspect is evident especially in Jesus' "Good Shepherd discourse" (chapter 10) and in his commissioning of Peter at the end of the Gospel (chapter 21). Against the backdrop of an entire set of Old Testament messianic images and expectations, Jesus' mission is presented as part of an eschatological framework that shows Jesus as inaugurating the messianic age at which "all will be taught by God" (6:45; cf. Isa 54:13).

There is no need to trace the narrative outworking of these motifs here. Since "Father" and "Son" language are inextricably intertwined in John's Gospel, this has already been done under the rubric of "Father" above. Suffice it to say that Father, Son, and Spirit (see below) are shown to be united in the messianic mission of the Son, distinct in personhood yet one in purpose, actively collaborating to bring about the new people of God whose identity is centered on faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. This new people of God, in turn, on the basis of their iden-

tification with Jesus and their commission from him, are sent on a mission to the world overseen by the exalted Jesus and empowered by the Spirit.

The Spirit

On the whole, references to the Spirit in John 1–12 are comparatively few. If the instances of *pneuma* in Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman in 3:5–8 and 4:23–24 are judged to refer to "spirit" (in distinction from material realities) rather than the person of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁰ there are but four passages in which reference to the Spirit is made in the first half of the Gospel. In every case, the reference relates to the Spirit's role in Jesus' ministry. The Spirit rests on him (1:32–33) and does so to an unlimited degree (3:34). His words are life-giving and Spirit-infused (6:63), and the Spirit is only to be given subsequent to Jesus' earthly ministry (7:39).

References to the Spirit in the second half of the Gospel increase dramatically in both number and prominence in keeping with the Spirit's pivotal role in the disciples' mission subsequent to Jesus' departure and return to God the Father. The Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13) and as the Holy Spirit (14:26; 20:22; cf. 1:33) as well as by the adumbration *paraklētos* or "helping presence" (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).⁴¹

The initial references to the Spirit in John's Gospel are in connection with Jesus' baptism by John (1:32–33). The Baptist witnesses that he saw the Spirit descend from heaven as a dove and remain on Jesus. The Baptist had been told by God that Jesus would be the one who would baptize, not with water as John did, but with the Holy Spirit (cf. 14:26; 20:22). Hence the Spirit's first appearance in this

Gospel is as confirming Jesus as the God-sent future dispenser of the Spirit.

In 3:34 the evangelist comments subsequent to the Baptist's testimony that "he" (most likely God) gives the Spirit without measure (i.e., to an unlimited extent; cf. 1:33).

In 6:63, in the first of *Jesus'* references to the Spirit in this Gospel, Jesus affirms that the Spirit gives life and that *Jesus'* words are spirit and life. The latter reference should be taken to mean that *Jesus'* words are life-giving because they are infused by the Spirit. After all, the Spirit rests on Jesus (1:33) to an unlimited degree (3:34).

The next mention of the Spirit is part of an aside by the evangelist who explains that a given utterance of Jesus at the feast of Tabernacles was with reference to the Spirit (7:39). The evangelist also notes that at that time the Spirit had not yet been given. This continues the future reference of 1:33. It also reflects hindsight and represents an effort by the evangelist to preserve the historical perspective prior to *Jesus'* "glorification."

The Spirit rises to considerably greater prominence in the Farewell Discourse, whose major thrust is the preparation of *Jesus'* followers for the time subsequent to his departure and return to the Father. Once Jesus has been exalted, the Spirit will play a pivotal role in the mission of *Jesus'* followers. This is evident by the references to the Spirit as "Spirit of truth" (objective genitive, the Spirit as conveying truth) in 14:17; 15:26; and 16:13; as the "Holy Spirit" in 14:26 and 20:22 (cf. 1:33); and as the *paraklētos* in 14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:7.

The entire section 14:15–24 envisions the giving of the Spirit subsequent to *Jesus'* exaltation, at which time Jesus and the Father will make their dwelling

in believers through the Spirit. *Jesus'* identification with the Spirit, the "other *paraklētos*," is so strong that Jesus can say that he *himself* will return to his followers in the person of the Spirit (14:18). While "yet a little while" in 14:19 and "on that day" in 14:20 may at a first glance seem to refer to *Jesus'* resurrection appearances, *Jesus'* promise not to leave his disciples as orphans in 14:18 is hardly satisfied by these appearances, which were temporary in nature. More likely, reference is made to the permanent replacement of *Jesus'* presence with the Spirit. This is suggested also by *Jesus'* response to Judas' question in 14:23 with reference to Jesus and the Father's making their dwelling in believers as further explicating 14:18.

Contrary to what the disciples thought at the time, *Jesus'* departure actually had several benefits for them. The most important is that Jesus would petition the Father to provide "another helping presence" like Jesus. This prospect ought to encourage *Jesus'* followers who were struggling to come to terms with the implications of *Jesus'* upcoming departure. As John had made clear earlier in his Gospel, this giving of the Spirit was possible only subsequent to *Jesus'* glorification (7:39). With this glorification now imminent (cf. 12:23; 13:1), Jesus spends much of his time in the Upper Room preparing his followers for life in the age of the Spirit.

In the first half of his Gospel, John's treatment of the Spirit has largely resembled that of the Synoptics. Like them he included the Baptist's reference to Jesus as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:32–33; cf. Mark 1:8 par.) and emphasized that the Spirit in all his fullness rested on Jesus during his earthly ministry (1:32; 3:34; cf. Luke 4:18). Moreover, John stressed the Spirit's role

in regeneration (3:5, 6, 8; cf. 1:12–13), worship (4:23–24), and the giving of life (6:63). But as in John’s presentation of Jesus’ followers, his adoption of a post-exaltation vantage point leads to a vastly enhanced portrayal of the Spirit in the Farewell Discourse, where the Spirit is featured primarily as “the *paraklētos*” (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) and as “the Spirit of truth” (14:17; 15:26; 16:13), two closely related terms (see 15:26).⁴²

Unsatisfactory approaches to resolving the meaning and import of the term *paraklētos* in John’s Gospel are legion.⁴³ The expression does not occur in the LXX⁴⁴ and, elsewhere in the NT, only in 1 John 2:1 is there a reference to Jesus “our Advocate” with God the Father.⁴⁵ Jesus’ reference to the Spirit as “another *paraklētos*” in 14:16 indicates that the Spirit’s presence with the disciples will replace Jesus’ encouraging and strengthening presence with them while on earth (cf. 14:17). When the Spirit comes to dwell in believers, it is as if Jesus himself takes up residence in them.⁴⁶ Thus Jesus is able to refer to the coming of the Spirit by saying, “I will come to you” (14:18).⁴⁷ This relieves a primary concern for Jesus’ first followers in the original setting of the Farewell Discourse: Jesus’ departure will not leave them as orphans (cf. 14:18); just as God was present with them through Jesus, he will continue to be present with them through his Spirit.⁴⁸ The Spirit’s role thus ensures the continuity between Jesus’ pre- and post-glorification ministry. What is more, the coming of the Spirit will actually constitute an advance in God’s operations with and through the disciples (16:7; cf. 14:12).

The initial reference to the Spirit as *paraklētos* in 14:16 is the first of five Paraclete sayings in the Farewell Discourse,

each referring to the Holy Spirit (cf. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7–11, 12–15).⁴⁹ As Jesus’ emissary, the Spirit will have a variety of functions in believers’ lives: He will bring to remembrance all that Jesus taught his disciples (14:26); he will testify regarding Jesus together with his followers (15:26); he will convict the world of sin, (un)righteousness, and judgment (16:8–11); and he will guide Jesus’ disciples in all truth and disclose what is to come (16:13). Historically, this included the formation of the NT canon as apostolic testimony to Jesus.

While initially focused on the eleven (cf. 15:26), the Spirit, in a secondary sense, fulfills similar roles in believers today. He illumines the spiritual meaning of Jesus’ words and works both to believers and, through believers, to the unbelieving world. In all of these functions, the ministry of the Spirit remains closely linked with the person of Jesus. Just as Jesus is everywhere in John’s Gospel portrayed as the Sent One who is fully dependent on and obedient to the Father, the Spirit is said to be “sent” by both the Father and Jesus (14:26; 15:26) and to focus his teaching on the illumination of the spiritual significance of God’s work in Jesus (14:26; 15:26; 16:9).

The Spirit is also called “the Spirit of truth” (cf. 15:26; 16:13). In the context of the present chapter, Jesus has just been characterized as “the truth” (14:6) in keeping with statements already made in the prologue (1:14, 17). The concept of truth in John’s Gospel encompasses several aspects: (1) truthfulness as opposed to falsehood: “to speak the truth” means to make a true rather than false statement, that is, to represent the facts as they actually are (cf. 8:40, 45, 46; 16:7; “to witness to the truth,” 5:33; 18:37); (2) truth in its finality as compared to previous, prelimi-

nary expressions: this is its *eschatological* dimension (cf. esp. 1:17: “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”); (3) truth is an identifiable body of knowledge with actual propositional content (e.g., 8:32: “you will know the truth;” 16:13: “he will guide you into all truth”); (4) truth is a sphere of operation, be it for worship (4:23–24) or sanctification (17:17, 19); and (5) truth as relational fidelity (1:17; 14:6).⁵⁰ The Spirit is involved in all five aspects: He accurately represents the truth regarding Jesus; he is the eschatological gift of God; he imparts true knowledge of God; he is operative in both worship and sanctification; and he points people to the person of Jesus.

The expression “spirit of truth” was current in Judaism (e.g., T. Jud. 20:1–5). Similarly, the Qumran literature affirms that God placed within man “two spirits so that he would walk with them until the moment of his visitation; they are the spirits of truth and of deceit” (1QS 3:18; cf. 4:23–26). Yet these parallels are merely those of language, not thought. For while these expressions are part of an ethical dualism in Second temple literature (including Qumran), John’s Gospel does not feature a “spirit of error” corresponding to the Spirit of truth.⁵¹ Rather, the Spirit of truth is the “other helping presence” who takes the place of Jesus while on earth with his disciples. This “other helping presence,” the “Spirit of truth,” the world cannot accept,⁵² because it neither sees nor knows him. Yet Jesus’ followers do, because “he resides with you and will be in you” (see 1 John 3:24; 4:13).⁵³

The final reference to the Spirit is found in the context of Jesus’ commissioning statement, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (cf. Matt 28:18–20; Luke

24:46–49),⁵⁴ which climaxes the characterization of Jesus as the sent Son.⁵⁵ The disciples are drawn into the unity and mission of Father and Son.⁵⁶ Succession is important both in the OT and in Second temple literature. In the present Gospel, Jesus succeeds the Baptist and is followed by both the Spirit and the twelve (minus Judas) who serve as representatives of the new messianic community. Old Testament narratives involving succession feature Joshua (following Moses) and Elisha (succeeding Elijah).

The reference to Jesus breathing on his disciples while saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit,”⁵⁷ probably represents a symbolic promise of the soon-to-be-given gift of the Spirit, not the actual giving of it fifty days later at Pentecost.⁵⁸ Against many commentators, the present pericope does not constitute the Johannine equivalent to Pentecost,⁵⁹ nor is the proposal satisfactory that at 20:22 the disciples “were only sprinkled with His grace and not [as at Pentecost] saturated with full power.”⁶⁰ The present event does not mark the actual fulfillment of these promises other than by way of anticipatory sign.⁶¹

On any other view of the present passage, it is hard to see how John would not be found to stand in actual conflict with Luke’s Pentecost narrative in Acts 2, not to mention his own disclaimers earlier in the narrative that the Spirit would only be given subsequent to Jesus’ glorification which entailed his return to the Father.⁶² The disciples’ behavior subsequent to the present incident would also be rather puzzling had they already received the Spirit.⁶³ The present gesture is made to the group in its entirety rather than to the separate individuals constituting it, just as the authority to forgive or retain sins is given to the church as a whole.⁶⁴

The Greek verb *enephyōsen* means “breathed on” rather than “breathed into” (TNIV). The theological antecedent is plainly Gen 2:7 where the exact same form is used.⁶⁵ There God breathes his Spirit into Adam at creation which constitutes him as a “living being.” Here, at the occasion of the commissioning of his disciples, Jesus constitutes them as the new messianic community, in anticipation of the outpouring of the Spirit subsequent to his ascension.⁶⁶

To sum up, in the few references to the Spirit in the first half of John’s Gospel, Jesus is associated with the Spirit in his present ministry and as the future dispenser of the Spirit subsequent to his exaltation to the Father. References to the Spirit increase dramatically in the second half of the Gospel, which is taken up with the anticipation of the disciples’ mission subsequent to Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (his “glorification”). It is that Spirit, the “Spirit of truth,” the “Holy Spirit,” the “helping presence” sent by Jesus from the Father, who will continue Jesus’ ministry and empower the disciples’ mission in the unbelieving world. As in the case of the Father-Son relationship, the references to the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel culminate in the commissioning passage in 20:21–22, a proleptic reference to the disciples’ reception of the Spirit for the purpose of their mission of extending forgiveness of sins upon people’s belief in Jesus.

Father, Son, and Spirit: The Three Persons of the Godhead United in One Mission

The relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are presented in John’s Gospel within a clearly defined relational as well as salvation-historical

framework. In relational terms, it is the Father who sends the Son, not the Son the Father. Likewise, it is the Father and the Son who send the Spirit rather than vice versa. In salvation-historical terms, God the Father sends the Son as the incarnate Word to mark an event of comparable import as creation. This intersects with John the Baptist’s ministry whose purpose it is to reveal the Christ to Israel. John sees the Spirit descend and rest on Jesus. At the same time, Jesus is said to live in constant intimate fellowship with God the Father throughout his earthly ministry.

As he goes about his work, the Son consistently affirms his unity with the Father in both his works and his words.⁶⁷ In the context of the Sabbath controversy, Jesus affirms that the Father is still working, and so is he. Later in the Gospel, Jesus states even more plainly that he and the Father are one (not one person, but one entity).⁶⁸ At the same time, Jesus can affirm that the Father is greater than he. Jesus is everywhere in the Fourth Gospel presented as equal yet subordinate to God the Father. The Spirit, in turn, is sent by the Father and Jesus yet set in continuity to their salvific and revelatory work. Throughout the Gospel it is made clear that the Spirit will be sent only subsequent to the Son’s exaltation as the next salvation-historical milestone to follow.

In John’s presentation of the interface between Father, Son, and Spirit, the programmatic division of the Gospel in two major parts of equal length features significantly. The first half deals with Jesus’ ministry to the Jews and presents Jesus’ claims in the context of a pattern of escalating controversy between him and his opponents. Jesus’ repeated claims of a unique relationship with God—including calling himself the Son of God—are

shown to constitute the major bone of contention between him and his opponents which in due course issues in the main charge leading to his crucifixion. The pattern of rejection is evident both at the midway point of the first half of John's Gospel (end of chapter 6) and at the end of the first major unit (end of chapter 12).

In the second half, particularly in the Farewell Discourse, both the evangelist and Jesus adopt a vantage point subsequent to Jesus' exaltation with the Father (his "glorification"). This has two important consequences. First, the unity between Father, Son, and Spirit emerges all the more clearly, since Jesus' exaltation—which is now imminent—marks the point at which the Spirit will be sent by him and the Father. Jesus' followers are told about a soon-coming era during which their mission will be directed by the exalted Jesus and enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Second, the disciples themselves are shown to be taken into the unity and love of the Father, Son, and Spirit as they carry out their mission.

Thus not only is the ministry of the Son grounded in the love and commission of the Father, the ministry of Jesus' followers is grounded in the love and commission of Jesus. What is more, by virtue of Jesus' close relationship with both the Father on the one hand and the Spirit on the other, believers' ministry is rooted also in the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit among one another. This does not obliterate all distinctions of role or authority. Just as Jesus is the Son who does the bidding of the Father who sent him, so his followers are to pursue their mission in total dependence on the Son and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In the end, Father, Son, and Spirit are shown to provide redemption and revelation to a community that is

itself sent on a redemptive and revelatory mission.

On the receiving end of this mission of unity, love, and redemption is a dark and dying world. Satan, the ruler of this world, inspires the Jewish nation in particular and the world at large to unite in their rejection of the Christ. Repeatedly in the course of the Gospel narrative Father, Son, and Spirit are mentioned together.⁶⁹ In 1:33–34, the Baptist says that "the one who sent" him (i.e., the Father) told him that the Spirit would mark the one who was to come as the Son of God. The collocation of references to Father, Son, and Spirit is particularly pronounced in the Farewell Discourse, especially in passages pertaining to the Spirit's sending by the Father or the Son or both (14:26; 15:26).

This joint characterization culminates in the commissioning reference in 20:21–22, where Jesus sends his followers as the Father sent him and (proleptically?) equips them with the Spirit.⁷⁰ Hence mission proves to be the major thrust of John's depiction of Father, Son, and Spirit.⁷¹ In one way or another, all three persons are intimately involved in the mission of believers:⁷² Just as the Son represented the Father, so Jesus' followers are to represent the Son as they are indwelt and enabled by the Spirit. This unity of mission in no way overrides personal distinctions between Father, Son, and Spirit. Neither does it compromise the ontological distinction between Father, Son, and Spirit on the one hand and believers in the Messiah on the other.

Conclusion

The preceding study of the portrayal of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in John's Gospel has conclusively demonstrated that the three persons of the Godhead are

shown to be involved in one great mission, the revelation of God to humanity and the redemption of humanity for God. Not only are the three persons of the Godhead united in this mission, the presentation of Father, Son, and Spirit in John's Gospel—John's Trinitarian theology—is clearly missiologically constrained. Rather than being one of several aspects or implications of John's Trinitarian theology, mission was shown to be the nexus and focal point of John's presentation of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, individually and in relation to one another. Hence it can truly be said, not only that John's mission theology is Trinitarian (which in and of itself is a very significant statement), but that his Trinitarian teaching is part of his mission theology—a truly revolutionary insight by John.

The insight is revolutionary, because, if heeded, it calls the church to focus its major energies on *acting on and acting out her Lord's commission*, "As the Father sent me, so send I you" (20:21), in the power of the Spirit, rather than merely engaging in the study of God or cultivating personal holiness (as important as this may be within the larger framework presented here). The insight is revolutionary also because a proper understanding of John's Trinitarian mission theology ought to lead the church to *understand its mission in Trinitarian terms*, that is, as originating in and initiated by the Father (the "one who sent" Jesus), as redemptively grounded and divinely mediated by Jesus the Son (the "Sent One" turned sender, John 20:21), and as continued and empowered by the Spirit, the "other helping presence," the Spirit of truth.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but

have eternal life" (John 3:16). No better summary of John's Trinitarian mission theology can be given. Together with the mission theology of the other New Testament writings, and in fact the entire Scriptures,⁷³ John's missionary thrust ought to compel the church to new heights of commitment and effectiveness in our day and in the future. May it be so. And may we be found faithful to our risen Lord's commission when he returns to take us with him to the place he has prepared for us to see the glory he had with the Father before the world began.

ENDNOTES

¹The present study builds on chapter 8 in A. J. Köstenberger and P. T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 11; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001). Some of this material will also be included in the forthcoming NSBT volume, *The Trinity and John's Gospel* (InterVarsity).

²R. A. Culpepper, *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 113.

³Culpepper (*ibid.*, 114) also lists God speaking to Moses (9:29).

⁴See the list in *ibid.*, and the discussion below.

⁵So rightly Culpepper, *ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.* Culpepper also includes "God is light" (3:21), though this does not reflect a direct statement but an inference.

⁷As N. Dahl has noted ("The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology," in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, [ed. D. H. Juel; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 58–60), the NT writers regularly presuppose or make only indirect reference to contemporary beliefs about God. See P. W.

Meyer, "The Father": The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, (ed. R. A. Culpepper and C. C. Black; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 257 (also citing J. M. Bassler, "God in the NT," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, [ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992], 2:1049).

⁸On this issue see esp. L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); and R. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism & Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁹L. Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 129.

¹⁰See the discussion in M. C. Fisher, "God the Father in the Fourth Gospel: A Biblical Patrology" (Ph.D. diss., Wake Forest, NC: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 55–96.

¹¹See esp. the "just as" statements relating the Father and the Son in this Gospel (e.g., 5:21, 23, 26; 6:57; 8:28; 10:15; 12:50; 17:18; 20:21) and references to Jesus being "in" the Father and the Father being "in" him (e.g., 10:38; 14:11, 20).

¹²See chapter 3 in A. J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

¹³See *ibid.*, 115–21.

¹⁴Morris (*Jesus is the Christ*, 130) finds 122 references to God as Father in John's Gospel (he also notes that the only other NT writer that comes even close to the pervasiveness of this motif is Matthew with

forty-five references to God as the heavenly father). Culpepper (*Anatomy*, 113), following M. C. Tenney ("Topics from the Gospel of John, Part I: The Person of the Father," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 [1975]: 38), puts the number at 118, as does Meyer ("The Father," 269, n. 27). G. Schrenk ("Patēr," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, [ed. Gerhard Kittel; trans. Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76], 5:996) counts 115 instances, and M. M. Thompson ("God's Voice You Have Never Heard, God's Form You Have Never Seen: The Characterization of God in the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 63 [1993]: 196, n. 17) counts 131. Occasionally, *patēr* refers to Jacob (4:12) or Abraham (8:39, 53, 56), the father of the servant healed by Jesus (4:53), or (in the plural) to the Jewish ancestors (e.g., 4:20; 6:31, 49, 58; 7:22). In 8:44, the repeated referent of *patēr* is the devil.

¹⁵The expression does not occur at all in chapters 7, 9, 19, and 21 and is found only once in chapters 2, 3, 11, and 18 and only twice in chapters 1 and 13. The absence of the term "Father" in chapter 7 is noted, among others, by J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 318 (cited in Meyer, "The Father," 262), who does, however, draw the hardly defensible conclusion that "nowhere in this chapter is there the slightest hint that Jesus regarded himself as the Son of God."

¹⁶This is noted by Meyer ("The Father," 264); and Thompson ("God's Voice," 196) who provides a careful and sensitive study of the characterization

of God (including that of 'Father') in John's Gospel using R. Alter's scale of characterization moving from his actions to his appearance, his direct speech, his inward speech, and finally statements by the narrator (187–204).

¹⁷The historicity of Jesus' calling God "Father" seems secure (but see the important remarks by C. Plantinga, "The Fourth Gospel as Trinitarian Source Then and Now," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective* [ed. M. S. Burrows and P. Rorem; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 307); space does not permit a defense of Jesus' use of this term. See the bibliographic references in Meyer, "The Father," 267, n. 17, and his presentation of Synoptic instances of Jesus' use of "Father" on p. 267, n. 20 (citing Mark 8:38; 11:25; 13:32; 14:36; Luke 2:49; 6:36; 10:21–22; Luke 11:2, 13; 12:30, 32; 22:29; 23:34?, 46; 24:49; Matt 5:16, 45; 6:1, 4, 6 [2x], 8, 9, 15, 18 [2x], 26, 32; 7:11, 21; 10:20, 29, 32, 33; 11:25–27; 12:50; 13:43; 15:13; 16:17; 18:10, 14, 19, 35; 20:23; 23:9; 25:34; 26:29, 39, 42, 53; 28:19). Meyer notes that, on the assumption of Markan priority, the earliest canonical Gospel contains the fewest references to God as Father while the last (John) features the most (though the fairly extensive above list of Synoptic references to God as Father hardly justifies Meyer's judgment that such references are "surprisingly scarce in the pre-Johannine gospel tradition" [258]). Nor does Meyer's verdict appear on target (at least in the categorical way in which he states it) that the "Father" language

in the Fourth Gospel “has its roots in post-Easter theological development and is part of the community’s confessional language” (ibid.). To say that an “appeal to Jesus’ own religious usage at this point only stands in the way of examining carefully how this language functions in the evangelist’s text” (ibid.) seems to considerably overstate one’s point.

¹⁸5:23, 36, 37; 6:44, 57; 8:16, 18; 12:49; 14:24; 20:21.

¹⁹Cf. Meyer (“The Father,” 265) who calls the Father “the Vindicator and Authorizer of Jesus.”

²⁰2:16; 5:17, 43; 6:32, 40; 8:19 (2x), 49; 10:18, 25, 29, 37; 14:2, 7, 20, 21, 23; 15:1, 8, 10, 15, 23, 24; 20:17. Several times the term “Father” is used by the evangelist (1:14, 18; 3:35; 13:1, 3). In 8:41 Jesus’ Jewish opponents claim they have one Father—God.

²¹On Jesus as God’s “one-of-a-kind Son,” see A. J. Köstenberger, *John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 42–44, 49.

²²It is doubtful that 14:2 represents an allusion to 2:16. Note that the word for “house” in 14:2 is *oikia* (cf. 4:53; 8:35; 11:31; 12:3), not *oikos* as in 2:16–17 (cf. 11:20). Cf. A. J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (ed. C. E. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 137; idem, *John*, 425–27.

²³See esp. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 394–95.

²⁴See Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 149–53 et passim.

²⁵D. F. Tolmie (“The Characterization

of God in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 69 [1997]: 71) points out that the events narrated in 13–17 are situated within an intimate atmosphere. He notes the marked change in the way in which the relationship between God and human beings is portrayed (a move from possibility to reality) and observes that there are no new traits of God revealed in these chapters (72).

²⁶Ibid., 72. Though note that Tolmie does not distinguish between references to *theos* and *patēr*.

²⁷See note 22 above.

²⁸See Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 71–75.

²⁹This subordination is non-reversible: The Son does not send the Father; the Father does not depend on the Son; etc. Contra S. J. Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 514 (with reference to Pannenberg), according to whom the persons of the Trinity are mutually dependent, so that the “Father is dependent on the Son,” not merely for his Fatherhood but even “for his deity” (see A. J. Köstenberger, “Review of *Women in the Church* by S. J. Grenz,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 [1998]: 517–18).

³⁰Note the frequent reference to the Father as “my” Father in this chapter (15:1, 10, 15, 23, 24).

³¹See Köstenberger, *John*, 472.

³²Tolmie (“Characterization of God,” 74) speaks of 20:17 as the “conclusion, and indeed the climax” of the characterization of God in the Fourth Gospel, since it is only

here that God is characterized, not only as Father of Jesus, but also as Father of believers. This is clearly an important point, but we will argue below that 20:21 is a more likely climax.

³³On the theological and missiological implications of this verse, see esp. Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*.

³⁴In light of the fact that we have already surveyed the vast majority of the passages referring to “the Son” in John’s Gospel under the heading “The Father” above, we will not duplicate the discussion here but merely provide a brief general synopsis of John’s portrayal of Jesus as “the Son.”

³⁵On Jesus as a rabbi, see A. J. Köstenberger, “Jesus as Rabbi in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 8 (1998): 97–128; reprinted in *Studies in John and Gender: A Decade of Scholarship* (New York: Lang, 2001), 65–116.

³⁶1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34 (2x); 13:31.

³⁷The first four references to Jesus as the Son are by the evangelist (3:17, 35, 36 [2x]). All other instances of “the Son” are self-references by Jesus: 5:19 (2x), 20, 21, 22, 23 (2x), 26; 6:40; 8:36; 14:13; and 17:1 (2x). The reference in 3:17 to *God* (rather than “the Father”) sending the Son is noteworthy.

³⁸The unity between Father and Son finds a partial parallel in the “one flock” under “one shepherd” consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles envisioned by Jesus (10:16; 11:52: *hen*). Just as Jesus and the Father do not lose their personal

identity, believing Jews and Gentiles do not lose their ethnic distinctness but are united in a larger entity and union as part of God's plan and mission.

³⁹Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, esp. 93–140.

⁴⁰The references to *pneuma* in 3:5–8 occur in the context of Jesus' instruction of Nicodemus regarding the spiritual birth required for entering the kingdom of God, where being "born from above" (cf. 3:3) is explained as being "born of water and spirit." Most likely, this is a reference to a spiritual birth entailing cleansing and renewal. As the following verse (3:6) makes clear ("That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit"), the reference is probably not to the person of the Holy Spirit but to the spiritual (rather than material) nature of the birth required for entrance into God's kingdom. This is true also for the following analogy between spirit and the wind (3:8).

It is similar with the instances of *pneuma* in 4:23–24. The anarthrous reference to "spirit and truth" in 4:23 resembles that to "water and spirit" in 3:5. In 4:23, too, the emphasis is on the *kind* of worship to be rendered by those who would please God, that is, worship that is spiritual and in keeping with truth rather than one that is focused on material aspects such as locations of worship. Neither in Nicodemus' nor the Samaritan woman's case would a reference to the Spirit have been intelligible to Jesus' original audience. This understanding of 4:23 is

confirmed by the reference to God as *pneuma*, spirit, in 4:24, surely not a reference to the Holy Spirit.

⁴¹See A. J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John* (Encountering Biblical Studies; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 157.

⁴²For a treatment of the Spirit-Paraclete in the context of the references to the Spirit in the entire Gospel narrative see M. Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 69; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 139–53. For a comparison of the treatments of the Spirit in John and the Synoptics see Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 156. On the translation of the term see Köstenberger, *John*, 436, n. 70.

⁴³O. Betz, *Der Paraklet* (Leiden: Brill, 1963) unconvincingly argues for a Qumran background (the archangel Michael; cf. A. Shafaat, "Geber of the Qumran Scrolls and the Spirit-Paraclete of the Gospel of John," *New Testament Studies* 27 [1981]: 263–69, who likewise adduces DSS parallels; and A. R. C. Leaney, "The Johannine Paraclete and the Qumran Scrolls," in *John and Qumran* [ed. J. H. Charlesworth; London: G. Chapman, 1972], 38–61, who says the Paraclete is God himself). H. Windisch (*The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968]) advances the hardly more plausible hypothesis that the Paraclete is "a kind of angel . . . in human form," be it a prophet or teacher. G. Johnston (*The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* [Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 12; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970]) unsuccess-

fully proposes that the *paraklētos* is an active divine power that has become embodied in certain leaders of the apostolic church, such as the fourth evangelist (see the critiques by R. Brown, "The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 13 [1967]: 126; and "The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 33 [1971]: 268–70, for whom the Paraclete is the "alter ego of Jesus," 1967: 132, cited in S. S. Smalley, "The Paraclete': Pneumatology in the Johannine Gospel and Apocalypse," in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, 297; cf. G. M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987]). R. Bultmann (*The Gospel of John* [trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray et al.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971], 566–72) views the concept as a Johannine appropriation of his Gnostic source's figure of "helper." H. Riesenfeld ("A Probable Background to the Johannine Paraclete," in *Ex Orbe Religionum. Studia Geo Widengren* [Studies in the History of Religions 21; ed. C. J. Bleeker et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1972], 1:266–74) postulates a sapiential provenance, which is equally unlikely. M. E. Boring ("The Influence of Christian Prophecy on the Johannine Portrayal of the Paraclete and Jesus," *New Testament Studies* 25 [1978]: 113–23) claims the Paraclete is an angel demythologized as the "spirit of prophecy"! A. Billington ("The Paraclete and Mission in the Fourth Gospel," in *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell* [ed. A. Billington, T. Lane, and M.

Turner; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995], 90–115) appropriately stresses the Paraclete’s role in mission. If the disciples are to witness to Jesus, they must understand the significance of his coming; witness to Jesus and the Paraclete’s ministry are thus inseparable (15:26–27; 16:8–11; 20:21–23). For a helpful discussion of the Paraclete as part of the Fourth Gospel’s lawsuit motif, esp. in 15:26–16:15, see A. T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 110–23, esp. 113–14.

⁴⁴But see Aquila and Theodotion on Job 16:2.

⁴⁵For a survey of all known examples from the fourth century B.C. to the third century A.D., see K. Grayston (“The Meaning of PARAKLĒTOS,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 13 [1981]: 67–82) who concludes that *paraklētos* was a more general term that was sometimes (but not always) used in legal contexts, meaning supporter or sponsor. The closest contemporaneous usage is found in Philo, who uses the expression to convey the notion of rendering of general help, be it by giving advice or support (with the latter meaning being the more common). In later rabbinic usage the term in its transliterated form is used alongside the transliterated term for a Greek expression meaning “advocate” (*synēgoros*). Patristic references include Did. 5:2; 2 Clem. 6:9; and Clement of Alexandria, *The Rich Man’s Salvation* 25:7. For a study of the Johannine Paraclete in the Church Fathers see A. Casarella, *The Johannine Paraclete in the Church*

Fathers: A Study in the History of Exegesis (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983).

⁴⁶“The Spirit is the divine presence when Jesus’ physical presence is taken away from his followers” (Morris, *Jesus is the Christ*, 159).

⁴⁷Though, as F. J. Moloney (*The Gospel of John* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998], 407) points out, there are differences between Jesus and the Spirit as well: The latter neither becomes flesh nor dies for our sins. Alternatively, the statement refers to Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to his followers (so H. N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John* [trans. J. Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 505; Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 501; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John* [New International Commentary on the New Testament; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 578–59; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* [Word Biblical Commentary 36; 2d ed.; Waco, TX: Word, 1999], 258; G. L. Borchert, *John* [New American Commentary 25; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002], 2.126). C. K. Barrett (*The Gospel according to St. John* [2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], 464) says the passage refers neither to Jesus coming in the person of the Holy Spirit nor the *parousia* but is using language appropriate to both the resurrection and *parousia* to refer to both.

⁴⁸As R. Brown (*The Gospel according to John* [Anchor Bible 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970], 642) points out, the promise of the divine presence with Jesus’ followers in 14:15–24 includes the Spirit

(14:15–17), Jesus (14:18–21), and the Father (14:22–24), hence involving all three persons of the Godhead in the indwelling of believers.

⁴⁹In 1 John, the term refers to the exalted Jesus (2:1). In secular Greek, *paraklētos* refers primarily to a “legal assistant” or “advocate” (though the word never became a technical term such as its Latin equivalent *advocatus*). In John’s Gospel, legal overtones are most pronounced in 16:7–11.

⁵⁰For the first four categories see S. R. Swain, “Truth in the Gospel of John” (Th.M. thesis, Wake Forest, NC: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998).

⁵¹But see 1 John 4:6 where “the Spirit [or spirit] of truth and the spirit of falsehood” occur together.

⁵²See at 1:10; cf. 10:26; 12:39; see also 1 Cor. 2:14.

⁵³D. M. Smith (*John* [Abingdon NT Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999], 274–75) notes that “you” here is plural, which leads him to infer that the statement does not necessarily refer to personal indwelling. In principle, this is true, but the statement could just as well be plural because Jesus is speaking to a *group* of followers (rather than a single person), not because reference is made to communal as opposed to individual indwelling. Despite the plural “you,” the latter scenario seems more likely (note, e.g., the singular pronoun *kakeinos* in 14:12, and compare the Pauline teaching on the Spirit’s indwelling of individual believers). On some of the systematic-theological issues raised by the present verse

see James M. Hamilton, Jr., "He Is with You and He Will Be in You: The Spirit, the Believer, and the Glorification of Jesus" (Ph.D. diss.; Louisville, KY: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), who takes the passage as a point of departure for arguing that OT believers were regenerated but not indwelt by the Spirit.

⁵⁴The statement harks back to 17:18, albeit without reference to the sphere of the disciples' commission (i.e., the world), indicating the emphasis in the present passage is on the disciples' authorization rather than on the realm of their activity (Ridderbos, *Gospel of John*, 643). Compare also the general statement in 13:20, which suggests that the present passage extends beyond the original disciples also to later generations of believers (Morris, *Jesus is the Christ*, 746 n. 55 et al.).

⁵⁵Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, esp. 96–121, 180–98. The vast majority of the instances of "sending" in John's Gospel relate to Jesus' having been sent by the Father. "Sending" terminology also occurs with regard to God's sending of the Baptist, the Father's and the Son's sending of the Spirit, and Jesus' sending of his disciples. The present passage features two sending verbs, *pempō* and *apostellō*, with no apparent difference in meaning (as is the virtual consensus among major commentators, including Ridderbos, Morris, Carson, Barrett, Schnackenburg, and R. Brown; see also A. J. Köstenberger, "The Two Johannine Verbs for Sending: A

Study of John's Use of Words with Reference to General Linguistic Theory," in *Linguistics and the New Testament: Critical Junctures* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. A. Carson; JSNTSS 168; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 125–43. Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 746 n. 56 notes that this is already suggested by the use of *kathos* linking the two verbs.

⁵⁶Cf. 17:21–26; Ridderbos, *Gospel of John*, 642.

⁵⁷The absence of the article in the expression "Holy Spirit" may indicate a focus on "the quality of the gift of the Holy Spirit rather than on the individuality of the Spirit" (Morris, *Gospel of John*, 747 n. 59).

⁵⁸See Acts 2; Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 649–55; John Christopher Thomas, "The Spirit in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Explorations," in *The Spirit and the Mind: Essays in Informed Pentecostalism* (ed. Terry L. Cross and Emerson B. Powery; Lanham: University Press of America, 2000), 102–4. cf. B. Witherington, *John's Wisdom* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 340–41. The critique by T. R. Hatina ("John 20,22 in Its Eschatological Context: Promise or Fulfillment?" *Biblica* 74 [1993]: 196–219), who says the reference is to the indwelling Paraclete, fails to convince.

⁵⁹So R. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:1038; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 570, who says the present passage cannot be harmonized with Acts 2; Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 691 et al.

⁶⁰So J. Calvin, *The Gospel according to St. John* (trans. T. H. L. Parker; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961 [1553]),

205. Beasley-Murray (*John*, 382) followed by Borchert (*John*, 2:307–8) believes John telescoped the giving of the Spirit without concern for chronology (citing the reference to the ascension in 20:17 as a parallel). M. M. B. Turner ("The Concept of Receiving the Spirit in John's Gospel," *Vox Evangelica* 19 [1977]: 24–42) thinks the reference is not to the Spirit at all, but to Jesus' message as Spirit and life. R. Schnackenburg (*The Gospel according to St. John* [New York: Crossroad, 1990], 3:325) surprisingly contends that the Johannine instance involves all believers while the events in Acts 2 pertain to the apostles. If anything, one might have expected the opposite kind of reasoning, with John's account anticipating the general outpouring narrated in Acts 2.

⁶¹Contra G. M. Burge, *The Gospel of John* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 558; cf. idem, *Anointed Community*, 148–49.

⁶²E.g., 7:39; 14:12, 16–18, 25–26; 16:12–15; cf. 20:17. Luke's account of Pentecost hardly reads as if Acts 2 represents merely 'one of several additional empowerings of the Spirit' as Hatina ("John 20,22," 201) alleges. C. H. Talbert (*Reading John* [New York: Crossroad, 1992], 252) concludes from 20:22 that Jesus must have ascended by then or, according to 7:39, he could not yet have given the Spirit. But this presupposes that the Spirit was in fact imparted at 20:22. If not, there is no need to suppose that Jesus had already ascended by then.

⁶³In 20:26, the doors are still locked (as

prior to 20:22 in 20:19), presumably still “for fear of the Jewish leaders;” in 21:3, Peter decides to go fishing and is joined by six others, but they catch nothing. Hatina’s (“John 20,22,” 200) argument that the latter may have been “an atypical circumstance” fails to convince, as does his claim that Peter’s threefold confession of love suggests reception of the Spirit (cf. Peter’s earlier offer in 13:37 to lay down his life for Jesus).

⁶⁴Morris, *Gospel of John*, 747, 749.

⁶⁵See also 1 Kings 17:21; Ezek. 37:9; Wis. 15:11; cf. Philo, *Op.* 135.

⁶⁶This “new creation” theme is noted by several commentators, including Morris, *Gospel of John*, 747 n. 58 (who also cites Ezek. 37:9); Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 570; R. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:1035, 1037; and Witherington, *John’s Wisdom*, 342. R. A. Whitacre (*John* [IVP New Testament Commentary 4; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999], 482) speaks of the present event as the church’s “conception,” and of Pentecost as its “birth.”

⁶⁷M. J. Erickson (*God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 201–3) groups these references under the rubric “equivalence of relationship or action of Son and Father.”

⁶⁸This is the second category, “Unity of the Father and the Son,” in *ibid.*, 203–5. Erickson’s third category is the “Sonship of Jesus and Fatherhood of God” (205).

⁶⁹See *ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁰Cf. 15:26–27; 16:7–11; see also 14:16–24.

⁷¹On John 20:21 and the Johannine mission theme see Köstenberger, *Mission of Jesus and the Disciples*.

⁷²Erickson, *God in Three Persons*, 207.

⁷³See Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*.