

JOHN 17:1–26: THE MISSIONARY PRAYER OF JESUS¹

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ABSTRACT

In John 17 we have the final words spoken by Jesus before his passion, and so these words provide the last glimpse into the Johannine understanding of the cross. It is a moment of intense communion between Jesus and the Father and we are privileged to ‘overhear’ this heavenly family conversation. For Jesus, this is a homecoming. Two time-frames need to be held together; a discourse Jesus delivers around the table on the night of his betrayal, and one that he delivers from the realm of the Father. Central to the chapter are three petitions for the disciples. Just as Jesus does not belong to the world, neither do they. Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world where he faced opposition, so now the disciples are sent and they too will face opposition. As Jesus is consecrated by the indwelling presence of God, so he prays for the disciples.

SOME SCHOLARS, BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN, DESCRIBE JOHN 17 AS THE High Priestly Prayer and consider that when Jesus speaks of ‘consecration’ he is speaking as a priest. I disagree. The language of ‘consecration’ and union can distract from the ultimate function of Jesus’ words, which is to establish the foundation for the future mission of the disciples in his absence.

In John 17 we have the final words spoken by Jesus to his disciples before his passion begins and so these words provide the last glimpse into the Johannine understanding of the cross. At the heart of this chapter is Jesus communing with his Father who loves him (17:24, 26). In this communion he reflects on his mission, which had its origin in God’s love for the world (3:16). Jesus has come into the world to en flesh that love, to make it visible and believable,

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper originally presented as the Presidential Address at the Fellowship for Biblical Studies AGM at Queen’s College, University of Melbourne, in November 2017. It was prepared for an international dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Church of Christ as part of the ongoing work of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. My thanks to the University of Divinity which has given great support for this important work through its research grant scheme. Manns names his study of Chapter 17 as “La prière missionnaire de Jésus.” Frédéric Manns, *L’Evangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme* (SBFA, 33; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1991) 383–400.

but, as the hour will demonstrate, the Father's love for the world is costly. Gathered now, with his friends, Jesus offers prayers for those who have come and will come to believe in him. Jesus has brought these friends of his (15:15) into friendship with God but, by so doing, they are alienated from the world which now hates them (17:14). Jesus prays that they be kept within the intimate friendship of God and kept from the harmful powers of the evil one (17:15), who still holds dominion over those in the world. Although only mentioned once (v. 26), the mutual love between Father and Son,² and between Jesus and his disciples, pulsates through this chapter.

In narrative time, Jesus is at table with his disciples (13:4),³ but even now he is moving towards his Father as he directs his gaze and his words heavenward.⁴ There is a tradition of leaders giving departing words to their followers, known as a "Testament."⁵ Biblical examples can be seen in Jacob's final words to and blessing of his sons (Gen 49), Moses' final words to the people of Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy, especially Chapter 34, and the prayer of Jesus ben Sirach (Sir 51). But while there are similarities between John 17 and the Jewish testament tradition, there are other quite unique features that have been described as "genre bending."⁶ First, through his passion, Jesus is returning to where he once was. Second, Jesus' passion is not a process of death but of glorification.⁷ Third, John 17 exhibits clearly what has been a feature of this Gospel, namely the blurring of time and space. Finally, Jesus' words depart

² Love has dominated Jesus' final meal with his disciples. The love between Father and Son (14:31; 15:9, 10); between Jesus and his disciples (14:15, 21, 23; 15:9, 12, 13); the Father's love for the disciples (14:21, 23); and the disciples are to love each other (13:34, 35; 15:12, 17).

³ The gathering of Jesus with his friends at table recalls Wisdom's feast where she sets her table and invites the townspeople to eat her bread and drink her wine (Prov 9:1-6).

⁴ From the time Jesus announced that "the hour has come" (12:23), a process has begun. Although not yet returned to the Father, "he is passing from this world to the Father." Francis J. Moloney, *John* (Sacra Pagina 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998) 466.

⁵ Fernando Segovia provides a helpful summary of the "testament" or "farewell type-scene." Although the 'prayer of a dying hero' is part of the farewell-type scene, Segovia did not include John 17 in this volume because of its length as he intended to make a detailed study of the prayer in a separate volume. See Fernando F. Segovia, *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), esp. Chapter 1.

⁶ See the discussion in Harold W. Attridge, "Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 121, no. 1 (2002) 3-21.

⁷ "For, Jesus does not stand on the threshold between life and death, but on the threshold between life and glorification in new life—the resurrection and ascension." See George L. Parsenios, "'No Longer in the World' (John 17:11): The Transformation of the Tragic in the Fourth Gospel" *HTR* 98:1 (2005) 14.

from the traditional ‘blessing’ form and are words of commission as the disciples are sent as the Father sent Jesus (17:18).⁸

OUTLINE

Various structures have been suggested, frequently based on the identity of the one spoken about, e.g., Jesus, the disciples, and others who come to belief through the disciples.⁹ More complex literary structures have also been proposed.¹⁰ A structure that I will use looks at the function of each section. At the centre of this chapter, vv. 9–23 are three petitions, with an introduction, naming those for whom Jesus prays, and a conclusion where his prayer is extended to those later believers. These verses are the formal ‘petitionary prayer’ of Jesus. The prayer section has a general introduction in terms of Jesus identity and mission (vv. 1–8), and themes from this introduction return in vv. 24–26 to conclude the chapter. This can be shown schematically:¹¹

Introduction:	1–8	Jesus’ identity and mission
Petitions:	9–23	Introduction to petitions
		3 petitions: Keep them in your name
		Keep them from the evil one
		Consecrate them in the truth
		Conclusion to petitions
Conclusion:	24–26	Jesus’ identity and mission

At this point in the narrative, these are Jesus’ final words on the eve of his passion. It is a moment of intense communion revealing the intimate Father-Son relationship, and the disciples are privileged to ‘overhear’ these words. Raymond Brown writes, “The disciple and the reader are party to a heavenly family conversation.”¹² But this time-frame is the perspective from within the

⁸ More will be said on these four features of John 17 in discussing the text.

⁹ E.g. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols; AB 29–29a; New York: Doubleday & Co., 1966 & 1970) 2:749; Moloney, *John* 459; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005) 434; Harold W. Attridge, “How Priestly is the ‘High Priestly Prayer’ of John 17?,” *CBQ* 75, no. 1 (2013) 9.

¹⁰ Edward Malatesta, “Literary Structure of John 17,” *Bib* 52, no. 2 (1971) 190–214; David A. Black, “On the Style and Significance of John 17,” *Criswell Theological Review* 3, Fall (1988) 141–59.

¹¹ The outline here is similar to the divisions made by Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Evil in Johannine and Apocalyptic Perspective: Petition for Protection in John 17,” in *John’s Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic* (ed. Catrin H. Williams and Christopher Rowland; London: Bloomsbury, T & T Clark, 2013) 208; also similar to Jean Zumstein, *L’Évangile selon Saint Jean (13–21)* (CNT IVb; 2nd Series; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007) 160–61.

¹² Brown, *The Gospel according to John* 2:747.

narrative. The time-frame of the actual Gospel places Jesus' passion in the past and his words *have been effective* for himself, and are being effective for believers. Both time-frames need to be held, and at times they are blurred. George Parsenios describes this "as though two discourses have been blended together, one that Jesus delivers around the table on the night of his betrayal, and one that he delivers from the realm of the Father after the Ascension. Jesus is alternately here and there, before and after, above and below."¹³

INTRODUCTION: VV. 1–8

The introductory verses speak of Jesus' identity (1, 4–5) and mission (2–3; 6–8). His identity is expressed using a distinctively theological word 'glory.' Within the OT, the word 'glory' (Hebrew, *Kabod*; Greek, *doxa*) referred to the visible or invisible radiance of God's presence and being, as shown in creation and in the mighty acts of God. The most vivid expression of this glory was the revelation on Mt Sinai. Prior to the incarnation, the Word was fully present in God (1:1) and so participated fully in God's 'eternity life' and glory. In taking flesh this glory was visible in the person of Jesus and at times this was recognized by his disciples (1:14; 2:11). Jesus, in his own being, made God present and known throughout his life, and so Jesus can say, "I glorified you on earth" (17:4). But the enfleshed glory is necessarily temporal and constrained by the mortal limitations of all flesh. When, through the crucifixion, Jesus returns to the presence of God, then he will assume the glory, the intimate presence of God, he once had. "So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed" (17:5). This glory no longer has the mortal limitations of flesh and so the Risen Jesus now participates fully in the 'eternity life' and glory of God. In summary, glory means the "divine mode of being."¹⁴

Because the hour has arrived, an hour through which Jesus will return to the Father, he asks that the Father will bring him back into the presence and rela-

¹³ Parsenios, "No Longer in the World" 5. In 1965 a German scholar, Franz Muller, presented a new hermeneutical approach for reading the Fourth Gospel based on the interpretive theology of Gadamer. In his study he used the term *johanneische Sehweise*, which I translate as a Johannine way of seeing, or Johannine perspective. This perspective merges the pre-Easter history of Jesus and the post-Easter experience of Jesus as the risen and glorified Lord—Gadamer's "fusion of horizons." Mussner's work has been significantly developed by another German scholar Christina Hoegen-Rohls, who emphasises the role of the Spirit-Paraclete. See Franz Mussner, *The Historical Jesus in the Gospel of John* (trans. W. J. O'Hara; Quaestiones Disputatae 19; New York: Herder, 1967); Christina Hoegen-Rohls, *Der nachösterliche Johannes: Die Abschiedsreden als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zum vierten Evangelium* (WUNT/2; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr; Paul Siebeck, 1996).

¹⁴ Gerhard Kittel, "δοκέω, δόξα, δόξαζω, συνδοξάζω, ἐνδοξος, ἐνδοξάζω, παράδοξος," *TDNT* 2 (1964–76) 247.

tionship the Word experienced with God prior to the incarnation, i.e., that the Father will glorify him (1, 5). This will make manifest the presence of God in the hour of Jesus' passion. What might appear as degradation will in fact bring God's work and the Son's mission to its completion and show the hour as the exultation of Jesus and the definitive revelation of God's glory. This hour will thus mutually glorify the Father and the Son in the culmination of Jesus' mission (17:1). "The Son will be glorified by the Father, restoring him to the pre-existent glory they shared, and the Father will be glorified by the completion of the Son's mission."¹⁵

The next verses (17:2–3) speak of the mission of Jesus, that in making God known, he also makes known God's desire to draw all into God's own eternity life, which is to participate in the very being of God. Across these introductory verses, Jesus' words are not a request but are imperatives: "glorify your Son" (vv. 1, 5) spoken with utter confidence from within the Son-Father relationship. For Jesus this is a homecoming, and there is no doubt that his words will be effective.

The time-frames are confused in verses 4–5, where Jesus speaks of 'finishing the work' when in fact that work will not be finished until the passion, when Jesus announces, "It is finished" (19:30). Within the narrative, the passion is yet to come and so Jesus can say, "glorify me," when, from the perspective of the post-resurrection Gospel, he has been glorified and taken into the pre-incarnation experience of the Word in and with God.

The final three verses of the introduction (vv. 6–8) again speak of Jesus' mission of making God known because, as the Son who is close to the Father's heart, only he can make God known (1:18). In these verses the term used is 'name,' which has similar theological force as 'glory' because the name expresses the essence of the person.¹⁶ To avoid saying 'God,' parts of the OT, particularly the Deuteronomistic history, use 'name,' as is the case in modern Judaism where "*ha Shem*" is a reverential alternative to the word 'God.' The work given him by the Father was to reveal the God that only he knows from within the intimacy of his relationship. And this work has been successful since the disciples have received Jesus' teaching. They are the ones, referred to in the Prologue who because of their belief, will be given the power 'to become children of God' (1:12). This will be the task of the Passion.

¹⁵ Adesola Joan Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John* (LNTS 505; London: Bloomsbury, T & T Clark, 2014) 177.

¹⁶ Hans Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," TDNT 5 (1964–). "Deuteronomic theology expressed that presence of God as the presence of God's name. So the temple is that place of which God has said 'My name shall be there.'" "1 Kgs 8:29," Anthony F Campbell, in *The Study Companion To Old Testament Literature: An Approach to the Writings of Pre-Exilic and Exilic Israel* (Old Testament Studies 2; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989) 159–60.

THE PETITIONS OF JESUS

Introduction to His Prayer (vv. 9–11a)

⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.

Jesus' prayer begins formally in v. 9 as he names those for whom he prays, "those who believed" (17:8), and who were given to him by God. Once again, there is a blurring of time-frames in verses 10 and 11. In narrative time the disciples have not yet grasped the meaning of Jesus' words and have not yet received the Spirit-Paraclete that is still to come. It will be in the Passion that they are drawn into the filial relationship with God that Jesus experiences. Then, from within the unity of the Father and Son, they will be able to manifest the divine presence and so glorify Jesus. It is only from the post-resurrection perspective of the Gospel, that the disciples can be said to have 'glorified' Jesus. From this perspective, Jesus speaks of himself as 'no longer in the world,' but his disciples "are in the world." And so now the task of being and revealing the presence of God in the world falls to the disciples. In the post-resurrection time they are the ones in whom Jesus is glorified, because they reveal his presence, while he has already passed through the Passion into the divine presence of God. After naming whom Jesus is praying for, he then makes three petitions.

Three Petitions (vv. 11b–19)

¹¹ Holy Father,

1. protect (τηρέω: keep) them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.

2. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect (τηρέω: keep) them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

3: ¹⁷Sanctify (ἁγιάζω: consecrate) them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify (ἁγιάζω) myself, so that they also may be sanctified (ἁγιάζω) in truth.

In these three petitions Jesus reveals the intimate union between himself and his disciples. Just as Jesus does not belong to the world, neither do his disciples. Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world where he faced opposition, so now the disciples are sent into the world where they will also face opposition. As Jesus is consecrated, so he prays for the disciples.

The first two petitions are set in antithetic parallelism: keep them *in* (v. 11); keep them *from* (v. 15). Jesus prays that the disciples will be *kept in* the Father's name, which means held within the very being of God, which will be the experience of the loving Father-Son relationship. There is some confusion in the manuscripts about the subject of the relative pronoun "that" in v. 11 and v. 12. Is it the 'name' that has been given to Jesus, or 'the disciples?' Understanding that 'the name' refers to the essence of a person, then Jesus, as Son, participates in the very being of God (1:18), and so knows God's name, and is able to reveal this. By sharing the being of God with disciples, Jesus gives them access to this same being. They too can have the gift of the 'eternity life' of God.

The second petition asks that the disciples not be taken from the world, but that they be *kept from* the power of the evil one, and this raised a paradox. On the one hand Jesus claims that the ruler of this world has no power over him (14:30) and has been condemned (16:11), and yet he prays that the disciples will be protected from this evil one. Also, the term 'world' has multiple meanings. It is a world 'loved' by God (3:16), and yet a world in opposition to Jesus and his disciples. We need to enter into the conceptual thinking of first century Judaism to make sense of these conflicting ideas.

Within the OT there are no prayers requesting God's protection from an evil power in opposition to God, but within first century Jewish literature there are numerous examples of such prayers. Loren Stuckenbruck examines a number of this form of petitionary prayers from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of Jubilees. He notes that such prayers presume the existence of an evil power at work in the world, even though the presumption is that these powers have been defeated and await eschatological destruction.¹⁷ From his study of these prayers, Stuckenbruck sees three ways in which they contribute to understanding John's Gospel.

First, according to John's Gospel, 'the world,' which is under the dominion of 'the ruler of the world,' is completely opposed to Jesus and his followers.

¹⁷ Stuckenbruck, "Evil" 228.

Second, the confidence expressed in the petitionary prayers considered here, based on definitive acts of God in the past and the certain eschatological defeat of demonic power in the future, is re-framed in John's Gospel around Jesus' death through which the world is already judged. Though the inimical world order holds sway, its days are numbered, and it already stands condemned.

Third and finally, the petitions in search of protection are formulated in recognition that, in the meantime, a community which considers itself especially elect needs divine help in order to ward off the unabating influences of evil power.¹⁸

The third petition that the disciples be "consecrated in the truth," again addresses the intimate Father-Son relationship. During the Jewish festival of Hanukkah recalling the re-consecration of the temple following the Maccabean victory over the Greeks, Jesus declares that he is the consecrated and sent one of God. "Can you say that the one whom the Father has *consecrated* and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'" (10:36). Because the glory of God dwells in Jesus (1:14), he can speak of his own body as a temple (2:21), and therefore as one already consecrated. In the hour of his Passion, the temple of his body will be destroyed, but Jesus has promised that a new temple will be raised up (2:19). This new temple will be a new Father's house/hold of the disciples¹⁹ and so Jesus prays that they too, as living temples, will be consecrated by his return to the Father. This consecration will come about "in the truth," and this 'truth' is identified as "your word" (ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν) (v. 17b). It is by participation *in* Jesus, in his filial relationship with God, that disciples will be drawn into the Father's household and into the holiness of God's being. Although they will remain *in* the world, they will no longer belong *to* the world and under the domain of the evil one.²⁰

Some scholars, both ancient and modern, approach John 17 as the High Priestly Prayer and consider that when Jesus speaks of 'consecration' he is speaking as a priest.²¹ I disagree. Jesus' consecration is as the living temple, the dwelling of God (10:36), and this is what he prays for his disciples. Also, that Jesus makes an intercessory prayer for his disciples is not the prerogative

¹⁸ Stuckenbruck, "Evil" 228.

¹⁹ Jesus had called the temple "My Father's House" (2:16), but this expression, when used in the OT, always meant the "household," the women, men, children who were knit as a familial unit.

²⁰ Dorothy Lee writes: "To be a disciple of Jesus—to belong within the divine family—means to be hallowed, made holy, consecrated, in him and by him." Dorothy A. Lee, *Hallowed in Truth and Love: Spirituality in the Johannine Literature* (Preston, Vic.: Mosaic Press, 2011) 134.

²¹ A helpful survey of the history of this title can be found in Attridge, "The High Priestly Prayer" 1–14; see also John P. Heil, "Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 57 (1995) 729–45.

of priesthood.²² From his study of various OT figures who offered prayers for another Samuel Balentine concludes: “it may be observed that, although the responsibility for intercession appears to be relatively widely distributed among lay persons, kings and prophets, the responsibility does not fall, according to the language examined thus far, to the priests.”²³

Some also write of Jesus as both priest and victim in a sacrifice,²⁴ but this particular cultic imagery is foreign to the theology of the Fourth Gospel. Jesus overturned the money-tables collecting the temple tax and drove out the sacrificial animals (John 2:13–22). As I have discussed earlier,²⁵ this action is not a temple ‘cleansing’ but an overturning of Israel’s sacrificial system of worship, and an indicator that Jesus is establishing a new manner of being in relationship with God. In his discussion with the Woman of Samaria, this same point was made that God was not to be worshipped in temples “on this mountain or in Jerusalem” for “the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipper will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (4:23). Through his passion, Jesus will establish a new form of worship, within a new “Father’s House.”

During his “hour” Jesus is the active agent not a sacrificial victim. Recall his words in John 12:

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—
‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that
I have come to this hour. ... Now is the judgment of this
world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And
I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to
myself.”

These are not the words of a victim, but a victor. In his final prayer, Jesus is neither priest, nor victim.

²² Samuel Balentine examined intercessory prayer and, from just one type using the verb פלל, he noted that “the role of intercessor is assumed by the following persons: Abraham (Gen 20:7), ‘man of God’ (1 Kgs 13:6), Nehemiah (Neh 1:6), Hezekiah (2 Chr 30:18), people (Jer 29:7; Ps 72:15), Moses (Num 21:7; Deut 9:20), Job (Job 42:8, 10), Samuel (1 Sam 7:5; 12:19, 23), Jeremiah (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 37:3; 42:4; cf. 42:2, 20).” Samuel E. Balentine, “The Prophet as Intercessor: A Reassessment,” *JBL* 103, no. 2 (1984) 163.

²³ “The Prophet as Intercessor” 164. A contrary view is held by Brown who considers this prayer ‘high priestly,’ not in the sense of one about to offer sacrifice, but as one making intercessory prayer “before the throne of God” as in Hebrews and Romans 8. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* 747.

²⁴ Manns, *L'évangile de Jean* 397. By contrast, Brown comments, “there is no major or clear emphasis on the theme of sacrificial offering in xvii; Jesus does not say that he is laying down his life but that he is coming to the Father.” Brown, *The Gospel according to John* 2:746.

²⁵ Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001) Chapter 4.

Conclusion to the Petitions (vv. 20–23)

²⁰ I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, *so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

²² The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, *so that the world may know* that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The prayer comes to its conclusion by Jesus extending it beyond the immediate group of disciples to include future believers. In this section it is clear that Jesus' desire for unity is not an end in itself, but is a critical aspect of continuing his mission in the world.²⁶ The union of "I in you" and "they also in us," is "*so that.*"²⁷ The union Jesus prays for has a purpose. Jesus can only be the true revealer of the Father because of his union with the Father and it is from this dynamic unity that he can make known the essence of God. Similarly, if disciples are to continue Jesus' mission and reveal God, then they too can only do this from within the union of Jesus and his Father. Jesus' desire that they all be one, in him, in the Father and among themselves is for the purpose of the mission. The revelation of God cannot occur from the outside, but only from within the Father–Son–disciples relationship. Being one in God is the only way to reveal God.

Conclusion to Chapter (vv. 24–26)

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me.²⁶ I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

²⁶ Francis J. Moloney, *Glory not Dishonour: Reading John 13–21* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 113.

²⁷ Francis J. Moloney, "'That all may be one': The Theme of Unity in John 17," in *Johannine Studies 1975–2017* (WUNT 372; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 461–62.

With the formal prayer ended, Jesus now draws his time with his disciples and this ‘conversation’ with the Father to conclusion. These verses echo many sentiments expressed in the introductory verses (1–8). The disciples are those given by the Father to Jesus (2, 6, 24) and they believe that Jesus has been sent by the Father (8, 25). The disciples are the one to whom Jesus revealed the ‘name,’ or the very essence of God (6, 26). Jesus is able to be this revealer because of the pre-existent love between Father and Son (5, 24). Because the disciples know the Father they experience the eternity life and love of God (3, 26).

A MISSIONARY PRAYER²⁸

The language of ‘union’ and ‘consecration’ can distract from the ultimate function of Jesus’ words, which is to establish the foundation for the future mission of the disciples in his absence. While Jesus has been present, he is the one on mission from the Father, sent into the world loved by God.²⁹ But when he returns to the Father, the disciples are the ones who will continue his mission to reveal God’s performative love for the world. For God’s love is active; love enfolds believers into the Father-Son relationship, making them children of God (1:12) and freeing them from slavery to an evil power. By transferring paternity from ‘the devil’ (John 8:44) to the Father of Jesus,³⁰ humanity is liberated to live with the freedom of children within the household and no longer as a slave (8:34–36). But, as Painter notes, “The success of this mission remains totally dependent on the oneness of those who are sent with the source of divine love, which may yet transform the world from a place of darkness and

²⁸ The missionary focus has come to the fore in some scholarship; e.g., Moloney, “‘That all may be one’” 383–400; Manns, *L'évangile de Jean*.

²⁹ The verb ἀποστέλλω occurs 6 times in this chapter with reference to Jesus (vv. 3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25), and once in reference to the disciples (v. 18), although the sending of disciples will not happen until after the cross (20:21)

³⁰ The issue of paternity is a central part of the argument with “the Jews” in John 8. The logic is that ‘sons’ do as their ‘father’ does (8:40). “For Jesus the true criterion of paternity is conduct, not ethnic descent.” Brendan Byrne, *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014) 152. Sin enslaves and only the son can liberate to enable the believer a permanent place within the household (8:34–36) (Coloe, *God Dwells with Us* 138–40). Within a patriarchal world-view, only the father was considered as the origin of new life, but in the Passion, the mother of Jesus will have a critical role in establishing the “children of God.” For two contrasting views on this point see Turid Karlsen Seim, “Descent and Divine Paternity in the Gospel of John: Does the Mother Matter?,” *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005) 361–75; and Mary L. Coloe, “The Mother of Jesus: A Woman Possessed,” in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (ed. Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie and Ruben Zimmermann; WUNT 314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 202–13.

terror.”³¹ Only the visible unity and love among believers can witness to and make present the divine love in the world.³²

³¹ John Painter, “Identity in the Fourth Gospel,” *The Covenant Quarterly* 72, no. 3–4 (2014) 258.

³² Zumstein, *L’Évangile selon Saint Jean (13–21)* 185.