

**A THEOLOGY OF MISSION
AS PARTICIPATION IN FRIENDSHIP
THROUGH, WITH, AND IN THE TRINITY**

Submitted by

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DEDICATION

*To my family, friends, teachers, colleagues, and students,
and most especially,
Barbara Hallensleben
whose abiding friendship with God
caused them to go forth in a grand gesture of friendship,
to draw me into fuller participation in Trinitarian Love.*

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ABSTRACT

A theology of mission as participation in friendship is perceptible within the whole of Sacred Scripture and is most fully revealed in the Gospel of John. It is evident in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the writings of the most recent pontiffs. Yet there appears to be no documented comprehensive synthesis of a theology of mission as participation in friendship. Therefore, this project seeks to employ biblical exegesis, dogmatic theology, and ecclesiology with an examination of contemporary magisterial teaching in studying the concepts of mission, friendship, and participation to contribute to a theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Catholic tradition. It is hoped that this project may serve as a resource to pastoral leaders, as the call to review and renew parishes has not yet sufficed to fulfill Pope Francis's hope to bring them "nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented."¹

¹ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013) (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2013), §28.

“If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light, and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, §4).

PART ONE: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR A THEOLOGY OF MISSION AS PARTICIPATION IN FRIENDSHIP

CHAPTER I: AN INTRODUCTION TO A THEOLOGY OF MISSION AS PARTICIPATION IN FRIENDSHIP THROUGH, WITH, AND IN THE TRINITY

A. The Research Project

1. *Impetuses for the Research Question and Its Formulation*

This chapter will answer the question of why this research project was undertaken. The pastoral impetus will be addressed first. This pastoral impetus, while significant, was reinforced by the scholarly search for a theology of mission as participation in friendship. The second impetus for this research was the discovery of a theology of mission as participation in the writing of Russian orthodox Pavel Florensky in his comment in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, on the Gospel of John. This discovery led to the third and most significant impetus which was the realization that the Gospel of John weaves the themes of mission, friendship, and participation together throughout the entire narrative. The following paragraphs describe how one discovery led to another in the formulation of the research question.

First, the pastoral impetus for this project is a tendency toward the functionalization of mission in the contemporary Catholic Church in North America in response to the decline in participation in the life of the Church. While the pastoral impetus is drawn from experiences of the Catholic Church in the United States, the need for a more relational Church has been voiced repeatedly by modern pontiffs.² Parishes and dioceses seeking to become loci of missionary

² In *Christifideles Laici* (1988), Saint John Paul II emphasizes that friendships formed within the Christian community are vital for spiritual growth and the building up of the Church; in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), he encourages Christians to foster deep friendships within the context of the Church, as these relationships are essential for building a culture of love and solidarity in the world. Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), reflects on how friendship with God is transformative and is the foundation for authentic friendships with others. It elevates human friendship by rooting it in the divine and in his *Caritas in Veritate*, he highlighted how friendship has a social dimension, contributing to the common good and the building of a just society. Pope Francis amplifies his predecessors' call for Christians to accompany one another in authentic friendship. His reflections on friendship are closely tied to his vision of the Church as a community of love and service, and his emphasis on the need for dialogue, encounter, and solidarity. He stresses the necessity of accompaniment and relationships in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), and dedicates an entire encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), to social friendship.

disciples as envisioned by Pope Francis' exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* have implemented many programs, at significant expense, attempting to foster a renewed missionary spirit among the clergy and lay faithful. However, these programs risk functionalizing mission as they deploy the latest recruitment strategies designed primarily to increase numbers. In this paradigm, pastoral plans take precedent over the creation of a culture of authentic friendship. Mission can be reduced to goals and objectives to achieve rather than an expression of sacrificial love for God and neighbor.

An account of the momentous World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 is instructive. Father Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, in his evening address at this historic ecumenical gathering of missionaries, identified racism, elitism, and paternalism as major obstacles to the development of Christian life in his native India.³ He believed that without everyone collaborating and cooperating in a spirit of mutual care and respect, the full glory of God would not be realized. Pleading with the missionaries present, Azariah said, "For ages to come, the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labors of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us friends!"⁴ Pastor Azariah perceived that participation in friendship is the key to mission.⁵ His cry for friendship has a theological foundation that integrates mission, friendship, and participation.

The initial scholarly inspiration for this project was Pavel Florensky's letter "On Friendship" in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* where he offers an interpretation of John 21:15-17. Florensky's interpretation of the interrelationship in this pericope of friendship and mission is not only highly significant and intriguing, but also in need of further analysis and research. In this dialogue in John 21:15-17, the Risen Lord connects being His friend with participating in His pastoral mission. Based on these insights about friendship and mission both requiring participation, the research question was formed around the potential interconnectedness of the concepts of mission, friendship, and participation.

³ Dana L. Robert, "Cross-Cultural Friendship in the Creation of Twentieth-Century World Christianity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 2 (2011): 100.

⁴ Quoted in Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 25.

⁵ An image of the word *friend* as a key is found in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* Trilogy. Gandalf's utterance of the word "friend" is the key to open the gates of Moria. For Tolkien, friendship truly was the key to achieving the mission. At the same time, participation in the mission forged the friendship of the main characters.

2. *Scriptural Foundation for the Research Project*

By tracing salvation history, it is possible to see how God establishes friendship with humanity and gradually invites humanity to participate in His plan of salvation.⁶ We read in Isaiah 41:8, “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend.”⁷ Abraham, whom God identifies as “friend,” participates in God’s mission by leading his progeny into a loving bond with God. The story of Abraham is the *locus classicus* of human participation in the Divine mission as a friend of God. Likewise, in Exodus 33:11, we read that Moses “speaks to God face to face as one does with a friend.” Moses, in a manner similar to Abraham, participates in God’s saving mission as His friend, leading Israel from bondage in Egypt to freedom in God’s law and promise. Not only do individuals participate in the Divine mission, but so do the chosen people Israel through her covenant with YHWH and through her vocation to be a “light to the nations” (Is 42:6; 49:6).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ names His followers as friends and invites them to participate in the Divine mission. In a very particular and profoundly beautiful way, the Gospel of John provides a narrative of a theology of mission as participation in friendship. Twenty-two times in the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of being sent by the Father. The Divine Persons are relational (Jn 10:30); they are united in mission (Jn 7:28-29); and in friendship-love (Jn 5:20). Jesus prays that He and His disciples may be united as He and the Father are one (Jn 17:11). Jesus conveys to His disciples that their union with Him is essential for their mission (Jn 15:5). Jesus describes the relation to His disciples as friendship-love (Jn 15:15). The characters of John the Baptist and Simon Peter form an *inclusio* of a mission theology of participation as friendship: at the beginning of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist, is identified by his participation in the divine mission as the Friend of the Bridegroom; at the conclusion of the Gospel, Peter is identified by his participation in the divine mission as a friend of Jesus who is to tend the Christian flock.

Without minimizing or denying the filial love between the Son and the Father, it is important to recall that to do the will of the other or to do what is pleasing to and good for the other

⁶ “The first man was not only created good but was also established in friendship with his Creator.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §374.

⁷ All English-language biblical quotes are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2011.

is an aspect of the classical concept of friendship.⁸ The Gospel of John includes the love indicative of friendship in the relationship between God the Father and God and Son. In John 5:20 the verb φιλεῖ (friendship-love) is used to describe the love the Father has for the Son. The apostles of Jesus are sent out to participate in His mission as His friends. The disciples are friends *as* they do what is pleasing to Christ, which is to love one another, *and* they are friends *because* Jesus shared with them everything He heard from the Father (Jn 15:17).

Animated by the Holy Spirit, friendship was the way of mission in the ancient Church. “The Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control” (Gal 5:22), all of which are integral to friendship. In Paul’s first letter to the Church in Thessaloniki, he writes, “So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but ourselves, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thes 2:8). We read in the Acts of the Apostles 2:4 how the first Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, cared for one another in mutual affection and generosity. Friendship in the early Christian community was an effective means of growing the Church—so much so that historian Rodney Stark explains, “Christianity did not grow because of miracle workings in the marketplaces, or because Constantine said it should, or even because martyrs gave it such credibility. It grew because Christians constituted an intense community.”⁹

A homily on the final discourse in the Gospel of John by Saint John Chrysostom explicitly makes the connection between the mission of Christ and Divine - human friendship. Chrysostom places on the lips of the Redeemer these words: “That is, it is not to upbraid, that I tell you that I lay down My life for you, but I ran to meet you to lead you into friendship.”¹⁰ For Chrysostom the mission of the Redeemer is to lead His disciples into Divine friendship by becoming Friend to them, displaying the greatest act of friendship-love in laying His life down for them. The mission of the Redeemer is an expression of His relationship with the Father, the Spirit, and with humanity.

A theology of mission as participation in friendship is perceptible in the whole of Sacred Scripture and is most fully revealed in the Gospel of John. It is evident in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, as well as in the writings of the most recent pontiffs. Yet, there appears

⁸ Aquinas offers, “to love is to will the good for someone (*amare est velle alicui bonum*).” *Summa Theologica* Part I-II, q. 26, a. 4, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica Complete in a Single Volume*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Claremont, CA: Coyote Canyon Press, 2018).

⁹ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Early Christianity* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1996), 210.

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, “Homily on John 15:17,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Charles Marriott, vol. 14 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1889).

to be no documented comprehensive synthesis of a theology of mission as participation in friendship. Therefore, this project seeks to employ biblical theology, dogmatic theology, and ecclesiology, along with an examination of contemporary magisterial teaching, to contribute to a theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Catholic tradition. It is hoped this project may serve as a resource to pastoral leaders as the call to review and renew parishes has not yet sufficed to fulfill Pope Francis’s hope that it brings them “nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.”¹¹

B. The Research Project Offers a Possible Answer to Present-Day Alienation

1. Present-Day Alienation

The experience of alienation is both a sociological and theological reality which is of concern to the modern Church. Social alienation is a condition in social relationships reflected by a low degree of integration or common values and a high degree of distance or isolation between individuals, or between an individual and a group of people in a community.¹² It is a sociological concept developed by several classical and contemporary theorists.¹³ Alienation can also be defined as a *relation of relationlessness*.¹⁴ (Could there be a more precise antithesis of Divine life than a relation of relationlessness?) Sociologists note the significance of social isolation in the modern world: “With increased isolation and atomization, much of our daily interactions are with those who are strangers to us and with whom we lack any ongoing social relationships.”¹⁵

Present-day means of social communication have not overcome alienation, in fact they have exacerbated it. Pope Francis expresses his concern regarding the illusion of connectivity and relationality of contemporary media platforms in his encyclical on social friendship, *Fratelli Tutti*:

¹¹ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013) (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2013), §28.

¹² Robert C. Ankony, “The Impact of Perceived Alienation on Police Officers’ Sense of Mastery and Subsequent Motivation for Proactive Enforcement,” *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 22, no. 2 (1999): 120–32.

¹³ Social theorists who have contributed to the understanding of alienation include Emile Durkheim; Erich Fromm; Karl Marx; Georg Simmel; Melvin Seeman; Devorah Kalekin-Fishman; and Robert Ankony.

¹⁴ See Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, trans. Frederick Neuhouser and Alan E. Smith, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

¹⁵ A. G. Neal and S. F. Collas, *Intimacy and Alienation: Forms of Estrangement in Female/Male Relationships* (New York, NY: Garland, 2000), 114.

“No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love.”¹⁶ In describing digital media, Francis says,

They lack the physical gestures, facial expressions, moments of silence, body language, even the smells, the trembling of hands, the blushes and perspiration that speak to us and are part of human communication. Digital relationships, which do not demand the slow and gradual cultivation of friendships, stable interaction or the building of a consensus that matures over time, have the appearance of sociability. Yet they do not really build community; instead, they tend to disguise and expand the very individualism that finds expression in xenophobia and in contempt for the vulnerable.¹⁷

Francis describes in *Fratelli Tutti* the dark clouds over our closed world of divisive digital communication, a rising resistance to welcome refugees, shameless selfishness, and escalating aggression.¹⁸ All of these contribute to and are reflective of a culture of growing alienation.

2. *Alienation Is the Opposite of Participation in the Modern Church’s Self-Understanding*

In the theological context, by alienation we mean “what limits and prevents a person from fulfilling himself or herself on the basis of acting and existing together with others.”¹⁹ Alienation is a serious concern for the modern Church because this increasing social phenomenon contradicts the social nature of the human person fashioned in the image and likeness of the Trinity.²⁰ The Church asserts human persons are social beings meant for participation. Karol Wojtyła, who would become Saint Pope John Paul II, writes,

Alienation denotes nothing else but the denial of participation, an attenuation or outright annihilation of the possibility of experiencing the other man as “the other ‘I,’” and thereby a devastation of the “I–the other” relationship. Inasmuch as various “negative” affections or attitudes, in a sense, verify a capacity for participation in the humanity of “the other,” alienation resides outside the field of such verification. Alienation denotes the situation in man, the state, the attitude in which he is not, in a sense, able to experience the other man as “the other ‘I.’”²¹

Wojtyła explains that the way to overcome alienation is through participation and that the Church has a significant role to play. “There is to be a certain resemblance between the unity of the Divine Persons and the association that human persons are to establish among themselves in

¹⁶ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §87.

¹⁷ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §43.

¹⁸ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §10–53.

¹⁹ Karol Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” *Church Life Journal*, May 18, 2021, <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/participation-and-alienation/>. See also Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Act and Related Essays* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2021).

²⁰ See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paras. 1878–1896, in which the social nature of the human person is presented.

²¹ Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation.”

truth and love.”²² In the Christian tradition, God is a triune communion of persons. “God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that love.”²³

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated at the Second Vatican Council in 1965, addresses the reality of alienation and the processes of socialization and personalization in the modern world. *Gaudium et Spes* asserts that the work of the Church includes fostering participation among a loving communion of friends so as to overcome alienation. *Gaudium et Spes* affirms participation in community is essential (not an “accessory”) to human flourishing.

The fact that human beings are social by nature indicates that the betterment of the person and the improvement of society depend on each other. Insofar as humanity by its very nature stands completely in need of life in society, it is, and it ought to be the beginning, the subject, and the object of every social organization. Life in society is not something accessory to humanity: through their dealings with others, through mutual service, and through fraternal and sororal dialogue, men and women develop all their talents and become able to rise to their destiny.²⁴

Gaudium et Spes asserts that the obligation to participate in fostering social relations is to be considered a sacred duty.

All must consider it their sacred duty to count social obligations among their chief duties today and observe them as such. For the more closely the world comes together, the more widely do people’s obligations transcend particular groups and extend to the whole world. This will be realized only if individuals and groups practice moral and social virtues and foster them in social living. Then, under the necessary help of Divine grace, there will arise a generation of new women and men, the molders of a new humanity.²⁵

Thus, the Church “in pursuing its own salvific purpose ... casts the reflected light of Divine life”²⁶ and love on the world precisely “in the way it consolidates society,”²⁷ or in other words, how it brings humanity closer together.

Christ’s revelation of the nature of God and the nature of the human person reveals how, made in the image and likeness of God, men and women find their truth and meaning when they both reveal and participate in Divine love. The fathers of the Second Vatican Council and recent

²² *Gaudium et Spes*, §24.

²³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), §21.

²⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, §25.

²⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, §30.

²⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, §40.

²⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*, §40.

popes communicated the role of the Church in modern society as fostering participation in human society, the ecclesial community, and most especially in the Divine life.

3. *A Mission Theology of Participation Requires Relationality in a Form the Postmodern Church Realizes*

In *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*, Sherry Weddell identifies the lack of a relationship with God as a significant barrier to a lifelong commitment to Catholicism. She writes, “When Pew researchers asked American adults a series of questions about the kind of God they believed in, a startling pattern emerged: Nearly a third of self-identified Catholics believe in an impersonal God.”²⁸ When Pew surveyors asked the question “Which comes closest to your view of God: God is a person with whom people can have a relationship, or God is an impersonal force?” only 48 percent of Catholics were absolutely certain that the God they believed in was a God with whom they could have a personal relationship.²⁹ Weddell’s insight is that it is not only the lack of a relationship with God but the very *belief that God is impersonal* that is significant. Weddell identifies one of the greatest challenges facing the United States Catholic Church today as the fact that the majority of American Catholics are not even sure that a personal relationship with God is possible.³⁰ This reveals a crisis of Divine-human relationality in postmodernity. How might the Church respond?

The Church can more consistently exhibit trustworthiness, hospitality, mutuality, vulnerability, solidarity, accompaniment, and sacrificial love and in so doing practice a mission theology of participation in friendship. Friendship has the potential to purify the motives of mission. It is contrary to Christianity and to friendship to seek power, domination, and control of the other.³¹ As Pope Francis has written in his missional encyclical, “An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.”³² Words or actions devoid of genuine love, affection, mutuality, anything the Church says or does that is devoid of friendship, will fail to evoke belief. The Church participates in the Divine mission

²⁸ Sherry A. Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 43.

²⁹ 2008 Pew Research Institute, “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey,” accessed June 23, 2021.

³⁰ Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 43.

³¹ See Benedict Ssettuuma, “Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission,” *African Ecclesial Review* 52, no. 2 & 3 (2010).

³² *Evangelii Gaudium*, §24.

through the Spirit, who is the bond of love personified. As missiologist Lesslie Newbigin asserts, “the proper bearing of a universal mission is a universal fellowship.”³³

“The Church is a community of missionary disciples.”³⁴ Those words from *Evangelii Gaudium* offer a clear, concise, and particularly compelling definition of the Church that contributes to our discussion of mission as participation in friendship. Two very important inferences may be drawn from Pope Francis’s definition.

The first inference is that the Church is a loving community, a gathering of diverse persons in friendship, who experience communion with one another. This is not only a modern ecclesiology. Ecclesial writers have emphasized since the earliest centuries that Christians are to be in cordial relations not only with God, but also with each other.³⁵ Tertullian (160–220 AD), a prolific early Christian author from the Roman province of Carthage, remarked of the early Church: “‘Look,’ they say, ‘how they [Christians] love one another’ (for they themselves hate one another); ‘and how they are ready to die for each other’ (for they themselves are readier to kill each other).”³⁶ Love and genuine friendship are hallmarks of the followers of Christ: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (Jn 13:35). We read in John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, that a member of the lay faithful, “can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship.”³⁷ The Church is a community of persons who love, reflective of the Triune God who is three persons whose very essence is Love. The centripetal force of a theology of mission as participation in friendship draws humanity into a deeper relationship with Christ, and through Him and His Spirit with all persons.

The second inference in Pope Francis’ phrase that, “the Church is a community of missionary disciples,”³⁸ is that to be a disciple is to be missionary. One cannot follow Jesus without also going forth to proclaim the good news of God’s mercy and invite participation in the Divine life of Love. Disciples are entrusted with the mission to “go forth and make disciples ... baptizing

³³ Lesslie Newbigin, *Is Christ Divided? A Plea for Christian Unity in a Revolutionary Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 19.

³⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium*, §24.

³⁵ For a compelling presentation of friendship and evangelization in the early Church, see Mike Aquilina, *Friendship and the Fathers: How the Early Church Evangelized*, (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing), 2021.

³⁶ *Apologeticum*, ch. 39, sect. 7, found in Oxford Essential Quotation, 4th ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, edited by Susan Ratcliffe, 2006).

³⁷ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the World *Christifideles Laici* (December 30, 1988) (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1988), §20.

³⁸ *Evangelii Gaudium*, §24.

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). The document of the Second Vatican Council specifically addressing the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, proclaims, “The Church is missionary by her nature.”³⁹ This missionary nature of the Church is founded upon the Trinity, whose abundant Love sends and is sent. The foundation of the apostolic mission is the Church’s participation in the missionary activity of the Trinity.

The mission of God sending, and being sent forth, is to invite and sustain all of humanity into the ecstatic joy of Divine friendship eternally. “The Trinitarian gift of Divine life is accomplished by the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—that is to say, by their salvific sending.”⁴⁰ “The fruit of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit is the lifting up of the human person toward God who gives human beings the grace to come to meet Him in His own personal mystery.”⁴¹ The fruit of the missions of the Son and the Spirit is the capacity for the human person to truly be with God. As gracious and generous is that, the missions of the Son and Spirit offer even greater grace—the fulfillment of the perfection of the human person in God himself.⁴² In the words of Russian Orthodox priest and theologian, Dumitru Staniloae, the Divine missions, “as a work of raising up believers to intimate communion with God, salvation and deification are nothing other than the extension to conscious creatures of the relations that exist between the Divine persons.”⁴³ Salvation is the miracle of the Triune God’s unrequited love, our free response to that love, and the grace which enables a participation in Divine love. Friendship love is paradigmatic of the mission of salvation.⁴⁴ Friendship love is the origin of the mission of salvation. Friendship love is the way of mission of salvation. Friendship love is the goal of the mission of salvation.

³⁹ Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes* (December 7, 1965), in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, OP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), §1.

⁴⁰ Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, ed. Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 178.

⁴¹ Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 360.

⁴² *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 2, a. 3: “The perfection of the rational creature does not only consist in that with which it is naturally endowed, but also in that which is given to it through a sort of participation in the divine goodness.” As noted by Giles Emery in *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 360.

⁴³ Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), 248.

⁴⁴ See Holger Dörnemann, *Freundschaft Als Paradigma Der Erlösung* (Würzburg, Germany: Echter, 1997).

C. Methodology

The following paragraphs describe the methodological choices that were made in this exploration of a theology of mission as participation in friendship. The methodological approach, as described below, creates an internal coherence to the research project.

First, an assessment of the strengths and limitations of contemporary missiological scholarly literature regarding a theology of mission as participation in friendship was conducted. This comprehensive literature review focused on 125 significant scholarly works on theology of mission sources available in English. This review of missiology (the term *missiology* is used here as the theology of mission) found scant research on the theological relationship of friendship and missiology.⁴⁵ The terms *friend* and *friendship* did not appear as independent topics or even as subtopics under “Love” in the indexes of major graduate level textbooks on the theology of mission.⁴⁶ This was unexpected because there is a clear connection between being Jesus’s friend and participating in His mission in the Gospel of John. It was essential to document this significant gap in missiology literature.

Because the focus of this dissertation is a theology of mission as participation in friendship, a question was considered in each of the broad subcategories of missiology literature: general missiology; Trinitarian missiology; and biblical missiology. The question posed was: Is there a reference in this scholarly missiological text to friendship, and if so, is it explicit or implicit? If explicit, the words *friend* and *friendship* in their philosophical and theological sense of “shared life” in participation are obviously present in the text to describe the origin, the way, or the end of mission. If implicit, the notion of friendship is implied or can be drawn out of the text. For example,

⁴⁵ “Friendship Evangelism” is a topic in evangelical writings. It is a method of proselytization whereby believers become friends with nonbelievers to gain adherents. This method exploits “friendship” as a means to an end. These tactics demean the human person and the sanctity of friendship. Converts are perceived as “cash” in a business model of evangelization with a focus on results-driven measurements reflective of a business mindset. Such transactional forms of evangelization harm the Church and human persons.

⁴⁶ It was discovered that the terms *friend* and *friendship* were not found in the leading theology of mission books. See Karl Müller, et al., ed., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997); David L. Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992); Eckhard J Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2004). Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academics, 2010); Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); and the classic Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995). Also see James J. Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001); Paul Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church: A Paul Evdokimov Reader* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001).

the text may describe missionary activity as restoring the Divine-human relationship, faithful accompaniment, solidarity with, or sacrificial love, for the sake of the other. This would seem to imply friendship. This somewhat unique approach to the literature review was necessary to demonstrate the *status quaestionis* in theological research regarding a theology of mission as participation in friendship.

Second, the thesis contains a methodology of interpretation of Sacred Scripture from the perspective of the main terms: mission – friendship – participation. This methodology draws upon the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, promulgated at the Second Vatican Council, and the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God *Verbum Domini*, promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI. *Dei Verbum* and *Verbum Domini* affirm that Sacred Scripture reveals God's invitation to humanity to participate in the Divine life and mission as friends. This methodology, further explained in Chapter Three, builds upon the scholarship of Donald Senior, Joseph Ratzinger, N. T. Wright, Archbishop Anastasios, and Matthew Levering, particularly his publications on participatory exegesis.

Third, a study of key biblical texts that illuminate the themes of mission, participation and friendship was undertaken. Because of prevalence of these themes in the Gospel of John, a thorough theological study of the terms for mission, friendship and participation in the Fourth Gospel was conducted. The methodology of biblical theology included a lexicographical study as well as a conceptual field approach, which considers not only the specific instances of the terms, but the broader concepts of mission, participation and friendship in the text. The Gospel of John provides the strongest evidence of a scriptural foundation for a theology of mission as participation in friendship and therefore is the focal point of this research project. The biblical theological methodology applied in this study of the Gospel of John is further explained in Chapter Four. The diverse scholarly opinions regarding mission, friendship and participation in the Gospel of John are also presented there.

Attention is given in this project to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, so that the meaning of the sacred texts regarding a theology of mission as participation in friendship is properly understood in relation to the whole of Divine revelation. A broad conceptual field study of the concepts of mission, friendship, and participation was conducted on the Old Testament and the New Testament. This ensures the biblical foundation for a theology of mission as participation in friendship reflects a hermeneutic of continuity with the Church's interpretation. It must be stated

that the objective is not exegesis in the strict sense, but a theological interpretation of biblical terminology pertaining to the thesis. There are other valid exegetical methodologies. However, this methodology provides a structured yet flexible framework to develop a robust theology of mission as participation in friendship grounded in scripture and tradition which is responsive to contemporary contexts.

Prior to engaging the methodology in seeking to answer the research question, it was essential to define the theological concepts of the key terms: mission, participation, and friendship.

D. Definitions

The following paragraphs explain the theological meaning of the three key concepts of mission, friendship, and participation discussed in this thesis. Saint Thomas Aquinas's thought influences our understanding of mission, friendship, and participation as well as the relationship of the three terms. These concepts interpenetrate and mutually imply each other in numerous ways. As will be demonstrated below, first, both mission and friendship require the participation of a person. Second, mission is the outward movement of friendship-love to engage others in participation in friendship with God and the Church. Third, the greatest good a friend can offer is to lay down their life for the salvation of the other. And finally, participation in Divine life and love is the goal of the missions of the Son and the Spirit. The Church continues and participates in the missions of the Son and the Spirit. Our finite beings are infused with sanctifying grace through the missions of the Son and Spirit, who make us friends with God able to participate in the Divine life and mission. But before we can understand how these concepts interact to form a theology of mission as participation in friendship, each term needs to be defined on its own.

1. Mission

The key concept of this thesis is mission. The standard definition of mission is the way in which Christians convey through proclamation and witness their faith in Jesus Christ to attract other people to their community. It is often expressed as “the effort to effect passage over the boundary between faith in Jesus Christ and its absence.”⁴⁷ It is the actualization of these words in the Gospel of John, “as the Father has sent me, so I also send you” (Jn 20:21). The Gospel of John draws a parallel between Jesus being sent by the Father and His followers being sent by Him. The

⁴⁷ Karl Müller, et al., ed., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), xv.

concept of mission in this thesis is based upon Trinitarian theology, specifically Saint Thomas Aquinas' treatment of the Trinity in Part 1 Question 43 of the *Summa Theologiae*. The findings of this thesis demonstrate how close this theological tradition is to the biblical terminology. The following paragraphs will develop Aquinas's theology of mission, beginning with his sources in Patristic authors, particularly Augustine.

One of the earliest works to connect the mission of the Church with the Trinity was Origen's *Contra Celsum*.⁴⁸ In his argument against the pagan philosopher, Celsus, Origen makes the case that the Christian mission is a Divine work, not a human enterprise, and that it is God who is responsible for the spread of the Gospel. "It was God who sent Jesus to announce the Gospel to all the nations, to bring the light of truth to those in darkness and to proclaim the kingdom of heaven to the whole human race."⁴⁹ For Origen, the mission of the Church is not simply an intellectual or pastoral movement of human origin. In this passage from *Contra Celsum*, Origen expresses the missionary activity of the Church as a participation in God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Saint Augustine of Hippo, in his work *De Trinitate*, further develops the understanding that the Church's mission as a continuation of the Divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Augustine discusses how the Son and the Holy Spirit are sent by the Father in the work of salvation, and how this mission of God is carried out through the Church. He describes the temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit as being extended in the work of the Church. "The Son is sent to be seen by men, the Holy Spirit is sent to dwell in men. Thus, we are brought to participate in the love and knowledge of God."⁵⁰ In this passage, Augustine suggests that the Church participates in the Divine sending, particularly through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which equips the Church to continue Christ's salvific mission in the world. Augustine addresses how the mission of the Son in the Incarnation reflects God's desire to reconcile humanity to Himself and connects this Divine desire to the Church's participation in Christ's mission: "The Son was sent so that the world might be reconciled through Him. And we, as His Body, are sent to bring this message of reconciliation

⁴⁸ Origen's *Contra Celsum* written around 248 AD, to counter philosopher Celsus' treatise against Christianity.

⁴⁹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, III.28, Documenta Catholica Omnia, accessed March 7, 2023, [https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0185-0254,_Origenes,_Contra_Celsum_\[Schaff\],_EN.pdf](https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0185-0254,_Origenes,_Contra_Celsum_[Schaff],_EN.pdf),

⁵⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, II.5, trans. Arthur West Haddan, Logos Library, access March 9, 2023, <https://www.logoslibrary.org/augustine/trinity/0205.html>.

to all men.”⁵¹ Here, Augustine directly links the mission of the Church to the Divine Mission of the Son, highlighting that the Church, as the Body of Christ, continues Christ’s work of reconciling the humanity to God.

In his *Summa Theologiae* (ST I, q. 43), St. Thomas Aquinas systematically elaborates Augustine’s writing on the Divine missions. In Aquinas’ own words, “The meaning of being ‘sent’ (*missio*) implies two things: one is the orientation of the one who is sent to the sender; the other is the orientation of the one sent to the goal to which he is sent.”⁵² Mission by definition is relational. Whereas within creation the relation between the sender and the sent implies a separation, in God, the Father, Son, and Spirit are united in the act of sending by their very essence of love. The sending takes place “without separation” (*sine separationem*).⁵³ Relation has an ontological foundation; it is a form of “participation” in Divine life. As Father Gilles Emery, OP, explains, “The Trinitarian gift of Divine life is accomplished by the missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—that is to say, by their salvific sending.”⁵⁴ In other words, the gift of grace, or participation in Divine life is the fruit of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

There are four interrelated facets of the Divine missions reflected in the *Summa Theologiae*. First, is the facet of unity of action: The whole Divine economy is the common work of the three Divine persons: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The second facet is the idea of the distinct missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are particularly highlighted, with the Son’s Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost being key events that reveal the distinct and complimentary roles of each Person of the Trinity. The third facet is the idea of the inseparability of missions: The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct yet flow from the same font of Divine love and work together in the economy of salvation. The sending of the Son is always accompanied by the sending of the Spirit, which underscores the relational aspect of the Trinity in the context of salvation history. The fourth facet reveals the purpose of the Divine missions is to enable humanity to share in the communion of love that exists between the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. Mission is rooted in the

⁵¹ Augustine, *De Trinitate* IV.20, trans. Arthur West Haddan, Logos Library, access March 9, 2023, <https://www.logoslibrary.org/augustine/trinity/0420.html>.

⁵² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part I q. 43, a. 1 in *Summa Theologica Complete in a Single Volume*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Claremont, CA: Coyote Canyon Press, 2018).

⁵³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 43, a. 1, ad 2.

⁵⁴ Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, trans. Matthew Levering (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 178.

eternal love of the Trinity and aims to bring people into a relationship with God. Saint Thomas Aquinas developed the theology of mission to explain the movement of God into the world. It is the outpouring of Divine love, which enables the human person, by way of the Divine missions and indwelling, to participate in the Divine mission as friends.

The definition of mission developed by renowned theologian and missionary Orthodox Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and all Albania is most aligned with that taken by this thesis. In his book, *Mission in Christ's Way*, Archbishop Anastasios articulates in one sentence the origin and purpose of mission as Trinitarian love: "Mission is the extension of the love of the Trinitarian God for the transformation in Trinitarian love of the whole world."⁵⁵ He posits that Love, which is the essence of the Trinity, is self-sacrificing; it is costly. Mission in Christ's way is the *via dolorosa*, the Way of the Cross. It is the outward movement of loving-suffering. "One of the greatest dangers for Christian mission is that we become forgetful in the practice of the Cross and create a comfortable type of Christian who wants the Cross as an ornament, but who often prefers to crucify others than to be crucified himself."⁵⁶ Bishop Anastasios echoes the Orthodox missiological notion of the liturgy after the Liturgy, but in a cruciform way. He states, "after the Divine Liturgy in the church, a new liturgy must be carried out....Whosoever wishes to live in Christ is obligated to follow Him, not only to the upper room and to the Mount of Transfiguration, but also in the dust of the apostolic way, uphill to Jerusalem and Golgotha."⁵⁷ This understanding of mission is rooted in Sacred Scripture, most explicitly in the Gospel of John, will be more thoroughly discussed in subsequent chapters.

In conclusion, mission is not conquest nor imposing beliefs, but rather inviting others into Divine friendship. Mission is the continuation of the loving sending of the Son and the Spirit into the world, which reflects the eternal Divine desire to draw humanity into a loving relationship. The missions of the Son and Spirit, make us friends with God able to participate in the Divine life and love.⁵⁸ Mission, therefore, is not a one-way activity in which the Church imparts doctrine or provides material assistance. Instead, mission is a process of authentic encounter where both the missionaries and those to whom missionaries are sent are transformed through their relationship.

⁵⁵ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ's Way* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 211.

⁵⁶ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 211.

⁵⁷ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 151.

⁵⁸ Matthew Levering, "Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 1 (January 2007): 44.

This mutuality reflects the essence of friendship, where both parties give and receive the revelation of Trinitarian love through, with, and in the other.

2. *Friendship*

The definition of friendship relies upon philosophical-ontological and theological understandings of this distinct relationship between humans and between humans and God. Ancient and contemporary understandings of friendship provide timeless wisdom into the nature and essence of friendship. However, once again, it is Saint Thomas Aquinas' insights into friendship that will most influence our understanding of friendship. Ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish concepts and traditions of friendship were adopted and adapted by the authors of the New Testament. In these traditions, friendship included the concepts of mutuality, frankness of speech, sharing resources, participating in life together, and self-sacrifice for the good of the friend. Loyalty is indicative of friendship. When the friend is hailed as a hero as well as when the friend is flayed as failure; when the friend is a victor and also when the friend is a victim; when the friend is popular and when the friend is persecuted; one must stand with the friend. Friendship also requires the self-gift of revelation. The following paragraphs provide a philosophical-ontological understanding of friendship as well as an overview of the development of the theological definition of friendship in the Christian tradition.

a) *Philosophical-Ontological Definition*

Twentieth-century Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben contributes significantly to the philosophical-ontological definition of *friend*. For Agamben, *friend* belongs to that class of terms that linguists define as non-predicative—terms, that is, based on which it is not possible to construct a class of objects in which one might group the things to which one applies the predicate. “*Friend* would share this condition with philosophical terms: terms which, as is well known, do not have an objective denotation and which, like those terms medieval logicians labeled transcendent simply signify existence.”⁵⁹ It is a metaphysical reality.

Friendship is then of such proximity that it is impossible to make for oneself either a representation or a concept of it. “To recognize someone as a ‘friend’ means not to be able to recognize him as something. One cannot say ‘friend’ as one says ‘white’, ‘Italian’, or ‘hot’—

⁵⁹ Giorgio Agamben, “Friendship,” *Contretemps*, no. 5 (December 2004): 3.

friendship is not a property or quality of a subject.”⁶⁰ Agamben provides a beautiful definition: “the friend is another self with which we share the fact of existing, the very softness of living.”⁶¹ This is why friendship opens the space of a community that precedes all identity and all sharing. Agamben is speaking of true solidarity—solidarity or unity that *precedes* the self. Because the perception of our own existence (*aisthesis oti estin*) is desirable, Agamben reasons so too is that of the existence of a friend:

Inherent in this perception of existing is another perception, specifically human, which takes the form of a concurrent perception (*synaisthanesthai*) of the friend’s existence. Friendship is the instance of this concurrent perception of the friend’s existence in the awareness of one’s existence.⁶²

Agamben seems to be saying that one can perceive oneself only in the presence of the friend, and self-perception is a determinant of the perception of the friend.⁶³ I can only know myself in relation to the other. For Agamben, “the friend is not another I, but an otherness immanent in self-ness, a becoming other of the self. At the point at which I perceive my existence as pleasant, my perception is traversed by a concurrent perception that dislocates it and deports it towards the friend, towards the other self.”⁶⁴ Perception of the self comes through the experience of friendship. Agamben seems to have developed Saint Augustine’s notion that, “no one becomes known except through friendship.”⁶⁵ Even the self is known in and through friendship.

b) Theological Definition of Friendship

Catholic theology views friendship as a vital and profound relationship that reflects Divine love and the communal nature of the Church. Rooted in the understanding of God as Trinity—a relationship of love among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—friendship is seen as a way to participate in and reflect this Divine communion. Therefore, the foundation of all true friendship in Catholic theology is friendship with God. Through grace, individuals are invited into a personal

⁶⁰ Agamben, “Friendship,” 4.

⁶¹ Agamben, “Friendship,” 4.

⁶² Agamben, “Friendship,” 4.

⁶³ This passage from Gregory Nazianzus comes to mind: “Now, belonging to the One, we have become one; belonging to the Trinity, we have gained unity; become of one nature, of one soul, of equal worth; belonging to the one Logos-Reason, we have escaped [divisive] unreason; belonging to the one Spirit, we are stirred, but together; belonging to the one who is the Truth, we reach the same conclusions; belonging to Wisdom, we are of one mind; belonging to the Light, we live together “as children of light”; belonging to the Way, we act in unison.” From Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 6, *Eirenikos prōtos*, 4.10–16.

⁶⁴ Agamben, *Contretemps*, no. 5 (December 2004): 4.

⁶⁵ Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus*. 71.5; Augustine. Eighty-Three Different Questions. vol. 70, *The Fathers of the Church*, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002) 183.

relationship with God, who is the source of all authentic human friendships. Christ is the model of friendship. In Jn 15:13, Jesus states that the heart of true friendship is a willingness to lay down one's life for one's friend. He then declares in Jn 15:15, "I call you friends." Friendship then, is a radical commitment to work for the ultimate good of the other including a willingness to dedicate one's entire life to doing so, even to the point of death. For the Christian, friendship points to martyrdom, reflecting the kenotic love of the Trinity.

During the late fourth century the theology of friendship flourished in the writings and in the personal lives of the Church Fathers.⁶⁶ Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom of the East, Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and Paulinus of Nola of the West all significantly contributed to the Christian understanding of friendship with God. "What distinguished the early Christian view of friendship was its focus on God and its belief that this shared focus brought the friends together and indeed brought all Christians who were committed to God together,"⁶⁷ according to Carolinne White.

Friendship was a significant theme in the life and writings of John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople in the late fourth century. The devotion, intensity, bliss, and beauty of love among friends is for Chrysostom how humanity is to love God. Chrysostom writes,

Let us then love God through Christ. What means through Christ? That it is He, and not the Law, who has enabled us to do this. ...For not only faith is necessary, but love. ...Has anyone a warm and affectionate friend? Let him love Christ but equally...At the very time when we did Him the greatest wrong, then did He give His Son for us. And still we, after so great benefits, after being made His friends, and counted worthy through Him of all blessings, have not loved Him as our friend! What hope then can be ours? You shudder perhaps at the word, but I would that you shuddered at the fact! What? How shall it appear that we do not love God even as our friends, you say? I will endeavor to show you—and would that my words were groundless, and to no purpose! But I am afraid they are borne out by facts. For consider, friends, who are truly friends, will often suffer loss for those they love.⁶⁸

A most profound Christological assertion is made by Chrysostom in his homily on John 15:17. Chrysostom understands that Jesus lays his life down for them so as to draw them in to friendship. Chrysostom ponders Jesus saying to us, "That is, it is not to upbraid, that I tell you that

⁶⁶ See Mike Aquilina, *Friendship in the Fathers: How the Early Church Evangelized*, (Stuebenville, Emmaus Road Publishing) 2021.

⁶⁷ Carolinne White, "Moving Beyond Friendly to Friendship" published by Institute for Faith and Learning, Baylor University Press, 2008, 11. Accessed online <https://ifl.web.baylor.edu/media-and-resources/christian-reflection-project/friendship>.

⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, Homily III on 1 Timothy, translated by W.R.W. Stephens. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 9, Edited by Philip Schaff. Buffalo, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889.

I lay down My life for you, rather, I ran to meet you in order to lead you into friendship.”⁶⁹ The purpose of the death of Jesus according to Chrysostom is to draw humanity into friendship. Restoring humanity’s friendship with God is the mission of the Son.

Friendship with God is the test of reliability of an evangelist according to Chrysostom. In his homily on the prologue to the fourth Gospel, Chrysostom bases the trustworthiness of the Gospel of John on the friendship of John with Jesus. The veracity of the fourth Gospel, according to Chrysostom is the fact that the person attributed with writing it is the beloved friend of Jesus. Of John the evangelist, Chrysostom says, “[A]nd all this will this man tell us exactly, as being a friend of the King Himself.”⁷⁰

For Augustine, God is in all true friendships. In a sermon at the dedication of a Church, Augustine preaches that love alone builds up the Christian community, the love of God poured into our hearts. Regarding friendship love he states, “you can love a friend truly, after all, when one loves God in the friend, either because he is in him, or in order that he may be in him. That is true love and respect.”⁷¹ In the *Confessions*, the notion of God as the bond in true friendship is reiterated, “there is no true friendship unless You weld it between souls that cling together by the charity poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.”⁷² Augustine again asserts Christian friendship relies upon friendship with God, in his letter to Saint Jerome, “Whenever I feel that a person burning with Christian charity and love for me has become my friend, when I entrust any of my plans and thoughts to my friend, I am entrusting them not to a human person, but to God in whom they abide, so as to be like Him, ‘for God is love, and the one who live in love lives in God.’”⁷³

Aquinas made friendship a central point in his theological works, by defining charity, as friendship with God. “Charity is a certain friendship [*amicitia*] of the human person toward God.”⁷⁴ Although Aquinas never wrote a work, or even a section of a work, entitled “On Friendship,” insights and discussions about friendship abound in his writings. For Aquinas, friendship is the

⁶⁹John Chrysostom, Homily LXXVII on John 15, quoted in *The Homilies on the Gospel According to St. John: St. John Chrysostom*, (Augsburg: Jazzybee Verlag, 2017), 373.

⁷⁰ Chrysostom, Homily LXXVII.

⁷¹ Augustine, Sermon 336.2, quoted in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, N.Y: New City Press, 1990), 267.

⁷² Augustine, *Confessions*, Book IV chapter 4, quoted in Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*. Vol. 1: Pt. 1. Books *The Confessions*, Intro., Transl. and Notes: Maria Boulding, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2013).

⁷³ Augustine, Letter 73, quoted in Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series* (New York, NY: Cosimo Classics, 2007).

⁷⁴ See Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 23, a.1.

paradigm for the relationships that rational beings should cultivate.⁷⁵ It is clear that a motivation for Aquinas's broadening of friendship is the unsuitability of Aristotelian friendship to accommodate successfully the Christian ideal of friendship with God.⁷⁶ However, it is more than this: "Aquinas sees charity as a kind of friendship between God and man, not because he fancies the writings of the Philosopher, but because he takes seriously our Lord's words in Chapter 15, verse 15 in the Gospel of John."⁷⁷ In this passage, Christ names his closest followers as friends.

Aquinas' treatment of friendship, deeply influenced by Aristotle, is centered on the pursuit of mutual good, grounded in virtue, and elevated by the possibility of friendship with God through charity. In his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas follows Aristotle in distinguishing three kinds of friendship: friendship of utility; friendship of pleasure; and friendship of virtue. Friendship of utility is based on mutual usefulness, where people are friends because they gain some benefit from one another. This is the weakest form of friendship. Friendship of pleasure is based on the enjoyment one person derives from the company of another. This type of friendship is also limited, since it lasts only as long as the pleasure continues. Friendship of virtue is the highest form of friendship because each person wills the good of the other for their own sake. This friendship is enduring because it is based on the goodness of the person, rather than temporary benefits or pleasures. Friendship flourishes between virtuous people, who seek the good in themselves and others. Aquinas, quoting Aristotle, writes in *Summa Theologiae*, "Perfect friendship is between good men who are alike in virtue: for these men wish well alike to each other in respect of that in which they are alike, namely virtue; and they are virtuous in themselves."⁷⁸

Aquinas extends the concept of friendship to include our relationship with God. This is called "charity" (*caritas*), the highest form of love. In this relationship, God is not just the object

⁷⁵ Daniel Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship* (Oxford: Philosophical Monographs Clarendon Press, 2012), 124.

⁷⁶ Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 124.

⁷⁷ Matthew Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship: A Metaphysical and Scriptural Explanation According to the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Italy: St Benedict Press, 2012) 160. Also see Guy Mansini, "Charity and the Form of Friendship," in *Ethics and Theological Disclosures*, ed. Guy Mansini and James G. Hart (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), "When St. Thomas identified the charity poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5) with friendship, he pressed into theological service the philosophical appreciation of friendship found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. He goes on to comment: "Nonetheless, if we have read thoughtfully, we will see by the end of Q. 23 that Aristotle has been interpreted as much as he has interpreted, that he has been framed and repositioned for all that he has helped us position St. Paul, and that the notion of friendship has been transformed in such a way that we realize its primary analogue is not the friendship between the virtuous Athenian gentlemen or even that between philosophers, but that between Christians and their God." From footnote no. 104 on page 160 in Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship*.

⁷⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

of love but also a friend, since friendship, for Aquinas, is mutual love. He states, “Charity is the friendship of man for God, which unites us to God in mutual love.”⁷⁹ In charity, humans are called to participate in Divine life, and this friendship with God elevates human friendships. Those who are friends of God can share in the common good of eternal happiness, and this makes charity the most perfect form of friendship. “The friendship of charity is based on the fellowship of eternal happiness, to which we can be admitted only by God's grace.”⁸⁰

Friendship, for Aquinas, provides the lens through which the theological virtue of charity can be best conceptualized. Aquinas is not the first theologian to treat charity as a form of friendship, yet it does seem that it is his original contribution to bring charity firmly into the Aristotelian understanding of friendship.⁸¹ Aquinas believes that friendship with God is both possible and desirable despite the separateness that exists between Divine and human persons.

According to Aquinas, it is through His mission that Christ enables human friendship with God by bridging the abyss between human beings and God, thus diminishing the vast inequality that prevents friendship. Consider Christ's words: “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16). Aquinas comments on this verse paraphrasing Christ: “Whoever has been called to this sublime friendship should not attribute the cause of this friendship to himself, but to me [i.e., Christ], who chose him or her as a friend.”⁸² To close the gap between humanity and divinity, the Spirit infuses the virtue of charity as a superadded habit or virtue in order to bestow on humans the capacity for such friendship.⁸³ Thus, the Divine missions, the sending of the Son and the Spirit

⁷⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

⁸⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

⁸¹ Charity was identified with *amicitia* as early as John Cassian (365?–433?), (e.g., in *Conferences*, XVI). See M. Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2005, 147-148, where he says, “Thomas' definition of charity as *amicitia* marks the culmination of over a hundred years of scholastic reflection on the nature of charity.”, 148. D. Konstan, ‘Problems in the History of Christian Friendship’, *Journal of Early Christianity*, 4 (1996), 106 and A. M. Fiske, ‘Cassian and Monastic Friendship’, *American Benedictine Review*, 12 (1961) on *caritas* and *amicitia*: pp. 202–5. According to Fiske, Cassian's views on charity are partially inspired by the ideas of Evagrius of Pontus, an Egyptian disciple of Macarius the Elder. Friendship was associated with *caritas*, before Cassian, by the Greek Fathers Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom. See L. Pizzolato, *L'idea di amicizia nel mondo antico classico e cristiano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), 375–93, 404, 411 (page references are to the 1996 Spanish translation published by Mario Muchnik in Barcelona in 1996). Cited as a footnote in Daniel Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship* (Oxford Philosophical Monographs) Clarendon Press, 189.

⁸² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. James A. Weisheipl and Fabian R. Larcher (Albany: Magi Books, Inc., 1998), 15.2019; See also: Raphael Joshua Christianson OP, “A Thomistic Model of Friendship with God as Deification” in *New Blackfriars*, DOI:10.1111/nbfr.12398, 514.

⁸³ See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III q.8 a.1; Bernhard Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 269.

enable men and women to be friends with God. God chooses to befriend humanity and bestows upon persons the virtues necessary for similitude with God, for participation in His life and love. The particular friendship between God and an individual person is not closed in on itself, but is designed to expand outward, extending this friendship to others. Divine-human friendship is to be both unitive and generative, inviting others to participate in Divine fellowship. Next, a definition of participation will be offered.

3. *Participation*

In the Greek New Testament, the word *κοινωνία* is translated as participation, fellowship, sharing in, intimacy, and even communion. It implies interpersonal relationality as a pleasant “participation” in the life and experiences of others. Participation has social, political, and theological dimensions. The human person is made for participation in the particular relations of a family, in the group relations of society, and in the collective relations in the political realm. These levels of participation are rooted in the theological understanding of the human person as a relational being in the image and likeness of the Triune God. The philosophical and theological understandings of participation are concerned with humanity’s intimate communion with and sharing in the life of the Trinity. Participation in this sense refers to a metaphysical notion which, “concerns properly speaking the mode of having and receiving, in the sense that the ‘whole’ remains intact and undivided, while an aspect or form of the object is being participated.”⁸⁴ This would be the case, for example, in which one participates in “goodness” or without causing any diminishment to the form of “goodness” as a result. The prologue to the Gospel of John provides the scriptural foundation for this understanding of participation. “From His fullness, we have all received” (Jn 1:16).

The New Testament points to this metaphysical reality of humanity’s participation in Divine life by grace in the earliest letters of Saint Paul to the last Gospel to be written. A New Testament passage frequently employed to explain the theological understanding of participation is, “For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the Divine nature”(2 Pt 1:4). The following paragraphs provide a definition of the theological concept of participation based upon ancient, medieval, and modern theologians.

⁸⁴ Cornelio Fabro, “The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, (trans. B. M. Bonansea) vol. 27, no. 3 (March 1974), 453.

Through his prayer and reflection on Sacred Scripture, Gregory of Nyssa comments on participation in his work, *De Hominis Opificio*, in which discusses the human capacity to share in God's Divine nature. He writes, “[s]ince the God who created man in the beginning out of goodness and for no other reason than that He is good, did so with the intent that man should participate in His own Divine perfections, He implanted in him the capacity for participation in Himself.”⁸⁵ In this passage, Gregory emphasizes that humans were created with the potential to participate in God’s own Divine nature and perfections. This idea is central to his theology of theosis or divinization which posits the goal of human life as participation in God.

Saint Thomas Aquinas develops the concept of participation in various theological and philosophical contexts, ranging from metaphysics (being and essence) to theology (grace and Divine life). Participation in Aquinas’ thought signifies how creatures, while finite and limited, share in the infinite perfections of God. Creatures participate in being, goodness, truth, and other perfections in a limited way because their existence and perfections come from God, the source of all. Aquinas defines *participare* in *De hebdomadibus* where he writes, “To participate is, as it were, to take part, and therefore, when something receives partially that which belongs to another universally, it is said to participate in that [other].”⁸⁶ For Aquinas, a thing participates in a quality or reality that it does not have in itself, but which it receives from a source. He employs the analogy of light describing how an object reflects light without being the source of light itself. Similarly, creatures participate in being, goodness, truth, and other perfections without being the source of these perfections. In his *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas discusses how all creatures reflect God's perfections in a limited way by participating in the Divine attributes. He emphasizes that participation explains how creatures can resemble God without being identical to God.⁸⁷ John Rziha explains, “In Thomistic thought, participation is a sharing in the essential act of another, which is limited by the potency of the participating subject.”⁸⁸ Creatures can participate in God’s

⁸⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Making of Man”, Chapter XVI, in Philip Schaff, and Henry Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.* Wipf & Stock, 2022, 426.

⁸⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *An Exposition of the “On the Hebdomads” of Boethius* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 2001), Lect.2, n.70. “. . . est autem participare quasi partem capere; et ideo, quando aliquid particulariter recepit id quod ad alterum pertinent, universaliter dicitur participare illud; sicut homo dicitur participare animal, quia non habet rationem animalis secundum totam communitatem.”

⁸⁷ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book II, chapter 54, translated by Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, Vernon J. Bourke, and Charles J. O’Neil, 5 vols., (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press) 1975.

⁸⁸ John Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 10.

perfections according to their limited natures. For Aquinas, creatures possess certain perfections by *participation*, but God possesses them by *essence*. God's creatures are by analogy like him, by *vestigium* in nonrational creatures, and by *image* in rational creatures.⁸⁹ This is understood as natural participation.

Daniel A. Keating provides the following explanation of participation:

The concept of participation was used philosophically in two main senses. First, it described how different particulars share some common elements. For example, all individual human beings share a common humanity and “partake” of a common nature. In this case each human being shares in this nature equally. Second, (and crucially important to this discussion) the concept of participation was used to describe the unequal relationship between what is essential and what is derivative. ...Participation necessarily requires a relation between two things that are unequal and that remain unequal and distinct in the act of the one participating in the others. It makes no sense to say something participates in itself, or that someone participates in oneself. If something simply becomes another thing, then it no longer can be said to participate in that thing. Therefore, if we say that something participates in another, then by the definition of the term it is derivative and dependent on that other.⁹⁰

A creature's existence is derived from his or her Creator. A creature has a likeness, a partial and finite sharing of what is infinite and is the essence of the Creator. Keating explains, “We do not have an existence of our own apart from our participation in God. Consequently, participation entails and guarantees both a true relation and a real distinction.”⁹¹

Supernatural participation by means of sanctifying grace is something greater. This participation is not just a natural sharing in being or in goodness, but a supernatural participation in Divine life through grace. The scriptural foundation for human's participation in Divine life through grace is found in the Second Letter of Peter. “His Divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the Divine nature. (2 Pt: 1-4) The fullness of Christian life, the sharing in Divine nature is a gift, a grace bestowed by God. Grace elevates human nature, enabling human beings to share partially in Divine life. The fruit of sacramental grace enables the faithful to participate in the Divine nature.⁹² French Dominican Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains how sanctifying grace gives us a share in the Divine life that surpasses natural participation:

⁸⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia, q. 93, a. 6.

⁹⁰ Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), 97–98.

⁹¹ Keating, *Deification and Grace*, 98.

⁹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1129.

From all eternity God the Father has a Son, to whom He communicates the whole of his nature, without dividing or multiplying it; He begets necessarily a Son who is equal to Him; He gives to Him the gift of being God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. Then out of sheer goodness, gratuitously, He wanted to have other sons in time, adopted sons, in a sonship that is not only moral (by exterior declaration) but real and intimate (by the production of sanctifying grace, the effect of God's active love for us). He has loved us with a love that is not only creating and conserving, but also vivifying, which makes us participate in the very principle of His inner life, in the principle of the immediate vision He has of Himself, and that He communicates to His Son and to the Holy Spirit. Thus, He has "predestined up to be conformed to the image of His only Son, so that He might be the first-born among the brethren" (Rom 8:29). The just in this way belong to the family of God and enter into the cycle of the Blessed Trinity. Infused charity assimilates us to the Holy Spirit (personal love), the Beatific Vision will assimilate us to the Word, who will assimilate us to the Father, whose Image He is. Thus, the Trinity, already within us as in a darkened temple, will be in us as in a luminous and living temple, wherein the Trinity will be seen without veil and loved with a love that cannot be lost.⁹³

This mystical understanding of participation in the Divine life is found in the Gospel of John.⁹⁴ The Gospel of John reveals that human persons are invited to a supernatural participation with the Divine Persons by sanctifying grace. Through sanctifying grace, therefore, God as Father, Son, and Spirit is personally present to men and women. Through Christ whom He has sent to be for humanity, God shares with humanity His own Divine life so that men and women may know and *love* as God knows and loves. The Father is present as Father, inviting humanity to be sons and daughters. The Word, the perfect image of the Father, is present as Son, enabling men and women to enter into His own worship of the Father. The Spirit is present as the bond of *love* uniting Father and Son, forming men and women so that they too may be children of the Father. The life of grace, therefore, is a participation in the very life of God Himself.⁹⁵ The Divine economy of salvation is ordered to the participation of humanity in the Divine beatitude. Christians, by the grace of God are to participate in the Divine nature (2 Pt 1:4).

By the grace of *mutual indwelling*, disciples *participate* in Divine love and continue the life-giving mission of God. This is evident in the notion "abide and go" that is indicated in John

⁹³ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "Is Grace a Participation of the Deity as It Is In Itself ?" (1936), *The Thomist Review*, volume XLI, 478. See Aquinas *ST II-II*, q. 2, a. 3.

⁹⁴ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Bk. IV, ch. 21: "Therefore since we are made lovers of God by the Holy Spirit, and every beloved is in the lover as such, by the Holy Spirit necessarily the Father and the Son dwell in us also (Jn 14:23; 1Jn 3:24). Therefore, by the Holy Spirit not only is God in us, but we are also in God (1Jn 4:13, 16).

⁹⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1997: "Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us to the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church."

15.⁹⁶ The phrase “abide and go” reveals the theological paradox in John’s Gospel of *being one with* and *going forth from*.⁹⁷ Just as the Son both abides with the Father and goes forth from the Father through the Spirit, so the followers of the Son abide with him and are sent forth from him by the Spirit. Christian existence without participation in the Divine mission in the world would be no Christian existence at all because the movement of love, whether in contemplation (abiding) or in action (going forth), both essential to discipleship, would be lacking.

As illustrated in the previous paragraphs, the concepts of mission, friendship and participation interpenetrate and mutually imply each other in numerous ways. God’s project with His creation is not just to “save the world”, but to include human beings into the saving mission of the Son and the Spirit. This inclusion can be called a “participation”, which it leads to friendship with God and simultaneously is an expression of friendship with God. The Church is the sacrament of Divine mission and friendship which deifies the human person and sanctifies all of the created order. Trinitarian love created man and woman, welcomed them back after the Fall, and finally offered them the opportunity to participate in the Divine life as friends through the missions of the Son and the Spirit.

The dissertation will demonstrate that despite the obvious interconnection in the definitions of the concepts of mission, friendship and participation, particularly in the Gospel of John, there is scant missiological literature that articulates a theology of mission as participation in friendship. This dissertation seeks to highlight the existing scholarship as well as to contribute to this body of knowledge. The term “mission” continues to be used to express integrating non-Christians into the Christian community and bringing Christians back to the practice of faith. Mission is often considered in terms of the quantitative growth of the church and exterior participation, rather than the interior transformation of persons through the Divine missions of the Son and the Spirit. This is where the biblical approach to the subject is worth considering. This dissertation is able to prove that the biblical terminology is much closer to the trinitarian dogmatic foundation of mission, for

⁹⁶ Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 8. Rensberger insightfully and succinctly puts it this way: “Abiding’ implies persistence, but not stasis.” Rensberger, however, largely limits the “journey” that is the opposite of stasis to love for the community of disciples, though he offers hints of a broader vision of “identification with those whom the world despises,” 186.

⁹⁷ See Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 186. Gorman notes that Andrew Lincoln in his analysis of missional discipleship in John states “the metaphors attached to discipleship include, paradoxically, not only being on the move by following Jesus but also staying put by abiding with or, even more intimately, in him” Andrew Lincoln, “The Johannine Vision of the Church,” in *Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Paul D. L. Avis (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022), 109.

example in Thomas Aquinas, than to the functionally shortened mission concept of the colonial era. An overview of the dissertation follows.

E. Overview of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into three parts. Part one lays a foundation for a theology of mission as participation in friendship. It includes chapters one, two, and three. Part two, which comprises chapters four through eight, presents the theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Gospel of John, which is the heart of this study. Part three which contains chapters nine, ten and eleven reveals how a theology of mission as participation can be discerned in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. The conclusions are presented in chapter twelve. A synopsis of each chapter follows.

Chapter one addresses preliminary questions related to research project including the impetuses for this study, the methodology, and definitions of the concepts of mission, friendship, and participation. Additionally, this chapter proposes how this research project offers a possible answer to present-day alienation.

Chapter two provides a brief survey of the theological field of missiology and a review of the scholarly literature pertaining to general missiology, Trinitarian missiology, and biblical missiology. The brief historical overview of the development of theology of mission as well as an exploration of the term begins this chapter. The study of the development of the concept *missio Dei* is significant for our project as it acknowledges mission originates with the Triune God, not the Church. This chapter explores the limitations of the concept *missio Dei* and proposes the Church as *the sacrament of the Divine mission* as a paradigm for understanding the relationship between the Church and the mission of God.

The literature review discovered few sources with an explicit theology of mission as participation in friendship despite the prevalence of this theme in Scripture and modern magisterial documents. This chapter relies upon the scholarship numerous missiologists including Karl Müller, John Flett, David Bosch, as well as biblical scholars James Okoye and Donald Senior. Most especially this chapter relies upon the writings of Archbishop Anastasios and the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Chapter three proposes a methodology of interpretation of Sacred Scripture that is missional, relational, and participatory. This methodology draws upon the Dogmatic Constitution

on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, promulgated at the Second Vatican Council, and the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God *Verbum Domini*, promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI. In the opening lines of *Dei Verbum*, a text that has shaped Catholic biblical interpretation for the past fifty years, we can detect the themes of mission, participation, and friendship:

Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14–15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself.⁹⁸

This chapter illustrates how *Dei Verbum* and *Verbum Domini* affirm that Sacred Scripture reveals God’s invitation to humanity to participate in the Divine life and mission as friends. As evidenced by the exploration of these two documents, an interpretation of Sacred Scripture that is missional, relational, and participatory is in accord with magisterial documents concerning Divine revelation. This chapter relies upon the scholarship of Donald Senior, Joseph Ratzinger, N. T. Wright, Archbishop Anastasios, and Matthew Levering, particularly his publications on participatory exegesis.

Chapter four addresses introductory considerations on the Gospel of John including the authorship, the intended audience, and the circumstances of the composition of the Johannine literature, as well as the Johannine Christology which is very significant to this project. The core of John’s Christology is the affirmation that the Son is sent to reveal the living God (Jn 1:18). Mission is frequently referenced regarding Jesus’s identity as “the one whom the Father sent”⁹⁹ and, correlatively, to express the Father’s identity as “the Father who sent me” or, even more densely, “the one who sent me.”¹⁰⁰ John’s presentation of the relationship of the Father and the Son, while expressing their ontological unity and their differentiated persons, also reveals their collaboration in the accomplishment of a mission as an expression of love (Jn 3:16). The Christology in the Gospel of John also reveals the Son as the Beloved (Jn 3:35; 15:9). This chapter

⁹⁸ Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965), in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, OP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), §2.

⁹⁹ “Always in the mouth of Jesus as a relative clause with *apostello* as a finite verb: 3:34; 5:38; 6:29; 10:36; 17:3.” Michael Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” *Communio* 17 (Fall 1990): 310.

¹⁰⁰ “Always in the mouth of Jesus with *pempo* in a participle phrase: 4:34; 5:23; 5:24; 5:30; 5:37; 6:38; 6:39; 6:44; 7:16; 7:18; 7:28; 7:33; 8:16; 8:18; 8:29; 9:4; 12:44; 12:45; 12:29; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5.” Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 310.

draws primarily upon the scholarship of Joseph Ratzinger, Raymond Brown, Johannes Nissen, Michael Waldstein, and Ben Witherington.

Chapter five explores the concept of mission in the Gospel of John. In John, mission is first of all Trinitarian: The Father sends; the Son is sent and sends; the Spirit is sent and animates the continuation of the Divine mission in the disciples. Secondly, mission is relational: the cause of sending is love.¹⁰¹ The mission of the Son is an expression of His filial relation to the Father as well as His relation to the world as Light, Way, Truth, Gate, Good Shepherd, Vine, Bread of Life, Resurrection, and Messiah. Third, mission is revelatory of the Sender. The sender's love and glory are made known through the words, deeds, and the gift of self by the one sent. Fourth, mission is multidimensional. John does not limit mission to the proclamation of the Gospel to peoples of different ethnic or religious groups. Mission in the Gospel of John may be understood as a specific task or work which a group or an individual carries in union with the Sender out of love.¹⁰² "Mission is a central concept in John, because it is an essential part dynamism of love that dominates the Gospel."¹⁰³

The chapter goes on to engage in a study of the Johannine usage of the Greek verbs ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω. A close examination of John's use of these two verbs ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, both of which are translated by the English verb *send*, sheds light on the relationship between the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church. This chapter also includes a conceptual field study of the Trinitarian mission in John and is organized into the following subsections: 1) The Father who sends; 2) The Son who is sent and sends the Church to continue the Divine mission with the Spirit; 3) The Spirit who is sent, who empowers the Church in her mission. For John, the mission of the Son, the Spirit and the community are one continuous sending in love.¹⁰⁴ In the sending of the Son, the Spirit, and the community, the gift of self—kenotic sacrifice—is required. The sending of the Son, the Spirit, and the community acknowledges that the promises of God are being fulfilled in the eternal now of "this hour." It is the Divine mission

¹⁰¹ See Michael Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018).

¹⁰² Andreas J. Köstenberger offers a similar definition of mission in the Gospel of John in his article "The Challenge of a Systematized Biblical Theology of Mission: Missiological Insights from the Gospel of John," *American Society of Missiology* 23, no. 4 (1995), 447. Köstenberger offers, "Mission in John may be understood as the specific task which a person or group seeks to accomplish, involving various modes of movement."

¹⁰³ See Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John," 332.

¹⁰⁴ Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 292.

that the followers of Jesus are invited to participate in and continue through the power of the Spirit. “John systematically presents Jesus as lifted up on the throne of the Cross in a consummate revelation of love in self-gift, the perfection of all that He has been sent to achieve.”¹⁰⁵ Moloney explains that this “is not only a Christological event; it is the foundational moment of the birth of a new family, upon which Jesus bestows the gifts of the Spirit (19:30) and Baptism and Eucharist, symbolized by the water and blood that flow forth from His side (19:31–37).”¹⁰⁶

Chapter six outlines the concept of friendship in the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is an essential text for the discussion of friendship in the New Testament.¹⁰⁷ This is due to the fact that the vocabulary of friendship, especially the noun φίλος and the related verb φιλέω, are found in key moments of the narrative.¹⁰⁸ John includes φιλέω to describe the relation of the Father and the Son (Jn 5:20); the relation of Christ to the disciples (Jn 15:15); and the relationship of the disciples to one another.¹⁰⁹ In the entire narrative, the verb φιλέω occurs thirteen times. The frequency of its use is notable among New Testament documents. “The imagery of friendship is present in the first half of the narrative but comes into sharpest focus in the final discourse, namely chapters 14–17.”¹¹⁰

This chapter provides an exploration of φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ, relying primarily on the scholarship of Ceslas Spicq, OP, and Pavel Florensky. While many scholars cite ancient Greco-Roman usage of synonyms to explain the Johannine usage of the two verbs for love, Spicq and Florensky argue that the author of the Gospel of John employs these verbs distinctly to make a theological point. “The Father loves (φιλέω) the Son and shows Him all He does” (Jn 5:19–20). In this verse, the author of the Gospel John describes the relationship between the Father and the Son

¹⁰⁵ Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 137.

¹⁰⁶ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, 138.

¹⁰⁷ See book length studies on friendship in John: Martin M. Culy, *Echoes of Friendship in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010); E. Puthenkandathil, *Philos: A Designation for the Jesus-Disciple Relationship. An Exegetico-Theological Investigation of the Term in the Fourth Gospel* (Frankfurt: Peter Land, 1993); J. M. Ford, *Redeemer-Friend and Mother: Salvation in Antiquity and in the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997); Sharon Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999).

¹⁰⁸ Gail O'Day, “Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 58, no. 2 (2004): 148. See also John Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 61, no. 3 (July 2007): 291, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430706100305>.

¹⁰⁹ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 291.

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Sammut, “Friendship with God Is the Basis for All Friendships,” *Church Life Journal*, September 2017.

as including friendship. John uses φιλέω in connection with revelation. Revealing one's inner thoughts was a hallmark of friendship in the ancient world.

In the Gospel of John, redemption is itself the supreme act of friendship (Jn 15:13).¹¹¹ Jesus's entire life and death is an act of friendship. "In the life and death of Jesus, the friendship convention of loving another enough to give one's life moves from philosophical or moral possibility to incarnated actuality."¹¹² As the λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, "the enfleshing of the Word" of God, Jesus's speech and action are inextricably linked.¹¹³ Jesus both speaks frankly and acts courageously in friendship, becoming the embodiment of friendship. Jesus is both the example and the source of friendship. "As the model of friendship, he makes possible their own friendship through what he has given them: the grace of Divine indwelling."¹¹⁴ "Friendship in the Gospel of John is the enactment of the love of God that is incarnate in Jesus and that Jesus boldly makes available to the world."¹¹⁵ Jesus as the Word of God enfleshes friendship with the Father and the world. In addition to Spicq and Florensky, this chapter relies upon the scholarship of Thomas Aquinas, John T. Fitzgerald, Matthew Levering, Gail R. O'Day, Francis J. Moloney, Raymond E. Brown, and Johannes Beutler.

Chapter seven presents the concept of participation in the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John contains a rich language of participation: "Abide in me, as I abide in in you" (15:4) and "I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in you" (14:19) are but a few examples. Several passages reflecting participation also include mission or sending, e.g., "I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (13:20) and "As the Father sent me, so I send you" (20:21), which is perhaps the most important text for this project. Also, the language of participation in love is woven throughout the text of the Gospel of John: "Just as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you; remain in my love" (15:9); "I have made Your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love You have for me

¹¹¹ See J. Massyngbaerde Ford, *Redeemer—Friend and Mother: Salvation in Antiquity and in the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997).

¹¹² O'Day, "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John," 144.

¹¹³ *Dei verbum*, §2: "This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation."

¹¹⁴ Gail O'Day, "I Have Called You Friends," *Friendship*, Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics (Baylor University, Spring 2008), 20.

¹¹⁵ O'Day, "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John," 151.

may be in them, and I in them” (17:26). The passage that most fully reveals the mystery of love, mission, and participation occurs in John 17:23: “I in them and You in me—that they may be perfectly united, so that the world may know that You sent me and have loved them just as You have loved Me.”

In the Gospel of John, the disciples participate analogously in activities with the Son similar to the activities between the Father and the Son. This participation includes being sent, loving, working, testifying, doing what is commanded, and doing nothing alone. However, the Christian disciple’s participation cannot be equal to the life and sharing among the Divine Persons in all their perfections. “Participation requires a relation between two things that are unequal and that remain unequal and distinct in the act of the one participating in the others.”¹¹⁶ It is necessary to recall here that a creature’s existence is derived from his or her Creator. A creature has a likeness, a partial and finite sharing of what is infinite and is the essence of the Creator. Created persons gain life by union with the Son, by participation in His Sonship by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel of John is clear that supernatural participation is only possible through faith.¹¹⁷ “Then they inquired, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus replied, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent’” (Jn 6:28–29).

Belief in the One sent by God is needed. “The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the believer establish the faith and love that make human persons friends of God.”¹¹⁸ It is the Trinitarian missions that enable humans to become participants in the Trinitarian acts of life.¹¹⁹ The Spirit is breathed upon the disciples. “As a work of raising up believers to intimate communion with God, salvation and deification are nothing other than the extension to conscious creatures of the relations that exist between the Divine persons.”¹²⁰ This is indeed the prayer of Jesus in His final discourse. As Archbishop Anastasios writes,

[M]ission cannot be limited to the offering of education, health care, and other means of external development. [The Church] is bound to offer to each person, particularly to the poor and oppressed, the faith that each person has a unique personal worth; that because each person is created in the

¹¹⁶ Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), 98.

¹¹⁷ We should note the distinction between natural participation and supernatural participation articulated by Aquinas. He uses the concept of “participation” to speak of creatures in relation to their Creator.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 1 (January 2007): 44.

¹¹⁹ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology”, 49–51.

¹²⁰ Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), 248.

“image and likeness of God”, he or she is destined for the highest possible achievement; to become “Christ-like,” to partake of the Divine glory, to attain by grace, deification.¹²¹

This is the ultimate end or goal of mission: deification, theosis. The Christian mission is incorporated into and is a continuation of God’s mission, and its purpose, as Scripture proclaims is the “recapitulation of all things’ (Eph 1:10) in Christ and our participation in the Divine glory, the eternal, final glory of God.”¹²²

The Gospel of John reveals that human persons are invited to a supernatural participation with the Divine Persons by sanctifying grace. Johannine spirituality consists in the mutual indwelling of the Triune God and Jesus’s disciples such that disciples participate in the Divine love and life, and therefore continue the life-giving mission of God. This is summarized in the phrase “abide and go,” based on John 15.¹²³ The phrase “abide and go” indicates the creative theological paradox in John’s Gospel that unites intimate relationality (“abide”) and mission (“go”).¹²⁴ This chapter presents the scholarship of Thomas Aquinas, Daniel A. Keating, Archbishop Anastasios, Michael Waldstein, and Michael Gorman.

Chapter eight examines several instances in the Gospel narrative of individuals participating in the Divine mission as a friend of Jesus. Individuals and the disciples as a group in the Gospel of John narrative will be shown to display the characteristics of intimacy, habit, and self-assertion, indicative of friendship with Jesus. This chapter demonstrates how participation in the Divine mission is an expression of friendship in the Gospel of John. Both women and men participate in Jesus’s mission as His friends. There are similarities between the women and men as portrayed in John’s narrative. Both women and men express their friendship-love with Jesus in a physical manner: Mary of Bethany (12:1) anoints Jesus’s feet and dries them with her hair, and the Beloved Disciple rests his head on Jesus (13:23). Both women and men express an awareness of the identity of the Son of God: John the Baptist calls him “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (1:29); Peter proclaims Jesus is “the holy One of God” (6:68–70); and Martha proclaims Jesus is the “Messiah, the Son of God” (11:27). Both women and men were at the foot

¹²¹ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 232.

¹²² Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 46.

¹²³ David Rensberger (“Spirituality and Christology,” 184) insightfully and succinctly puts it this way: “‘Abiding’ implies persistence, but not stasis.” Rensberger, however, largely limits the “journey” that is the opposite of stasis to love for the community of disciples, though he offers hints of a broader vision of “identification with those whom the world despises,” 186.

¹²⁴ See Michael Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018) 8. The metaphors attached to discipleship include, paradoxically, not only being sent by Jesus but also by staying and abiding with or, even more intimately, in him.

of the Cross (19:25–28). Both women and men encounter the Risen Lord (20:11–10). Both women and men and are sent forth by the Risen Lord. In the narrative of the Gospel of John, both women and men experience intimacy, habit, or multiple interactions, as well as self-assertion in their relationship with Jesus. This reflects a radical and stunning equality of men and women in the narrative. John is very clear that both women and men share intimate friendship with Jesus and have essential yet distinct roles as participants in the Divine mission. In key moments in the narrative, John refers to Jesus and the Twelve, and women are not among them.

Chapter nine explores how the theology of mission participation in friendship which reaches its crescendo in the Gospel of John is perceptible in the other books of the New Testament. The New Testament is a missionary book in its form, purpose, and content as it proclaims and evokes participation in the mission of the Trinity revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Biblical scholar Robert Schreiter wisely suggests that “a sensitive reading of both Testaments makes it clear that Scriptural testimony to the mission of salvation is not a solo voice, but a chorus from the many communities and persons which made up the Hebrew and Christian communities.”¹²⁵ It is critically important to attend to the diversity as well as the harmony of that testimony throughout the entirety of the New Testament. This chapter demonstrates that a mission theology of participation in friendship is discernable in a distinct manner in the various communities and historical contexts which gave rise to the unique books of the New Testament. As the Johannine corpus was the last of the New Testament to be written, it is not surprising that a richer and more fully developed theology of mission as participation in friendship would be found there. This chapter shows that this theology of mission as participation in friendship is not unique to the Gospel of John, demonstrating how the themes of mission, friendship and participation intersect in the Gospels and the Letters of Saint Paul to form a theology of mission as participation in friendship. While not as developed as in the Gospel of John, a theology of mission as participation is evident throughout the New Testament.

Chapter ten demonstrates the theology of mission as participation in friendship by in the Old Testament. Though scholars disagree whether mission is present in the Old Testament, what is clear is that there is a pattern of God inviting humanity to participate in the Divine mission as His friends. Abraham, Moses, and Israel serve as prime examples. God’s revelation draws humanity into a particular relationship with Him (centripetal mission) for a universal purpose

¹²⁵ Robert Schreiter, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983) xi.

(centrifugal mission). The blessing of friendship with God for Abraham, Moses, and Israel becomes a blessing for others as they participate in His mission.

The dissertation concludes with an explanation of how friendship is the origin, the way, and the goal of mission. Some pastoral implications of a mission theology as participation in friendship are proposed in light of the paschal mystery of Christ.

CHAPTER II: MISSIOLOGY & REVIEW OF MISSIOLOGY LITERATURE

A. Survey of Missiology and Review of Missiology Literature

A comprehensive literature review of missiology (the term *missiology* is used here as the theology of mission) yielded relatively little research on the theological relationship of friendship and missiology.¹ The terms *friend* and *friendship* did not appear as independent topics or even as subtopics under “Love” in the indexes of major texts on the theology of mission.² This was surprising, because in the Gospel of John, there is a clear connection between being Jesus’s friend and participating in His mission. Contemporary theologies of mission have explored ontological themes as they relate to the Trinity. However, whereas most of them make some mention of mission as participating in and spreading Divine love, the particular aspect of friendship-love is not prominent among them.

In the realm of moral theology, there exists a worthy corpus on friendship as well as an interpretation and application of Meleander by theologians, most notably Waddell.³ However, a mission theology of friendship-love has not been articulated. This too was surprising, as the concept is found quite frequently in the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church.

In the process of reviewing this literature, three broad categories were created: sources in which no connection is made between mission and friendship; sources with an explicit connection between mission and friendship; and sources with an implicit connection between mission and

¹ “Friendship evangelism” is a method of proselytization whereby believers become friends with nonbelievers to gain adherents. This method exploits “friendship” as a means to an end. These tactics can demean the human person and the sanctity of friendship. Such transactional forms of evangelization harm the church and human persons.

² It was discovered that the terms *friend* and *friendship* were not found in the leading theology of mission books. See Karl Müller, et al., ed., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997); David L. Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992); Eckhard J Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2004). Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academics, 2010); Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); and the classic Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995). Also see James J. Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001); Paul Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church: A Paul Evdokimov Reader* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001).

³ See Gilbert C. Meilaender, *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). Also, Paul J. Waddell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002).

friendship. The literature included writings from Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical, and Catholic scholars.

B. What Is Missiology?

The word *missiology* itself is a union of the Greek *missio*, which means “to be sent,” and the Latin *ology*, meaning “the study of.”⁴ Missiology is an academic discipline that describes the theology, history, theory, and practice of the Christian world mission by reflecting on it philosophically, empirically, and theologically. Missiology is fundamentally the study of the mission of God and His Church. It involves all that God has done, is doing, and intends to do to accomplish His loving purpose for creation.

Missiology is considered a recent addition to theology. Church historian J.T.L. Danz first mentioned it as a theological concept in 1832.⁵ Gustave Warneck (1834–1910), the pioneer Protestant missiologist, called it *Missionslehre*, meaning “theory” or “doctrine of mission.” The influential German Catholic missionary theorist Josef Schmidlin⁶ (1876–1944, killed in the concentration camp at Struthof bei Schirmeck) called it *Missionwissenschaft*, meaning “mission science.” Twenty-first century Nigerian Catholic missiologist Francis Anekwe Oborji offers an explanation for the delay in the development of a science of mission:

Though theology itself, as a reflection on faith, was born out of finding itself in new circumstances, often because of mission, it did not consider it necessary to develop a discipline of systematic reflections on mission until recently. This may be an oversight in theological studies. In the early centuries of Christianity, theology was generated largely by the emergency situation in which the missionizing church found itself. Because of this situation, it is impossible to read the New Testament without considering that most of it was written within a missionary context.⁷

⁴ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978). Verkuyl is quoting Raoul Allier in “Missions and the Soul of A People”, *International Review of Missions*, 18, (1929): 282-284.

⁵ Karl Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction* (St. Augustin, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1987), 17.

⁶ Josef Schmidlin is considered the father of Catholic missiology. In 1911 he founded the *Zeitschrift für Missionwissenschaft*. According to the entry in the New Catholic Encyclopedia on Schmidlin, in 1914 he became the first ordinary professor of missiology at Münster; beginning in 1911 he was also the director of the scientific commission of the International Institute for Missiological Research. His *Einführung in die Missionwissenschaft* (2d ed., Münster 1925) appeared in 1917. This work was followed by *Katholische Missionslehre im Grundriss* (Catholic Mission Theory, tr. M. Braun, SVD, Techny 1931) in 1919 and *Katholische Missionsgeschichte* (Catholic Mission History, tr. M. Braun, SVD, Techny 1933) in 1925. All three works continue to shape Catholic missiology and are used as foundational texts in Catholic seminaries and universities.

⁷ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 43.

Twentieth-century South African Protestant missiologist David Bosch concurs that, in a sense, mission was the “mother of theology,” but when Christianity “became the established religion in the Roman Empire and beyond, theology lost its missionary dimension.”⁸

Catholic missiologist Karl Müller, in his *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, provides four proofs that missiology is indeed a theological discipline:⁹ First he observes that missiology makes the missionary dimension of the faith the most important object and the main measuring rod of its own work: mission as God’s own concern, set in motion by Him alone, sustained by Him until it reaches fulfillment in the eschaton.¹⁰ Second, he states that missiology pursues the dimensional reference to the *missio Dei* through the whole domain of theology, beyond the limits of the praxis of mission.¹¹ Third, he notes that missiology realizes its dependence on the other theological disciplines and avails itself of their help. For example, it was modern exegesis that enabled missiology to discover the biblical dimension of the *missio Dei*.¹² Finally, he offers that missiology critically examines the Church’s missionary activity as well as provides new insights into the understanding of and participation in the *missio Dei*.¹³

According to Müller, “missiology, although it is not simply the *ancilla theologiae*, has to be conscious of its continual dependence on theology. It can only preserve its autonomy by mediating to theology *as a whole* that which, in the correlation of dimension and intention, is its specific scientific responsibility—namely, the foundation, goal, and realization of the mission for the world.”¹⁴ Missiology is a multidisciplinary subject relying upon biblical exegesis, dogmatic theology, Church history, pastoral theology, and the social sciences.

According to American missiologist Stephen Bevans, most missiologists attribute the beginning of their discipline to Gustav Warneck, who was appointed to the chair of Missiology at the University of Halle in 1897. For Catholic missiologists Joseph Schmidlin is considered a key figure in missiology. Schmidlin was appointed to the chair of Missiology at the University of Münster in 1914. In the Catholic world, Münster would emerge as an important school of

⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 489.

⁹ Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, 24–27.

¹⁰ Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, 25.

¹¹ Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, 25.

¹² Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, 26.

¹³ Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, 26.

¹⁴ Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, 27.

missiological thought, another being at the University of Louvain in Belgium.¹⁵ Prior to the Second Vatican Council, Münster held that the goal of mission being primarily the salvation of souls. Louvain under the leadership of Pierre Charles would argue that the purpose of mission was primarily the establishment of the Church. The Second Vatican Council's decree on the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, seems to have settled the debate in paragraph six which affirms both the spreading of the Gospel and the planting of the Church.¹⁶

The Council's decree on missionary activity represented a breakthrough in missiological thought by rooting the Church's mission "not so much in the *external* command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations, but in the *internal* reality of the Church's participation in the mission of the Triune God."¹⁷ In its opening salvo, the document returns to the understanding of mission found in the writings of Aquinas: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father."¹⁸ Mission is the movement of the Son of God and the Spirit of God into the world. Missiology after the Second Vatican Council understands itself to be founded upon and directed toward the Trinity: the Love that is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Additionally, *Ad Gentes* articulates the scope of mission as broadly as possible:

In the present state of affairs, out of which there is arising a new situation for mankind, the Church, being the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13–14), is more urgently called upon to save and renew every creature, that all things may be restored in Christ and all men may constitute one family in Him and one people of God.¹⁹

God's mission encompasses not only the human person but also all of God's creation: "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Missiology after the Second Vatican Council has a scope that is universal and eschatological: from the first creative movement of God the Father to the fulfillment of the purpose of the created order—from Genesis to Revelation.

¹⁵ Additionally, the University of Fribourg in Switzerland has made significant contributions to Catholic Missiology and continues to do so.

¹⁶ Stephan B. Bevens SVD, "Themes and Questions in Missiology Today," accessed June 15, 2020, https://www.cppsmissionaries.org/download/mission/THEMES_AND_QUESTIONS_IN_MISSIOLOGY_TODAY_Bevens.pdf.

¹⁷ Bevens SVD, "Themes and Questions in Missiology Today. See also *Ad Gentes*, paragraphs 2-7.

¹⁸ *Ad Gentes*, §2.

¹⁹ *Ad Gentes*, §1.

C. Historical Development of Missiology

The Church has always been missionary; it has always gone forth to share the good news. In the Middle Ages, through the mission carried out by monks, the Church built the civilization of modern Europe. With the colonization of Africa and the Americas, “the Church went to the horizons of the newly discovered humanity.”²⁰ From 1500 to the early part of the twentieth century, “missionary activity as the process of diffusion of the Catholic Church, was at times tragic because of the colonialism through which Europe imposed itself upon other people and other continents.”²¹

With the creation of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1622, the Holy See hoped to free missionary activity from “too tight political tutelages.”²² The meaning of the word *mission* became associated with a geographic entity: the territory of peoples who did not know Christ. Thus, the world was divided into two distinct territories: the territory where the Church was established and the territory where it was not. This distinction is similar in a way to that used by the Jews in the first century as they mentally separated all of humanity into two categories: Jews and Gentiles, those who followed the God of Abraham and those who did not. In 1622, the divisions were called “corpus christianorum”—the territory where Christianity was established—and the “missions” or “missionary,” referring to the non-Christian world.

The first World Missionary Conference, held in 1910 in Edinburgh, Scotland, was the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement as well as “if not the birth, the genuine renaissance of mission studies.”²³ David Bosch described the missionary mood at the conference as “pragmatic, purposeful, activist, impatient, self-confident, single-minded and triumphant.”²⁴ Factors contributing to this general sense of missionary euphoria include the publication in 1900 of John Mott’s *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*, which sparked a wave of optimism of fulfilling the Great Commission, and the two previous missionary conferences in London in 1888 and in New York in 1900, which attracted between 170,000 and 200,000 people.²⁵

²⁰ Giuseppe Buono, *Missiology: Theology and Praxis*, (Nairobi: Paulines Africa, 2002), 25.

²¹ Buono, *Missiology*, 25.

²² Buono, *Missiology*, 25.

²³ W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), 259–67.

²⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 336.

²⁵ See footnote 50 on page 279 in Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010).

Experienced missionary John Mott, the chair of the event described it as “the first attempt at a systematic and careful study of the missionary problems of the world.”²⁶

Timothy Tennent enumerates several key features that capture the legacy of the conference. First, Edinburgh 1910 initiated an entirely new structure and constituency for reflecting on Christianity in the world, engaging delegates from the mission societies who understood the serious issues facing the Church at the time.²⁷ Secondly, the conference initiated scholarly activities ranging from the collection and analysis of empirical data relevant to trends in the mission field to establishing important journals including *The International Review of Missions*.²⁸ Thirdly, the conference realized that mission is *God’s* work through *His Church*.²⁹ John Mott is attributed with saying that “God is the ultimate Home Base of missions.”³⁰ Finally, those gathered at Edinburgh recognized that Christianity was truly a worldwide movement.³¹

A turning point in Catholic Missiology came in 1943, when it was realized that the prevailing mentality, which neatly divided the world between those regions where the Gospel was preached, and the Church was flourishing and those regions where it was not, was quite flawed. During this moment in human history, the entire world was at war, and nations in Europe that were formerly Christian were destroying each other. The secular movements of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism, which held no esteem for the human person as *imago Dei*, were devastating communities, cultures, and consciences. It was in this zeitgeist that a profound awareness arose regarding faith in Europe. Under the direction of Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard, the Archbishop of Paris, a pamphlet was published containing the results of the religious sociology inquiry conducted by French priest Father Y. Odin. Father Odin discovered that, in the Parisian quarter where he worked, only 1 percent of the inhabitants were practicing Catholics.³² The view of the world as divided into Christian countries and mission countries no longer reflected reality. A missionary outreach was needed in France—in the heart of Christian Europe. Mission then,

²⁶ As quoted in Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 59.

²⁷ Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 282–83.

²⁸ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 283.

²⁹ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 283.

³⁰ W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), 259.

³¹ Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 282–83.

³² Buono, *Missiology*, 26.

no longer or not only was a question of sailing the seas, saving a soul, and then dying, a dream that had, however holily, characterized the life of thousands of missionaries committed to the point of martyrdom in order to announce Christ and his salvation. Now it was a matter of turning oneself into his own environment, amongst his own people and to identify here the reality of the urgency to bring back the Church to giving the Gospel of salvation once again to Christians who were only nominally such.³³

In response to the recognition that only a tiny portion of Parisians were practicing their faith, the *Mission de France* was founded by the 26th assembly of cardinals and the archbishops of France, who established a seminary in Lisieux for the purpose of training secular priests to carry out evangelical work in poor French dioceses.³⁴ This French project became the seedbed for a new understanding of mission that blossomed at the Second Vatican Council. The Church was coming to the awareness that mission was not limited to geographies far off, nor was mission to be carried out exclusively by clergy in missionary orders.

In some respects, up until the Second Vatican Council, understanding the Church's mission was easy. It was simply the twofold action of, first, preaching the Gospel to people who had not heard of Jesus, and second, planting churches where they did not exist before.³⁵ These two interdependent aspects of the Church's mission appear to be simple concepts comprising a quite literal application of the great commission in Matthew's Gospel to "go and make disciples." However, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, the documents of the Second Vatican Council placed mission at the center of Church life and the Trinity at the center of mission and the transformation of the whole of creation at the end of mission. This resulted in a steady increase in authoritative Church reflection and teaching on mission.³⁶

The Second Vatican Council contributed significantly to the development of Catholic missiology, emphasizing a more relational and participatory understanding of mission that is rooted in the Trinity. The Council's vision of mission moves away from a model of conquest reminiscent of the colonial period toward a vision of mission as participation in Divine love. The Council documents emphasize the importance of dialogue and communion in mission. It has been said that the Second Vatican Council turned the Church the world so that the world could turn to the Church. A theology of mission as participation in friendship may expand that idea in this way.

³³ Buono, *Missiology*, 26

³⁴ Buono, *Missiology*, 27.

³⁵ See *Ad Gentes*, §6; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §14 and §28.

³⁶ Gregory, Williams, "Catholic Theology of Missions" in Stephan B. Bevans SVD, *A Century of Catholic Mission: Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present*, vol. 15 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 155.

The Second Council turned the Church toward the world in a gesture of friendship, inviting a fuller participation in the Divine life her mysteries convey and celebrate, as an expression of her missional identity which is rooted in the Trinity. It has been said that the Second Vatican Council turned the Church to the world, so that the world would turn to the Church.

After the Second Vatican Council, mission came to be recognized as a more “complex reality.”³⁷ Prior to the council, missionary orders of men and women almost exclusively carried out mission in the Church. After the Council, the Church promoted the notion of the missionary responsibility of all the baptized. The Church gained an awareness that preaching the Gospel and planting churches was not as straightforward as it was once thought. Effective missionary praxis requires many things. To list but a few, it requires an awareness of indigenous cultures, languages, and anthropology; respect for religious freedom and the role of the individual conscience; interreligious dialogue; ecumenism and the capacity to foster ecumenical activity; sociology and global issues; knowledge and skills to foster the development of the whole person and every person; catechetical methods; and, most especially, celebrating the sacraments and expressing theological truths in various cultures and contexts. This vast array, and the interconnectedness of these issues, affecting every aspect of life, has resulted in the field of missiology becoming quite complex. Add to this the phenomenon that continents in previous eras that once sent missionaries (for example, Europe) are now receiving missionaries from former mission territories, such as Africa and Asia. And add to that a rapidly globalized world now confronted with massive, interconnected challenges, such as drastic climate change, waves of mass migration, religious extremism, secularization, and growing nationalism, and it is no surprise that contemporary missiology has become one of the most dynamic areas in theological studies.³⁸

Gerald Anderson provides three concise points for understanding the evolution of mission and its contemporary study, missiology. First, the source of mission is the Triune God. God the Father sends the Son. The Father and Son send the Spirit. The Son with the Spirit sends the Church.³⁹ Second, the scope of mission in this age of church history, mission is no longer understood as outreach beyond Christendom, but rather as the common witness of the whole

³⁷ *Redemptoris missio*, §41.

³⁸ See William Burrows and Wilbert Shenk comments located on the back cover of *Contemporary Mission Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017).

³⁹ Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson, and John Goodwin, ed., *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission* (London, UK: Lutterworth Press, 1973), 594.

Church, bringing the Gospel to the whole world.⁴⁰ Third, the task of mission is humanization in an eschatological perspective. Through witness and service to humanity, assisting them in struggles for justice, peace and dignity, Christians share in God’s mission of restoring men and women to their true God-intended nature.⁴¹

Charles E. Van Engen has remarked that in the past, missiology drew from four primary sources: the Bible, philosophy, theology, mission history, and mission strategies. Contemporary missiology draws from the arts and sciences; business and marketing; sociology, anthropology, and economics; political analysis; environmental sciences and ecology; behavioral sciences, management, training and leadership, and other sources.⁴² Although it may be helpful to the field of missiology to consult all other bodies of knowledge in studying the contemporary appreciation of the multifaceted nature of mission, this development makes one wonder whether the field has become too broad and unfocused.

It should be noted that in the German context, the term *Missiologie* was replaced by *Missionswissenschaft*, which is strongly attached to *Religionswissenschaft*. This shift represented an approach to missiology as it is practiced. *Missionswissenschaft* considers both the theory and praxis of mission. It is multidisciplinary since mission itself is multivalent, requiring knowledge and skills not only in theology and pastoral sciences but also in anthropology, linguistics, sociology, psychology, leadership and management, history, education, and development, among others. This begs the question, is the fundamental theology and practice of mission as “the extension of the love of the Trinitarian God for the transformation in love of the whole world”⁴³ lost in this multidisciplinary approach, or is “the extension of the love of the Trinitarian God for the transformation of the whole world” the Church’s *raison d’être*?

D. The Missio Dei

Missio Dei is a term frequently employed in discussing the Church and mission. The twentieth-century development of *missio Dei* was a seminal moment in missiology as *missio Dei* was an attempt to reposition mission from the hands of men to the heart of God. *Missio Dei* attempted to correct the interpretation of mission as anthropocentric, back to its origin in the Triune

⁴⁰ Neill, Anderson, and Goodwin, ed., *Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, 594.

⁴¹ Neill, Anderson, and Goodwin, ed., *Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, 594.

⁴² Charles Van Engen, “Conclusion: Seeking Ways Forward,” in *Contemporary Mission Theology: Engaging the Nations*, ed. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 294.

⁴³ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 221.

God. This reaffirmation that mission originates in God and not with the Church or the state, intended to restore the understanding of mission as participation in the salvific love of the Trinity. “The recognition that mission is God’s mission represented a crucial breakthrough in respect to the preceding centuries,”⁴⁴ according to renowned missiologist David Bosch. Bosch adds, “It is inconceivable that we could again revert to a narrow, ecclesio-centric view of mission.”⁴⁵ However useful it was in response to the missional crisis of the early twentieth century, the term *missio Dei* has become a slogan, a trope. The following paragraphs will consider ways in which the twentieth-century development and usage of the term *missio Dei* solved some problems but created others.⁴⁶

Missiologists debate the origin and the precise meaning of *missio Dei*.⁴⁷ The popular account is that Karl Barth inspired the idea of *missio Dei*, and Karl Hartenstein popularized the term. In a text read at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932,⁴⁸ Barth did not explicitly use the phrase *missio Dei* but implied it. He defined mission “as a work of God Himself.”⁴⁹ In *Die Mission als theologisches Problem*, written soon after Brandenburg, in 1933, Karl Hartenstein affirmed the same principle as Barth, that mission is the work of God.⁵⁰ At the Tambaram meeting of the International Missionary Conference in 1938, the declaration of the German delegates “confessed that only ‘through a creative act of God His Kingdom will be consummated in the final establishment of a new Heaven and a New Earth’, and ‘We are convinced that only this eschatological attitude can prevent the Church from becoming secularized.’”⁵¹

It was at the World Missionary Conference held in Willingen in 1952 where the content of the *missio Dei* doctrine was clearly presented. “At Willingen, the Christian mission was said to arise from God himself and was placed in the context of the Trinitarian doctrine.”⁵² The image of mission to emerge from the Willingen Conference was mission as participating in the sending

⁴⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 381.

⁴⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 381.

⁴⁶ John Flett is certainly of this opinion. See John Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

⁴⁷ For an account of origins and development of *missio Dei*, see Thomas Schirrmacher *Missio Dei—God’s Missional Nature* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018 [translated from the edition previously published in 2017 by Verlag für Kulture und Wissenschaft]), and John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

⁴⁸ Karl Barth, „Die Theologie und Die Mission in der Gegenwart”, in: *Zwischen den Zeiten* 10, (3/1932), 189–215; Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 11–17.

⁴⁹ Karl Barth, „Die Theologie und Die Mission in der Gegenwart”, in: *Zwischen den Zeiten* 10, (3/1932), 189–215.

⁵⁰ Hartenstein, Karl., *Die Mission als theologisches problem: Beiträge zum grundsätzlichen Verständnis der Mission*. (Germany: Furche-Verlag, 1933).

⁵¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 309.

⁵² Nicolas Lossky, ed., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications 2002), 780–81.

action of God. The Willingen proceedings were published under the title “Missions Under the Cross.” Thus, Willingen offered not a triumphalist notion of mission, but rather affirmed that mission is of God, and like the Son of God, embraces the Cross. Missionary has a cruciform nature and as such is a participation in the kenotic love of God. At Willingen, “the age of missions ended, and the age of mission has begun, prompting the need to distinguish between missions and mission.”⁵³ David Bosch explains, “While we cannot claim that what we do is identical to *missio Dei*; our activities are only authentic insofar as they reflect participation in the mission of God.”⁵⁴

Since then, “missionary theology has faced a radical change of paradigm, involving the transfer of the emphasis from an interpretation of the mission inside the autonomous anthropology to its understanding as a work of God, the Holy Trinity.”⁵⁵ This perhaps can be attributed to the notion which “places the basis of the Christian mission on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and not on Ecclesiology or Soteriology.”⁵⁶

“The *missio Dei* doctrine, understood as the sending of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, was extended to the idea that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit sent the Church into the world. *Missio Dei* became a concept relatively accepted by the Protestant and Catholic as well as by the Orthodox Churches, for they all came to better understand it and with varying degrees to embrace it.”⁵⁷

Thomas Schirrmacher explains that *missio Dei* came to be understood in this way:

In the New Testament the sending of the disciples by Jesus is understood to be an extension of the sending of Jesus by his Father (Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; 10:16; Acts 3:20, 26; approx. 50 times in John;) and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and Jesus (John 14:26; 15:26; Luke 24:49). This is the reason the same word for “sending,” (*missio*) (particularly John 17:18; 20:21) is used.⁵⁸

Henning Wrogemann and Theo Sundermeier have both derived *missio Dei* from the love of God. Schirrmacher offers, “God comes to people as a lover.”⁵⁹ For both these authors, *missio Dei* is an expression of Divine love that enables the free response of the person.

⁵³ Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson, and John Goodwin, eds., *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1971), 572.

⁵⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 400.

⁵⁵ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*, 105–58.

⁵⁶ Gheorghe Petraru, *Misiologie ortodoxă. I. Revelația lui Dumnezeu și misiunea Bisericii*, (Iași: Ed. Performantica 2000), 200.

⁵⁷ Understanding, misunderstanding and the evolution of the *missio Dei* doctrine in the Western European Churches is described by T. Engelsviken, in “*Missio Dei*”, 481. See also D. J. Bosch, *Witness to the World. The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, (Eugene, OR; Wipf and Stock Publisher 2006) 239–248; L. Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 19–29.

⁵⁸ Thomas Schirrmacher and Berthold Budde, ed., *Harenberg Lexikon der Religionen: die Religionen und Glaubensgemeinschaften der Welt, ihre Bedeutung in Alltag, Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (Dortmund: Harenberg, 2002), 196.

⁵⁹ Thomas Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei: God’s Missional Nature*, 52.

Nonetheless, scholars noted some limitations of the term. John Flett noted, “*missio Dei* satisfied an instinct that missionary witness properly belongs to the life of the church without offering any concrete determination of that act.”⁶⁰ He goes on to say, “it provided the necessary critical distance between the missionary act and the colonialist project.” Flett asserts however, that “*missio Deo* failed to support that act with any alternative form.”⁶¹ Jacques Matthey remarked in a 2003 article on the history and significance of the World Mission Conferences in the twentieth century that, “*missio Dei* did not really solve any of the major missiological challenges which shook Protestants from the beginning of the last century.”⁶² In trying to explain the quick adoption of the term, Wolfgang Gunther concluded that, “with the impending threat of all missions being ejected from the collapsing colonial empires, the *missio Dei* formula came as a relief: ‘it is God’s mission, not ours!’”⁶³

This notion that “mission is not the mission of the Church, but rather God’s mission”⁶⁴ is problematic. If the Church is a human construction, then this divorce between the mission of the Church and the mission of God may be understandable. If, however, the Church is believed to be the People of God, the Mystical Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, then a possible paradigm for understanding the relationship between the Church and the mission of God is the notion of the Church as the sacrament of the mission of God.

E. The Church as the Sacrament of Mission and Friendship

To claim the Church is the sacrament of the mission of God is also not without problems.⁶⁵ How can a community comprised of sinful people be a sacrament? The members of the Church, the People of God, are flawed human beings. Theologically it is understood that Christ is the sacrament of God, and the Church is the sacrament of Christ. Sacraments, in the *Catechism*’s classic definition, are “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church,

⁶⁰ John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 8.

⁶¹ Flett, *The Witness of God*, 8.

⁶² Matthey, Jacques, “God’s Mission Today: Summary and Conclusions,” *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 4 (2003): 581.

⁶³ Gunther, Wolfgang, “The History and Significance of the World Mission Conferences in the 20th Century,” *International Review of Mission*, 92, no. 4 (2003): 530.

⁶⁴ This quote is attributed to the Lutheran Bishop of Oslo, Norway, Fridtjov Sjøiland Birkeli (26 May 1906–17 September 1983) and can be found in Anna Marie Aagaard’s “*Missio Dei* in Katholischer Sicht: Missionstheologische Tendenzen,” *Evangelische Theologie* 34 (1974), 74.

⁶⁵ See Leo Scheffczyk, “The Church as the Universal Sacrament of Jesus Christ,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10, no. 1 (2010).

by which Divine life is dispensed.”⁶⁶ Sacraments are effective in and of themselves through Christ. Christ, who administers them, makes them efficacious. The Church is able to be the sacrament of mission because it is born *not* from human works, confession, or conduct, but because it is born of Christ’s total self-giving for the world’s salvation. The Church as the sacrament of mission implies that the Church is “the sign and instrument both of the reconciliation and communion of all humanity with God and the unity of the entire human race.”⁶⁷ As the sacrament of mission, the Church is to point to the friendship, and to facilitate the reconciliation, between God and humanity. The Church is the sign and instrument of humanity’s intimate relationship with God as well as of the bonds of affection among all persons. The Church as the sacrament of mission is in service to God’s love for the world. The first paragraph of Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* reads,

Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission.⁶⁸

Cambridge professor Clare Watkins, in an article published in 2003, notes that, in all the eight references to the Church as *sacrament* in the Second Vatican Council documents, there is a compelling sense of the Church, called as it is to a universal mission to unite all things in Christ.⁶⁹ Here are but a few examples. The open salvo of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* states, “By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind.”⁷⁰ This notion is repeated in the later part of the document. “Christ through His Spirit has established His body, the Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation.”⁷¹ The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council promotes the understanding of the Church as a sacrament of the Divine mission going forth so as to gather all into the communion of Divine life and love.

⁶⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1131.

⁶⁷ *Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), §152.

⁶⁸ Vatican Council II *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964) in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery OP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), §1.

⁶⁹ Clare Watkins, “Mass, Mission and Eucharistic Living,” *Heythrop Journal* XLIV (2003): 440–55.

⁷⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, §1.

⁷¹ *Lumen Gentium*, §48.

Following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Church as Communion speaks of the Church as “the sacrament of salvation.” The letter describes how it is from this sacramentality that,

it follows that the Church is not a reality closed in on herself; rather, she is permanently open to missionary and ecumenical endeavor, for she is sent to the world to announce and witness, to make present and spread the mystery of communion, which is essential to her: to gather all people and all things into Christ; so as to be for all an “inseparable sacrament of unity.”⁷²

The letter articulates the vocation of the Church to be a sacrament and describes how this vocation is actualized, namely, through proclamation and witness, by manifesting and sharing communion, and by gathering everything into Christ. In these ways, the Church is a visible sign and instrument of the Divine mission. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains,

The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may “bear much fruit.” Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.⁷³

The Church-world dualism no longer makes sense if the Church is the sacrament of mission, for Church is in the world to be a sacrament of mission and communion. “In creating man and woman in the Divine image and likeness, God created them for communion. God the Creator, who revealed himself as Love, as Trinity, as communion, called humanity to enter into intimate relationship with himself and into interpersonal communion, in the universal fraternity of all men and women.”⁷⁴ The Church's mission is not in addition to that of the Christ and the Holy Spirit but is inseparable from it. Father Gilles Emery, in his fine work on the Trinity, states succinctly that “the Church's mission is an extension of this sending”⁷⁵ of the Son and the Spirit (see Jn 17:18; Jn 20:21).

⁷² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion (May 28, 1992), §4.

⁷³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §737–739.

⁷⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, §3.

⁷⁵ Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, 26.

As the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5:13–14), the Church is to save and renew all of creation. Hence the Second Vatican Council’s *Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church* begins,

Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them “a universal sacrament of salvation,” the Church, driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity, and obeying the mandate of her Founder (cf. Mark 16:16), strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men. The Apostles themselves, on whom the Church was founded, following in the footsteps of Christ, “preached the word of truth and begot churches... In the present state of affairs, out of which there is arising a new situation for mankind, the Church, being the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Matt. 5:13–14), is more urgently called upon to save and renew every creature, that all things may be restored in Christ and all men may constitute one family in Him and one people of God.⁷⁶

The circumstances which gave rise to the urgency expressed in 1965 have worsened. Divisions within the human family and the Christian community have multiplied. The statistics on indicators of the practice of Christianity in Europe and North America have spiraled downward these past fifty-five years. Humanity is at a critical moment in which we will either learn to live together or continue to destroy one another and the planet. Fr. Rock Kereszty, an American religious priest and theologian in his recently published dissertation asserts, “The world needs the sacrament of the Church’s mission as a transforming and reconciling presence in which God unites all of creation to Himself.”⁷⁷ This call to sanctify and renew so that all may be restored in Christ continues to be exigent. The impetus to mission is not external, however. It is driven by the inner necessity of the Church. Let now explore what this inner necessity of the Church might mean.

F. The Church’s Missionary Nature

“The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.”⁷⁸ *Ad Gentes* is the document of the Second Vatican Council tasked with expressing the missiology of the Church. Certainly, several other key Council documents reveal the mission of the Church, particularly *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*.

What is most significant is that *Ad Gentes* begins with a Trinitarian locus for the origin of mission. Mission thus becomes more than an extending of the perimeters of the Church. It is rather to motivate the very heart of the Church, not only because Christ commands the faithful to engage

⁷⁶ *Ad Gentes*, §1.

⁷⁷ Roch A. Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ: A Catholic Ecclesiology* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), vii.

⁷⁸ *Ad Gentes*, §2.

in it, but also because by being missionary, the Church is drawn into the innermost life of the Trinity. The Council emphasized the Church's "missionary nature," basing it in a dynamic way on the Trinitarian mission itself.⁷⁹ The mission of the Church is the sacrament of the mission of the Triune God as evidenced in the Fourth Gospel: "Just as You sent Me into the world, even so I sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18); "Just as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (Jn 20:21).⁸⁰ The Church's mission has its source in the Triune God. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, so that we, through the power of the Holy Spirit are made one in love, which is the very nature of God.⁸¹ The Church's mission is to attract people to communion with and participation in the Holy Trinity.

The Church is called *apostolic* both in the sense that we are founded on the apostles (noun) and in the sense that Christians are "sent" (verb).⁸² Sent comes from the Greek root of apostle. In unbroken continuity with the apostles, the Church participates in God's mission. All who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are invited by God to become "part-takers" in God's mission. As the Son was sent as the incarnation of the Love of the Triune God, followers of Christ are sent to incarnate, to embody the love of the Triune God. Thus, the foundation of the apostolic mission is the Church's participation in the missionary activity of the Trinity.

The notion of *incarnational mission* is founded upon the hymn in Paul's letter to the Church in Philippi. Emptying the self, taking on the form and likeness of the other to love that person—that is incarnational. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, in their reflection on Philippians 2:1–11, instruct missionaries: "We must love the people to whom we minister so much that we are willing to enter their culture as children, to learn how to speak as they speak, play as they play, eat what they eat, sleep where they sleep, study what they study."⁸³ Walter Hansen calls the epistle a "letter of friendship." He lists ten friendship motives found in Paul's letter to the Philippians: "affection, partnership (*koinōnia*), unity of soul and spirit, like-mindedness,

⁷⁹ *Redemptoris Missio*, §1.

⁸⁰ Christ as being sent by the Father appears directly in John 3:17, 34; 4:34; 5:23f., 30, 36–38; 6:29, 38f., 44, 57; 7:16–18, 29, 33; 8:16, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44–49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; and repeatedly throughout chapter 17. Jesus sending of the disciples is less prominent but is mentioned in 4:38; 17:18 and 20:21.

⁸¹ Thomas Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei: God's Missional Nature*, (Bonn: Verlag, 2018), 53.

⁸² The verb "to send" is the English translation of the Greek verbs *apostello* and *pempo*. The verbs for sending in the Gospel of John, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, occur over 60 times. A study of these verbs in the Gospel of John can be found on page 96 and following in this document.

⁸³ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 24–25.

yokefellow, giving and receiving, common struggles and joy, absence/presence, virtue friendship and moral paradigm.”⁸⁴

Evelyne Reisacher asserts that a missiology of friendship reflective of the kenotic love described in Saint Paul’s letter should be the normative relation of missionaries. She notes, “This self-giving attitude and sensitivity toward other cultures adopted by countless missionaries seem even more important at times of cultural, ethnic, and religious conflicts.”⁸⁵ The incarnation of Christ through, with, and in the Spirit, is the impetus for the Church’s missiology of friendship. It is the person of Christ, sent on mission by the Father, through the Spirit, who takes on our human likeness in an expression of salvific friendship. Saint Damien of Molokai’s life and death reveals a way of being—an incarnational mission of friendship. Saint Damien became a leper with the lepers to gain all for Jesus Christ.

Within the Church, mission is a communal activity.⁸⁶ Persons participate in mission in unity and in diversity. The human community participating in mission is *imago Trinitatis*. Each human person participates in his or her own unique way, sharing his or her particular gifts in the missionary enterprise of God. Paul speaks of this as members of One Body (1 Cor 12:12–37). The human person in mission acts communally, participating in a people gathered, assembled, as *ekklesia*. God’s mission originates, operates, is directed toward, and is fully realized in community, among friends. God sends and is sent in love to gather in love. The Church sends and is sent forth to gather humanity to participation in Trinitarian life and love.⁸⁷ Its gathering is for sending and the sending forth of the Church is for gathering.

The liturgy is the Church’s response to the loving activity of the Trinity. It is directed to participants’ communion with the Trinity and with one another. “It is through the liturgy that the faithful are able to express in their own lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church”⁸⁸ Bruno Forte echoes this point by stating that in the Liturgy of the Eucharist,

⁸⁴ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 8–11.

⁸⁵ Evelyne Reisacher, “Have This Mind Among You: Philippians 2:1–11,” *Theology, News & Notes* (Fall 2013).

⁸⁶ *Redemptoris Missio*, §61.

⁸⁷ See Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Aspects of Christian Salvation” *Placuit Deo*, (Vatican, February 22, 2018): “Salvation does not consist in the self-realization of the isolated individual, nor in an interior fusion of the individual with the divine. Rather, salvation consists in being incorporated into a communion of persons that participates in the communion of the Trinity.”

⁸⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §2.

the dynamic activity of the Trinity flows into the activity of the Church, and vice versa. [As the] sacrifice of praise of the Father, memorial of the Son, invocation of the Spirit, the Eucharist models the Church's mission after that of the Trinity, as a mission of love.⁸⁹

The practice of mission reflects the paschal mystery. In this regard, the primary role of mission is of “unveiling the truth of the gospel, where liturgical action complements and deepens verbal teaching and draws one deeper into the mystery of God's promise.”⁹⁰

The mission of the Son and the Spirit is brought to completion with and through the Church as the sacrament of the Divine mission and friendship. According to Balthasar, Richard of St. Victor, in his treatise on the Trinity, proposed a concept that explained the Divine, but also the human person, as *ex-sistentia*, which is a spiritual subject that earns the name *person* only by going out beyond itself (ex)-in God.⁹¹ Richard of St. Victor connects personhood with the capacity to go, *to be sent*, beyond oneself. Being a person is having the capacity to relate in love to another beyond oneself. In this light, then it is possible to say that the human person, *ex-sistentia*, is missional. Likewise, the Church, *ex-sistentia*, is missional.

In *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II penned, “Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other; they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.”⁹² The dynamism of Trinitarian love simultaneously draws members of the Church into communion as it propels them outward in mission so as to bring others into communion. This mutuality of mission and communion is analogous to the simultaneity of centripetal and centrifugal forces.

A recent letter sent from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to Roman Catholic bishops states explicitly that, “salvation does not consist in the self-realization of the isolated individual, nor in an interior fusion of the individual with the Divine. Rather, salvation consists in being incorporated into a communion of persons that participates in the communion of the Trinity.”⁹³ In conclusion, the nature of the Church is both communal and missional, having its source in the Trinity.

⁸⁹ Bruno Forte, *The Trinity as History: Saga of the Christian God*, trans. Paul Rotondi (New York, NY: Alba House, 1989), 216.

⁹⁰ Forte, *The Trinity as History*, 216. See also, William Burrows, “The Importance of Liturgy in Ecclesial Mission Animation,” *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 1 (January 2010): 41.

⁹¹ Hans Urs Von. Balthasar, “On the Concept of Person,” trans. Peter Verhalen, *Communio* 13, no. Spring (1986): 22.

⁹² *Christifideles Laici*, §2.

⁹³ *Placuit Deo*, §12.

G. Theology of Mission Literature

What are the sources that inform the theological writing of missiologists today? As previously mentioned, the most monumental influence on modern Catholic missionary theology was the Second Vatican Council, considered a “missionary council” because in key council documents the Catholic Church articulated its role in the modern world: “to be a light to the nations”⁹⁴ with concern for the joys and hopes for all humanity.⁹⁵

Post-conciliar mission theology is understood as a complex reality, which includes witness and proclamation; catechesis; liturgy, prayer, and contemplation; justice, peace, and the integration of creation; interreligious dialogue; enculturation; and reconciliation.⁹⁶ Therefore, sources for mission theology draw from a variety of theological and non-theological disciplines.

In this literature review of missiology, three categories are presented: **general missiology, Trinitarian missiology, and biblical missiology.** Because this dissertation seeks to articulate a theology of mission as participation in friendship, this question was considered in each of the aforementioned subcategories of missiology: **Is there a reference to friendship, and if so, is it explicit or implicit?** By explicit, we mean that the words *friend* and *friendship* are obviously present in the text to describe the origin, the way, or the end of mission. By implicit we mean that the notion of friendship is implied or can be drawn out of the text. For example, the text may describe missionary activity as restoring the Divine-human relationship, faithful accompaniment, solidarity with, or sacrificial love for the sake of the other. This would seem to imply friendship.

H. General Missiology

Missiology is often a required topic for training for ministry. In many Catholic and Protestant and Evangelical seminaries, the study of missiology is mandated. This has led to the publication of dozens of textbooks and scholarly books that provide a general overview of the field of missiology. Most of these texts fall along denominational lines.

⁹⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, §1.

⁹⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, §1.

⁹⁶ Stephan B. Bevans SVD, “Themes and Questions in Missiology Today,” accessed June 15, 2020, https://www.cppsmissionaries.org/download/mission/THEMES_AND_QUESTIONS_IN_MISSIOLOGY_TODAY_Bevans.pdf.

1. *General Missiology Scholarly Books with No Reference to Friendship*

The literature review began with an examination of scholarly books and articles in the field of mission theology. It was surprising to discover **no reference** to the terms *friend* or *friendship* in theology of mission books. The terms *friend* and *friendship* were not included as subjects in the indices or as chapter headings in major missiology texts, even those dedicated to Trinitarian missiology. The following paragraphs describe the most often cited general missiology texts, all considered standard in the field, with no mention of the concepts *friend* or *friendship*.

a) *Catholic*

Josef Schmidlin⁹⁷ is considered by many to be the father of Catholic missiology. He was an influential German Catholic missionary theorist in the early twentieth century. His *Einführung in die Missionswissenschaft* appeared in 1917. This work was followed by *Katholische Missionslehre im Grundriss* in 1919 and *Katholische Missionsgeschichte* in 1925.⁹⁸ All three works continue to shape Catholic missiology and are used as foundational texts in Catholic seminaries and universities. None of these classical Catholic missiology texts by Schmidlin contain a reference to friendship.

The *Dictionary of Mission*⁹⁹ is an updated volume of the 1987 dictionary that was developed by two of Europe's foremost missiologists, Karl Müller and Theo Sundermeier. American missiologists Stephen Bevans and Richard Bliese published this newer English language edition in 2006 so as to incorporate the many changes in the field of missiology in recent decades. These developments reflected a redefinition of mission developed during the 1981 meeting of the research and service institute of Roman Catholic missionary religious orders known as SEDOS where mission was expressed in terms of proclamation, dialogue, inculturation, and liberation.¹⁰⁰ Although the foreword of this edition notes that this new approach to mission is "marked by a

⁹⁷ In 1911, Schmidlin founded the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*. According to the New Catholic Encyclopedia's entry on him, in 1914 he became the first ordinary professor of missiology at Münster; beginning in 1911 he was also the director of the scientific commission of the International Institute for Missiological Research. He was killed by the Nazis in the concentration camp at Struthof bei Schirmeck.

⁹⁸ Josef Schmidlin, *Einführung in Die Missionswissenschaft* (Münster, Germany, 1925). Josef Schmidlin, *Catholic Mission Theory: Katholische Missionslehre Im Grundriss*, trans. Matthias Braun (1931, n.d.).

⁹⁹ Karl Müller, et al., ed., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Müller., *Dictionary of Mission*, xiii.

sense of solidarity and accompaniment,”¹⁰¹ the term *friendship* is not to be found in the book’s 500-plus pages.

Karl Müller published in 1987 *Mission Theology: An Introduction*,¹⁰² a comprehensive and systematic treatment of missiology from a Catholic perspective that was subsequently translated into English. Born in East Prussia, Müller was Mission Secretary of the Divine Word Missionaries. He served as a lecturer in missiology at St. Augustine’s Seminary in Germany and wrote numerous books and articles on missiology and mission history. The concept of friendship is absent from his highly used text.

Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology, by Catholic priest and missionary Francis Anekwe Oborji, is frequently cited. Father Oborji is considered Africa’s most respected missiologist. His book, published in 2006, provides a general summary of Catholic missiology and an excellent historical overview, as well as more recent perspectives on missiology in light of the Second Vatican Council. Referring to *Ad Gentes*, he notes that, “when considered in the light of the Trinitarian mystery, the Church’s mission finds its origin in the love of the Father and its continuation in the mission of the Son and the Spirit.”¹⁰³ Father Oborji explores the theme of liberation theology in numerous cultural contexts and mission as dialogue with other religions. Yet, the language of friendship and interpersonal relationships is absent from his book.

Constants in Context, by highly regarded Catholic missiologists Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, is a comprehensive history of the theology of mission. Priests of the Society of the Divine Word, the largest missionary congregation in the Catholic Church, and professors of missiology at Chicago Theological Union, Bevans and Schroeder describe six constants of missionary theology. These constants consist of six questions Christians constantly need to answer in every cultural context, which are to shape their preaching, teaching, serving, and witnessing. They are: (1) Who is Jesus Christ and what is his meaning? (2) What is the nature of the Christian church? (3) How does the church regard its eschatological future? (4) What is the nature of salvation it preaches? (5) How does the church value the human person? And (6) what is the value of human culture in the context in which the gospel is preached?¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Müller., *Dictionary of Mission*, xiii.

¹⁰² Karl Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction* (St. Augustin, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1987).

¹⁰³ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2006), 9.

¹⁰⁴ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 30 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2004), 34.

The first half of the lengthy text masterfully traces how these constants are addressed throughout history and in various cultural contexts. The second half develops their theology of mission for today which includes: participating in the mission of the trinity; liberating service of the reign of God; proclaiming Jesus as universal Savior; and prophet dialogue. The idea of mission as prophetic dialogue is perhaps the most significant insight of the book. Included in the description of prophetic dialogue is the notion that reconciliation can be a form of prophetic dialogue. Echoing Robert Schreiter, the authors assert that the contemporary context requires, “special attention to the praxis of reconciliation as a newly emerging paradigm of mission.”¹⁰⁵ Although restoring relations through the praxis of reconciliation is an outcome of prophetic dialogue, there is no mention of friendship in this popular missional text.

b) Protestant

The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission (1978) by the highly internally esteemed British missiologist, Lesslie Newbigin contains no reference to friendship. In this foundational missiology text, Newbigin draws upon his extensive experience as both a missionary and professor of missiology. He notes that the story of the Christian mission begins in the love and hope of the Paschal mystery. His readers could well anticipate the mention of friendship in the chapter dedicated to mission as love in action. Surprisingly, it is not present. However, Newbigin does effectively illuminate how disciples of Christ are to embody the kingdom of God presented in the Gospels. He notes that those sent by Christ are to bear his presence in word and deed. In so doing, disciples become “part of the revealed secret of the presence of the kingdom.”¹⁰⁶ Christ is to be manifested through the disciples’ lives, revealing to the world the open secret of the kingdom of God.

David J. Bosch is the most often cited author in contemporary missiological studies. Neither his magnum opus *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*¹⁰⁷ nor his *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*¹⁰⁸ contains any reference

¹⁰⁵ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 389.

¹⁰⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 44.

¹⁰⁷ David L. Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

¹⁰⁸ David L. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 2006).

to friendship. The absence of the language of friendship in these standard missiological texts written by a leading scholar of missiology today is quite remarkable.

The comprehensive *Contemporary Mission Theology: Engaging the Nations*, edited by Robert Gallagher and Paul Hertig was published by the American Society of Missiology in 2017. This festschrift honors Protestant missionary and retired Fuller Seminary professor of missiology Charles Van Engen. The contents include biblical and theological foundations for mission, the history of the Christian mission, and current topics in missiology by acclaimed scholars and practitioners of mission. Described as a resource for the classroom that specifically addresses the missiological issues of the twenty-first century, the book contains contributions from the leading contemporary English-speaking scholars of missiology. Its sole occurrence of the term *friendship* is in reference to the relations experienced in an ecumenical missionary association. The theological connection between friendship, missiology, and missionary practice is missing from this significant and lengthy book.

Van Engen edited *The State of Missiology Today: Global Innovations in Christian Witness*. Published in 2016, it is a series of essays based on Fuller Seminary's 2015 Missiology Lectures celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Fuller's School of Intercultural Studies, originally known as the School of World Mission. The text reflects Fuller Seminary's historical and current appreciation of church growth and church planting as mission praxis. Neither in the recollections of missionary practices of the past, nor in proposals for missionary practice in the future does the concept of a missiology of friendship appear.

The term *friendship* does not appear on any of the 385 pages of *Participating in God's Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church in America* co-authored by Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile, both of whom are affiliated with Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota. This highly rated book received rave reviews from numerous highly regarded missiology scholars of diverse Christian traditions. Published in 2018, it responds to the question of how American churches can faithfully participate in God's mission today. That response, however, does not seem to include the concept of friendship.

Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions by John Piper is a best-selling missiology textbook in its third edition. The text provides a firm biblical foundation for mission, places God rather than humanity at the center of mission and explains how mission is oriented to

worship. Yet, this popular missiology textbook has no reference to friendship; the term *friendship* cannot be found within its covers.

Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective by John Howard Yoder. Yoder is known for his writings on Christian pacifism. This book which is a compilation of his lecture notes on missiology has been enthusiastically received by missiology scholars of various traditions. Yoder not only offers an Anabaptist perspective on mission, but also a fine study of the biblical foundation for mission, a multi-faceted missional ecclesiology, and a thorough discussion of the Christian mission in the context of global religions. In the author's foreword, Yoder states that he sought to articulate a theological basis for mission that, in "sharing the gospel message, disentangled from Western industry and militarism, could become a profound practice of Christian peacemaking."¹⁰⁹ It is curious then that Yoder's writings on missiology make no reference to friendship.

c) *Orthodox*

An extensive but not exhaustive search for a missiology text in the Orthodox tradition with no reference to friendship discovered none. Every Orthodox missiology text examined in this study contained at least an implicit reference to friendship. Perhaps this may be attributed to the Trinitarian foundation of Orthodox missiology. In Orthodox theology, the missionary vocation of the Church has its origin in Trinitarian relations. Orthodox missiology has its source not only in scripture but in the very essence of Divine love.

2. *General Missiology with an Implicit Reference to Friendship*

A source in Orthodox mission theology where an implicit missiology of friendship can be found is *The Liturgy after the Liturgy* by Father Ion Bria, a Romanian Orthodox priest and scholar. Father Bria is clear that Christians are to extend the *koinonia* of love and peace, realized in the Divine Liturgy, to the world.¹¹⁰ He reminds his readers that St. John Chrysostom,

who shaped the order of the Eucharistic Liturgy ordinarily celebrated by the Orthodox, strongly underlined "the sacrament of the brother," namely the spiritual sacrifice, the philanthropy, and

¹⁰⁹ John Howard Yoder and Gayle Gerber Koontz, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 8.

¹¹⁰ Although Bria has a book with this title and often is cited in reference to the phrase "the liturgy after the liturgy," our research revealed Archbishop Anastasios may have utilized and developed this term at an earlier date.

service which Christians must offer outside worship, in public places, on the altar of their neighbor's heart.¹¹¹

The author's reference to the "second altar," the heart of the neighbor, implies that the Christian offers friendship to neighbors in the liturgy after the Eucharistic Liturgy.¹¹²

Another Orthodox mission theology with an implicit reference to friendship is *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, by James Stamoolis. Published in 1986 by the American Society of Missiology, it provides an excellent synopsis of Orthodox mission practice and theology. In the beautifully written chapter on "Motives for Mission," an implicit reference to friendship can be found. Stamoolis expounds on how love is the motivation for mission (i.e., love of God and love for others), illuminating how mission flows from an inner necessity to love.

The first chapter of Protestant theologian Henning Wrogemann's *Theologies of Mission* also implies a missiology of friendship, acknowledging that missiology of the twenty-first century is in a new tone. Mission is first and foremost communal. Christian mission today is based "not so much in verbal proclamation as in body language, not so much in being on the move as in sharing life with other people. It is not so much about affirming the content of faith on a rational level as it is about experiencing a physical presence."¹¹³

In *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, Enoch Wan presents the theory and practice of missiology among displaced populations. Mission in this context is not only about sending but also about receiving those God brings to us. Wan maintains that deliberate strategies for welcoming, reaching, and mobilizing diaspora communities are essential. Ministry to displaced persons must be relational at its heart.

One final mission theology source worth noting for its implicit reference to friendship is *Understanding Christian Mission: Participating in Suffering and Glory*, by Protestant missiologist Scott W. Sunquist, reflecting on Philippians 2, asserts that "the kenotic identity of Jesus Christ calls for a cruciform Christian journey."¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, he explains, "The cruciform life is not an

¹¹¹ Ion Bria, "The Liturgy After the Liturgy," *Orthodox Christianity* (blog), April 26, 2013, <https://orthochristian.com/61078.html>.

¹¹² See Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1996).

¹¹³ Henning Wrogemann, *Theologies of Mission*, ed. Karl E. Bohmer (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2018), 5.

¹¹⁴ Scott W. Sunquist, "Missio Dei: Christian History Envisioned as Cruciform Apostolicity," *Missiology: An International Review* 37, no. 1 (2009): 39.

end in itself. ... Love is the motive, kenosis is the means, and transformation is the goal.”¹¹⁵ This process implies friendship.

3. *General Missiology with an Explicit Reference to Friendship*

In the review of mission theology literature, a few noteworthy sources reveal an explicit missiology of friendship, where friendship is clearly connected to mission. These sources most frequently discussed friendship with respect to missional praxis or as a way of doing mission. Some sources articulated the origin and end of a missiology of friendship within the Trinity. Others did not. The following are the most significant findings.

Dana L. Robert is the William Fairfield Warren Distinguished Professor, and Director of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at Boston University. Her recent publications include *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* and *Joy to the World! Mission in the Age of Global Christianity*. In her articles “Global Friendship as Incarnational Missional Practice” and “Cross-Cultural Friendship in the Creation of Twentieth-Century World Christianity,” both published in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, she articulates an explicit missiology of friendship, arguing that Christian missionaries should practice friendship in its highest form. However, she does not develop a Trinitarian missiology of friendship.

A missiology with an explicit reference to friendship is the festschrift entitled *Unlikely Friends: How God Uses Boundary Crossing Friendships to Transform the World*, honoring Dana Robert. This book is a series of essays by contemporary missiologists from various Christian denominations. The authors express the need for a greater attention to friendship in the study of mission history and as well as a more intentional living out of friendship as a practice of mission. In its historical portraits and reflections on personal experience, this book affirms that friendships in Christian mission have shaped theologies, built organizations and partnerships, facilitated mission work, and changed attitudes and ways of thinking.¹¹⁶ The book concludes that friendship stands as a powerful testimony to the gospel. Although this book explicitly connects mission and friendship in missional practice, a trinitarian basis for a mission theology as participation in friendship was not evident.

¹¹⁵ Sunquist, “Missio Dei”, Also Scott Sundquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academy, 2013), 408–11.

¹¹⁶ Dana Lee Robert et al., ed., *Unlikely Friends: How God Uses Boundary-Crossing Friendships to Transform the World* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2021), viii.

Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer's book *Making Friends, Making Disciples: Growing Your Church through Authentic Relationships*¹¹⁷ also makes explicit the connection between mission and friendship. Spitzer, an American Baptist minister, believes that the Church is a Christ-centered community of friends that is committed to making more friends. He explores how friendship influences both the prayer and outreach of the contemporary Church. Although not an academic work, Spitzer's book provides practical advice to Church leaders on fostering spiritual friendships within a congregation. Spitzer, like Roberts, Reisacher, Lingenfelter and Mayers, describes a way of mission as friendship but does not develop a Trinitarian missiology of friendship that sees friendship as the origin and end of mission.

Paul Waddell, Professor of Moral Theology at Saint Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, has become identified as a leading scholar and promoter of the practice of friendship as a means to live and to share the Gospel. While not a missiologist, Waddell understands that friendship, when properly practiced can be a transformative channel of God's grace. His book *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice and the Practice of Christian Friendship* identifies (1) the role of friendship is shaping our moral lives; (2) the practice of spiritual companionship in the model of Aelred of Rievaulx and in the lives of numerous Catholic saints, some of whom shared a common mission; (3) the idea that the beauty of Christian friendship offers a profound witness of the faith and can attract others to the faith (in the words of Chrysostom, "Let us astound them by our way of life!"), and (4) the reality that friendship practices mercy, justice, and peace. Waddell believes that friendship, more than just and ethical practice, must permeate the whole of the life of the Christian community.

Some recent missiological literature has sought to return the local community to its primary place as a focus for congregations. These voices are calling for a fruitful turn toward the engagement of ordinary disciples in neighborhood life rather than trying to attract people from far and wide to drive to big-box-style megachurches or focus their mission efforts on distant places. These works encourage congregations to be friends with those in close proximity. A significant text in this genre is Michael Barram's *The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic*,¹¹⁸ in which the author suggests that the time is ripe for a "missional

¹¹⁷ Lee Spitzer, *Making Friends, Making Disciples: Growing Your Church through Authentic Relationships* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2010).

¹¹⁸ Michael Barram, "The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 61, no. 1 (January 2007): 42.

hermeneutic” that would privilege the missiological “location” of the Christian community in the world as a key to a critical and faithful approach to Scripture. Some other significant sources are Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community*; Alan J. Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time*; and James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. These texts generally describe a way of mission as friendship, but do not develop a Trinitarian missiology of friendship.

The literature on relational models of mission is growing, and includes the following works: Anthony J. Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins: Strategy and Spirituality for Mission*; Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility*; Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl, *Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission*; and Kirk Franklin, *A Paradigm for Global Mission Leadership: The Journey of the Wycliffe Global Alliance*. A text that likely influenced the development of relational models of mission is Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Published in 1970, Freire’s work sought to transform the patronizing and oppressive mindsets and behaviors of Christian missionaries.¹¹⁹ Freire’s thesis is simplified in the often-quoted saying of Lilla Watson, twentieth-century aboriginal human rights activist: “If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” In these relational models of mission, the language of solidarity, partnership, mutuality, and friendship are employed. These sources tend to describe the practice of mission as friendship but do not develop a Trinitarian missiology of friendship that expresses Divine charity or friendship as the origin and end of mission.

Let us turn now to Trinitarian missiology to determine if there is a reference to friendship and if so, whether it is explicit or implicit.

I. Trinitarian Mission Theology

1. The Necessity of the Trinity for a Theology of Mission as Participation in Friendship

It is evident that in Trinitarian missiology, to speak of the nature of God as missionary is an evolving conversation. What I am offering to this conversation is that, as Scripture and Tradition

¹¹⁹ The preface to Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was penned by missionary Richard Shaull.

have revealed, God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16). The Divine nature as Love sends and is sent, to draw all of creation into Divine love eternally. The missionary activity of God reveals His nature as Love. “For *God so loved* the world that *he gave his only Son*, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. *For God did not send* his Son into the world to condemn the world, *but that the world might be saved through him*.” (Jn 3:16-17). Mission is derivative of or an expression of Love.

The term *mission* is from the Latin verb *mittere*, which “expresses two realities: the sending of a person by one who has the power to send and the specific task that the sender entrusts to the person sent.”¹²⁰ There are two relational aspects of mission: the relation to the sender of mission and the relation to whom the mission is being sent. In mission, there is the phenomenon of a simultaneous coming-from and going-towards. These may be best understood as two orientations. Mission is both oriented back toward the sender and oriented toward the one to whom the mission is sent. In Aquinas’s words, “The meaning of being ‘sent’ (or mission) implies two things: one is the orientation of the one who is sent to the sender; the other is the orientation of the one sent to the goal to which he is sent.”¹²¹

Although Aquinas’s general definition may be applied to the missions of angels, human persons, or Divine Persons, it must be stated clearly that these orientations are not the same in the Divine missions.¹²² In his book *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Father Emery takes considerable care to describe these distinctions, stating that,

Aquinas puts forth a common notion of mission, applying it analogously to creatures and to God; as such any mission involves an orientation of the envoy to the one who sends (such as a procession or origin), and likewise an orientation to the goal (such as a new mode of being for the one sent.) The notion of mission particular to creatures will imply, on the one side, distance, and on the other, movement or change in the one sent, whereas the notion of mission which is peculiar to the Divine person is characterized by on the one side, the person’s having an eternal origin, and, on the other, a new mode of being for the person who is sent.¹²³

Thus, the distinct characteristics of the Divine mission expressed by Aquinas are two: the absence of separation among the Divine Persons and the absence of change in the Divine Persons.

¹²⁰ Bruno Forte, *The Trinity as History*, 55.

¹²¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* I, q. 43, a. 1; cf. I *Sent* d. 15, q. 1, a. 1. Fr. Gilles Emery notes, that the idea of tackling the topic via relations is not unique to Aquinas. He points us toward the *Summa fratris Alexandri*, Book I, to show that Aquinas is drawing upon received assumptions.

¹²² Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Ann Murphy (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 364ff.

¹²³ Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 366.

Emery concludes that “a Divine mission consists in a *new mode of presence* in the person sent, his rendering himself present in *an innovative way*.”¹²⁴ In Trinitarian doctrine, *mission* is understood as the sending of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of grace.¹²⁵

Saint Thomas Aquinas developed the theology of mission to explain the movement of God into the world. The *Divine mission* is the temporal, external movement of God toward all of creation and, perhaps most especially, the human person. It is the outpouring of love, which invites the human person into the Divine relationship of love.

The renewal of Trinitarian theology that has taken place over the past several decades has provided a rich basis for theologians to reimagine God’s life and mission. Among the important works in that area are Gilles Emery, *Trinity, Church, and the Human Person*; Rowan Williams, *The Trinity*; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*; John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*; Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*; Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology*; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*; and Stanley Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*.

Numerous scholarly articles have been published in the field of Trinitarian missiology. These books and articles explore “missionary” as an attribute of God, often with reliance upon Augustine’s discussion of the Divine missions in *De Trinitate*, Aquinas’ discussion of *processio* and *missio* in his *Summa theologiae*, as well as Karl Barth’s and Karl Rahner’s writings on the Trinity. Some of these texts speak of mission not merely as an attribute of God but as His nature or essence. John Flett in *The Witness of God* asserts “the classic location of ‘*missio*’ as a descriptor of Divine ontology breaks from God’s own particular act. His missionary activity is fuller and more representative of his nature than can be told by simply referring to the Father’s sending of the Son and the Spirit.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 367. Emery notes that “this teaching is another one which Thomas could have found among his forerunners: see for instance the *Summa fratris Alexandri*, Book I (ed. Quaracchi, vol. 1), no 511, contra *c* and response; Albert, I *Sent.* D. 14, a. 7; d. 15, a. 5.

¹²⁵ Gilles Emery, *The Trinity, An Introduction to the Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, trans. Matthew Levering, (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2011), 200.

¹²⁶ Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 42.

2. *Trinitarian Missiology with No Reference to Friendship*

This section concerns articles that speculate that the nature of God is missionary, and that mission has its origin and end in the Trinity, but that do not contain any reference to friendship. The most noteworthy of these articles include Stephen Holmes' "Trinitarian Missiology: Toward A Theology of God as Missionary"; Anna Marie Aagaard's "Missiones Dei in Katholischer Sicht," as well as her "Missiones Dei: A Contribution to the Discussion on the Concept of Mission"; Peter Bellini's article "The Processio-Missio Connection: A Starting Point in Missio Trinitatis or Overcoming the Immanent-Economic Divide in Missio Trinitatis"; Alan Roxburgh's "Rethinking Trinitarian Missiology"; Adam Dodds' "The Mission of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church: Toward a Trinitarian Missiology"; Seng-Kong Tan's "A Trinitarian Ontology of Missions"; and Lesslie Newbigin's "Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission." Although these articles contribute to the conversation on Trinitarian missiology, they often lack precision with terms. In addition, they reflect a tendency to diminish the vast distinctions between mission in the Divine Persons and the mission of human persons. The critical and precise understanding Aquinas brings to the discussion regarding persons, processions, and missions is truly foundational for any dialogue on Trinitarian missiology.¹²⁷

In several texts on Trinitarian missiology, friendship is implied by the use of the words: fellowship, relationship, and communion of love or *koinonia*. One of these texts is John G. Flett's *The Witness of God*. Flett is clear that mission/witness is an integral part of God's being. While the focus of his book is the *missio Dei*, Flett suggests that if the Church were to reflect the fullness of God's being, the Church would need to become a missionary community in fellowship with God and one another. Neither the words *friend* nor *friendship* appear in the text. However, friendship may be implied in Flett's use of fellowship.

¹²⁷ See Chul-ho Youn, "Missio Dei Trinitatis and Missio Ecclesiae: A Public Theological Perspective," *International Review of Mission* 107 (2018): 225–39; Eugene R. Schlesinger, "A Trinitarian Basis for a 'Theological Ecology' in Light of *Laudato Si'*," *TS* 79 (2018): 339–55; Timothy C. Tennent, "Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century," *Invitation to Theological Studies*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010; Tormod Engelsen, "Missio Dei: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology," *International Review of Mission* 92 (2003): 481–97; John F. Hoffmeyer, "The Missional Trinity," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40 (2001): 108–11; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Missions* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

Thomas Schirrmacher recently published a book entitled *Missio Dei: God's Missional Nature* in which he asserts the missional nature of God. For Schirrmacher, in Jesus, God is the missionary par excellence, and in the Holy Spirit, God is the most successful missionary. In this book, Schirrmacher outlines the recent history of the term *missio Dei* as well as its biblical and systematic foundations. The term *friendship* appears nowhere in the text; however, there is a brief chapter on love and *missio Dei*. In this section, Schirrmacher notes, along with Wrogemann¹²⁸ and Sundermeier,¹²⁹ that *missio Dei* is derived from the love of God.¹³⁰ Schirrmacher believes it is important to connect the *missio Dei* with the love of God because “God comes to people as a lover.”¹³¹ God is sent into the world from Love. God comes into the world as Love. God remains in the world as Love.¹³²

3. Trinitarian Missiology with an Implicit Reference to Friendship

A very significant Trinitarian mission theology with an implicit reference to friendship can be found in the writing of Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos.¹³³ His Beatitude Bartholomew Patriarch of Constantinople says of Yannoulatos, “we would *not* be unrealistic in emphasizing the primary and most important role Archbishop Anastasios has played in regenerating and reactivating in our times the missionary practice and service as a most essential act and obligatory expression of the self-consciousness of the Church.”¹³⁴ Therefore, Yannoulatos is our primary Orthodox interlocutor in our discussion of a Trinitarian missiology of friendship.

A Trinitarian missiology of friendship is present implicitly yet compellingly in *Mission in Christ's Way*. Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos articulates in one sentence the origin and

¹²⁸ Wrogemann, *Theologies of Mission*, 301–2.

¹²⁹ Theo Sundermeier. “Missio Dei: Zur Identität Christlicher Mission,” Entwurf (Fachgemeinschaft Ev. Religionslehrer in Württemberg, etc.), March 2003: 3–9.

¹³⁰ Thomas Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei: God's Missional Nature* (Bonn, Germany: Verlag, 2017), 52.

¹³¹ In making his claim that *missio Dei* flows from the love of God should be emphasized more, Schirrmacher quotes Sundermeier who states “God comes to people as a lover” in his work *Missio Dei heute*, on page 1247.

¹³² I am indebted to Joannes M. Oravec for his insights on the concept of God as Love. See Johannes Miroslav Oravec, *God as Love: The Concept and Spiritual Aspects of Agapē in Modern Russian Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2014).

¹³³ Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos is perhaps the most important Orthodox scholar of missiology and considered an exceptional missionary leader. Born in 1929, he is the Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania and as such the primate and Head of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania. He is Professor Emeritus of the National University of Athens. Archbishop Anastasios is one of the presidents of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. He has published over 230 essays and articles, many of which have been translated into Russian, Swedish, Finnish, Serbian, Romanian, English, French, German, Bulgarian, Spanish, and Albanian.

¹³⁴ Bartholomew of Constantinople, on November 4, 2006, in the forward of *Mission in Christ's Way*, 2010, xiii.

purpose of mission as Trinitarian Love: “Mission is the extension of the love of the Trinitarian God for the transformation in love of the whole world.”¹³⁵ He reminds us of that Love, which is the essence of the Trinity, is self-sacrificing; it is costly. Mission in Christ’s way is the Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Cross. He states, “One of the greatest dangers for Christian mission is that we become forgetful in the practice of the Cross and create a comfortable type of Christian who wants the Cross as an ornament, but who often prefers to crucify others than to be crucified himself.”¹³⁶ Yannoulatos echoes the Orthodox missiological notion of the liturgy after the Liturgy, but in a cruciform way. He states, “after the Divine Liturgy in the church, a new liturgy must be carried out. ... Whosoever wishes to live in Christ is obligated to follow Him, not only to the upper room and to the Mount of Transfiguration, but also in the dust of the apostolic way, uphill to Jerusalem and to Golgotha.”¹³⁷

Archbishop Anastasios outlines for his readers the Orthodox ethos of Christian witness through six theological points. He does not develop these points as a missiology of friendship. However, I would like to illustrate that they do indeed *imply* a missiology of friendship.

First, for Archbishop Anastasios, Christian mission does not seek to conquer, does not seek to establish a Christian state, and does not even seek to expand or increase ecclesial structures or authority. Its purpose is to serve the world with love and humility and to offer it salvation.¹³⁸ If friendship-love is understood as willing and doing what is good for the other, then seeking the salvation of the whole world is willing and doing what is the highest good of the world. I believe he is saying that mission is not expanding the Church on earth but increasing the number of saints in heaven. Put another way, mission is not so much about the planting of churches but the nurturing of eternal friendships with and in Trinitarian love.¹³⁹

Archbishop Anastasios’s second point: Trinitarian theology infuses Orthodox thought regarding the human person as a relational being. This theological perspective overcomes the reduction of the human person to a consumer or producer and instead seeks the deification of the

¹³⁵ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 211.

¹³⁶ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 211.

¹³⁷ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 151.

¹³⁸ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 128.

¹³⁹ See also Ion Bria, “Unity and Mission: From the Perspective of the Local Church: An Orthodox View,” *Ecumenical Review* 39, no. 3 (1987): 265–70. “In the East catholicity, which is another name for mission in unity, was conceived as an expression of the apostolic calling and obedience of the church to share “all the truth” (John 16:13) in each specific historical and cultural situation. Catholicity is not a quest for global expansion or for organizational uniformity or jurisdictional centralization.” 266.

person. “The Trinitarian theology of the East remains the best theological infrastructure for appreciation of the importance of the human person and the harmonious coexistence with other human persons in a community of love.”¹⁴⁰ He is clear that “this theological perspective and certainty make it possible to overcome both the selfish individualism cultivated by the capitalist mentality of the West, and the danger of massification, of reducing persons to dehumanized masses under various forms of dictatorships.”¹⁴¹ In the Orthodox tradition, the human person is destined for glory. In a missiology of friendship, friends remind one another of this potentiality to be transfigured. In the praxis of a missiology of friendship, missionaries guide and encourage the other in their holy ascent.

Thirdly, in Orthodox spirituality, inner genuineness or purity enables one to radiate the Gospel. The holiness of life in every believer, whether in the monastery or in married life, is strongly emphasized in the ethos of Christian witness. “When a person submits consciously to the criteria and demands of the Kingdom of God, when one becomes a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, then that person becomes a living ‘sign’ of the anticipated fulfillment of the Second Coming.”¹⁴² The authentic witness takes precedence over preaching. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus puts it this way: “It is great to speak of God; but it is greater to purify oneself in and for God.”¹⁴³ This notion correlates to Aristotle’s ideas regarding friendship and virtue. “Friendship-love in Aristotle is both teleological (love as attraction) and deontological (love as right action). Virtue is, to use Aristotelian terminology, simultaneously the final cause (goal) and efficient cause (originating force) of being a friend.”¹⁴⁴ Living a holy, virtuous life is an expression of friendship with God that most assuredly attracts friends.

Archbishop Anastasios’s fourth point of the Orthodox ethos of Christian witness acknowledges that “the axis around which the Orthodox community revolves and the source from which she gathers her spiritual strength for her mission is the liturgical life and above all the Divine Liturgy.”¹⁴⁵ For the Orthodox, it is impossible to consider mission without the Divine Liturgy.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 128.

¹⁴¹ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 128–29.

¹⁴² Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 129.

¹⁴³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily 53*, PG 36:581A, quoted in *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 130.

¹⁴⁴ Liz Carmichael, *Friendship, Interpreting Christian Love* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2004), 19.

¹⁴⁵ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 130.

¹⁴⁶ See also James Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 86–101, and especially Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*. WCC Publications, 1996, and Ion, Bria. “Dynamics of Liturgy in Mission.” *International Review of Mission*, Geneva, Switzerland, no. 327 (1993), 317.

“Mission does not just mean the announcement of the redemption in Christ, but its revelation, an invitation to a doxological participation in the event of salvation in Christ through the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴⁷ The Divine Liturgy is where this happens. Archbishop Anastasios invites us to imagine a missiology of friendship in and through the Divine Liturgy:

The faithful by experiencing in the Liturgy communion with God, sanctification in truth, inclusion in Christ and through Christ in the Father, and incorporation into the Church of the past, present, and future, broaden the horizons of their thoughts and interests, and acquire inner strength that enables them to prolong the experience of the Liturgy into life. That is, to work for the essential promotion of brotherhood in the world, the bridging of the separated, and the elimination of all forms of cultural and linguistic barriers.¹⁴⁸

The Divine Liturgy at the same time realizes communion and friendship with God and all the Saints as well as nourishes and equips the believer to be an agent of communion and friendship in and to the world. The Divine Liturgy reveals Divine and human friendship in a missiology of friendship. The Divine Liturgy also is the source of the spiritual strength of believers as they are sent forth from the Divine Liturgy to the liturgy of life to be friends to all.

Archbishop Anastasios’s fifth point in describing the Orthodox missionary ethos of witness is closely related: “Such a liturgical spirituality does not imply a negative attitude towards the world, but on the contrary, an *admirable freedom and ease* facing the world, an attitude of affection and love towards man.”¹⁴⁹ The ancient truth, articulated by Dorotheus of Gaza and Saint Basil, is that the closer one is to God the closer one is to the world. “The ascetics, who have been so misunderstood by the mentality of activism, do not live for themselves, but rather, have an intense awareness that they belong to the broader society of the Church.”¹⁵⁰ How is this possible? On the surface, this seems contradictory. Archbishop Anastasios explains, “The struggle of the saints for freedom from the bonds of personal egoism is directly connected to ‘being joined with all men,’ to the sense of unity in society where one affects all.”¹⁵¹ Freedom from selfishness enables a person to be with and to be for others. A freedom such as this is possible when one becomes aware of God’s love. The security in knowing that one is dearly loved as a son or daughter of the King of Glory unshackles the chains of self-absorption. Freedom from guilt, shame, anger, hurt, pride, and lust enables one to become a true friend.

¹⁴⁷ Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, 101.

¹⁴⁸ Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, 93.

¹⁴⁹ Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, 131.

¹⁵⁰ Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, 132.

¹⁵¹ Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, 132.

The sixth and final aspect of Archbishop Anastasios's Orthodox missionary ethos is finding a strong existential understanding of the words of Saint Paul: "my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).¹⁵² It is not enough just to believe these words. One must recognize them as a truth and the reality of life. Suffering, sacrificing, and martyrdom may seem like failures. Archbishop Anastasios reminds us that unless a grain of wheat falls upon the ground and dies, it will not produce fruit. This aspect of the ethos is similar to the one that precedes it. There is an element of freedom, perhaps a freedom from power and success in surrendering to the cross. Sadly, and far too often, missionary and evangelization efforts focus on numbers: how many inquiries, how many converts, how many donations, how many fed, how many counseled. This is a trap set by egoism. A missionary may not see the fruit of his or her labor. Patient perseverance with humble fidelity to the task is what is necessary. Is this not what we desire from our friends? A missiology of friendship-love does not seek to be successful, simply faithful. To do mission in Christ's way is to be a friend to humanity through a sacrificial, redemptive love in the Spirit for the glory of the Father.

Although Archbishop Anastasios may not write explicitly in reference to friendship, we find in his writings and in the witness of his life a full and lovely expression of a theology of mission as participation in friendship.

4. *Trinitarian Missiology with an Explicit Reference to Friendship*

Rev. Dr. Benedict Ssettuuma is a priest of the Diocese of Masaka in Uganda, where he lectures in Missiology and Pastoral Theology at St. Mary's National Seminary. His article "Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission"¹⁵³ contains a rare explicit Trinitarian missiology of friendship:

In the mind of Jesus Christ, friendship is the key to understanding and doing mission. Consequently, friendship is a fundamental dimension of mission that drives all missionaries into effective mission. The friendship of God precedes the history of salvation and of human beings. Friendship, therefore, is the point of departure for any effective mission in this world.¹⁵⁴

Friendship is not only the origin, way, and end of mission for Ssettuuma, but also the remedy to all the problems plaguing the world. 'The realization that God is our friend and wants us to be friends with each other and the entire creation is the ultimate solution to all the problems

¹⁵² Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, 132.

¹⁵³ Benedict Ssettuuma, "Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission," *African Ecclesial Review* 52, nos. 2&3 (2010).

¹⁵⁴ Ssettuuma, "Friendship: An Effective Tool, 58.

facing humanity today.¹⁵⁵ Building on biblical wisdom and the wisdom of traditional African culture, Ssettuuma, describes how friendship purifies missionary motives, rejuvenates missionary zeal, relieves human suffering, redefines our relationship to creation, and restores broken relationships.

Robert Doran's book published in 2019 *The Trinity in History: A Theology of Divine Missions* is the second volume in his trilogy exploring the Trinitarian theology of Bernard Lonergan. In a lengthy discussion on Lonergan's concept of sacralization, Doran explains that the form of Divine self-communication and the charity that flows from it is indeed friendship.¹⁵⁶

Scott Horrell's article "The Self-Giving Triune God, The Imago Dei and the Nature of the Local Church: An Ontology of Mission" also contains an explicit reference to friendship. He states that the local Church can reflect the triune Divine image through deep friendships. "If God exists as a community, then real community is to be reflected in all the life of the Church. ...To imitate God, the local church must seek to cultivate deep friendships."¹⁵⁷ He makes a case for a Trinitarian missiology of friendship: "Just as the persons of the Trinity did not confine themselves to loving themselves but rather created the world and entered redemptively into our existence, so the local church is called to give of itself to an alienated world."¹⁵⁸ The Church is to be friend to world as *imago Trinitatis*.

Another explicit Trinitarian missiology of friendship is found in Dominican priest scholar Serge-Thomas Bonino's article "Role of the Apostle in the Communication of Revelation" in *Reading John with Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, edited by Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering. Relying on the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Saint Thomas Aquinas, Father Bonino explains how the relation of the Father and the Son is extended to and reflected in the relation of the Son to the disciples: "Christ is constituted as the source of all supernatural knowledge of God: 'And all who know God owe this to Christ' (*Ioan.*

¹⁵⁵ Ssettuuma, "Friendship: An Effective Tool, 63.

¹⁵⁶ Robert M. Doran, *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions*, Lonergan Studies (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 42.

¹⁵⁷ Scott J. Horrell, "The Self-Giving Triune God, The Imago Dei and the Nature of the Local Church: An Ontology of Mission" (October 2008), 10, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/31/87>. This is a translation of the article Horrell, J Scott (John Scott). 1996. "O Deus Trino Que Se Dá, a Imago Dei e a Natureza Da Igreja Local." *Vox Scripturae* 6 (December): 243–62.

¹⁵⁸ Horrell, "The Self-Giving Triune God, The Imago Dei and the Nature of the Local Church: An Ontology of Mission." <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/31/87>.

13, lect. 6, n. 1830)’ and thus ‘it is through the disciples that the knowledge of truth has come to us’ (*Ioan.* 6, lect.1 n.856)”¹⁵⁹

Bonino offers that friendship is the reason for Christ’s special revelation to the disciples of the knowledge of God. “It is the friendship that they have with God that explains why Christ specially manifests himself to the apostles.”¹⁶⁰ He makes an explicit connection between revelation, friendship, and participation in mission. Citing Aquinas, he concludes that Christ reveals knowledge of God to His friends who, now enlightened by Divine revelation, become a light to others, thus participating in the mission of Christ, who is the Light of the World.¹⁶¹

Matthew Levering is a highly regarded scholar of systematic theology who makes the connection between mission and friendship explicit. In his article “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,”¹⁶² Levering expresses an explicit Trinitarian missiology of friendship. He does so through an examination of the biblical texts central to Aquinas’ Trinitarian theology¹⁶³ that speak of supernatural friendship.¹⁶⁴ These texts are Wisdom 9, John 14 and 15, and Romans 5. In reflecting on Aquinas, Levering posits, “The missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the believer establish the faith and love that make humans friends with God.”¹⁶⁵ It is only the Divine missions that bring about intimate friendship between human beings and God. For Levering, friendship is at the heart of Aquinas’s Trinitarian theology: “These texts from Wisdom, Romans and the Gospel of John may appear to be more proof-texts for the doctrine of the Trinitarian missions. Their emphasis on supernatural friendship, however, suggests that Aquinas’ treatise on the Trinity finds its culmination in friendship.”¹⁶⁶

Levering continues to explore this theme by examining Augustine’s treatment of friendship and the Trinity:

Augustine comes to appreciate that the practice of the ascent of the soul to friendship with the Divine Trinity occurs through the friendship in and with Jesus Christ by the action of the Holy

¹⁵⁹ Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP, “Role of the Apostles in the Communication of Revelation,” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 321.

¹⁶⁰ Bonino, “Role of the Apostles,” 328.

¹⁶¹ Bonino, “Role of the Apostles,” 341.

¹⁶² Matthew Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 1 (January 2007): 39–54.

¹⁶³ *Summa Theologica*, I, q.43, a.3, ad 2; q.43, a 5. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica Complete in a Single Volume*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Claremont, CA: Coyote Canyon Press, 2018).

¹⁶⁴ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,” 44.

¹⁶⁵ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology,” 45.

¹⁶⁶ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology,” 45.

Spirit. This friendship takes effective shape in the community of believers, the church as the mystical Body of Christ united by her sacramental participation through the Holy Spirit in Christ's saving work.¹⁶⁷

Thus, Levering states, "The goal of the Trinity's work in history, then, is to draw us into contemplative friendship with the Trinity."¹⁶⁸ This is the most explicit Trinitarian missiology of friendship I have found.

J. Biblical Missiology

The primary source for missiology is the Bible. Sacred Scripture reveals the Divine plan of salvation and the proclamation of redemption in which mission is dogmatically rooted. The foundation for the Divine mission, for the mission of the human person, and the mission of the ecclesial community is Sacred Scripture.¹⁶⁹ "A missional hermeneutic of the Bible begins with the Bible's very existence. ... [T]he whole canon of Scripture is a missional phenomenon in the sense that it witnesses to the self-giving movement of this God toward his creation and us, human beings in God own image."¹⁷⁰ The sacred texts are themselves both the product of and the witness to the ultimate mission of God, according to Wright. Charles Taber concurs,

The very existence of the Bible is incontrovertible evidence of the God who refused to forsake his rebellious creation, who refused to give up, who was and is determined to redeem and restore fallen creation to his original design...The very existence of such a collection of writings testifies to a God who breaks through to human beings, who discloses himself to them...who takes the initiative in re-establishing broken relationships with us.¹⁷¹

In chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, we will demonstrate a theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Gospel of John. Chapter 9 will explore this concept in most of the books of the New Testament. A theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Old Testament will be presented in chapter 10.

¹⁶⁷ Levering, "Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby," 48. Levering says in footnote 32: "For the friends who assisting Augustine in arriving at this conclusion, as well as the work of the Holy Spirit in liberating him from slavery to sin, see Book III (of the Confessions) which describes his conversion."

¹⁶⁸ Levering, "Friendship and Trinitarian Theology," 49.

¹⁶⁹ Greg McKinzie, "Missional Hermeneutics as Theological Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 11, no. 2 (2017): 160.

¹⁷⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP Academic, 2006), 48.

¹⁷¹ Charles R. Taber, "Missiology and the Bible," *Missiology* 11, no. 2 (April 1983): 229–45.

1. *Biblical Missiology with No Reference to Friendship*

Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*,¹⁷² provides a highly detailed study of the concept of the mission of God, traced though both Old and New Testaments. Wright advocates for interpreting all of Scripture with a missional hermeneutic. Despite the biblical metanarrative of God seeking to restore relations with humanity, there is no reference to friendship in Wright's text.

Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller are two of the most prominent Catholic biblical scholars in North America. Their *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*,¹⁷³ is a comprehensive exegesis of the theme of mission in the Old Testament and each book of the New Testament that demonstrates how biblical scholarship needs to shape missiology. It is surprising that no reference to friendship is contained therein.

Mission in the New Testament An Evangelical Approach is a collection of scholarly articles on the theme of mission in Scripture by highly regarded exegetes edited by William J. Larkin Jr., and Joel F Williams that provides a solid biblical foundation to a contemporary theology of mission. It does not contain any reference to friendship.

The following is a sampling of additional biblical missiology books and articles with no reference to friendship. First, Michael W. Goheen's *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. In this book, Michael W. Goheen, professor of missional theology at Calvin Theological Seminary and director of theological education at the Missional Training Center, Phoenix, traces the theme of mission through both the Old and the New Testaments. He asserts that the church's identity can be understood when its role is articulated in the context of the entire Biblical narrative. The theme of friendship was not discernable in Goheen's missional ecclesiology. Another important biblical missiology without reference to friendship is by scholars A. J. Kostenberger and P. T. O'Brien. Their *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* links mission to fallen humanity's need for redemption. Surprisingly, A. J. Köstenberger's, *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*, which is a fantastically thorough treatment of mission in the Gospel of John does not connect mission to friendship.

¹⁷² Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academics, 2010).

¹⁷³ Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983).

2. *Biblical Missiology with an Implicit Reference to Friendship*

Israel a Light to the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament by James Chukwuma Okoye, a Catholic missionary priest, presents an implicit missiology of friendship. It is subtle, but nonetheless important to mention. Okoye posits that Israel is able to be a light to the nations because of its friendship with God. Israel's friendship with YHWH expressed as a covenant enables them to attract the nations to YHWH. Also, as a light, a source of wisdom and truth, Israel is a friend to the nations.¹⁷⁴

Perhaps the best example of a biblical missiology with an implicit reference to friendship is Michael Gorman's¹⁷⁵ *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*.¹⁷⁶ Gorman outlines the Fourth Gospel as a missional gospel with a missional spirituality. He "refers to this missional spirituality as 'missional theosis' (also known as deification or divinization) being one of the Christian tradition's words for the transformative participation in the life of the Triune God."¹⁷⁷ Disciples of Jesus become more and more like the missional Father as they become like his Son through the work of the Spirit. This happens by the disciples both abiding (being a close relationship) with Jesus and by going and participating in the salvific mission of Christ. Gorman explains,

The missional God sent the Son out of love, the Son's mission was motivated and shaped by love, and the disciples are sent to continue that mission in the same spirit of love. Jesus's request in 17:26 confirms this conclusion: "I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."... [T]he only way that the world, which currently does not know God, will come to know God is through the disciples' practicing unity and love by means of their mutual indwelling with the Father and the Son. Mission, in other words, requires a communal spirituality of unity and love that comes only by the reciprocal residence of the community and God, a profound participation in the life of the Father, Son and Spirit.¹⁷⁸

Although Gorman does not explicitly use the term *friendship* here, he implies friendship in his phrase "communal spirituality of unity and love." What is friendship if not mutually abiding with one another in a spirit of unity and love? Gorman does explicitly address friendship when he

¹⁷⁴ James C. Okoye, *Israel A Light to the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 153.

¹⁷⁵ Michael Gorman is well suited for the task of explaining the missional *theosis* in the Gospel of John. He is the author of numerous books including *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission; The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant, Reading Paul and Reading Revelation Responsibly*.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018).

¹⁷⁷ Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, xvii.

¹⁷⁸ Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 126.

speaks about the need for the disciples of Jesus to not only love and lay down their lives for friends but for enemies as well:

Jesus's love command and example do not end with love among the disciples, nor do they have internal unity as their ultimate goal. Such love and unity are meant to bring others—specifically others who are hostile to God and to God's agents in the world—into Divine love and life....[T]he disciples are sent out of Divine love, shared among themselves, to bring others, even haters and persecutors, into the love of the Father, Son, and community.¹⁷⁹

Although he does not use the phrase “missiology of friendship,” Gorman asserts that the disciples are sent as a loving community so as make even the enemies of God His friends. They are sent to draw those who are far from God into participation in the Divine life and love. It is by their own “missional theosis,” participation in the Divine life and love, which enables the disciples to do this.

Gorman does not have a developed theology of grace, nor does he explore the culmination of the missional theology of John in chapter 21, where Peter expresses his desire for friendship with Christ and is invited to participate in Christ's mission.

3. *Biblical Missiology with an Explicit Reference to Friendship*

Evelyne Reisacher in “Have This Mind among You” also expresses an explicit missiology of friendship. She provides an exegesis of the second chapter of Saint Paul's Letter to the Philippians and builds upon the writing of New Testament scholar G. Walter Hansen, who calls the epistle a “letter of friendship.”¹⁸⁰ Reisacher, in reading Hansen, dreams of a praxis or way of mission that is reflective of friendship:

Philippians also addresses the quality of relations in mission. It is an interaction between church planter (Paul), co-workers (Timothy, Epaphroditus), fellow missionaries (with, at times, controversial mission strategies, Phil 1:15–17), and church members, who are called to have the same mind that was in Christ... We all know the challenges of global and local mission partnerships and how much effort is needed to strengthen and sustain them. Is it too much to ask that the concept of friendship be not only used in “friendship-evangelism,” but also to define the relationships between those who engage in mission.¹⁸¹

Reisacher expresses a hope for praxis of mission as friendship based upon Saint Paul's Letter to the Philippians. She desires that those who participate in the mission be friends with one another, being of one mind and one heart. Friendship should characterize the relationships with

¹⁷⁹ Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 174.

¹⁸⁰ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 8–11.

¹⁸¹ Reisacher, “Have This Mind Among You: Philippians 2:1–11.”

whom one is a missionary. However, friendship not only shared *with* fellow missionaries, but also those *to* whom missionaries are sent.

Similarly, Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers in *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* base their advice to missionaries on Philippians 2:6–7, stating, “We must love the people to whom we minister so much that we are willing to enter their culture as children, to learn how to speak as they speak, play as they play, eat what they eat, sleep where they sleep, study what they study.”¹⁸² In other words, missionaries must become friends with those to whom they are sent, sharing in every facet of life.

4. *Excursus Friendship Evangelism*

Friendship evangelism is a significant topic in evangelical Protestant writings.¹⁸³ The literature includes *Equipping Churches for Friendship, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Healthy Growth*, by D. James Kennedy, *One to One: A Practical Guide to Friendship Evangelism*, by Terry Wardle; *Making Friends for Christ: A Practical Approach to Relational Evangelism*, by Wayne McDill; *Friendship Evangelism: Reaching Others for Christ through Involvement in Operation Andrew*, by Joseph C Aldrich; *Building Friendships: The Foundation For Missional Engagement*, by Dave Arnold; *Friendship Evangelism by the Book: Applying First Century Principles to Twenty-First Century Relationships* by Tom Stebbins; and a particularly disturbing title, *Winning The Winnable—Friendship Evangelism*, by Elmer Towns, which boasts that the “winnable people” are those who are closely related to us—friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. These texts tend not to be scholarly but rather simplistic “how-to” guides. One popular text in this genre is *Friendship Evangelism by the Book*, by Tom Stebbins, which outlines a six-step approach to friendship evangelism: Step 1: Develop personal acquaintance. Step 2: Use secular life for further involvement. Step 3: Share and observe family values. Step 4: Discuss church background. Step 5: Give your personal testimony. Step 6: Share the Gospel. It is a method of proselytization, whereby believers become friends with nonbelievers or nonpracticing Christians to gain adherents. This method exploits “friendship” as a means to an end. These tactics demean both the human

¹⁸² Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003) 24–25.

¹⁸³ “Evangelicals are Protestants who adhere to the Protestant Reformation doctrines of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and believe that right doctrine comes from Scripture alone. Evangelicalism as a movement was shaped by the revivals of the First Great Awakening during the 18th-century and it is this revival heritage that differentiates evangelicals from other Protestants.” Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 24–25.

person and the sanctity of friendship. Converts are perceived as “cash” in a business model of evangelization with a focus on result-driven measurements reflective of a market-driven mindset. It is the same practice as pyramid schemes. This relationship cannot be described as a genuine friendship when it is motivated by a church growth agenda. This so-called friendship evangelization is neither genuine friendship nor authentic evangelization.¹⁸⁴

Friendship evangelization is in stark contrast to a missiology of friendship whose origin, means, and end is the Trinity. Friendship evangelism is not to be identified with the whole evangelism movement nor with evangelical communities, many of whom are exemplar in their missionary witness. The *origin* of friendship evangelization is not the Trinity but the human ego that desires to achieve a human agenda. The *way* of friendship evangelization is not Trinitarian but secular marketing and business growth strategies. The *end* of friendship evangelization is perceived not as communion with the Trinity, humanity, and all of creation but growth in the number of members and in finances. Perhaps these tactics are understandable in light of the rapid decline of religious practice and secularization in the United States; however, they are not justifiable. Both the ontological and eschatological horizons may be lacking in friendship evangelism and the human person and relations can be obscenely reduced to a means to an end. Mission must occur in the context of mutual trust and respect. The religious freedom and dignity of the person is always to be honored.¹⁸⁵ Although it is true that many come to faith by the authentic and genuine witness of family and friends, it is essential not to exploit relationships, or to form friendships for the sole purpose of church recruitment.

K. Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of pivotal persons in the development of missiology and the evolution of the field. This chapter also provided a review of missiological sources for references on friendship. Given the biblical connection between being a friend of God and

¹⁸⁴ This critique of “friendship evangelism” is not directed at genuine efforts to foster community and build relationships. The critique is grounded in the practice of marketing techniques which exploit friendship. Aristotle would describe this as a utilitarian friendship.

¹⁸⁵ “This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such ways that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits. The Council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself.” *Dignitatis Humanae*, §2.

participating in His mission, it was expected that more missiology texts would contain an explicit missiology of friendship. One type of literature that was not included was “church growth” guides. This is a growing body of literature with an entire industry developing to assist churches in increasing not only the number of members but also their level of engagement. Most importantly, this chapter, particularly the literature review, demonstrates the need for a systematic theology of mission as participation in friendship. Such a theology would necessarily have its source in Sacred Scripture.

CHAPTER III: DIVINE REVELATION: THE SCRIPT THAT INVITES PARTICIPATION IN MISSION AS A FRIEND

A. Introduction

Biblical exegesis is the interpretation of the sacred texts, to bring out their meaning, with a primary focus on words, grammar, literary form, sources, and style. Hermeneutics is the study and establishment of the principles by which sacred texts are to be interpreted. The hermeneutic methodology I employ draws upon *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, and *Verbum Domini*, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, issued by Pope Benedict XVI. Three interrelated principles are engaged in this methodology for interpreting Sacred Scripture. These principles are: first, Sacred Scripture is missional; second, Sacred Scripture communicates Divine-human friendship; and third, Sacred Scripture affects participation. The following paragraphs illustrate how these principles form a tri-focal hermeneutic. It must be stated that there are other valid hermeneutic methods. The methodology employed and explained in this chapter in no sense pretends to be the only possible approach. The objective is not exegesis in the strict sense, but a theological interpretation of biblical terminology pertaining to the thesis.

1. *Sacred Scripture Is Missional*

The whole canon of Scripture is a missional phenomenon in the sense that it witnesses to the self-giving movement of God toward His creation and us, particularly toward human beings fashioned in the Divine image.¹ In this understanding, the sacred texts are themselves both the product of and the witness to the ultimate mission of God. According to Biblical scholar N.T. Wright, “the New Testament was written to sustain and direct the missional life of the early church.”² Wright asserts that the purpose of the New Testament emerges from the entire missional agenda of the early Church.³ Andrew Kirk concurs, “[T]he Bible should be considered by biblical

¹ Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 48.

² Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 175.

³ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 176.

scholars as a book about mission from beginning to end, written by missionaries, for missionaries.”⁴

Christopher J.H. Wright, in *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, claims that “mission is a major key that unlocks the whole grand narrative of the canon of Scripture.”⁵ Wright is not proposing that in every biblical pericope there is to be found a missional message. Rather he is asserting that “in a missional approach to the Bible we are thinking of: the purpose for which the Bible exists; the God the Bible renders to us; the people whose identity and mission the Bible invites us to share; and the story the Bible tells about this God, this people and indeed about the whole world and its future.”⁶ It is possible to perceive, as Wright does, that the theme of mission forms an *inclusio* within the whole Bible, for in Genesis 12:3 we read, “*all peoples* [emphasis added] will be blessed through you” (through Abraham), and in the Book of Revelation 5:9, 7:9, and 14:6 the same concern for *all peoples* and nations is found.⁷

For Christians, the Bible has always been the charter document for missionary activity. By turning to the Sacred Scriptures, Christians have sought guidance for missionary activity; found examples of missionary behaviors; uncovered strategies for missionary challenges; discovered motivation for the mission of sharing the love of God in word and deed; and come to understand that God invites individuals and communities to participate in His salvific mission as His friends.

Those who engage Sacred Scripture through a missional hermeneutic read the text not only as revealing God’s missional purpose in the world but also as a summons to participate in that Divine activity. New Testament scholar Michael Barram describes missional hermeneutics in these terms: “biblical interpretation conducted from the hermeneutical perspective of the Church’s location as a sent community.”⁸ Barram’s hypothesis is that the missional “sent-ness” of the interpretive community of faith has become the *sine qua non* for ecclesial hermeneutics.⁹ Missional practice is necessary for missional hermeneutics as missional hermeneutics draws the reader into a fruitful dialogue with the text from his unique contextual vantage point of being a

⁴ Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 20.

⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 17.

⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 31.

⁷ See William Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), xii.

⁸ Michael Barram, “Reflections on the Practice of Missional Hermeneutics: ‘Streaming’ Philippians 1:20-30,” 2019, 9. Referenced in Michael Gorman’s *Becoming the Gospel, Paul, Participation and Missions*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 2015, 52.

⁹ Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 10.

“missionary.” Thus, missional hermeneutics appreciates both the centripetal (drawing-in) and centrifugal (moving-outward) phenomena of reading Sacred Scripture.

Missional hermeneutics proposes that the whole of Scripture contributes to our understanding of mission. Michael Barram furthers our understanding of missional hermeneutics as “an approach to the biblical text rooted in the basic conviction that God has a mission in the world and that Scripture is read as a community called into and caught up by those Divine purposes.”¹⁰

2. *Sacred Scripture Communicates Divine-Human Friendship*

The Greek word for revelation is *apo-kalypsis*, which means *unveiling*, also translated as *revelation*. Friendship can be understood as a gradual unveiling of the self to another,¹¹ revealing our self, our hopes, feelings, fears, so as to grow closer. Revelation draws humanity into the Divine communion.” “According to the Hellenistic philosophers, to be someone’s friend was to speak frankly and honestly to them and to hold nothing back.”¹² It is worth noting that, in the Gospel of John, when the evangelist employs love as *φιλεῖ*, it is often in the context of a showing forth, or a revelation. Consider John 5:20: “For the Father loves (*φιλεῖ*) the son and shows him all he does.” In the love between the Father and the Son, revelation is an act of friendship. Revelation as an act of friendship extends to Divine-human relations, as we read in John 15:15. Jesus proclaims His disciples are His friends precisely because He has revealed to them all that He has learned from the Father. The fourth-century theologian Ambrose eloquently captures this dimension of John 15:15:

Let us reveal our bosom to [a friend] and let him reveal his to us. Therefore, he said, I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. Therefore, a friend hides nothing, if he is true: he pours forth his mind, just as the Lord Jesus poured forth the mysteries of his Father.¹³

Those who engage Sacred Scripture through a friendship hermeneutic read the text not only as revealing God’s speaking to men as friends but also as an invitation to Divine friendship. Sacred Scripture reveals that in creating man and woman in His own image and likeness, God created

¹⁰ Michael Barram, “‘Located’ Questions for a Missional Hermeneutic” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, GOCN Forum on Missional Hermeneutics, Washington, DC, November 2006), emphasis added. See also Michael Barram, “The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic,” *Int* 61 (2007): 42-58.

¹¹ Wadell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship*, 64.

¹² Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 22.

¹³ Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Minister*, 3.22.135.

them for communion. God the Creator, who showed Himself as Love, as Trinity, as communion, called humanity to enter into intimate relationship with Himself and into interpersonal communion, in the universal fraternity of all men and women.¹⁴ “In this way the love of God was revealed to us, ... that he ... sent his Son as expiation for our sins” (1 Jn 4:9–10).

3. *Sacred Scripture Affects Participation*

In composing their texts, the New Testament writers were not simply speaking about the mission of Christ in the past. They were proclaiming Christ’s victory over sin and separation, over death and despair in the present moment of their audience. The word of God “engages us not only as *hearers* of Divine revelation, but also as its *heralds*.”¹⁵ This is because the one whom the Father sent to do His will (Jn 5:36–38; 6:38–40; 7:16–18) draws us to Himself and makes us part of His life and mission. David Bosch offers that “to participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”¹⁶

Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* describes God as revealing Himself as a relationship between the Divine Persons, which bids humanity to participate in that love:

God makes himself known to us as a mystery of infinite love in which the Father eternally utters his Word in the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the Word, who from the beginning is with God and is God, reveals himself in the dialogue of love between the Divine Persons, and invites us to share in that love.¹⁷

Thus, a missional and relational reading of the Word of God affects participation.

I seek to demonstrate that because Sacred Scripture is missional and relational, it must be participatory. Drawing upon the writings of Matthew Levering, I am proposing a Christian biblical hermeneutic that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in ecclesial communion, understands the fullness of the Sacred Scriptures because it participates in the realities to which the Scriptures refer—specifically Divine mission and Divine friendship.¹⁸ The Holy Bible, Christianity’s sacred texts, are indeed a *script* for participation in Trinitarian mission and friendship.

¹⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, §3.

¹⁵ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church *Verbum Domini*, (September 30, 2010) (Frederick, MD: Word Among Us Press, 2010), §91, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html

¹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 400.

¹⁷ *Verbum Domini*, §6.

¹⁸ Matthew Levering, “Principles of Exegesis: Toward a Participatory Biblical Exegesis,” *Pro Ecclesia* 17, no. 1 (February 2008): 43.

It is worth noting that no matter how objectively scientific biblical scholarship may strive to be, questions directed to the biblical texts are inevitably influenced by the viewpoint of the exegete. Any biblical foundation for mission in the New Testament is a window to the first disciples of Christ, the life and community of the evangelist, as well as a mirror for the life of the contemporary scholar and his or her faith perspective.

B. *Dei Verbum* Sets the Stage for a Missional, Relational, Participatory Hermeneutic

In *Dei Verbum*, a text that has shaped Catholic biblical interpretation for the past fifty years, we can detect our three themes of mission, participation, and friendship. The concept of the Divine mission is hinted at in the opening paragraph: “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God” (“Hac itaque revelatione Deus invisibilis”).¹⁹ The invisible God *becomes* visible through the Divine missions, through the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the Spirit by the Father and the Son.

The concept of friendship is obvious in the next phrase: “out of the abundance of His love speaks to men *as friends*” (“ex abundantia caritatis suae homines tamquam amicos alloquitur”).²⁰ The text of Exodus 33:11 reads, “The Lord would speak to Moses face-to-face as one speaks to a friend.” God’s relationship to Abraham is described in Sacred Scripture as friendship. The author of Deutero-Isaiah has God declare Abraham is His friend (Is 41:8). In John 15, Jesus tells the disciples that he is relating to them as friends because he has revealed all that the Father has shown Him. *Dei Verbum* describes the relationship between God and humanity as friendship.

Participation is also perceptible in this excerpt from *Dei Verbum*. “God lives among them” (“cum eis conversatur”)²¹ is reminiscent of the imagery of God pitching His tent among us in John 1:14. God becomes human, living among us so that humanity may dwell with God (Jn 14:3). God becomes human so humanity may partake of the Divine nature (2 Pt 1:4). The purpose of revelation is “so that He may invite and take them into *fellowship with Himself*.”²² Revelation is intended to draw humanity into friendship with God. Human friendship with God as in all human relationships requires participation—the *participation* in the life of the friend. *Dei Verbum* affirms that Sacred

¹⁹ *Dei Verbum*, §2.

²⁰ *Dei Verbum*, §2.

²¹ *Dei Verbum*, §2.

²² *Dei Verbum*, §2.

Scripture tells the story of God continually inviting humanity to participate in Divine life through the Divine missions of the Son and Spirit.

In the following five sections, we will see the evidence for a missional, friendship-oriented, participatory hermeneutic by exploring Church documents in the intersection with contemporary theology attentive to the importance of memory. This approach is grounded upon the conviction that the purpose of reading Sacred Scripture is so that human beings may come to participate in the life of the Trinity. In this way biblical interpretation is situated within the economy of salvation.

1. A Missional Perspective Is Essential in Order to Understand the Genesis of the New Testament

The mission perspective of the New Testament reflects the early Church's mission consciousness and missionary experience. According to Biblical scholar Donald Senior, the New Testament texts have been largely shaped by concerns for mission. Senior identifies these mission issues facing the early Church as "(a) the validation of the Gentile mission by relating it to the history of Israel and the ministry of Jesus; (b) the encouragement of the ongoing mission of the community beyond its own boundaries; (c) the effort to reconcile different social and cultural groups present in the community because of its cross-cultural mission."²³

Senior explains that,

these concerns are evident in a wide spectrum of [New Testament] materials: gospel stories of Jesus in conflict with his opponents, examples of responsiveness on the part of Gentiles, Samaritans, and outcasts, Paul's attempts to validate Gentile access to salvation apart from the Law, and the social codes in 1 Peter encouraging Christians to participate in the created institutions of Roman society.²⁴

He concludes that "mission must be considered a potential part of the 'horizon' that shaped the aim" of the Gospel writers.²⁵

"The [New Testament] writings served a variety of community needs," including offering a "perspective on the Church's universal mission."²⁶ The question of the Gentile mission was obviously a major theological issue in the first decades of the Church. Each Gospel author responded to this challenge based upon the unique needs of their community. Senior helps us to

²³ Donald Senior, "The Struggle to Be Universal: Mission as the Vantage Point for New Testament Investigation," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 66.

²⁴ Senior, "The Struggle to Be Universal," 66.

²⁵ Senior, "The Struggle to Be Universal," 66.

²⁶ Senior, "The Struggle to Be Universal," 66.

appreciate that the self-understanding of each Gospel community regarding their identity as agents of God's mission was central:

Although sectarian dynamics were at work in early Christianity, it was not the only dynamic. Although the correcting of a false Christology was a concern of New Testament authors, it was not their only concern. Although orthodoxy and ecclesial authority were issues for the Deutero-Pauline and other New Testament writings, they were not the only issues. Equally important, perhaps more important, for determining the nature and intent of early Christian literature was the community's developing conviction that it was called to be an agent of salvation for the world.²⁷

Biblical scholar N.T. Wright concurs that the New Testament was written to sustain and direct the missional life of the early Church.²⁸ Wright states,

The early church was conscious of being (and the writers of the New Testament wanted them to be conscious of being) a people through whom the love and power and new creational energy of the one God of the Jewish monotheism had been let loose on the world. These writings were meant to guide and sustain, direct, and energize—to shape the early church, and to warn it about possible wrong paths. To put it basically: the purpose of the New Testament emerges from the entire missional agenda of the early church.²⁹

N.T. Wright explains this missional purpose of the New Testament in *Scripture and the Authority of God*, writing, “after the narrative has reached its wonderful and shocking climax in Jesus, the very people reading the New Testament are supposed to be the ones who carry this story forward.”³⁰ He offers that the early Christian community understood themselves as responsible for continuing God's saving works revealed in Sacred Scripture. Wright also notes that their continuation of God's saving work was shaped by an integrated kingdom theology. As Joseph Ratzinger observes,

The meaning of scripture is constituted when the human word and God's word work together in the singularity of historical events and the eternity of the everlasting Word which is contemporary in every age. The biblical word comes from a real past. It comes not only from the past, however, but at the same time from the eternity of God and it leads us into God's eternity, but again along the way through time, to which the past, the present and the future belong.³¹

Ratzinger articulates here that the meaning of Scripture is understood through an awareness of past, present, and future. It is imperative for biblical scholars to keep in mind that the writers of the New Testament were proclaiming Christ's death and resurrection in the past so as to transform the lives of their audience in their present circumstances as well as to prepare them for their future

²⁷ Senior, “The Struggle to Be Universal,” 81.

²⁸ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 175.

²⁹ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 176.

³⁰ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 176.

³¹ Joseph Ratzinger, “Preface,” in *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, ed. Pontifical Biblical Commission, trans. John Kilgallen and Brendan Byrne (Boston, MA: St. Paul's Books & Media, 1993), 29.

with God. The New Testament writers were bringing events of the past to the present consciousness of their readers with a hope-filled view to the future, not unlike what is effected in the liturgical anamnesis.

2. *The New Testament Is Born of the Need for the Community to Participate in Anamnesis*

Anamnesis is from the Greek word *ἀνάμνησις* meaning “reminiscence.” Anamnesis is the making present of an object, event, or person from the past. It is closely related to the Hebrew word זָכַר *zeker*, translated as memorial or remembrance. The eternal and timeless anamnesis supersedes classical categories of created time. This is true in liturgical action. I am proposing that it may also apply to a missional hermeneutic.

In the exegesis of Sacred Scripture, it is absolutely essential to learn the historical context of the passage, what the text would have meant to the original audience, often referred to as the world behind the text. This work of historical, textual, and source criticism are the primary and necessary tasks of exegetes. Only with an understanding of the historical meaning of a text can the contemporary exegete begin to interpret the text.

The concept of anamnesis may serve as a way to interpret Scripture with full awareness of the layers of remembering. In the New Testament, these layers of remembering include the words and deeds of Jesus; how those words and deeds were communicated orally; how the early Christian community began to organize those oral traditions; how the authors of the Gospels and epistles composed their texts, including to whom they were writing and the *Sitz im Leben* of their audience. The spiritual senses of Scripture (allegorical, moral, and anagogical) are based upon the literal sense of Scripture.³² In his book on the topic of participatory exegesis, contemporary Catholic theologian Matthew Levering explains, “Christian biblical exegesis, in accord with the Christian and biblical understanding of reality, should envision history not only as a linear unfolding of individual moments, but also as an ongoing participation in God’s active providence, both metaphysically and Christologically-pneumatologically.”³³ I wish to make a connection between this sense of “ongoing participation in God’s active providence,” which Levering identifies with

³² See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §116.

³³ Matthew Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 1.

participatory biblical exegesis, and the liturgical concept of anamnesis so as to illuminate how a missional hermeneutic is participatory.

Anamnesis is an engagement with memory that does not simply recall the past but is a participation in the past in such a profound way that it transforms us for the future. A missional hermeneutic is not simply studying the Gospel to understand the past mission activity of the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the early Church as conveyed in the text of the evangelist. Missional hermeneutics is not merely a passive intellectual activity but a participation in the Divine mission here and now similar to the liturgical anamnesis. It brings to our consciousness the loving mission of God “who is, and who was, and who is to come” (Rv 1:8).

For Archbishop Anastasios, anamnesis provides the foundation for Christian self-understanding. He writes,

Anamnesis is the remembrance of the amazing intervention of God in the life of humanity. The remembrance, in faith and dedication, of the economy of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit determines our self-consciousness. It is from this that all other things begin and draw their meaning. The church steadfastly remains the community that remembers. How God, from the creation of the universe, during the flow of time, has guided, protected, and blessed humanity, choosing individuals or entities who were based entirely on him. “I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; yea, I will remember thy wonders of old” (Ps. 76 [77]:11). The church recalls with gratitude and draws power and inspiration as it remembers. “You shall remember what the Lord your God did” (Deut. 7:18) was the order God gave to his people when he guided them from slavery to freedom. Later, this paschal event acquired a new meaning, a perspective and dynamism in the person of Christ.³⁴

Archbishop Anastasios invites our conscious awareness of the loving saving acts of God past, present, and future. Analogously, we can read a text in Sacred Scripture; conduct a thorough exegesis of the language, context, redaction, and meaning of the original text in the past; connect that meaning with God’s message throughout Sacred Scripture; learn how the Church has interpreted that text throughout her history; and explain the meaning in love for our sisters and brothers today, in the hope of their present and future salvation. This is a genuine hermeneutic of continuity with an eschatological horizon. It is not simply a transfer of information but a true and full communication.

It is worth briefly exploring Deuteronomy 7:18. Of all the biblical books, Deuteronomy stands alone in its treatment of memory. Others might emphasize memory, but none does what

³⁴ Anastasios, “Together on the Way: 2.2. Anamnesis,” World Council of Churches (December 4, 1998), accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/together-on-the-way-22-anamnesis>.

Deuteronomy does, commanding memory and placing it at the center of community life. The words of Deuteronomy—“Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out of there” (Dt 5:15)—echo across time commanding its hearers to remember that *they themselves* were slaves. Deuteronomy makes clear at the outset that the people who stand before Moses are not the exodus generation, which is dead and gone (Dt 2:14–16). The generation standing here is a new generation with a new opportunity. Yet, having made this clear, Deuteronomy then proceeds to speak to the new generation *as if* they are the Exodus generation. The most striking example is when the people are repeatedly told to recall what “you saw with your own eyes” during the Exodus (e.g., Dt 4:3).

Developments in memory research have allowed us to understand this phenomenon even further. Speaking of Deuteronomy specifically, Jan Assmann has said,

We undoubtedly can speak here of a cultural, ritual memory technique that stands in the service of bonding memory and has the purpose of bringing to life and stabilizing a collective identity through a process of symbolic dramatization. Here, if anywhere in world literature, we have a text whose theme is “making memory.”³⁵

Exegesis must attend to the function of memory within the believing community and how that memory is engaged in composing the text and reading the text across generations. Archbishop Anastasios explains in a Christian context that,

the anamnesis of Christ’s redemptive work permeates our existence and continuously transforms it. The anamnesis is not a simple intellectual function; it is an action. It has an incomparably wider spectrum, which includes the element of thought and makes it an existential, personal event. Anamnesis binds us with the world in an essential way. It places us in the center of the world’s proceedings, of its pains, of its deepest quests. It reminds us that Christ’s work of salvation concerns the entire world; it embraces the whole universe, earth, and heaven, “all things”. The church, “which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23), cannot be shut in itself and take thought only for itself. The church lives “for the whole world”. With its prayer, its message, its interests, its action, it embraces all the pains of humanity, the exploitation of individuals or groups, the multifaceted oppression of women and children, the local clashes, the global financial unrest, and injustice, and deepening ecological threats. The church offers the holy gifts “in all and for all.”³⁶

In composing their texts, the New Testament writers were not simply speaking about the historic mission of Jesus of Nazareth. They were proclaiming Christ’s victory over sin and separation over death and despair *in the very present moment* of their audience. The New Testament authors were engaged in anamnesis. They were bringing events of the past to the present

³⁵ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, ed. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 16–17.

³⁶ Anastasios, “Anamnesis.”

consciousness of their readers with a hope-filled view of the future. This is an essential consideration for missional hermeneutics. A missional hermeneutic acknowledges the mission of God revealed in Sacred Scripture is to be participated in here and now, conscious that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again in glory.

Reading Sacred Scripture, according to Pope Benedict XVI, is “not only a literary phenomenon”; “it is the movement of [one’s] existence,” which occurs by way of an encounter with the Divine revealed in and through His Logos.³⁷ Perhaps this movement of one’s existence can be understood as the response to God’s own movement toward humanity: the movement of God’s salvific Love for His creation revealed in Sacred Scripture.

3. From Dei Verbum to Verbum Domini: A Consistent Contemporary Call for a Missional Reading of the Word of God which Affects Participation

The theme of participation in the Word of God perceptible in *Dei Verbum* was further developed during the pontificate of Benedict XVI. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI, in consultation with the Synod Fathers, conveys the necessity of participation in the Word of God several times. First, paragraph ninety-one makes clear that those who hear the Word of God are to also share the Word of God. It states, the Word of God, “engages us not only as hearers of Divine revelation, but also as its heralds.”³⁸ Paragraph ninety-one goes on to explain that it is Christ himself, who was sent by the Father, sends us, the recipients of revelation to participate in His life and his mission. It reads, “The one whom the Father sent to do his will (Jn 5:36–38; 6:38–40; 7:16–18) draws us to himself and makes us part of his life and mission.”³⁹ This same paragraph of *Verbum Domini*, provides the reason for our participation in Christ’s mission. “We cannot keep to ourselves the words of eternal life given to us in our encounter with Jesus Christ: they are meant for everyone.”⁴⁰ Why is this so? Paragraph ninety-three explains, “It is the word itself which impels us toward our brothers and sisters.”⁴¹ This missionary charge directed to only a few. It is meant for all the Baptized, “[S]ince the entire People of God is a people who have

³⁷ Benedict XVI, “Address at the Opening of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops,” October 5, 2008.

³⁸ *Verbum Domini*, §91.

³⁹ *Verbum Domini*, §91.

⁴⁰ *Verbum Domini*, §91.

⁴¹ *Verbum Domini*, §93.

been ‘sent’, the Synod reaffirmed that the mission of proclaiming the word of God is the task of all the disciples of Jesus Christ based on their Baptism.”⁴²

Thus, the response to hearing Scripture is to go forth to proclaim it. The proclamation of the Gospel is not simply a staid recitation of past events. Reading in Scripture of the mission of God revealed in Jesus Christ, the missionary command directed to all followers of Christ, and the mission activities of the early Church, Christians become participants in the Word, and the Word is a Person, Jesus Christ.⁴³ Authentic witness in the present moment is shaped by the memory of the coming of Kingdom of God. Authentic Christian witness gives a glimpse of the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. “This reciprocity between word and witness reflects the way in which God himself communicated through the Incarnation of his word. The word of God reaches men and women through an encounter with witnesses who make it present and alive.”⁴⁴ There is a bond between the love-filled hearing of God’s word and self-emptying care of our sisters and brothers. Followers of Christ who read Scripture need to “translate the word we have heard into gestures of love, because this is the only way to make the Gospel proclamation credible.”⁴⁵

In *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, The Resurrection and the Mission of the Church*, N. T. Wright suggests Christian mission is having a proper grasp of the *future* held out to us in Jesus Christ that leads to a vision of hope for the *present*. The kingdom is *both* present and future. Through Christ and His Spirit, the Church is to be now a foretaste of the coming kingdom. Wright writes,

To hope for a better future in this world—for the poor, the sick, the lonely and depressed, for the slaves, the refugees, the hungry and homeless, for the abused, the paranoid, the downtrodden and despairing, and in fact for the whole wide wonderful and wounded world—is not something else, something extra, something tacked on to the gospel as an afterthought. And to work for that intermediate hope ... is not a distraction from the task of mission in the present. It is a central, essential, vital, and life-giving part of it.⁴⁶

⁴² *Verbum Domini*, §93.

⁴³ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §134 “All Sacred Scripture is but one book and that book is Christ.”

⁴⁴ *Verbum Domini* §97.

⁴⁵ Benedict XVI, “Homily at the Conclusion of the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops,” October 26, 2008, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20081026_conclusionone-sinodo.html.

⁴⁶ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, Resurrection and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008), 192.

Michael Gorman has written several books on the topic of missional hermeneutics as participatory.⁴⁷ In *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, he offers the following definition of missional hermeneutics:

A missional hermeneutic is grounded in the theological principal of the *missio Dei*, or mission of God. This term summarized the conviction that the Scriptures of both Testaments bear witness to a God who as creator and redeemer of the world, is already on a mission. Indeed, God is by nature a missional God, who is seeking not just to “save souls” to take to heaven someday but to restore and save the created order: individuals, communities, nations, the environment, the world, the cosmos. This God calls the people of God assembled in the name of Christ—who was the incarnation of the Divine mission—to participate in this *missio Dei*, to discern what God is up to in the world, and to join in.⁴⁸

The implication is that “mission is not the church’s initiative, but its response, its participation in God’s mission: mission is derivative.”⁴⁹ The mission of the Church is to *participate* in the Divine mission. Gorman believes that “theosis and other terms (deification, Christification) adequately summarize this transformative reality of Spirit-enabled, Christ-like participation in the life and mission of God.”⁵⁰

Exegesis begins with the written text, with its historical context and social setting, with the words and idioms, grammar and literary forms, religious and theological vocabulary, and the many other topics that comprise the historical methodology.⁵¹ This facilitates the literal meaning of the text, the essential first step to understanding Scripture.⁵² For it is the very essence of biblical faith that Sacred Scripture reveals how people encountered God in their historic reality. In *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, Matthew Levering argues for a delicate interpretive balance, in which history is understood both as a process that participates in God’s creative and redemptive presence and as a set of historic moments. Levering offers a vision of Scripture that is rooted in the exegetical practice of St. Thomas Aquinas and his sources but embraces the historical-critical method as well.

Levering proposes that “the modern (metaphysical) understanding of history as a solely linear continuum, insofar as this understanding has taken hold in biblical scholarship, is incapable

⁴⁷ Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015); Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*.

⁴⁸ Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, Rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 155.

⁴⁹ Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 153.

⁵⁰ Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 7.

⁵¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §109–114.

⁵² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §116.

of accounting for the theological and metaphysical reality of human history.”⁵³ Quite boldly he states that “history cannot be confined to what can be known by linear historical modes, important as those modes are; the historical includes a participation in realities known by faith.”⁵⁴

Levering explains,

Participatory biblical exegesis locates the linear-historical details with a participatory-historical frame, a frame established by God’s creative and redemptive work in history. Such exegesis is ongoing whenever people presume that a biblical text about Jesus is about Jesus whom they worship in the church, or whenever people suppose that the local churches founded by Saint Paul have a real analogue today. It is ongoing whenever people pray, receive the sacraments, or ask forgiveness in the context of the reading and teaching of Scripture. It involves an understanding of historical realities, of our place in the history of salvation that comes naturally to the believer.⁵⁵

One might argue whether his or her place in salvation history comes *naturally* or needs to be cultivated in the mind and heart of the believer. But nonetheless, Levering suggests that “Christian biblical exegesis, in accord with the Christian and biblical understanding of reality should envision history not only as a linear unfolding of individual moments, but also as an ongoing participation in God’s active providence.”⁵⁶ Although each moment follows the last in succession, the individual moments together constitute an organic web of interrelation. Levering states, “[O]nly participatory knowledge and love, which both ground the flow from the reading practices of the Church, can really attain the biblical realities.”⁵⁷ And he writes with conviction that the “intimate vertical presence of the Trinity’s creative and redemptive action suffuses the linear or horizontal succession of moments.”⁵⁸

Some scholars have been critical of Levering’s participatory biblical exegesis. Joel Green of Fuller Theological Seminary asserts that Levering’s proposal is not so much “a theology of biblical interpretation as it is a theology of ecclesially located biblical interpretation.”⁵⁹ For Green, “[T]he essential characteristic of scientific exegesis is its commitment to a quest for meaning at the point of generation of those texts and *sans* the predetermined outcomes of ecclesiastical

⁵³ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 6. It would be important to note the writing of Pope Benedict XVI regarding “The Limits of the Historical-Critical Method” in the introduction to *Jesus of Nazareth*.

⁵⁴ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 6.

⁵⁵ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 6.

⁵⁶ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 1.

⁵⁷ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 23.

⁵⁸ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 1.

⁵⁹ Joel B. Green, “Review of ‘Participatory Biblical Exegesis’ by Matthew Levering,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71 (2009), 408.

doctrine.”⁶⁰ Yet, Levering makes a significant contribution to the discussion of biblical scholarship and the historical-critical method by asking what history actually *is*.

To help better explain his perspective, Levering has developed principles for a participatory biblical exegesis. Building upon O’Collins and Kendall, the Princeton Scripture Project, and the *Catechism*, Levering proposes the following seven key words:

- *Theocentric*. The Triune God is the source and goal of biblical exegesis. The goal of reading Scripture is union with the living God.
- *Christological/Pneumatological*. The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit make possible a reading of the Old Testament as fulfilled rather than as negated by the New Testament and a reading of the New Testament as present in the Old Testament. In light of the missions of the Son and the Spirit, the spiritual sense of Scripture deepens believers’ self-understanding, understanding of the Church, and anticipation of the eschaton.
- *Ecclesial*. Without repudiating other contexts for reading Scripture, participation in the Israel of God (in the people God has assembled: *ekklesia*) is the context for biblical exegesis that seeks union with the realities that Scripture mediates. The church’s theology, catechesis, and evangelization are therefore not extrinsic to biblical exegesis.
- *Participatory- and linear-historical*. Time is both a series of moments (linear) and a participation in God (participatory). In God’s wisdom and love, the realities of the past are not isolated from present and future realities. Rather, time possesses an interior principle of unity that undergirds time as a series of moments. Historical-critical exegesis needs to be more fully historical.
- *Sapiential*. Scripture’s diversity does not prevent its being a unified wisdom. Even though the full appropriation of Scripture’s unity is an eschatological reality, this unity is already anticipated in the church’s communion.
- *Embodied*. The realities learned in biblical exegesis are lived out in our embodiment of supernatural wisdom and love in the world. The lives of the saints are most fully “exegesis.”
- *Humble*. A posture of charitable receptivity, hearkening to the insights of many voices, characterizes biblical exegesis. The role of the church’s teaching office, guided by the Holy Spirit, is to configure interpreters to receptivity rather than self-sufficiency.⁶¹

Perhaps the best way to explain it is that “in participatory biblical exegesis, the exegetical goal is contemplative union with the Creator God who redeems us and unites us to himself.”⁶² In the end, Levering promotes a Christian biblical exegesis that “under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in ecclesial communion, understands the fullness of Sacred Scriptures because it participates in

⁶⁰ Green, “Review of ‘Participatory Biblical Exegesis,’” 408.

⁶¹ Levering, “Principles of Exegesis: Toward a Participatory Biblical Exegesis,” 49–50.

⁶² Levering, “Principles of Exegesis: Toward a Participatory Biblical Exegesis,” 50.

the realities to which they refer—specifically the Christological plan of human salvation.”⁶³ Let us reflect now on a friendship hermeneutic.

4. *Revelation Is Related to Friendship*

God initiates and sustains a relationship with humanity in which the gift of knowledge of God and of God’s will for creation is continually revealed. *Dei Verbum* states the purpose of revelation is relational: “*in order* to invite and receive them into his own company.” God, “from the fullness of love,”⁶⁴ addresses humanity. His revelation to humanity is to enable humans to know and have fellowship with Himself. *Dei verbum* also indicates that not only the content, but the way of revelation is relational: God addresses humans *as his friends*. Divine revelation, in which God speaks with humans as with friends and dwells among them, is fully and personally realized in Jesus Christ. Friendship requires knowing the friend and this occurs through and in the revealing of oneself to the other. It is a “sacred knowing.”⁶⁵ “In Jesus Christ, God himself was made man and allowed us, so to speak, to cast a glance at the intimacy of God himself. And there we see something totally unexpected: in God, and ‘I’ and a ‘You’ exist. The mysterious God is not infinite loneliness, but an event of love.”⁶⁶ In *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event*, Matthew Levering explains, “Revelation transforms us and draws us into the Divine communion.” Therefore, it is not surprising that the notion of revelation as establishing and fostering a friendship with God is apparent in the second paragraph of *Dei Verbum*: “By this revelation, then the invisible God (see Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17), from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends (see Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14–15), and moves among them (see Bar 3:38), in order to invite and receive them into his own company.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Levering, “Principles of Exegesis: Toward a Participatory Biblical Exegesis,” 43.

⁶⁴ See *Ad Gentes*, §2: “This decree, however, flows from the ‘fount—like love’ or charity of God the Father who, being the ‘principle without principle’ from whom the Son is begotten and Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son, freely creating us on account of His surpassing and merciful kindness and graciously calling us moreover to share with Him His life and His cry, has generously poured out, and does not cease to pour out still, His divine goodness. Thus, He who created all things may at last be ‘all in all’ (1 Cor. 15:28), bringing about at one and the same time His own glory and our happiness. But it pleased God to call men to share His life, not just singly, apart from any mutual bond, but rather to mold them into a people in which His sons, once scattered abroad might be gathered together (cf. John 11:52).”

⁶⁵ Samuel Kimbriel, *Friendship as Sacred Knowing: Overcoming Isolation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *New Outpouring of the Spirit: Movements in the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007), 124.

⁶⁷ *Dei Verbum*, §2.

In a 2016 article, Kevin Lenehan⁶⁸ explores the analogy of friendship in describing Divine revelation, first in terms of the personalist and dialogical thinking that characterized the “majority” voice in the promulgation and reception of *Dei Verbum*, and second in the Thomistic themes of *caritas*, friendship, and revelation that could be heard in the “minority” voice at the Council. Revelation in *Dei Verbum* is presented in terms of a historical event of address and conversation, of personal and living contact between God and humanity. Lenehan explains, “Central to this renewed presentation of Divine revelation in interpersonal and historical categories is the use of the analogy of fellowship and dialogue between friends in describing the salvific interaction between the Divine Persons of the Triune God and the human person.”⁶⁹

Although Lenehan does a thorough job documenting the development of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, our focus is not so much *how* the text developed but *what* it states regarding revelation and the analogy of friendship. Lenehan’s point that *Dei Verbum* uses the analogy of friendship in describing the Divine-human communion brought about by God’s self-revelatory communication is helpful for our consideration of friendship as a lens through which to examine the New Testament. Lenehan begins:

[T]he line of argument in the first paragraphs of the Second Vatican Council’s *Dei verbum* begins with the kerygmatic announcement of (the letter) 1 John 1:2–3 (“We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so you may have fellowship with us, and that our fellowship may be with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”), and goes on to explain that this fellowship (*societas/koinonia*) is brought about by God’s revealing Himself and the mystery (*sacramentum*) of his will (with reference to the use of “mystery” in Eph 1:9). Thus, through the incarnation of Christ, God speaks with humans as friends (with references to Ex 33:11 and Jn 15:14–15) and lives among them (citing Bar 3:38), so as to invite and receive them into communion with himself (ad *societatum secum* as sharers in the Divine nature.⁷⁰

Meticulously detailing the development of *Dei Verbum*, Lenehan recalls the crucial moment in the drafting process when the analogy of friendship was considered. Archbishop Ermenegildo Florit, in his *relatio* presenting this *Textus emendatus* of the schema *On Divine Revelation* on September 30, 1964, with the newly drafted chapters 1 and 2 on the nature and transmission of revelation, outlined an approach to Divine revelation reformulated in the light of the theological *ressourcement* of recent decades. The new text described revelation in a way that is first, *Theocentric*, originating in the loving initiative of God in free relationship with humanity,

⁶⁸ Kevin Lenehan, “Revelation and the Analogy of Friendship in *Dei Verbum*,” *Pacifica* 29, no. 2 (June 2016): 175–91.

⁶⁹ Lenehan, “Unfolding in Friendship,” 181.

⁷⁰ Lenehan, “Unfolding in Friendship,” 176.

drawing people into the communion of the Trinity. Second, *Historical*, in the gradual outworking of that revelatory relationship in a unified, saving oikonomia. Third, *Sacramental*, in that this address of God (locutio Dei) is communicated to humans through the mutual enlightenment of words and deeds (verba et gestis) within that saving economy. Fourth, *Christological*, whereby the entire life and paschal mystery of Jesus Christ manifests and mediates the fullness of God's revelation in history, as the culmination of the covenants with biblical Israel. Fifth, *Interpersonal*, in that revelation is the event of God's self-communication in personal relationship with humankind, fully and definitively realized in the incarnation of the Word, inviting those who receive him in the response of faith into intimate communion in the Divine life, and therefore, *Salvific*, since this participation in the triune communion affects the sanctification and fulfilment of the human person. This salvation is the purpose of God's self-gift in loving covenant with humans, and of the inspired testimony to this revelatory self-communication in the written words of scripture.⁷¹ Lenehan explains that according to Baum,

In re-conceptualizing revelation as God's loving gift of self in a historically-enacted relationship with humanity, and in differentiating between this primary object of revelation and the secondary object that is the scriptural testimony to this revelatory encounter, the authors of the draft were proposing 'a new theological epistemology' and a new understanding of Christian truth.⁷²

What is significant to our study is that the concept of revelation is both interpersonal and salvific. These facets of Divine revelation are interrelated. God's self-communication invites men and women to intimate communion in the Divine life, and *therefore* it is salvific, *since* this participation in the Triune communion *affects* the sanctification and fulfilment of the human person. Salvation is *the purpose* of the inspired testimony of God's revelatory self-communication of love contained in Sacred Scripture. Revelation is relational. Salvation is the purpose of God's self-gift in the loving covenant with humans, and of the inspired testimony to this revelatory self-communication in the written words of scripture.

⁷¹ Ermenegildo Florit, "Relatio super Cap. I et Cap. II Schematis Constitutionis De Divina Revelatione," in Francisco Gil Hellín, *Dei verbum*. On these characteristics of revelation, see Baum, *Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation*, 58–59; Jared Wicks, "Dei verbum, Developing: Vatican II's Revelation Doctrine 1963–1964," ed. Daniel Kendall and Stephan Davis, *The Convergence of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 109–125; Gerald O' Collins, "Dei verbum and Revelation," ed. Mark O'Brien and Christopher Monaghan, *God's Word and the Church's Council: Vatican II and Divine Revelation* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2014) 1–8; Joseph Smith, "An Introduction to the Constitution of Divine Revelation," *Landas* 20 (2006): 78–134 at 82. Cited by Kevin Lenehan, "Unfolding in Friendship: Revelation and the Analogy of Friendship in Dei verbum," *Pacifica* 29 (2016), 176.

⁷² Gregory Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation: History and Interpretation," *Theological Studies* 28, no. 1 (February 1967): 59.

Lenehan provides the background documentation for this insight into Divine revelation as being interpersonal and therefore salvific. It is the paragraph proposed by Father Pieter Smulders⁷³ and introduced into the July 1964 *Textus emendatus*, which proceeded with little amendment to the final redaction of *Dei Verbum* paragraph 2. The analogy of friendship, of the sharing of life and conversation between friends, recalls many biblical and patristic texts and reframes God's revelatory action in personalistic and dialogical terms. It is possible to trace the development of this notion in the *textus emendatus*. According to Spanish Archbishop and theologian Francisco Gil Hellin,

The editorial notes to this paragraph in the *Textus emendatus* indicate Smulders's reasons for utilizing the motif of friendship⁷⁴ in describing Divine revelation. Emphasizing the character of revelation as an encounter mediated by language (*per verba*), the text describes the loving and gracious action of the invisible God who "speaks (*alloquitur*) with humans as friends and dwells (*conversatur*) with them" in order to draw them into the Divine communion (*societatem*). The reference to friendship between God and humans, according to the notes, carries allusions to the texts of the Old and New Testaments as well as patristic writings. The image of God dwelling among (*conversatur*) humans is drawn from the liturgical use of the text of Baruch 3:38 cited in *Dei verbum*.⁷⁵

Scholars and observers of the Second Vatican Council Max Thurian and Roger Schulz note, "The friendly character of revelation adds something to the personal and historic aspect already stressed. ... The object of revelation is essentially this friendly dialogue between God who invites and receives and man who hears the invitation and enters into living community with God."⁷⁶

The theme of Divine friendship with humanity has a long tradition reaching back to the earliest patristic writers. The topic of friendship with God appears in the writings of the early

⁷³According to Lenehan, Father Smulders consulted with sub-committee member Bishop Joseph Heuschen (Auxiliary, Liege) and with Louvain professors L. Cerfaux and A. Prignon in producing a text that drew together the main points. For a first-hand account of the drafting process, see Pieter Smulders, "Zum Werdegang des Konzilskapitels 'Die Offenbarung selbst'. *Dei verbum*, I," in *Glaube im Prozeß. Christsein nach dem II. Vatikanum* (FS Karl Rahner) (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), 99–120. For this *textus emendatus*, see Francisco Gil Hellín, ed., *Concilii Vaticani II synopsis in ordinem redigens schemata cum relationibus necnon patrum orationes atque animadversiones: Constitutio dogmatica de Divina Revelatione, Dei verbum* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), 12–45.

⁷⁴The 1964 *Textus emendatus* indicated that some Council fathers proposed the phrase "God speaks with humans as friends and sons" in *Dei Verbum* §2, but that the addition of "et filios" to the draft text was deemed to be unnecessary. The analogy of friendship was thought to be sufficient to bear the meaning of the goal of revelation, participation in the divine communion described by the allusions to Eph 2:18 and 1 Pt 1:4 in *Dei Verbum*, §2. See Gil Hellín, *Concilii Vaticani II synopsis in ordinem redigens schemata cum relationibus necnon patrum orationes atque animadversiones*, 18–20.

⁷⁵Hellín, *Concilii Vaticani II synopsis*, 18.

⁷⁶Max Thurian and Roger Schutz, *Revelation: A Protestant View* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1968), 14.

Church fathers, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine. However, it was Thomas Aquinas who most fully explored the topic of Divine and human friendship. Aquinas begins his reflection on charity by describing it as a form of friendship with God: “Since there is a *communicatio* between humans and God, inasmuch as God communicates his beatitude to us, some kind of friendship must be based upon this *communicatio*... . The love that is based upon this *communicatio* is charity. Hence it is clear that charity is a certain friendship [*amicital*] of the human person toward God.”⁷⁷

The influence of Thomistic thought is evident in *Dei Verbum* paragraph 2, which presents God’s self-disclosure as an act primarily intended to draw the human race into a new relationship of intimacy, of knowledge experienced as love.⁷⁸

In fact, as Lenehan notes, many of the themes in *Dei Verbum* paragraph 2 had been expressed in 1962 by a Council father who used scholastic rather than personalist resources. In his response to the original schema *De fontibus revelationis*, the recently elected Master General of the Order of Preachers, Aniceto Fernandez Alonzo,⁷⁹ drew on Thomas Aquinas to argue for a Christological and incarnational theology of revelation in the Council’s decree.⁸⁰ Aquinas famously employed the analogy of *conversatio* (the same word as used in DV 2!) between friends in his treatment of the supernatural virtue of *caritas* (ST II-II q. 23 a. 1). For Thomas, *caritas* is a love which has the characteristics of authentic friendship, and therefore Divine-human love can be referred to as a type of friendship.

The text of John 15:15 serves as the basis for Thomas Aquinas’ argument that *caritas* is a type of Divine-human friendship. Jesus’s words to his disciples express this interconnection of friendship with Him with knowing everything He has heard from His Father. Jesus’s friendship

⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica Complete in a Single Volume*, II-II q. 23, art. 1.

⁷⁸ Brian E. Daley, “Knowing God in History and in the Church: *Dei verbum* and *Nouvelle Theologie*,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 348.

⁷⁹ Fernandez strongly argued for the priority of doctrinal clarity and precision over an attempt to express the truths of the faith in the dominant linguistic or philosophical categories of the day in the hope of greater pastoral communication. When deciding between two formulae, one more pastoral in tone but less clear and exact, and the other clearer and more exact in expression but less pastoral, the Council should prefer the latter. See Francisco Gil Hellin, *Dei verbum: Concilii Vaticani II Synopsis* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), 333–338.

⁸⁰ See Hilari Ragner, “An Initial Profile of the Assembly” in Alberigo and Komonchack, *History of Vatican II*, vol. 2, 209–215. Elected Superior General on July 2, 1962, Fernandez was appointed by John XXIII to the Doctrinal Commission of the Council during the First Session of the Council.

with His disciples leads Him to reveal that which is most intimate, most precious to Him: His relationship with the Father.⁸¹ Commenting on this verse, Thomas writes,

For the true sign of friendship is that a friend reveals the secrets of his heart to his friend. Since friends have one mind and heart it does not seem that what one friend reveals to another is placed outside his own heart: “Argue your case with your neighbor” (Pr 25:9). Now God reveals his secrets to us by letting us share in his wisdom: “In every generation she (Wisdom) passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets (Wis.7:27).”⁸²

The implications of revelation and the analogy of friendship in *Dei Verbum* paragraph 2 are expressed both in terms of twentieth-century personalism as well as in terms of the Thomistic understanding of Divine love as a type of friendship. This understanding of revelation has been commented upon by theologians of the post-conciliar period, perhaps most notably by the theologian Joseph Ratzinger in his subsequent writings as Pope Benedict XVI.

In his 1967 book, *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger argues that the phenomenon of dialogue is proper to the nature of the Triune God, who is an interrelation of Divine Persons in a differentiated union. The category of *relation*, a real relation brought about by reciprocal sharing of life and conversation, is to be understood as constitutive of both human and Divine persons, not only as an accident of a pre-existing substantial form. Ratzinger explains, “It now becomes clear that the dialogue, the *relatio*, stands beside substance as an equally primordial ‘form of being.’ Thus, the human experience of God is of logos and *dia-logos*, both in God’s immanent personhood and in relation to human persons.”⁸³

Later, in *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI develops a theology of the Word of God personally present to and active in the Church, based on the phenomenon of revelatory dialogue. In writing on the subject of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church, the pope again takes up this theme of revelation and relationship, of dialogue and friendship. There is a development of the notion of Divine love revealed as and through relationship. In *Verbum Domini*,

⁸¹ Gerald O’Collins and Daniel Kendall, *The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1997), 61. On love as the motive and context of Jesus’s revelation of the Father in the Fourth Gospel, see Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study*.

⁸² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13-21*, trans. Fabian Larcher OP and James Weisheipl (Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 110. See also Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Charity as Friendship in St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 60–62. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, ed., *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 327.

⁸³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 131. The importance of the category of relation in Ratzinger’s early thought is well-expressed in his “Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology,” *Communio* 17 (1980): 439–454.

the Trinity is revealed as a mystery of infinite love through a dialogue of love between Father, Son, and Spirit.⁸⁴ *Verbum Domini* describes God as revealing Himself as a relationship between the Divine Persons who bid humanity to participate in that love. “God makes himself known to us as a mystery of infinite love in which the Father eternally utters his Word in the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the Word, who from the beginning is with God and is God, reveals himself in the dialogue of love between the Divine Persons, and invites us to share in that love.”⁸⁵

The power of Divine dialogic love elevates human persons to become partners with God in facilitating the unity in love between God and humanity. This unity of love between Christ and the Church is described in the most intimate of terms as a “nuptial mystery.” This intimacy invites the free response of every man and woman. The power of Divine love to transcend the separation of God and humanity is described as a bridge. More than a mere connection, the bridge created by Divine love facilitates human participation in the Divine mission. Divine love transcends time and space, and although the distinction between Divine and human beings remains, this bridge of love opens the possibility for every man and woman to participate in the Divine dialogue of Love. “By this gift of his love God bridges every distance and truly makes us his ‘partners,’ in order to bring about the nuptial mystery of the love between Christ and the Church. In this vision every man and woman appear as someone to whom the word speaks, challenges and calls to enter this dialogue of love through a free response.”⁸⁶

It is by this revelation of Divine love that we come not only to know God but to know ourselves. Divine love reveals the relational nature of God and of human persons. “Each of us is thus enabled by God to hear and respond to his word. We were created in the word, and we live in the word; we cannot understand ourselves unless we are open to this dialogue. The word of God discloses the filial and relational nature of human existence.”⁸⁷

Verbum Domini proclaims that the deepest longings of the human heart are satisfied in and through this Divine dialogue and participation in the Divine Word which is Love:

In this dialogue with God, we come to understand ourselves and we discover an answer to our heart’s deepest questions. The word of God in fact is not inimical to us; it does not stifle our authentic desires, but rather illuminates them, purifies them, and brings them to fulfillment. How

⁸⁴ *Verbum Domini*, §6.

⁸⁵ *Verbum Domini*, §6.

⁸⁶ *Verbum Domini*, §22.

⁸⁷ *Verbum Domini*, §22

important it is for our time to discover that God alone responds to the yearning present in the heart of every man and woman!⁸⁸

This is needed now more than ever as the division within man himself and between man and his neighbor are pulling persons, societies, and our world asunder. “In the present context it is more necessary than ever to rediscover the word of God as a source of reconciliation and peace, since in that word God is reconciling to himself all things (cf. 2 Cor 5:18–20; Eph 1:10).”⁸⁹

Verbum Domini pronounces that as a person comes to know God through Divine revelation, which is a gesture of friendship-love, he or she can best communicate who God is by way of a gesture of genuine love and friendship. The Word of God is to be translated into tangible actions indicative of compassion, accompaniment, loyalty, self-sacrifice, in a word—friendship. It is in this way that the Word of God is credible. “By listening to the testimonies offered during the Synod, we saw more clearly the bond between a love-filled hearing of God’s word and selfless service of our brothers and sisters; all believers should see the need to ‘translate the word that we have heard into gestures of love, because this is the only way to make the Gospel proclamation credible.’”⁹⁰

In citing Saint Augustine, *Verbum Domini* affirms that whoever “claims to have understood the Scriptures, or any part of them, without striving as a result to grow in this twofold love of God and neighbor, makes it clear that he has not yet understood them.”⁹¹ Revelation transforms us and draws us into the Divine communion and communion with humanity. Revelation is a gesture of and is a means of friendship which invites our participation.

Dei Verbum asserts that God’s revelation to humanity is to enable humans to know and have fellowship with God. It also indicates that not only the content, but the way of revelation is relational: God addresses humans *as His friends*. Divine revelation, in which God speaks with humans as with friends and dwells among them, is fully and personally realized in Jesus Christ. *Verbum Domini* develops the relational nature of revelation to include humanity’s participation not only in a relationship with God but also a participation in His revelation. In *Verbum Domini*, Benedict emphasizes that “God ... makes us his ‘partners’, in order to bring about the nuptial mystery of the love between Christ and the Church.”⁹² Believers are to “translate the word that we

⁸⁸ *Verbum Domini*, §23.

⁸⁹ *Verbum Domini*, §102.

⁹⁰ *Verbum Domini*, §103.

⁹¹ *Verbum Domini*, §103, quoting Saint Augustine *De Doctrina Christiana*, I, 35, 39–36, 40: PL 34, 34.

⁹² *Verbum Domini*, §22.

have heard into gestures of love, because this is the only way to make the Gospel proclamation credible.”⁹³

A concluding word on the analogy of friendship for revelation goes to Canadian Jesuit scholar René Latourelle, who remarks: “The word by which God somehow bridges the infinite distance, which separates him from man in order to meet him, can only be a word of friendship: it proceeds from love, develops in friendship, and pursues a work of love, that is, saving participation in the Divine communion.”⁹⁴

5. *The Trifold Hermeneutic of This Study: A Reading That Engages the Missional, Participatory, and Friendship-Orientated Nature of the New Testament*

For the early Christians, witness and proclamation were inseparable. The Apostles, who were transmitting the Gospel message in written or spoken word, were themselves participating in its message through their martyrdoms. They were not just telling the story of Jesus’s paschal mystery; they were participating in it. Their authentic witness to and embodiment of the Gospel even to the point of death was a powerful testimony to the veracity of the message. They show us that the effective transmission of the events of the life, the teaching, the working of miracles, the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus requires an embodiment of the message. In accord with this, missiologist Karl Müller writes,

Scriptural motives for mission need no longer be laboriously compiled from individual biblical references or precedents since the writing of the New Testament as such took shape as missionary witness. Scripture does not only inform our teaching about the possible perceptions of mission but witnesses to the on-going missionary proclamation as an event inseparable from the Gospel itself.⁹⁵

Here Müller is helping us remember how the New Testament was formulated. His point is that it is not necessary to “proof-text” missiology but rather to “prove the text” by living the message.

Theologian John Colwell in *Living the Christian Story* remarks,

The Gospel story defines the life of the Christian and the life of the Church, while the life of the Christ and the life of the Christian are correspondingly, a retelling and reinterpretation of that Gospel story. The world has no access to the Gospel story other than as it is narrated in the life, worship, and proclamation of the Church. . . . Through its service and being witness, the Church is a rendering of the Gospel to the world⁹⁶

⁹³ *Verbum Domini*, §103.

⁹⁴ René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York, NY: St. Paul Publications, 1966), 459–60.

⁹⁵ Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, 23.

⁹⁶ John Colwell, *Living the Christian Story: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2001), 85.

Colwell is echoing renowned missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, who said,

I have come to feel that the primary reality of which we have to take account in seeking for a Christian impact on public life is the Christian congregation. How is it possible that the Gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the Gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.⁹⁷

Both Colwell and Newbigin amplify the necessity of authentic witness as articulated by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”⁹⁸ The goodness, truth, beauty, and kenotic love of the Christian community are necessary for the world to understand the meaning of the Gospel.

Heidelberg missiologist Theo Sundermeier introduced the term *convivence*⁹⁹ into the discussions on practical missiology. As a way to address the paternalism and materialism of the model of mission as “church for others,” Sundermeier developed an approach that is based on mutuality and partnership. Sundermeier asserts that mission is about “living with others,” not about “helping” those who are considered needy, lesser, or in some way deficient. As a response to the patronizing, condescending approaches to mission and dialogue, Sundermeier advocates *living with others* is a more suitable approach as it affirms the inherent dignity of human persons. “The idea is first, to live together with others, second, to learn from others, and third, to celebrate together with others: *convivence* is described as a basic model of living, learning, and celebrating in *community*.”¹⁰⁰ *Convivence* is a way of living together in community not by fusing people together but by helping them live together, by sharing a common interest in humanity, by transcending the individuals’ own groups of family, friends, culture, and milieu.¹⁰¹ When observing a group of people living in a state of *convivence*, it should be difficult to determine who is the learner and who is the teacher, or who is foreign and who is indigenous, because all are learning and teaching in a spirit of unity and mutual respect. All are participating as friends in the

⁹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 27.

⁹⁸ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §41.

⁹⁹ This term was first explained in Theo Sundermeier, “Konvivienz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz heute,” in *Ökumenische Existenz heute*, ed. Wolfgang Huber, Dietrich Ritschl, and Theo Sundermeier (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1986), 1:49–100. The term also featured in an important statement on the theological position of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD): *Religionen, Religiosität und christlicher Glaube*, ed. VELKD and the Arnoldshainer Konferenz (Gutersloh, Germany: Gutersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1991).

¹⁰⁰ Wrogemann, *Theologies of Mission*, 336.

¹⁰¹ Wrogemann, *Theologies of Mission*, 336.

Divine mission in the gifting and reception of the Word, who is Christ. Mission and friendship are to be instantiated in the believing community. The New Testament was written to sustain and direct the missional life of the early Church and to foster Divine-human friendship, as well as friendship within the community.

C. Conclusion: A Trifold Hermeneutic for a Trinitarian Missiology

To read Sacred Scripture from the perspective of mission, friendship, and participation is to read it in the key in which it was composed. As evidenced by our exploration of *Dei Verbum* and *Verbum Domini*, the Church's interpretation of Sacred Scripture is missional, relational, and participatory. Theologians not only interpret Scripture through the trifocal lenses of mission, friendship and participation but also discover the full meaning of the text as they participate in the realities to which they refer, specifically the Trinitarian mission and friendship.

The words of the Psalmist beckon: “‘Come,’ my heart says, ‘seek his face!’ Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me” (Ps 27:8–9). To see the face of the other is to begin to know the person. If we are to see God's face, He has to take the initiative to reveal Himself to us. As we have seen, the word for revelation in the New Testament is *apo-kalypsis*, while Christ is the full unveiling of the face of God, the entire biblical narrative tells how God enters into human history to reveal himself as Love. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais observe, “In revealing himself, God therefore had to show both his reality and his love, without compromising the need for people to live in a new way, so as to be able to participate in Divine life and love.”¹⁰² Seeing God face to face, beholding Love Divine, which is the mission of the Son and of the Spirit, prompts our practice of virtue, which in turn facilitates our participation in the Divine mission. Let us consider Paul's words in his letter to the Church in Galatia:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” (Gal 4:4–6)

This text is key for our understanding of the Trinitarian missiology. Of special note is the language of Divine *sending*. God *sent* his Son and God *has sent* the Spirit of his Son. The Divine Father *sends* the Divine Persons of the Son and the Spirit of His Son. Levering and Dauphinais

¹⁰² Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, *The Wisdom of the Word: Biblical Answers to the Pressing Questions about Catholicism* (Park Ridge, IL: Word on Fire, 2021), 6.

explain the centrality of this text for understanding the purpose of the Divine missions. Not only does this text reveal the reason for the sending by the Father of the Son and the Spirit, but that reason reveals the destiny of the human person. “These two sendings, or missions, anchor the whole of our reality, allowing us to enter into a new relationship with God.”¹⁰³ For Christians, their personal and communal relationships with God, with one another, and with all of the cosmos depend on their increasing familiarity with the Word of God.¹⁰⁴

In the New Testament, Jesus’s followers experience His friendship and participate in the Divine mission through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ invites His friends not just to understand and proclaim this mission but to participate in the mission in the Spirit, giving glory to the Father. Christians express their friendship with the Divine Persons by participating in and continuing the Divine mission. Christian continuation of the Divine mission is directed toward deepening the friendship between God and humanity and the friendship among humanity and with creation. In this way, the Church is the sacrament of the Divine mission and Divine friendship.

Having reflected upon mission and friendship as appropriate interpretive lenses for Sacred Scripture and the participatory nature of exegesis, we are ready to proceed to the study of the texts themselves. We are mindful that the character of revelation touches men and women in their totality, not only addressing their reason but also, as dialogue, addressing them as partners, seeking to engage them as friends who participate in the Divine mission.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Dauphinais and Levering, *Wisdom of the Word*, 19.

¹⁰⁴ *Verbum Domini*, §124.

¹⁰⁵ See Joseph Ratzinger, “Revelation Itself,” in *Vorgrimler Commentary*, vol. 3 (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1968), 170–72.

PART TWO: A THEOLOGY OF MISSION AS PARTICIPATION IN FRIENDSHIP IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

CHAPTER IV: READING THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IN LIGHT OF MISSION, FRIENDSHIP, AND PARTICIPATION: INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

A. **Literary Analysis and Conceptual Field Approach in a Hermeneutic of Continuity**

In the previous chapter, interpretive lenses were discussed: missional, friendship-oriented, and participatory. In the following chapters, we will conduct a close examination of the Gospel of John and the terminology related to a theology of mission as participation in friendship. It is now necessary to explain further the methodology of the study of mission, friendship, and participation in the Gospel of John. It must be stated that there are other valid hermeneutic methods. The methodology utilized in this chapter is certainly not the only possible approach. The methodology employed in this study fosters the theological interpretation of the biblical concepts of mission, friendship, and participation. The following paragraphs describe the methodology for examining the biblical terms related to the thesis includes both the literary analysis and a conceptual field approach. Additionally, attention is given in this project to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, so that the meaning of the sacred texts regarding a theology of mission as participation in friendship is properly understood in relation to the whole of Divine revelation. This will ensure the biblical theology of our topic will reflect a hermeneutic of continuity with the Church's interpretation.

The theme of mission in the Gospel of John has not received the attention of many scholars.¹ Perhaps as Johannes Nissen suggests, the omission is due to the ambiguity regarding for

¹ Few monographs have been devoted to this question in John: cf. J. Kuhl, *Die Sendung Jesu und Der Kirche nach dem Johannes-Evangelium* (St. Augustin: Steyler, 1967) and the popular work of J. Comblin, *Sent from the Father* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979). A few articles have been devoted exclusively to the topic: see the pertinent chapter in F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (Naperville: Allenson, 1965), pp. 152-63; J. McPolin, "Mission in the Fourth Gospel," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 36 (1969): 113-22; J. Radermakers, "Mission et apostolat dans l'Évangile johannique," *Studio Evangelica*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der alchristlichen Literature 87, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 2:100-21. Michael Gorman, *Abide and Go Missional Theosis in John*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Book, 2018), and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). Also refer to Chapter 3 the Literary Review in this document.

whom and for what purpose the Gospel was written.² The problem arises from a textual variant in the Greek of John 20:31. Some manuscripts are read in the present subjunctive (“that you may go on believing”) and others read in the aorist subjunctive (“that you may begin to believe”). The relation of the tenses to the audience and the purpose of the Gospel of John is complex.³ This scholarly debate actually serves to reinforce the idea that mission in John’s Gospel is both sending (the outward movement of proclamation) and gathering (the inward movement of a deepening of relationship).

Johannine mission is dual in character. It is both sending and gathering.⁴ Both aspects are held together by the concept of love: God’s love draws humanity in and the love of God urges believers to go forth. The exploration of Johannine missiology in the subsequent chapters will illuminate how mission in John is both centripetal and centrifugal: “going” and “abiding”⁵ in the dynamism of Trinitarian love. Mission is a central concept in the Gospel of John, because it is an essential part of expression of the Divine love and friendship that dominate the Gospel.⁶

In the New Testament, the Greek verbs ἀποστέλλω (*apostello*), which occurs 135 times, and πέμπω (*pempo*), which occurs 80 times, are used to designate the action of sending. But the concept of mission is more than simply the words “to send” or “to go.” Mission in the Gospel of John is understood as carrying out the saving work on behalf of the sender. Mission is not limited to “the going” of the one sent but includes what the sent one is to accomplish. In other words, for what purpose was one sent and how will the sent one carry out the will of the sender? To study mission in the New Testament, it is necessary to study not only the words related to sending but also words and phrases related to the concept of mission. This methodology is known as a conceptual field approach. In the Gospel of John, the concept of mission is related to the will of the sender, the identity of the one sent, participation, salvation, the cosmos, obedience: bearing fruit, eternal life, and most especially love.

The conceptual field survey is also useful for the study of friendship in the Gospel of John. Examining the verb φιλέω and its cognates is only the beginning of understanding friendship in

² Johannes Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt am Main; New York: P. Lang, 1999), 85.

³ See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., The Anchor Bible, (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966–1970), xvii-xxx; Rensberger, *Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John* (London: SPCK, 1989), 153.

⁴ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 75.

⁵ See Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*.

⁶ See Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 311.

the Gospel of John. New Testament texts adopted and adapted Greco-Roman and Jewish concepts and traditions of friendship. In those traditions, friendship included the concepts of mutuality, frankness of speech, sharing resources, participating in life together, loyalty, and self-sacrifice for the good of the friend. Friendship is a form of love; therefore, a conceptual field examination of φιλέω in the Gospel of John requires the examination of the distinct but related word ἀγαπῶ.

The methodology for interpreting the Gospel of John relies upon a conceptual field approach that “recognizes that words with similar meanings sustain a relationship with one another as part of a semantic field.”⁷ A biblical concept such as mission or friendship may be best accessed by the study of the various terms, phrases, ideas comprising such a semantic domain, rather than reducing the concept to a single word. In this study, to avoid a reduction of mission to simply the strict literal vocabulary of “to be sent” or “to go” and their cognates, I examined the *words* associated with mission as well as the *concepts* associated with mission. To truly grasp a New Testament understanding of mission, friendship, and participation it is necessary to expand those words to concepts.

And yet, we must start with the words for mission and friendship themselves, inquiring what the precise words are in the Greek text. Several questions are to be considered in the exegesis of those terms as they are employed in the Gospel of John, among them: What is the meaning of the word in the culture of the Gospel writer? What could it mean to the original intended audience? What is the meaning of the word in the historical and cultural context in which it is used in the specific pericope? How does the Gospel writer use this word throughout the Gospel? How is the word or phrase employed in the Old Testament? Are there other words in the lexical field that can help define the concept? Over the past two millennia, how has the Church interpreted the text in which the word occurs?

There is considerable scholarly debate about use of synonyms by the author of the Gospel of John. This debate over synonyms impacts this project because our study hinges on two pairs of synonymous verbs in the Gospel of John: the verbs for sending, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, and the verbs for loving, φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ. After extensive study of the texts themselves, I concur with

⁷ Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*, 17.

numerous scholars, including Frans Neiryck,⁸ Gilbert Van Belle,⁹ and Thomas Popp,¹⁰ who assert that the key to interpreting the Gospel of John is found in the evangelist's use of repetition, variation, and amplification. I demonstrate that in several instances the author of the Gospel of John chooses ἀποστέλλω or πέμπω and φιλέω or ἀγαπῶ to make a theological point. This linguistic matter will be addressed in subsequent sections on mission and friendship.

B. Authorship, Audience, and Circumstances of Composition

It is necessary to address several preliminary questions regarding the Gospel of John, which include authorship, audience, and circumstances of composition. Each of these topics is a matter of scholarly research on their own, but here we will briefly address them in the broadest terms, attending to the general scholarly consensus. Although there has been much speculation about the various stages of the composition and editing of the Gospel,¹¹ we shall accept the text as it stands, aware of the variety of influences that may have shaped the final product but considering the final product as the fullest expression of Johannine theology.

1. Regarding the Johannine Literature

Several documents in the New Testament have been traditionally regarded as having been written by the apostle John. This *Johannine literature* consists of the Gospel of John, the three Johannine Letters, and the Book of Revelation, which is an apocalyptic eschatology. Only in the Book of Revelation does the author identify himself as “John” (see Rv 1:1, 4; 9; 22:8).

The Johannine literature appears to have been written near the end of the first century. The Book of Revelation is generally associated with the persecutions of the Roman emperor Domitian (81–96 AD). The Gospel and Letters of John share similarities of vocabulary and parallel ideas. Although the Letters do not tell the story of Jesus, they presuppose it. Raymond Brown explains that it is the unique understanding of God, Jesus, the Spirit, and the Christian life found in the Gospel that has generated many of the challenges the author of the Johannine letters seeks to

⁸ Frans Neiryck, “Evangelica,” *Evangelica Gospel Studies (études évangile)*, Collected Essays (1991).

⁹ Gilbert van Belle, Michael Labahn, and P. Maritz, ed., *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 223 (Leuven ; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2009).

¹⁰ Thomas Popp, *Grammatik des Geistes: Literarische Kunst und theologische Konzeption in Johannes 3 und 6* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001). (In German the tradition to start words in the title with capitals does not exist!!)

¹¹ See Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979).

address¹². Most scholars propose that the Gospel of John responds to a breakdown in the relationship between the Johannine community and the members of the synagogue. The Letters, written in light of the Gospel, seem to address the tensions within the Johannine community.¹³ Both the author of the Letters and those he is accusing of failing to live up to the Christian ideal appear to be looking back to the Gospel of John for Christological and missiological inspiration.¹⁴ Based on this internal evidence, it would seem that the Gospel was written before the Letters. The Gospel of John and the Letters of John seem to have a similar origin in what most scholars understand as the Johannine community.¹⁵

2. *Authorship*

There is internal evidence pointing to the identity of the author of John. The Gospel of John contains an approximation of a statement of authorship in John 21:24. The author claims to be a direct eyewitness, “ὁ μαθητῆς ὁμαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων,” who testifies with integrity. In John 21:20 the author is identified as the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” “ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς,” (Jn 13:23–35; 19:26–27; 20:1–10; 21:7; 21:20). The claim of the testimony of an eyewitness occurs twice in the Gospel (21:24 and 19:35). These affirmations of truth are linked to the “Beloved Disciple” who leaned on Jesus’s breast at the Last Supper (13:23), was present at the foot of the Cross (19:25–27) and saw and believed when he found Jesus’s shroud of death empty and folded in the tomb (20:3–10). John 21:24 claims that this character, “ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς,” in the narrative is the author of the Gospel.

In addition, there is external evidence pointing to the identity of the author of John. Scholarly opinions vary about the identity of “ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς,” also known as the Beloved Disciple. In the second century, Irenaeus,¹⁶ the Bishop of Lyon (c. 180–200 AD), in quoting Polycarp, attributed the Gospel of John to the Beloved Disciple, whom he identified as John the son of Zebedee. Some scholars believe Irenaeus may have been depending on even earlier traditions.¹⁷ Irenaeus was trying to authenticate the Gospel by connecting it with the first-hand

¹² Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 97–103.

¹³ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966), 46–115.

¹⁴ Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 74–86.

¹⁵ Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 74–86.

¹⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1 The oldest traditions state the apostle John spent his later years in Ephesus ministering to the churches of Asia Minor. Papias was from Asia Minor and appears to have known John the elder personally. Irenaeus says John wrote his Gospel while at Ephesus (A.H. 3.1.1) and remained there until the time of emperor Trajan (r. 98–117) (A.H. 3.3.4).

¹⁷ See Martin Hengel, *Die Johanneische Frage*, (Tubingen: J.C. B. Mohr, 1993), 13–15.

witness of John the son of Zebedee, in an effort to rescue the Gospel from the Gnostics of the second century. It is not possible to know with certainty if Irenaeus's assertion is correct that the Beloved Disciple and John the son of Zebedee are one and the same and the author of the Gospel of John. The majority of scholars today believe there is not sufficient internal or external evidence to substantiate Irenaeus' claim, but that alone does not mean Irenaeus was wrong.

What is certain is that the author of the Gospel of John and the Letters of John displays not simply knowledge of Jesus but a genuine intimacy with him. N. T. Wright offers a highly significant insight regarding authorship and friendship, stating that the Gospel of John "gives the appearance of being written by someone who was a very close friend of Jesus, and who spent the rest of his life mulling over more and more deeply, what Jesus had done and said and achieved, praying it through from every angle, and helping others to understand it."¹⁸

In a homily on the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, John Chrysostom rests his case on the reliability of the gospel on the author's friendship with Jesus. He states that no longer is the evangelist a mere fisherman but has become a friend of the subject of his writing. The veracity of the gospel, Chrysostom asserts, resides in the fact that the person attributed with writing it is a friend of Jesus. In Chrysostom's words, "And all this will this man tell us exactly, as he is a friend of the King Himself."¹⁹

It is St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* who makes the strongest case that the Gospel of John is to be especially relied upon because of the friendship between the Beloved Disciple and Christ.

[A]mong the other disciples of the Lord, John was more loved by Christ And because secrets are revealed to friends ... Jesus confided his secrets in a special way to that disciple who was specially loved. Thus, it says in Job (36:32): 'From the savage' that is, the proud, 'he hides his light,' this is, Christ hides the truth of his divinity, 'and shows his friend,' that is, John, 'that it belongs to him.'²⁰

Although I acknowledge that there are many problems regarding Johannine authorship which still remain unsolved, I will refer to the Fourth Gospel as the Gospel of John and to the

¹⁸ N. T. Wright, *For Everyone Study Guide: John* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2009), 7.

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homily 1 on John, trans. W.R.W. Stephens. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, vol. 9. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christina Literature Publishing Co., 1889), Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-5*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher and James A. Weisheipl, Thomas Aquinas in Translation (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010) prologue, n 11.

author²¹ as John. I stand with N. T. Wright Thomas Aquinas, and John Chrysostom in believing the author of the Gospel of John was an intimate friend of Jesus. By composing the Gospel of John, the author was expressing his fond relationship with Jesus. Penning the Gospel was an act of friendship. In writing the Gospel, the author was also continuing Jesus's mission as the Logos. The author of the Gospel of John himself embodies a theology of mission as participation in friendship.

3. *The Johannine Community*

The *Johannine community* is the name that scholars have given to those Christians in the latter half of the first century for whom the Gospel and Letters of John were written. Recent scholarship contends that the Johannine community was in dialogue or contention with a wide spectrum of groups and ideologies in the first century.²² These scholars, influenced by the theories of Raymond Brown, propose that John's Gospel is more than the product of a succession of encounters with other groups and viewpoints that influenced John's theology; in its finished form, it may represent an attempt to communicate with a variety of dialogue partners.²³

Brown has suggested that the Johannine community went through a series of stages as it developed its own unique Christology and community identity.²⁴ The community would have originated in Palestine with a group of Jews (including some followers of John the Baptist) who came to accept Jesus as the Son of God. Texts such as John 7:35; 11:52; and 12:20–22 suggest that at some point in its evolving history the Johannine community experienced a significant shift in membership from a purely Jewish and Palestinian composition to that of a mixed membership, including Hellenistic Jews, Samaritans, and ultimately Gentiles. Together, these additions to the community became a catalyst for developing its Christology.²⁵

However, not all scholars agree with Brown's hypothesis of the Johannine community, and with good reason. Martin Hengel observes that the reconstructions of the life setting of a Johannine community must remain highly speculative, especially since there is neither evidence for its existence in the Church fathers nor extant documents of the community itself, as is the case

²¹ "Author" may refer to the person or authority most influential in shaping the Johannine literature.

²² Brown provides a convenient review of recent studies in this line in his own analysis of the ethos of the Johannine community: cf. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), appendix 1.

²³ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 280.

²⁴ See Raymond Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*.

²⁵ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 281.

for the Qumran community.²⁶ For much of the twentieth century, scholars interpreted the Gospel of John within the paradigm of a hypothetical Johannine community,²⁷ assuming that the gospel sprang from a late first-century Christian community that was excommunicated from the Jewish synagogue²⁸ for its belief in Jesus as the promised Jewish messiah.²⁹ This interpretation, which saw the community as essentially sectarian and standing outside the mainstream of early Christianity, has been increasingly challenged in the first decades of the twenty-first century.³⁰ There continues to be considerable debate over the social, religious, and historical context of the Gospel of John and the role of a Johannine community in its formation.

New Testament scholar Teresa Okure notes that “overtly missionary passages” in John (3:16; 4:31–38; 17:20; and chapter 21) have been attributed by some scholars to the “final redactional layers”³¹ intended to address the needs of the Johannine community. However, it is difficult to discern the redactional history of the Gospel and speculate how it reflects the reconstructed history of the reconstructed Johannine community. It is preferable to examine the Gospel as a whole, in its final form. Michael Gorman explains,

This approach is significant both methodologically and materially when it comes to the subject of mission. If one considers the Gospel’s structure primarily as the product of redactional activity, one may conclude that the various contributors to the task of Gospel writing represented differing approaches to mission based on the historical circumstances of the redactors and the Johannine community over time. An approach that looks at the Gospel as a whole and takes into account the missional focus of this final form is possible.³²

As Andrew Byers writes, this sort of approach “focuses not on the community that *produced* John’s Gospel, but on the sort of community John’s Gospel *seeks to produce*.”³³ This is

²⁶ See Johannine community hypothesis by Martin Hengel *Die johanneische Frage: Ein Lösungsversuch*. Wissenschaftliche. Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 67. Tübingen. Germany: J. C. B. Mohr (1993) and Andreas J. Köstenberger who references Hengel in “The Challenge of a Systematized Biblical Theology of Mission: Missiological Insights from the Gospel of John” *Missiology: An International Review* vol XXIII, No 4, October 1995, 448.

²⁷ David A Lamb, *Text, Context and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 2.

²⁸ Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 70.

²⁹ Andreas Köstenberger, “Destruction of the Temple and the Composition of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. John Lierman (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 72.

³⁰ Lamb, *Text, Context, and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings*, 2.

³¹ Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 31 (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), 34.

³² Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 39.

³³ Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph 167 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

to focus not solely on the world *behind* the text, and not merely on the world *within* the text, but on the world *in front* of the text. It involves awareness of how the disciples' lived experience of the Son of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit formed the early Christian community, how that experience was expressed orally, and then through the written texts, how the present-day Church experiences the Triune God revealed in His Word. It is an approach of holding past, present, and future together in one's mind simultaneously.

Matthew Levering explains,

While the Bible should be studied in its original ancient context...[t]hese original contexts never stand on their own. While temporal reality is a linear unfolding of moments, it is so precisely as participating in the Triune God....This is because the intimate vertical presence of the Trinity's redemptive action suffuses the linear or horizontal succession of moments.³⁴

Sacred Scripture is a script that invites us who live in the present moment to participate in ancient texts that reveal the eternal. In this way, the salvation history that is revealed in the Bible continues in the life of the Church. This interpretation is consistent with Andrew Byers who suggests that the study of the "Johannine community" focus "not on the community that *produced* John's Gospel, but on the sort of community John's Gospel *seeks to produce*."³⁵ The following chapters seek to demonstrate that the text of the Gospel of John continues to seek to produce in the life of the Church a loving community that participates in the saving mission of God.

C. Johannine Christology

The Christological focus of the Fourth Gospel is the key to understanding its theology of mission, as it is for every other aspect of John's message. At the core of John's Christology is the affirmation that the Son is sent to reveal the living God (1:18).³⁶ As Michael Waldstein attests, "Mission is frequently used to express Jesus's identity as 'the one whom the Father (or God) sent'³⁷ and, correlatively, to express the Father's identity as 'the Father who sent me' or, even more densely, 'the one who sent me.'"³⁸

³⁴ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation*, 1.

³⁵ Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph 167 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

³⁶ Senior and StuhlmueLLer, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 283. See also the study of J. T. Forestell, *Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, *Analecta Biblica* 57 (Rome, Italy: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 17–57. and H. Schneider, "The Gospel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969): 344–56.

³⁷ Always in the mouth of Jesus as a relative clause with *apostello* as a finite verb: 3:34; 5:38; 6:29; 10:36; 17:3.

³⁸ Always in the mouth of Jesus with *pempo* in a participle phrase: 4:34; 5:23; 5:24; 5:30; 5:37; 6:38; 6:39; 6:44; 7:16; 7:18; 7:28; 7:33; 8:16; 8:18; 8:29; 9:4; 12:44; 12:45; 12:29; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5.

The Gospel of John is first and foremost a testimony to Jesus who “is the Christ, the Son of God” (Jn 20:31). According to E. Haenchen, Christology is the main focus in John, and the key understanding in Johannine Christology is the refrain “the Father who sent me.”³⁹ Vincent Taylor contends “that Jesus ‘came’ and was ‘sent’ into this world is the pivot on which all his doctrinal purposes turn.”⁴⁰

One of the primary ways in which the relation between Jesus and the Father is described in the Gospel of John is in terms of the Father as the “Sender” and the Son as the one “Sent.” In the Gospel, Jesus is referred to as being the one sent by the Father at least thirty-three times.⁴¹ The metaphor of the “sent son” would have been well understood in its original Jewish setting. A father, when wanting to ensure the faithful execution of a commission, would send not a slave or other messenger but his son, especially his firstborn, oldest son (Mk 12:1–11, especially v. 6).⁴² The gospel’s original audience would have understood those sent with a commission were authorized representatives of those who sent them.⁴³ The manner in which those to whom the representative was sent treated this ambassador or herald reflected their attitude toward the sender.⁴⁴

The sender is encountered through the medium of the agent. In John 12:45, Jesus says, “Whoever beholds me beholds my Father.” And again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life” (5:24). Throughout the Gospel, John stresses belief in the Son as the means for achieving eternal life (3:15), one of many such texts and the only access to intimate fellowship with Father and Son (17:20–21). As Guardini has remarked, “[T]he Father is utterly remote; concealed to all but himself. His revelation is the Son, the living word.”⁴⁵ This is apparent in John 14:9: “He who sees me sees also the Father.”

³⁹ Ernst Haenchen, “Der Vater, der mich gesandt hat,” *New Testament Studies* 9, no. 3 (1963): 210.

⁴⁰ Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1966): 102.

⁴¹ For passages where Jesus is the agent of the Father see: John 3:17; 3:34; 4:34; 5:23–24; 5:30; 5:36–38; 6:29; 6:38–39; 6:44; 6:57; 7:16; 7:28–29; 7:33; 8:16; 8:18; 8:26; 8:29; 8:42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44–45; 12:49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3; 17:8; 17:18; 17:21; 17:23; 17:25; 20:21.

⁴² Anthony E. Harvey, “Christ as Agent,” in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1987), 239–50.; Helen S. Friend, “Like Father, Like Son: A Discussion of the Concept of Agency in Halakah and John,” *Ashland Theological Journal* 21 (1990): 18–28.

⁴³ On agents being backed by the sender’s authority, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus 6.88.2; Diodorus Siculus 40.1.1; Josephus, *Life of Flavius Josephus* 65, 72–73, 196–198; 2 Macc. 1:20.

⁴⁴ See Diodorus Siculus 4.10.3–4; Josephus Ant. 8.220–21; also, Craig S. Keener, “Sent Like Jesus: Johannine Missiology (John 20:21–22),” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 21, no. 1 (2009): 313–14.

⁴⁵ Romano Guardini, *The Lord* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1954), 141.

According to Rudolf Schnackenburg, the emphasis in the Gospel of John is not on the Messiahship of Jesus but rather on his Sonship. Schnackenburg writes,

The Son of God title implies the full profession of faith, proclaiming the messiahship of Jesus in a sense which surpasses all Jewish expectations, the unique dignity of the Incarnate Logos as the “only-begotten of the Father” (1:14), the mystery of Jesus as “the Son” absolutely, a mystery grasped by faith (Jn. 1:3; 3:8; 3:23; 4:9; 4:15; 5:5; 5:13; 5:20). What is involved therefore is the foundation and justification of the primordial confession of faith in Christ by the early Church.⁴⁶

To say *son* is to say *father*, for sonship exists only in relation to one who is father. Jesus as the Son of God is presented, in the Fourth Gospel, in the context of His relationship to His Father. In his essay *Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology*, Joseph Ratzinger includes a reference to the Christology in John’s Gospel, which serves to further explain the theological and specifically the ontological significance of the Son of God being sent from the Father:

John picks up the theology of mission found in the Synoptics and in the Judaism of antiquity in which the idea is already formulated that the emissary, inasmuch as he is an emissary, is not important in himself, but stands for the sender and is one with the sender. John extends this Jewish idea of mission, which is at first a merely functional idea, by depicting Christ as the emissary who is in his entire nature “the one sent.” The Jewish principle, “The emissary of a person is like that person” now takes on a completely new and deepened significance, because Jesus has absolutely nothing besides being the emissary, but is in his nature “the one sent.” He is like the one who sent him precisely because he stands in complete relativity of existence toward the one who sent him. The content of the Johannine concept “the one sent” could be described as the absorption of being in “being from someone and toward someone.” The content of Jesus’s existence is “being from someone and toward someone,” the absolute openness of existence without any reservation of what is merely and properly one’s own. And again, the idea is extended to Christian existence of which it is said, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (20:21).⁴⁷

Ratzinger further explains,

John picks up a schema of theological thought that was extremely widespread in the Greek and Jewish world....However, there was a new element he introduced into the concept of the Logos.... [T]he point is that a word is essentially from someone else and toward someone else; word is existence that is completely path and openness. Some texts express this idea differently and clarify it, for instance when Christ says: “My teaching is *not* my teaching” (Jn 7:16). Augustine offers a marvelous commentary on this text by asking: Is this not a contradiction? It is either my teaching or not. He finds an answer in the statement, Christ’s doctrine is he himself, and he himself is not his own, because his “I” exists entirely from the “you.” He goes on to say, “*Quid tam tuum quam tu, quid tam non tuum quam tu*—what belongs to you as much as your ‘I,’ and what belongs to you as little as your ‘I?’” Your “I” is on the one hand what is most your own and at the same time what

⁴⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1980), 154. According to Schnackenburg, the assertion that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, “provides the key to understanding John’s doctrine of salvation, realized eschatology, sacramental theology, mysticism, ethics, ecclesiology, and missiology.” (154-164).

⁴⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, “Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology,” *Communio* 17 (1990): 446.

you have least of yourself; it is most of all not your own, because it is only from the “you” that it can exist as an “I” in the first place. Let us summarize: in God there are three persons which implies, according to the interpretation offered by theology, that persons are relations, pure relatedness. Although, this is in the first place only a statement about the Trinity, it is at the same time the fundamental statement about what is at stake in the concept of person. It opens the concept of person into the human spirit and provides its foundation and origin.⁴⁸

According to Ratzinger, in the Son, the one sent, is found the full revelation of Divinity and humanity. The deepest truth about God and the human person is revealed in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.⁴⁹ This is perhaps why the mature faith of the disciples consists in knowledge of this singular thing, “that *you* sent me”: “They have truly come to know that I have gone out from you, and they have believed that you sent me” (17:8). “They have come to know that you sent me” (17:25). In reaching this faith, the disciples have understood the true significance of Jesus’s works: “for the works which the Father gave me to complete, these works which I do testify that the Father has sent me” (5:36). Thus, the last and most significant sign, the raising of Lazarus, has as its particular purpose “that they may believe that *you* sent me” (11:42), a message that Jesus restates with emphasis, “Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but in *the one who sent me*” (12:44).⁵⁰

The Gospel of John’s presentation of the relationship of the Father and the Son, although expressing those Persons’ ontological unity, also reveals their collaboration in the accomplishment of a mission. The Gospel of John is a “Christologically focused text which views the Father through the lens of what the Evangelist believed about the Son.”⁵¹ Ben Witherington provides a brilliant and succinct synthesis of Johannine Christology in his article “The Trinity in the Johannine Literature.” His insights into the interrelations between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit in John are particularly germane to our study. Witherington writes,

“The clear, almost umbilical connection between the Son and the Father is delineated already in Jn 1:14–18 where Jesus is called ‘monogenes’ or the only natural son of the Father, in contrast to believers who can become adopted sons and daughters of God by means of being ‘born again’ spiritually.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, “Concerning the Notion of Person,” 446–447.

⁴⁹ *Dei Verbum*, §2.

⁵⁰ See Michael Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John” *Communio*, 17, (1990): 311-33.

⁵¹ Ben Witherington, “The Trinity in Johannine Literature,” in *The Oxford Handbook on the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69.

⁵² Witherington, “The Trinity in Johannine Literature,” 70.

In John, Jesus alone calls God τὸν πατέρα μου (“my Father”) almost 30 times; Jesus refers to God as ὁ πατήρ (“the Father”) 85 times and “Father” or “holy Father” an additional eight times. In John 10:30, the Son is said to be “one” with the Father: ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἓν ἐσμεν. Witherington explains that this is “not to be taken to mean that the Son and the Father are the same person, because the two can be distinguished: the Son alone becomes incarnate, dies on the cross, and rises again.”⁵³

Witherington also describes the Christology of John regarding the Divine will and the human will of Christ:

It has often rightly been noted as striking that the Son is portrayed as God’s agent or apostle on earth, who will not act without Divine approval and authorization, and this dependency of will on the Father is a manifestation of the fact that “he who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9), by which is meant the Son shares the same character and nature with the Father and agrees with the will of the Father. Their relationship is characterized as mutual abiding. They are not merely in agreement; they have a unity of character and purpose as well. The same Evangelist who stresses that in order to know who Jesus is, one must know where he has come from (namely from heaven as the Divine Logos), is the Evangelist who places strong stress on the humanness of Jesus, who gets thirsty and tired (Jn 4), or angry (Jn 11), and who manifests a sort of dependency on the Father that can provide a paradigm for his disciples to follow. There is a balance in the portrayal of Jesus as human and yet clearly more than mortal. . . . The Incarnation is very real: Jesus does not merely appear to be human or pantomime human behavior but really tabernacles with humankind in the flesh.⁵⁴

Witherington provides the insight that the Christology in John is rooted in the Jewish Wisdom tradition. Wisdom motifs are especially crucial for appreciating John’s thought.⁵⁵ He states, “The portrait of the Logos in Jn 1 is in fact borrowed from the portrait of God’s Wisdom in Prov 3:8–9, Sirach, and Wisdom of Solomon and applied to the Son. In Ws 7:22 it was Wisdom that was said to be ‘monogenes’. The personification has become a person in this reading of the Wisdom tradition.”⁵⁶

In prophetic texts such as Isaiah 55:10–11, the dynamism of God’s Word is spoken of in personified terms. Wisdom as the manifestation of God’s presence to the world shapes the pattern of creation (Ws 9:1–2, 9; Prv 8:22–31), comes to dwell in the world (Ws 9:10; 18:14–15; Sir 24:8–12), meets acceptance or rejection (Sir 24:19–22; Prv 8:32–36). According to Donald Senior,

⁵³ Witherington, “The Trinity in Johannine Literature,” 70.

⁵⁴ Witherington, “The Trinity in Johannine Literature,” 70.

⁵⁵ See the discussion in R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, lix–lxiv, See also D. Senior, *Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 284.

⁵⁶ Witherington, “The Trinity in Johannine Literature,” 70.

John boldly identifies Jesus as the revealing Word of God, as Wisdom incarnate. This Logos preexists with God and then fully embraces a human history, becomes 'flesh'. In Jesus Christ, the Word-made-flesh, the believer encounters the glory of God and thus achieves the ultimate destiny of God's creation, eternal life. Thus, right from the start the Johannine canvas is cosmic and universal in proportion.⁵⁷

Sharon Ringe also writes about the Johannine Christology's foundation in Wisdom, noting Wisdom's intimacy with God and role in creation. Ringe discusses Wisdom's somewhat "missionary" vocation of foreshadowing the Son to "search for a people who will feast at her banquet and follow the way she teaches and thus become friends of God (Wis 7:27)."⁵⁸

Ringe,⁵⁹ along with Brown, Senior, and Witherington, recognize the Son of Man Christology in the Gospel of John as rooted in the Wisdom tradition. Witherington states,

[T]he Son of Man language in the Fourth Gospel which is conditioned by the ascending and descending discussions, both about Wisdom in earlier Jewish literature (see 1 Enoch 42 where Wisdom comes to earth, is rejected and returns to the Father on high), and about Enoch himself (1 Enoch 70:2; 71:1) And so we hear texts like "What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending and descending" (like Enoch) or in John 7:25-27 where the key to understanding Jesus is knowing his origins in God and also his destiny in returning to God (see Jn 7:35; 8:21-22).⁶⁰

Witherington notes that throughout the entire Gospel,

Jesus assumes the roles normally attributed to Wisdom who is said to provide light (i.e., truth), and life (i.e., salvation), and the path to both (see Prov 8-9 and Ws 10:16). In a very explicit sapiential echo Ws 16:6 tells us the snake lifted up in the desert is a sign of salvation, and so in Jn 3:14 the lifting of the Son on a stake, like the snake, is the sign of salvation in this Gospel.⁶¹

Even the iconic "I AM" statements in the Gospel of John, according to Witherington, reflect imagery from the Wisdom tradition:

[A] close examination of the I AM sayings in John both in the absolute form and with qualifiers (e.g. "I am the light of the world"; see Jn 8:24; 8:28; 8:58; 13:19; 17:6, 17:12; 17:26) equally reflects the indebtedness to the Wisdom tradition, for Wisdom has been called the living bread, the light of the world, the door, the life, the authentic vine in Prov 3:18; 8:38; 9:5; Ws 1-8; Sir 24.⁶²

In tying the Divine name, I AM to such predicates as bread, truth, life, or way, Senior asserts that John moves his revelation theology to an even more profound level. "These predicates are symbols of the human quest for God. The hungers and longings signify the long search for the face of God, a search depicted in Wisdom literature precisely in such terms."⁶³ Thus, John implies

⁵⁷ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 284.

⁵⁸ Sharon H. Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 1.

⁵⁹ Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends*, 1.

⁶⁰ Witherington, "The Trinity in Johannine Literature," 71.

⁶¹ Witherington, "The Trinity in Johannine Literature," 71.

⁶² Witherington, "The Trinity in Johannine Literature," 71.

⁶³ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 285.

by such declarations as “I am the bread of life” and “I am the light of the world” that, in Jesus, God’s manifest presence and the groping of humanity for God meet, perhaps more than meet; they embrace as friends.

Wisdom makes us friends of God (Ws 7:27). As we have seen, in the humblest, most noble, and transcendent manner, the incarnation, life, passion, death, and resurrection of the Son make us friends of God. The bond between Father and Son and the unique revelatory role of the Son touches almost every facet of John’s Christological language and certainly is the key to understanding a mission theology of participation in friendship.

CHAPTER V: MISSION IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

To speak of mission in the Gospel of John is to reflect upon the love of the Father in sending the Son, the love of the Father and the Son in sending the Spirit, and the love of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in sending the Church to continue the mission of the Triune God in the world. Therefore, to speak of mission in the Gospel of John is to truly speak of the Trinity. John's mission theology is an integral part of his presentation of Father, Son, and Spirit. The Gospel of John describes the sending of the Son and the sending of the Spirit as a movement of love, of kenotic interrelatedness. God the Father is the loving sender; the Son and the Spirit are the loving sent ones. "Mission is a central concept in the Gospel of John, because it is an essential part of the dynamism of love that dominates the Gospel."¹ This chapter will explore the meaning of the verbs for sending in the Gospel of John: the key to understanding mission in John; the Father; the Son; the Spirit; and the continuation of the Divine mission in the disciples.

A. The Lexicographical Exploration of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω

The verbs for sending in the Gospel of John, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, occur over 60 times and are applied to the following sendings:

- John the Baptist (Jn 1:6; 1:33; 3:28)
- Agents of the authorities (1:19; 1:22; 1:24; 5:33; 7:32)
- The disciples (4:38; 13:20; 17:18)
- The advocate, the Spirit (14:26; 15:26; 16:7)
- Jesus (3:17; 3:34; 4:34; 5:23–24; 5:30; 5:36–38; 6:29; 6:38–39; 6:44; 6:57; 7:16; 7:28–29; 7:33; 8:16; 8:18; 8:26; 8:29; 8:42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44–45; 12:49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3; 17:8; 17:18; 17:21; 17:23; 17:25; 20:21)

One initial observation is the number of times *sending* is used in reference to the Son being sent by the Father. A close examination of John's use of these two verbs ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, both of which are translated by the English verb *send* sheds light on the relationship between the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church. The investigations of Karl Rengstorf have shown, however, that when the Johannine Jesus uses πέμπω in speaking of His sending by God there is a definite formula involved. Its simplest expression is ὁ πέμψας με, "The one who has sent me."

¹ See Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John," 332.

This usage is wholly restricted to God and is sometimes expanded to πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με, “The Father who has sent me.” Rengstorf explains,

In John’s Gospel ἀπέστειλεν is used by Jesus when His concern is to ground His authority in that of God as the One who is responsible for His words and works and who guarantees their right and truth. On the other hand, He uses the formula ὁ πέμψας με to affirm the participation of God in His work in the action of His sending. This explanation is in full accord with the Johannine view of Jesus as the One whose work originates in God’s work and by whom “God’s work reaches its goals.”²

Rengstorf concludes that this usage “is followed exactly in 20:21, except that it is here applied to the relationship of Jesus to His messengers. The work which they have to do is finally His work for which He sends them.”³ The implications are apparent. If the ministry of the Church is essentially the continuation of the ministry of Jesus, then the Church must pattern the form and content of its ministry after that of Jesus. Therefore, for this reason the Church is immediately empowered with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. “And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (Jn 20:22).” The disciples are commissioned by Jesus to continue His mission in word and deed. To this end, they are gifted with the Holy Spirit, who represents in them both the presence of the Son and the power of the Father. Equipped with this presence and power, they are to announce confidently to everyone everywhere the call to repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Some scholars,⁴ unconvinced by Rengstorf’s position, argue that, in Greco-Roman texts contemporaneous to the Gospel of John, it was a common literary style to employ synonyms instead of repeating the same word. They provide evidence of this ancient literary stylistic tendency of the use of synonyms to explain Johannine usage of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω as well as φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ. This external evidence, although the fruit of good research, is not completely convincing. Close examination—of the type Rengstorf undertook—into the Gospel of John, looking in the text for small nuances in John’s usage of these verbs, provides greater insight into

² Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley, s.v. “Apostleship,” (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 405.

³ Rengstorf, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 405. See also Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Apostleship*, trans. J. R. Coates. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1933)

⁴ Lenski, Kilpatrick, Tarelli, Barrett, Brown, and Keener are but a few who disagree with Rengstorf contending that both verbs seem to be used in the same sense. See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interrelation of St. John’s Gospel* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), 1370; G. D. Kilpatrick, “Some Notes on Johannine Usage,” *The Bible Translator* 11(1960), 176; C. C. Tarelli, “Johannine Synonyms,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1946), 176; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: S. C. K., 1962), 473; R. Brown, *The Gospel according to St. John*, XIII-XXI, The Anchor Bible, vol. 29A (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1970), 1022; Craig S. Kenner “Sent Like Jesus: Johannine Missiology,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 12:1 (2009) 28.

how he intentionally uses the verbs for sending (ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω) and the verbs for loving (φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ).

Other scholars⁵ concur with Rengstorf that there is no such thing as a “needless synonym,” since, in the words of Levinsohn, “Choice implies meaning. ...[W]hen an author has the option of expressing himself or herself in either one of two ways, the two differ in significance; there are reasons for the variations.”⁶ Edwin Abbot, one of the early voices in the debate over synonyms in John, maintained, “The whole of this Gospel is pervaded with distinctions of thought, represented by subtle distinctions of word or phrase-words and phrases so far alike that at first the reader may take the thought to be the same, though it is always really different.”⁷ Rengstorf discerned a clear pattern: ἀποστέλλω is primarily used where it is a matter of commissioning a task with the emphasis on the sender and the relationship with the one sent, while πέμπω focuses on the fact and the task of the sending. Waldstein concurs as was previously noted:

Always in the mouth of Jesus as a relative clause with apostello as a finite verb: 3:34; 5:38; 6:29; 10:36; 17:3. Always in the mouth of Jesus with pempo in a participle phrase: 4:34; 5:23; 5:24; 5:30; 5:37; 6:38; 6:39; 6:44; 7:16; 7:18; 7:28; 7:33; 8:16; 8:18; 8:29; 9:4; 12:44; 12:45; 12:29; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5.⁸

Thus, when the object of the verb is a person, *apostello* often has the connotation of a commissioning, which transfers the authority of the sender to the person being sent.

Numerous scholars including Franz Neiryck,⁹ Gilbert van Belle,¹⁰ and Thomas Popp¹¹ assert that the key to interpreting the Gospel of John is found by understanding the evangelist’s use of repetition, variation, and amplification, “whereby he endeavors to keep the attention of his readers time and again.”¹² It would appear that the variation in the verbs ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω is

⁵ Abbott, Radermakers, and Vincent assert John intends a difference of meaning in the two words: ἀποστέλλω emphasizing the authoritative sending of an envoy with a special commission and πέμπω emphasizing the process of sending, the relation of Sender to Sent One. For a more thorough discussion on the history of the debate, see Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*, 97.

⁶ Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek* (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992), 8.

⁷ Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three*, (London, UK: A & C Black, 1906), 645. See also Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Repr. of the ed. New York 1888 (Peabody, MA: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1902), 226.; Radermakers, SJ, “Mission et Apostolate dans l’Evangile Johannique,” *Studia Evangelica* 2 (1964), 111.

⁸ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 310.

⁹ Frans Neiryck, “Evangelica.”

¹⁰ Gilbert van Belle, Michael Labahn, and Pieter Maritz, eds. *Repetitions and variations in the Fourth Gospel: style, text, interpretation*. Vol. 223. Peeters, 2009.

¹¹ Thomas Popp, *Grammatik des Geistes: literarische Kunst und theologische Konzeption in Johannes 3 und 6*. Vol. 3. Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001.

¹² Gilbert van Belle, Michael Labahn, and Pieter Maritz, *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel*, 84.

intentional: ἀποστέλλω is employed as a way to emphasize the sender and the relationship with the one sent, while πέμπω is employed to highlight the act of sending.

The Johannine use of φιλέω and ἀγαπᾶω will be addressed in the section on friendship, employing the same methodology: although the verbs are similar and would be included in the same semantic or conceptual field, John also deploys them distinctly to convey a specific meaning.

B. John 3:16–17 as a Key for Understanding Mission in John’s Gospel

John’s Gospel reveals the Triune God as Sending Love. Love is the motivating power of Jesus’s coming into the world. John simplifies the whole process of God’s love and sending by saying, “For God so loved the world that he gave his begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

Missiology scholar J. Verkuyl notes that the author of the Johannine literature had three intentions in writing the Gospel and the Epistles. First, the author wanted to bring people to faith in Jesus (Jn 20:31). Second, the author intended to show his readers Jesus “came in the flesh” (1 Jn 4:2–3). Thirdly, the gospel author desired to continue the fellowship people had in Christ (1 Jn 1:3). Verkuyl adds that the Johannine corpus shows a strong interest in the disciples’ call into world missions (Jn 4:35–38; 13:20; 17:18). Jesus commands them explicitly to go as the Father has mandated Him to go, empowered with the Holy Spirit (Jn 21:21–22),¹³ to love as they have been loved (13:34; 15:12) to the greatest extent, which is to lay down one’s life for a friend (15:13).

Mission implies first, the sender(s); second, the sent one(s); third, those *sent to*; and forth, a reason to be sent *for*. A proper understanding of mission in the Gospel of John must consider first, the sender *from whom* one is sent; second, the one(s) who is (or are) sent; third, the recipient *to whom* one is going; and forth, the *purpose for which* one is sent. This understanding of mission is relational as it requires going *from* someone *to* someone. The emissary or missionary is sent on behalf of a person to a third person or group of persons. This understanding of mission involves some task or action on behalf of the sender(s). Andreas J. Kostenberger proposes that “an inductive study of John’s Gospel suggests that mission in John may be understood as *the specific task which a person or group (as sender or sent ones) seeks to accomplish, involving various modes of*

¹³ Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, 111.

movement.”¹⁴ Mission occurs in John when the one(s) who is (or are) sent carry out the purpose of the sender(s). The mission of sending love clearly emerges in the Gospel of John.

John 3:16–17 may be considered the hermeneutical key for the missiology of the Fourth Gospel and is an example of the Johannine concept of mission as love sent to save.

John 3:16

ὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:17

οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνη τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ.

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Here we find the four elements of mission:

- The sender is God: ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεός.
- The one sent is the Son: τὸν υἱόν.
- The recipient to whom the one is being sent is the world: τὸν κόσμον.
- The purpose is to give eternal life so that the world may be saved: ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον... ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ.

We might also add that the impetus is love: ὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον.

John 3:16–17 is by far not the only missionary action in the Fourth Gospel, but I propose it is the model for mission in the Gospel of John. Let us examine each of these aspects of mission:

- *The sender* = ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεός. God the Father is the sender. In Jn 20:21, Jesus identifies the Father as the one from whom He is sent: καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ. Jesus is sent by the Father also in John 4:34: λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐμὸν βρῶμά ἐστιν ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον (“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.’”). It is important to note that the Father is not the only sender in the Gospel; however, He is the only one not sent.
- *The one sent* = τὸν υἱόν. One of the titles for Jesus in the Gospel of John is “the one sent.” This notion of Jesus being sent occurs 41 times in the Gospel. Jesus uses the Greek verb *pempein* to refer to “the Father who sent me” 24 times. These references

¹⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Challenge of a Systematized Biblical Theology of Mission: Missiological Insights from the Gospel of John,” *Missiology: An International Review* 23, no. 4 (October 1995): 447.

put the focus on the Father, who through this action of sending authorizes and empowers the Son in His mission. In another 17 passages, however, some form of the verb *apostellein* is used to focus instead on Jesus, as the one who is sent. This verb invests Jesus's acts with the full authority of the Father because He seems to do only what the Father wills.

- *To whom the one is being sent* = τὸν κόσμον (the world). τὸν κόσμον occurs 18 times in John. Several times τὸν κόσμον is used in John to designate where the Son is sent (3:39, 6:24; 9:39, 12:46–47; 17:18; 18:37). It is to the cosmos, the whole of creation, that the Son is sent—not to Israel alone, not to any one group but to the whole of the cosmos. The Eternal Word of God, through whom the world was made, came into the world. It is to the world τὸν κόσμον that the disciples of the Son of God are also sent in 17:18. According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, “the Holy Church of God is the icon of the whole universe”¹⁵
- *To do what* = ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον ... ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ (to grant ζωὴν αἰώνιον [eternal life] and so that ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ [all might be saved through Him]). All of the various Johannine motifs relate to the overarching theme of Jesus's singular work to bring life (ζωὴν). Twice ζωὴν αἰώνιον eternal life occurs in this pericope. Life (ζωὴν) occurs a total of 24 times in the Gospel of John. Often it is designated as eternal life or everlasting life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον), which occurs 17 times, or as abundant life, as in John 10:10. The Son of God states in John 10:10 that “I came that they might have life (ζωὴν) and that they might have it abundantly (περισσὸν).”
- *Why* = ὅτι ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον (because God has loved the cosmos). The verb ἠγάπησεν is found two other times in the Gospel of John: in John 13:1, “He loved ἠγάπησεν them to the end,” referring to Jesus and occurring at the beginning of the Last Supper, before the washing of the feet; and in 15:9 “as the Father has loved (ἠγάπησεν) Me.” Various forms of the verb ἀγαπᾶ occur 31 times in John. The reason for the Son's mission in the world is the Father's love.

Australian Johannine scholar John Painter summarizes how these passages in the third chapter of John are significant to the theme of a missiology of love:

The author of John's Gospel depicts Jesus as sent by God in a unique way: he is the Son, and God is the Father. Jesus's mission is described as a unique expression of the Father's love for the world. In John's Gospel, Jesus uses the Greek verb *pempein* to refer to “the Father who sent me” no fewer than 24 times. These references put the focus on the Father, who through this action of sending authorizes and empowers the Son in his mission. In another seventeen passages, however, some form of the verb *apostellein* is used to focus instead on Jesus, as the one who is sent. This verb invests Jesus's acts with the full authority of the Father because he seems to do only what the Father wills. Indeed, for John, the Father is present, speaking and acting in Jesus (Jn 5:17, Jn 5:19–20). This emphasis on the interrelationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son lays the

¹⁵ St. Maximus, *Märturisorul, Mistagogia 2*, trans. D. Stăniloae (București: Ed. IBM-BOR, 2000), 15.

groundwork for later Trinitarian theology. In Jn 3:16–17, the “sending” relationship between the Father and Son frames Jesus as God’s gift for the world. For John, this embodies the nature of God’s love for the world (see also Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:10). The purpose of this giving or sending is to save the world, not to condemn it. Jn 3:34–35 further describes the relationship between God and “he whom God has sent” as an expression of the reality that “the Father loves the Son” (Jn 5:20). The Father’s love for the Son continuously endows and empowers the Son to speak the Father’s words and do the Father’s works (Jn 3:34–35, Jn 5:17, Jn 5:19–20, Jn 5:30).¹⁶

For God so loved the world that he ἔδωκεν—he *gave* His son.¹⁷ Alison Milbank invites our consideration of the doctrine of Trinitarian mission in terms of gift: as the gift of the Trinity in mission. “This doctrine is not a set of words so much as a gift. God communicates himself to us as holiness, as becoming incarnate, and as relationality itself.”¹⁸ Mission is an expression of a relationship—in this instance, the relationship between the Trinity and creation.

Regarding the centrality of life ζωὴν in the Gospel of John, we can consider it in relation to other themes, particularly love and participation. In Francis Moloney’s expressive language, Jesus’s mission is that we “might be swept into the relationship with God that He has had from all time,”¹⁹ which he explains is an eternal relationship of love. Being caught up in the eternal love of the persons of the Divine Trinity is, as Moloney asserts, the essence of eternal life according to the Gospel of John.²⁰ Hastings echoes Moloney, saying, “God’s first thought in reaching out to fallen humanity was to draw them into the fellowship of his triune love and life.”²¹ Thompson adds, “life and salvation are virtually synonymous in John because salvation is construed as a deliverance from death and participation in the plentitude of God, both in this life and in the life that follows resurrection” (see Jn 12:32, *I will draw all people to myself*).²² Jan van der Watt writes that in most instances, “the term ‘eternal life’ may be substituted by ‘to be in/receive a state of being which allows participation (action and relations) in the Divine reality of and with God.’”²³ Alan

¹⁶ John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature, and Theology of the Johannine Community*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 224–225.

¹⁷ Strong’s Bible Dictionary: to give one to someone to care for his interests also found in Acts 13:20.

¹⁸ Alison Milbank, “The Gift of the Trinity in Mission,” in *God’s Church in the World*, ed. Susan Lucas (London, UK: Canterbury Press, 2020), 17.

¹⁹ Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013) 56–57.

²⁰ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, 62–64.

²¹ Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2012), 21.

²² Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 85. Here she is commenting on John 3:16–17.

²³ Jean Van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John and Letters* (London, UK: T & T Clark, 2008), 85.

Culpepper observes that God’s life-giving mission is rooted in God’s love, which is inescapably missional.²⁴

The gift of ζωὴν αἰώνιον, *eternal life* in the Gospel of John, is taking place in the present.²⁵ Life eternal ζωὴν αἰώνιον is not some future existence, rather it connotes life without beginning or end, that which always was and always will be.²⁶ The verb ἔχει is the present indicative active of to have or possess. This ζωὴν αἰώνιον is taking place in the present. A realized eschatology is consistently communicated throughout the Gospel:

- “Whoever believes in the Son *has eternal life* (ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον)” (Jn 3:36).
- “The one who hears my word and believes the one who sent me *has eternal life* ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον and does not come into judgement but has passed from death into life” (Jn 5:24).
- “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes *has eternal life* (ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον)” (Jn 6:47).
- “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood *has eternal life* (ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον)” (Jn 6:54).

Through the mission of the Son, there is contact and communion “not with something preliminary, but with final and definitive life; with the Divine life itself.”²⁷ Why has this profound gift been granted humanity? Why has God the Father given us what our first parents stole in the garden? The reason given in the Gospel of John is the Father’s love, which it is the Son’s mission to reveal. We will address love, and in particular friendship-love, later in this chapter. However just to demonstrate that John 3:16–17 contains themes which echo throughout the Gospel, here are several passages in which the Father’s love is presented. In each of these pericopes, the phrase “the Father loves the Son” is used by Jesus in an explanation. Both verbs for love (ἀγαπᾶν and φιλεῖν) are employed by John to describe the Father’s love for the Son. The Father’s love is the cause of the Divine mission.

- “The Father *loves* (ἀγαπᾷ) the Son and has given all things into his hand” (Jn 3:35).
- “For the Father *loves* (φιλεῖ) the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing” (Jn 5:20).

²⁴ Alan Culpepper, “Creation Ethics of the Gospel of John,” in *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John*, ed. Sherri Brown and Christopher Skinner (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 83; see also 84–89.

²⁵ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 316.

²⁶ “Life/ ζωὴν,” in James Strong and W. E. Vine, *Strong’s Concise Concordance & Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999).

²⁷ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 316.

- “The reason the Father *loves* (ἀγαπᾷ) Me is that I lay down My life” (Jn 10:17).

One final category to be considered in John’s missiology is that of testimony. Giving testimony and bearing witness is a role played by other characters in the Gospel, such as John the Baptist (1:6–8), the Beloved Disciple (19:35), and the community itself. Bearing witness is also a function of the Paraclete (15:26).²⁸ It is the Holy Spirit who enables the continuation of the witness, the testimony to the love of God.

What is central in Johannine Trinitarian missiology is this: the Father is the originator and sender of mission;²⁹ the Son is the actor and embodiment of mission; and the Spirit is the empowering presence in the mission of creation and new creation.³⁰ When Jesus declares, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you,” he does not speak of a merely economic event, foreign to the life of God; rather, Jesus is linking the life of those who participate in an apostolic mission with the Trinitarian God.³¹ While many ponder the nature of this connection between the sending of the Son and the sending of the disciples, it is perhaps best to understand the sending of the disciples, (the sending of the Church) as the sacrament of the Divine mission and of Divine love.

C. The Father Who Sends but Is Not Sent

As Craig Keener observes, the Father’s sending the Son into the world by the power of the Spirit is the heart of the Fourth Gospel’s plot.³² More than any other New Testament text, Jesus in the Gospel of John refers to God as “the Father who sent me (πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με)”:

- “And the *Father who sent me* (πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με) has Himself testified about me” (5:36).
- “No one can come to me unless *the Father who sent me* (πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με) draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day” (6:44).
- “Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the *Father who sent me* (ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ)” (8:16).

²⁸ Senior and Stuhlmüller, 285.

²⁹ See George F. Vicedom, *Missio Dei: Einführung in eine Theologie der Mission* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), 12–13. Vicedom seems to be the first to coin the term *missio Dei*, which implies that God is primary the originator, sender, and accomplisher of mission. *Missio ecclesio* is the continuation of and participation in the mission of the Triune God. The church is the sacrament of the divine mission as it points to and makes manifest God’s loving, salvific transformation the world.

³⁰ See Tennent, *World Missions*, 75. However, it is important to note that Tennent is building upon the work of Lesslie Newbigin in *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Today’s Mission Volume 2 of C. W. M. E. Study Pamphlets* (London, UK: Edinburgh House, 1963).

³¹ Stephen R. Holmes, “Trinitarian Missiology: Towards a Theology of God as Missionary,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 1 (2006): 79.

³² Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 1204.

- “I am One who testifies about myself, and the *Father, who sent me*, (πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με) also testifies about Me” (8:18).
- “I did not speak on my own, but *the Father who sent me* (πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με) commanded me what to say and speak” (12:49).
- “As *the Father has sent me* (καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ) I am sending you” (20:21).

In the Gospel of John, in addition to sending the Son, the Father knows the Son (10:15). The Father glorifies the Son (17:1, 5). The Father is one with the Son (10:30). Most significantly and perhaps the best way to interpret the relations between the Father and the Son in the Gospel of John is realizing the Father *loves* the Son (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 17:28).

Johannine Christology is perfectly transparent in the sense that Jesus does not attract attention to himself but points to the Father whom He constantly reveals. The Father is the center of the Gospel; Jesus is the revealer and the way to the Father. As the revealer of God, Jesus permits all the light to pass through Him to the Father.³³

According to Michael Waldstein, “the Gospel of John is resolutely centered on the Father. It is not in the first place Christo-centric but Patro-centric. The Father is the origin and the goal of everything.”³⁴ The Father’s eternal love is origin and endpoint of the Gospel. “Contact with Jesus is never an endpoint in John.”³⁵ In the first lines of the Gospel, the Baptist says of Jesus, “No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side has revealed him” (Jn 1:19). In Jn 14:9, Jesus himself proclaims that “if you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” Thus, the revelation of the Father progresses throughout the Gospel narrative, which culminates in the Son’s obedient gift of self in “the hour” of passion and resurrection glorifying the Father.

John 5:19–30 contains a very important revelation by Jesus of the Father. This revelation occurs in the discourse in response to those who are highly critical of Jesus for healing a paralytic on the Sabbath.³⁶ When the Jews attack him for healing a paralytic on the Sabbath, Jesus answers them: “As my Father is still working, so I am working too” (Jn 5:17). Waldstein explains, “This enigmatic statement can be understood in light of the Jewish teaching on Sabbath: his work as creator and Lord continues uninterrupted, even on the Sabbath.”³⁷ Raymond Brown gives further

³³ J. Kavunkal “Mission in the Fourth Gospel,” in J. Kavunkal & F. Hrangkhuma, ed., *Bible and Mission in India Today*, (Bombay: St. Paul’s, 1993), 121.

³⁴ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 332.

³⁵ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 312.

³⁶ This healing narrative and Sabbath controversy is similar to the Synoptic narratives. However, Jesus’s response in John is unique to the Fourth Gospel, revealing the His relationship with His Father. See Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 3 vols. (New York: Crossroads, 1982-1987), vol. 2, 96-97.

³⁷ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 312.

explanation: “For the Jews the Sabbath privilege was peculiar to God, and no one was equal to God (Ex 15:11; Is 46:5; Ps 89:8). In claiming the right to work even as his Father worked, Jesus was claiming a Divine prerogative.”³⁸

John conveys the Jews³⁹ were upset because not only did Jesus break the Sabbath law, which was offensive enough, but He was also doing something even more outrageous in this statement. Jesus was making Himself equal to God. John states that it was “[f]or this reason the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke Sabbath, but called God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (Jn 5:18; 10:33). What prompted them to want to execute Jesus was his “blasphemous infringement on the unicity of God.”⁴⁰ And this, as Raymond Brown asserts, violates the fundamental core principle of Jewish identity: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Dt 6:4).⁴¹

“The carefully constructed discourse in Jn 5:19–30 takes this charge as a point of departure for unfolding the Johannine image of God.”⁴² There is a parallelism in verse 5:19 which, when examined, provides some insights:

A: THE SON can do nothing of himself,
B: except what he sees THE FATHER doing
B': for whatever THE FATHER does
A': THE SON does likewise.

Waldstein explains,

The first half of this verse responds directly to the charge “he makes himself equal with God.” Contrary to this charge, Jesus does not arrogate anything to himself; he is not a second God independent from and in competition with the Father; rather, he remains completely subordinate to

³⁸ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., AB 29-29A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966 and 1979, vol 1, 217, quoted in Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 313.

³⁹ One must be extremely attentive to how passages in the Gospel of John regarding “the Jews” have been employed to foster the evil of anti-Semitism. Pope John Paul II condemned antisemitism in several key speeches and documents, naming it a “sin” which is the strongest religious term one could use in such a condemnation. But he did not stop at verbal condemnation of antisemitism. He also called for a joint concerted action by Jews and Christians to combat its remaining presence and any further spread. For guidance on how to address these passages see John T. Pawlikowski, *When Catholics Speak About Jews: Notes for Homilists and Catechists* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987). See also Culpepper, R. Alan. “The Gospel of John and the Jews” *Review & Expositor* 84, no. 2 (May 1987): 273–88.

⁴⁰ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 314.

⁴¹ Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciples: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 47; see also J. Louis Martyn *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979), 72.

⁴² Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 314.

the Father in all his activities. “The Son can do nothing of himself, except what he sees the Father doing.”⁴³

Brown concurs, “They [i.e., the Jews] can only conceive equality with God as independence from God, whereas for Jesus it means the very opposite, as is brought out immediately in verse 5:19.”⁴⁴

Waldstein continues:

Jn 5:19b counter-balances this note of subordination. It does so by generalizing the claim to an exclusively Divine activity (working on the Sabbath) made in 5:17: “For whatever the Father does, this the Son does likewise” (5:19b). A similar statement is made about the “Word” in the Prologue: “All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be” (1:3). Yet, while the Prologue refers only to the creative activity of the Word in union with God (“through him”), 5:19b makes a more sweeping claim: there is no activity of the Father which is not also an activity of the Son. Although there is a certain opposition between the two halves of the verse, subordination (5:19a) and equality (5:19b), they are closely tied together by a causal link. The all-encompassing equality of activity between the Father and the Son is the reason why the Son’s activity is not independent and separate. He can do nothing of himself “for (Greek: *gar*) whatever the Father does, this the Son does likewise.” Verse 5:20a pushes the casual line of thought one step further (second “*gar*”): the reason for the comprehensive unity of activity between the Father and the Son is the love of the Father.”⁴⁵

Following Waldstein’s insight into *the reason why* the Son’s activity is united to that of the Father, we can link to that an understanding of John 5:20, which reads:

ὁ γὰρ πατήρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, καὶ μείζονα τούτων δείξει αὐτῷ ἔργα, ἵνα ὑμεῖς θαυμάζητε.

Notice that John employs φιλεῖ in stating “For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.” There are two similar passages: “The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in His hands” (Jn 3:35) and “Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father” (Jn 14:12). Might the Johannine use of φιλεῖ in this pericope indicate the mutuality, communion, and equality between the Father and the Son?

Waldstein provides a beautiful and critical insight that focuses on the significance of this pericope:

⁴³ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 314.

⁴⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, ed. G.S. Beasley-Martin (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1971), 245.

⁴⁵ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 315.

To bring out the order of objective foundation envisaged by 5:19–20a one can invert its steps: The Father’s “love” (5:20a) stands at the origin. It is the reason why the Father gives or “shows” his works to the Son. Due to this gift and its completeness, the operation of Father and Son is an inseparable interrelated whole. Since their operation is such a whole, Jesus does not act “of himself,” contrary to the charge that he “makes” himself equal with God.⁴⁶

In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Thomas Aquinas states that the origin of the Son’s power and glory is the Father’s love. Aquinas explains,

[T]he Son is loved perfectly by the Father, and because the Father perfectly loves the Son, this is a sign that the Father has shown him everything and has communicated to him his very own [the Father’s] power and nature. And it is of this love that we read above (3:5): “the Father loves the Son and has put everything into his hands”; and “this is my beloved Son” (Mt 3:17).⁴⁷

It is also worth noting that there is an *inclusio* in the discourse. An *inclusio* is a literary device based on a concentric principle, also known as bracketing, or an envelope structure, which consists of creating a frame by placing similar material at the beginning and end of a section of text. It is a frame that serves as an interpretive lens or hermeneutic key for the passage which it surrounds. In this instance, it is the noun τέλος⁴⁸ and its derivative τετέλεσται⁴⁹ which form an *inclusio*.

What Jesus states in the third person in verse 19 is restated in the first person in verse 30:⁵⁰

5:19 The Son can do nothing on his own authority.
οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ἄφ’ ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲν

5:30 I can do nothing on my own authority.
Οὐ δύναμαι ἐγὼ ποιεῖν ἄπ’ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐδέν

The two verses, 5:19 and 5:30, serve to frame the passage drawing our attention to what is at the heart of the discourse, the central point: “The Father loves the Son” (Jn 5:20). This is the second time John affirms the Father’s love for Jesus. The first is in 3:35: “ὁ πατὴρ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν υἱόν”. This theme of the Father’s love for the Son will gather momentum, but in this context, it is

⁴⁶ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 315.

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher and James A. Weisheipl, vol. 3, Thomas Aquinas in Translation (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 753.

⁴⁸ “τελέω, v 1) to bring to a close, to finish, to end 1a) passed, finished 2) to perform, execute, complete, fulfil, (so that the thing done corresponds to what has been said, the order, command etc.) 2a) with special reference to the subject matter, to carry out the contents of a command 2b) with reference also to the form, to do just as commanded, and generally involving the notion of time, to perform the last act which completes a process, to accomplish, fulfil 3) to pay of tribute.” In James Strong and W. E. Vine, *Strong’s Concise Concordance & Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999).

⁴⁹ Perfect indicative active verb of the root τέλος.

⁵⁰ See Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988) 117.

the reason for the Father's showing all that He Himself is doing.⁵¹ The Father manifests his love for the Son by confiding his secrets to him and giving all power to the Son. "To love and to give are almost synonymous, because the generosity of the Father's gift is his expression of love for the Son."⁵²

Aquinas, in citing Augustine, explains that "there is another way of understanding statements which seem to, but do not, imply the inferiority of the Son: namely by referring them to the origin of the Son coming or begotten from the Father. For although the Son is equal to the Father in all things, he receives all these things from the Father in an eternal begetting. But the Father gets these from no one, for he is unbegotten."⁵³

Waldstein demonstrates that "[t]he second half of the discourse (5:25–30) begins with a carefully structured unit that works out the connection between eschatology and Jesus's exalted identity in more detail."⁵⁴ "In the frame of this literary unit (5:25, 28–29), realized and future eschatology face each other in a complementary parallelism; it is through the working of the Son that life is given, and judgement occurs, both now and in the future."⁵⁵ The structure is as follows:

A: Realized Eschatology

(25) Truly, truly, I tell you, the hour is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

B: The Foundation of Jesus Eschatological Power

(26) For as the Father has life in Himself, so also, He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.

(27) And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

A¹: Future Eschatology:

(28) Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice.

(29) And they will come out those who did good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John Sacra Pagina*, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 182.

⁵² Ceslas Spicq, OP, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, *Agape in the Gospel of John, Epistles and Apocalypse of St. John*, trans. Marie Aquinas McNamara, OP, and Mary Honoria Richter, OP (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 182.

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher and James A. Weisheipl, vol. 3, *Thomas Aquinas in Translation* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 747. See also *ST I*, q. 33, a. 4.

⁵⁴ Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John," 316.

⁵⁵ Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John," 317.

⁵⁶ Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John," 316–317.

The verse “For as the Father has life in Himself, so also He has granted the Son to have life in Himself” is essential to our understanding of the Father in the mission of the Son. Waldstein explains,

The phrase “life in himself” can be understood by contrast with the way in which believers have life, namely not “in themselves” but “in his name” (Jn 20:31). The underlying principle is that as the creator from whom all life flows, God has life “in himself”, rather than by derivation. It is thus paradoxical when the text says that the Father has given it to the Son to have life in this manner: as a gift, the Son’s life depends on the Father; and yet, the Son’s life is the same creative life, rather than created life, that characterizes the Father. This tension between subordination and equality closely resembles the tension between the two halves of 5:19. 5:19a asserts the Son’s complete dependence on the Father in the sphere of activity; 5:19b asserts his complete equality in that sphere. 5:26 moves one step deeper, namely, to the Son’s own life, the root of his activities: the Son is subordinate to the Father in receiving life from him as a gift; and yet he is equal to the Father in having the same mode of life, “life in himself.”⁵⁷

Just as “The Father loves the Son” (5:20) was the key to understanding the first half of the pericope, in this instance it is similarly the phrase at the center: “For as the Father has life in Himself, so also, He has granted the Son to have life in Himself” (5:26). The phrase reveals the completeness of the gift made by the Father. Waldstein lays it out exquisitely:

According to 5:20 the Father loves the Son and therefore shows him everything he does. 5:26 continues one step deeper in the same vein: the Father gives his own life to the Son and this gift is so complete that the Son has “life in himself”. Compare “All that the Father has is mine” (16:15). “All that is mine is yours and what is yours is mine” (17:10). “As a complete gift, the Son’s activity and life are subordinate to the Father, as a complete gift they are equal with the Father.”⁵⁸

The conclusion of this discourse returns to the beginning with particular emphasis on “mission”:

5:19 The Son can do nothing on his own authority.

οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ἄφ’ ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲν

5:30 I can do nothing on my own authority.

Οὐ δύναμαι ἐγὼ ποιεῖν ἄπ’ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐδὲν

Jesus is not a second God in competition with the Father. He receives his activity and life from the Father and this dependence expresses itself in his seeking, not his own will, “but the will of him who sent me.”⁵⁹ (Emphasis original)

The discourse in 5:19–30 is critical for our understanding of mission and the Father who not only *sends*, not only *loves*, but gives to the Son *His own life*, “life in Himself.” Perhaps we can summarize by saying the Father sends from the eternal fount of His love the fullest expression of love, which is the giving of His own life, life in Himself, to the Son: the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father. The Son does only what He sees the Father doing, seeking to do the will of the

⁵⁷ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 316–317.

⁵⁸ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 317.

⁵⁹ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 318.

one who sent him, who loves Him, who eternally begets Him. And so, the Son in doing what the Father does, also gives the gift of His life. The mission of the Son culminates in “the hour” of the gift of His life.

The Gospel of John emphasizes the inner unity between the sending Father and the sent Son. Their unity is secured by love in the Holy Spirit. The Son loves the Father; thus, he gives Himself for the world. The Father loves the Son; thus, he places all things into his hands (17:24). Jesus said, “my Father and I are one” (10:30). This being of “oneness” in the other is seen as mutual abiding. “I abide in the Father, the Father in me,” said Jesus (14:11). Johannine scholar Raymond Brown asserts that the Father’s sending of the Son serves both as the *model* and the *ground* for the Son’s sending of the disciples (cf. 20:21). Both sendings, Christ’s and the believer’s, are to the world. Jesus came to save the world, not to judge it (3:16–17) and the disciples are sent into the world (cf. 17:18) “so that the world may believe” (17:21).⁶⁰

Orthodox liturgical theologian of the twentieth century, Alexander Schmemmann offers this meditation on the mutual love and sacrifice of the Father and Son for the salvation of the world:

The whole of the Father’s Essence is eternally “given away” to the Son, and the whole of the Son’s Life is having the Essence of the Father as His Own, to exist as the Perfect Image of the Father; and finally this mutual sacrifice of perfect love, this eternal Gift of the Father to the Son is the very Spirit of God—the Spirit of Life, of Love, of Perfection, of Beauty, of the whole inexhaustible depth of Divine Essence... God so loved the world that He gave (sacrificed) His Son to us, to bring us back to Himself. The Son of God, so loved His Father that He gave Himself to Him. His whole life was a perfect and absolutely sacrificial movement. He performed it as God-Man, not only in His Divinity, but also in His humanity, which is assumed out of Divine love for us. In Himself He thus restored human life to perfection, as a sacrifice of love to God, a sacrifice not of fear, not of any kind of “interest,” but of love and love alone. And finally, the perfect life as love, and therefore as sacrifice, He gave to all who accept him and believe in Him, restoring in them the initial relationship with God.⁶¹

In the Synoptic Gospels, the Father reveals His love for the Son in a dramatic theophany at the Jordan and on Mt. Tabor. However, these are not mentioned in the Gospel of John. Instead, according to renowned twentieth-century biblical scholar Ceslas Spicq, OP, “Jesus’s awareness of God’s love for him is constantly being represented.”⁶² The author of the Gospel of John continuously reveals the Father’s love for the Son throughout the narrative in terms of the Father’s

⁶⁰ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 77.

⁶¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life: Christian Development Through Liturgical Experience* (New York, NY: Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church of America, 1974), 49–50.

⁶² Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 158.

giving, glorifying, and being one with the Son. Spicq explains the love between the Father and Son in John:

Their relationship is an exchange in which total love is expressed in every sort of way. The Father loves Jesus and lavishes gifts upon him. Jesus loves the Father and glorifies him (Jn 7:18; 8:49–50; 14:13; 17:4). The Father is again thankful for what his Son does for him (12:28; 13:31). Jesus, aware of his Father’s love, takes pleasure and rejoices in it (15:11; 17:25–26). His joy springs from his knowledge of the Father’s delight.... Jesus can summarize his life in these words: “I remain in his love” (Jn 15:10). ...Jesus relates the love his Father bears him now to the charity which has surrounded him from all eternity, before the incarnation and even before the creation. “You loved me before the world was founded” (17:24–26). In this context, the Father’s love is presented as a source of beatitude, since closeness and communion between two persons who love one another bring beatitude, especially if their union is not only a bond but a mutual indwelling. “The Father and I are one” (10:30). “You in me ... as you love me” (17:23).⁶³

The mission of the Son is the giving of His life in perfect love *in response to* the Father’s gift of love and life to the Son. Let us explore the Son, who is sent from the Father’s love, and how the Son in union with the Father and the Spirit, sends the disciples in the manner in which he was sent.

D. The Son Who Is Sent and Sends

1. The Son Who Is Sent

Johannine Christology, which emphasizes the Son as the sent one, was previously discussed. Almost every page of the Fourth Gospel “breathes with a passage in which Jesus expressed who he is in terms of his sense of being sent.”⁶⁴ Christ’s identity in John is bound up with his mission of being “sent” which is an expression of his filial relation “Son.” Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the one sent to save. “His mission (both the visible and invisible) is to establish faith and love in the believer that makes that disciple friends with God.”⁶⁵ This mission has as the stated purpose in John 3:16–17 the salvation of the world. Sacred Scripture and Tradition⁶⁶ provide the following reasons for the sending of the Son:

- The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins (1 Jn 4:10; 4:14).

⁶³ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 158.160.

⁶⁴ Francis M. DuBose, *God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983), 49.

⁶⁵ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,” 44.

⁶⁶ This list of four reasons for the incarnation are taken from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 457–460.

- The Word became flesh so that thus we might know God’s love: In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him (1 Jn 4:9).
- The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6).
- The Word became flesh to make us “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4).

In the Gospel of John, the mission of the Son points back to the Father and reflects the bond of love between the Father and the Son. In this gospel, we have found that the Son:

- brings glory and honor to the sender (5:23; 7:18)
- does the sender’s will (4:34; 5:30, 38; 6:38–39) and works (5:36; 9:4)
- speaks the sender’s words (3:34; 7:16; 12:49; 14:10b, 24)
- is accountable to his sender (17:1–26)
- bears witness to his sender (5:36; 7:28; 8:26)
- represents him faithfully (12:44–45; 13:20; 15:18–25)
- exercises delegated authority (5:21–22, 27; 13:3; 17:2; 20:23)
- knows the sender intimately (7:29; cf. 15:21; 17:8, 25)
- lives in a close relationship with the sender (8:16, 18, 29; 16:32)
- follows the sender’s example (13:16)

This is not merely a list of disparate activities of Son, but rather each of these serves to reveal how the Son loves the Father in fulfilling the Divine mission. It is the “hour” of his death and resurrection to which all the Son’s activities are oriented. “This [namely, laying down my life to take it up again] is the command I received from my Father” (Jn 10:18). Therefore, it is from the Cross that the Son can definitively say “It is finished” (Jn 19:30).

For John, the most intense moment of Jesus’s mission to reveal God comes at the moment of death, as he loves to the end εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτοῦς. Jesus’s death on the Cross is a triumphant return to the Father at the completion of Jesus’s mission. Therefore, as Senior explains, “John can use such terms as ‘to be lifted up’ (3:14; 8:28; 12:32–34), or the ‘hour’ in which the ‘glory’ of God is manifested (12:27–8; 13:1; 17:1, 4–5; etc.).”⁶⁷ It is also the most missiological moment because Jesus’s death for his friends (15:13) reveals God’s compassionate love for the world (3:16–17). John is consistent, then, in connecting the Son of Man title, which depicts Jesus’s mysterious heavenly origin, and his descent to reveal God at the moment of death (3:14; 8:28).

⁶⁷ Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 284

When the Son of Man is lifted up on the cross, he completes his mission of revealing God's saving love for the world (8:28).⁶⁸

The sublime conclusion to the Last Discourse is Jesus's "Priestly Prayer" which alludes to previous declarations of the "hour" of glory. While still in the world (cf. 17:13), Jesus looks back on his earthly ministry as a thing of the past (cf. 17:4)⁶⁹ and looks ahead to the Cross through which the Father and the Son will glorify one another (cf. 12:23–24; 12:28; 13:31–32).⁷⁰ The mutuality in the Father glorifying the Son as the Son glorifies the Father should not be missed.

A: Father, THE HOUR has come, to *glorify your son*

B: *so that* the Son may glorify you—as you have given him power over all flesh
so that everything you have given him, he may give them eternal life.

C: And this is eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον): that they know you, the only true God, and the one you sent, Jesus Christ (17:3).

B': *I glorified you* on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

A': And NOW, *glorify me*, Father, in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

The Son will glorify the Father and will Himself be glorified through His having brought to completion the task given to him by the Father: making the Father known.⁷¹ Several scholars assert that John 17:1–5 is a distinct literary unit, a chiasmic structure within chapter 17 with the focus on the theme of glory.⁷² It is easy to spot how 17:1 and 17:5 correspond to one another in two ways: First, both are petitions for the Son's glorification; and, secondly, "hour" in 17:1 corresponds to "now" in 17:5. It is also easy to see that 17:2 and 17:4 correspond to one another as both refer to the Son glorifying the Father. In the chiasmic structure, A and A' pertain to the "hour," which is now, for the Father to glorify the Son, whereas B and B' pertain to how the Son is glorifying the Father. All this glorification is centered upon and radiates outward from verse 17:3. ("And this is eternal life [ζωὴν αἰώνιον]: that they know you, the only true God and the one you sent, Jesus Christ.") Jn 17:3 reveals the "one you sent" with the title "Jesus Christ."⁷³ Verse

⁶⁸ Senior and StuhlmueLLer, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 284

⁶⁹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 84.

⁷⁰ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2:1052.

⁷¹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John Sacra Pagina*, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 486.

⁷² Edward Malatesta, "The Literary Structure of John 17," *Bib* 52(1971): 195-198; see also Waldstein, "Mission of Jesus and Disciples in John," 321.

⁷³ Nowhere else in the Gospel of John does Jesus refer to himself as Jesus Christ. It has been asserted that this verse 17:3 was added by a redactor (See notes New American Bible, John 17:3). While it is highly unusual that Jesus refers to himself as "Jesus Christ", this the only instance in the Gospel of John, it is hard to explain why a redactor would choose this point in the prayer during the Last Supper to have Jesus refer to himself in this way. The prayer is

17:3 also reveals knowing the Father is eternal life.⁷⁴ The Semitic use of “know” implies intimacy and union.⁷⁵ It is knowing both the Father and the one he sent, Jesus Christ, that is ζῶην αἰώνιον. This is the only time in John that Jesus uses the title “Jesus Christ” for Himself. This is significant because He is making the point that knowing Him and the Father is eternal life.

Michael Waldstein offers this insight:

The two parts set against each other by this symmetrical structure interpret the hour in two opposite directions: the first part (17:1–2) focusses on its effect, the gift of eternal life; the second part (17:4–5) on its theological root and goal, the pre-existent glory of the Son. “Father glorifies your Son” is not a petition for an isolated personal glorification. It is ordered to the glorification of the Father (“so that the son may glorify you”) which is identified in turn, with the gift of eternal life to those the Father gave him (“so that...he may give them eternal life.”) The second final clause probably picks up and explains the first: “so that the Son may glorify you ...,” i.e., so that he may give eternal life to all. Compare, from the perspective of the continuation of Jesus’s fruitfulness, “In this my Father is glorified that you bring much fruit and become my disciples” (15:8).⁷⁶

According to Waldstein, the second part of 17:1–5 interprets the Son’s hour not in terms of its effectiveness in giving life, but in terms of its origin and end: the Son’s pre-existent glory.⁷⁷ “I have glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed” (17:4–5). It is in the third part of Jesus’s prayer in chapter 17 in which the nature of Jesus’s pre-existent glory is clarified:

“I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be completed toward one, so that they may know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me” (17:22–23). This text suggests that the glory of the Son consists in his unity with the Father or the Father’s being “in” the Son. This unity, perceived as it is, is communicated to human beings, is not an endpoint. The true endpoint is the Father’s love “...my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (17:24).⁷⁸

thoughtfully composed with attention to word choice and poetic structure, containing many parallels with the content in the narrative in chapter 13. Chapter 13 is a narrative; chapter 17 is a prayer. The context is knowing the Father and Son whom he sent is eternal life. It makes perfect sense for Jesus to use this title of himself at this point in the Gospel. It is uttered in His prayer to the Father, which also makes sense.

⁷⁴ The identification of knowing God with immortality also appears in Wisdom 15:3.

⁷⁵ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*, 84.

⁷⁶ Waldstein, “Mission of Jesus and Disciples in John,” 321.

⁷⁷ Waldstein, “Mission of Jesus and Disciples in John,” 322.

⁷⁸ Waldstein, “Mission of Jesus and Disciples in John,” 322.

Waldstein recognizes that the connection between glory and the Father's love is also present in the parallels of 17:22 and 17:26. "The parallel suggests that Jesus's glory is the presence of the Father's love in him."⁷⁹

- "I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one" (17:22).
- "I have made your name know to them...so that they love with which you loved me may be in them" (17:26).

Thüsing explains, that Jesus's pre-existent glory is based not only on the love of the Father, it is determined by this love not only casually, but by its very contents or nature. The Son's pre-existent glory reveals His oneness with the Father. "We can thus understand the 'glory' of 17:5 and 17:24 as the Son's being filled with the fire and light of the Father's eternal love."⁸⁰ It is the Father's love that is the glory of the Son.⁸¹ Waldstein offers, "[T]he Father's eternal love of the Son becomes effectively present in Jesus's death; it is as if it were transferred and continued into the economy of salvation: "...so that the world may understand that you sent me and that you loved them as you loved me (17:23, see 15:9)."⁸² C.H. Dodd offers this insight:

The human career of Jesus is, as if it were a projection of this eternal relation which is love upon the field of time. It is such not as a mere reflection or representation of the reality, but in the sense that the love which the Father bore the Son "before the foundation of the world," and which he perpetually returns, is actively at work in the historical life of Jesus.⁸³

As the one sent by the Father, all the signs, all the words, all the actions of the Son reveal the Father's love, which is without beginning or end. The Son was sent to make known the love of the Father and by being "lifted up" in glory, bringing all into eternal life, which is the love of the Father. The passion narrative is a realization of the words in John 3:16. The Son became man to reveal the Father whom no one had seen. The cross is the full revelation of the Father's love as He is reflected in His glorious Son. Consistently in John the "work" of God is to bring humanity to "believe" (Jn 6:29). That task is fully accomplished on the Cross for only now can people know the Father as Love which is revealed in His glorious Son (cf. 17:3).

⁷⁹ Waldstein, "Mission of Jesus and Disciples in John," 322.

⁸⁰ Thüsing, *Erhöhung und Verherrlichung*, 214; see also de la Potterie, *La Verite dans Saint Jean*, vol. 2, 723, with note 247. Quoted in Waldstein, 322.

⁸¹ I might add that it is the Son's love that is the glory of the Father.

⁸² Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John," 323.

⁸³ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 262.

In the Gospel of John there are few instances of Jesus at prayer, and yet when he prays, it serves as an opportunity to teach the disciples about the source of His glory: the Father.⁸⁴ In this pericope, Jesus, the glorified High Priest is returning to his Father as a representative of humanity, presenting a great prayer of unitive love. Brown notes that in this prayer in John 17 “we have the Preface to the historical and eternally valid offering of the cross.”⁸⁵

To summarize, first, the Father’s love is what determines the identity of the Son, who receives life—an eternally begetting in love from the Father. Second, as being sent by the Father, the Son is disposed to do the Father’s will, even to the cross. Third, the glory of the Son is the radiant love of the Father that makes them one. Fourth, the mission of the Son expresses His eternal life with the Father. The mission of the Son is “the concrete mode in which the Father’s love is extended and continued into the word.”⁸⁶ And fifth, it is in the mission of the Son that the Father’s love becomes known in the world. Mission in the Gospel of John is the visible reality of Trinitarian love coming into the world so that all might believe and have eternal life. The event of salvation does not exist as something abstract; it exists as the tangible reality of Divine love, which becomes present in the mission of Jesus Christ and continues in the mission of the Church. In this God and human persons are glorified.

Culpepper observes that in the Gospel of John one is never far from the theme of life, and God’s life-giving mission is rooted in God’s love which is “inescapably missional.”⁸⁷ Michael Gorman illustrates the missional purpose of the Son in the Gospel of John using three key terms in the Johannine lexicon: love, light, and life.⁸⁸

LOVE →	LIGHT →	LIFE
Motivation →	Revelation →	Participation

For Gorman, mission is motivated by love and reveals the light that fosters participation in the life of God.⁸⁹ He builds upon the patristic and Eastern Orthodox missionary paradigm as the revelation of the light, originating in love, and issuing life.⁹⁰ The Son is sent from love, to reveal love through

⁸⁴ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*, 84.
⁸⁵ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*, 84.
⁸⁶ Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 332.
⁸⁷ Culpepper, “Creation Ethics of the Gospel of John,” 87.
⁸⁸ Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 46.
⁸⁹ Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 46.
⁹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 210–16.

the life-giving love of the cross. The followers of the Son are invited to participate through the power of the Holy Spirit in His mission to bring life.

2. *The Son Who Sends the Disciples to Continue the Divine Mission*

In the Gospel of John, the importance of the disciples’ continuing the mission of Jesus is evident in the first words of the Risen Lord to them. Jesus says to the disciples in John 20:21–22, “As the Father sends me, so I send you. And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.”

εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] πάλιν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν· καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς (Jn 20:21). καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον (Jn 20:22).

“As the father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21). The perfect tense of the first verb (ἀπέσταλκεν) indicates that the mission of Jesus is viewed from the standpoint of the permanence of its effects. The fact that it is this same mission—which is to be continued—is signified by the shift to the present tense for the second verb (πέμπω). The Church, then, is not to engage in a new work of its own creation but rather is to continue the ministry of Jesus. Craig Keener offers a summation of the importance of the commissioning passage in the Fourth Gospel for the life of the Church:

Whereas the sending of the Son is the heart of the Fourth Gospel’s plot, its conclusion is open-ended, spilling into the story of the disciples. Thus, the church’s mission is, for John’s theology, to carry on Jesus’s mission (14:12; 17:18). Because Jesus was sending “just as” the Father sent him (20:21), the disciples would carry on Jesus’s mission, including not only signs pointing to Jesus (14:12) but also witness (15:27) through which the Spirit would continue Jesus’s presence and work (16:7-11).⁹¹

The emphasis of the construction “Just as...so also” is a parallelism, not a contrast. This may be seen from identical constructions at John 15:9 and 17:18. Here we have the parallel of the Father loving the Son and the Son loving the disciples *and* the Father sending the Son and the Son sending the disciples. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (Jn 15:9). “As you sent me into the world, so I am sending them into the world” (Jn 17:18). “As the Father sends me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

John 15:9	Father loves Son	Son loves disciples
John 20:21	Father sends Son	Son sends disciples

⁹¹ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2:1204.

It is not possible to read John 20:21 without remembering the parallel with John 15:9. The disciples are sent in the same way they are loved, which is to say the disciples are loved as the Father loves the Son and they are sent as the Father sends the Son. Indeed, this is a petition in the priestly prayer of Jesus verses 17:26 in which Jesus prays: “that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.”

In John 20:21–22, a relationship is expressed between the mission of the Church and the mission of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This pericope is considered a key text for scholars of Trinitarian missiology.⁹² “John’s Gospel is one of the strongest biblical supports for the understanding of mission as *missio Dei* that is the movement of God to man, in creation, in incarnation and redemption, a movement involving Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁹³

British missiologist Lesslie Newbigin considered how John 20:21–22 exemplifies the model of a Trinitarian missiology.⁹⁴ Michael Goheen, who wrote his dissertation on Newbigin, determined that John 20:21 was the key text regarding the interrelation of the messianic mission of Christ and the apostolic mission of the Church.⁹⁵ However, Goheen did not consider John 20:22 in which Jesus said receive the Holy Spirit. These two verses (and they should perhaps be read together) display the Trinitarian mission continuing in the life and witness of the apostolic Church.⁹⁶

Being sent like Jesus, the disciples will be required to love and lay down their lives not only for friends but also for enemies.

Jesus’s love command and example do not end with love among the disciples, nor do they have internal unity as their ultimate goal. Such love and unity are meant to bring others—specifically

⁹² See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Today’s Mission* (Council for World Mission and Evangelism Study pamphlet 2, (London: Edinburgh Housing, 1963), 3; John G. Flett, *The Witness of God, the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth and the Nature of the Christian Community*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmann), 2010, 42; Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 67; Donald Senior, C. , Carroll Stuhlmueller, C. , *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 298; Andreas J. Kosetenberger, *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), pp2-4. See also Michael W. Goheen, *As the Father Has Sent Me, So I Am Sending You: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2000).

⁹³ William Klaiber, *Call and Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 61: “If the missiological slogan of the *missio Dei* as the foundation of all mission work applies anywhere in the New Testament, then it is the Johannine writings.”

⁹⁴ Newbigin, *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Today’s Mission*, Volume 2 of C. W. M. E. Study Pamphlets, 3.

⁹⁵ Michael Goheen, *As The Father Has Sent Me, So I Am Sending You: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology*, (Zoetermer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2000).

⁹⁶ See Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 67

others who are hostile to God and to God's agents in the world—into Divine love and life....The disciples are sent out of Divine love, shared among themselves, to bring others, even haters and persecutors, into the love of the Father, Son, and community.⁹⁷

Trinitarian life refers to the inner life of God, a life of deep, personal knowing and loving. The Father, through a perfect knowledge of Himself, generates the Son, one with Him in nature but a distinct Person. Knowledge elicits love, and from the perfect love of the Father and the Son for one another, there proceeds the third Person of the Trinity, the Spirit, one in nature with the Father and Son but a distinct Person. Within the Trinity, therefore, there is one Divine nature, two distinct processions (generation and spiration), and three distinct Persons (Father, Son, and Spirit).

Raymond Brown explains this continuity of mission in the following way:

The special Johannine contribution to the theology of mission is that the Father's sending of the Son serves both as the model and the ground for the Son's sending of the disciples. Their mission is to continue the Son's mission; and this requires that the Son must be present to them during this mission, just as the Father had to be present to the Son during His mission.⁹⁸

Orthodox theologian G. Mar Osthathios provides a compelling synopsis of the Trinitarian missiology in John:

[T]he Father created the world through the Logos in the movement of the Spirit, the Son redeemed the universe, incarnate by the tabernacling of the Spirit as the agent of the Father, and the same Father will consummate the salvation of the world through the Holy Spirit, sent by the Son from the Father as the Paraclete.⁹⁹

Trinitarian processions are understood not only as movements within the mystery of God, as such, but as God moving in saving love within the world.

Three times in John's Gospel Jesus explicitly commissions these disciples as his "sent ones" (4:38; 17:18; 20:21). Let us look at these texts in reverse order. Johannes Nissen identifies these three occasions of the Son sending the disciples in John.¹⁰⁰

a) *The mission command* (20:19–23)

Jesus came and stood in their midst (ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς). This "coming" of the Risen Lord harkens back to the Incarnation, to the coming of the Word, who Word came to stay, "to dwell among us" (1:14). The task of forgiving or retaining sins is given to the disciples by the risen Lord in the context of their being sent as he was sent and is oriented not to community members only,

⁹⁷ Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 174.

⁹⁸ Raymond Brown, "The Gospel According to John" *Anchor Bible*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 1036.

⁹⁹ Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, "Mission and the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ," *Mission Studies* 12, no. 1 (1995): 85.

¹⁰⁰ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 77–79.

but to “anyone” (20:21–23). Thus, the Church is founded upon forgiveness: the forgiveness of Peter and the ministry of forgiveness of the apostles. The disciples’ mission is a continuation of the mission of the Lamb of God who “comes to take away the sins of the world” (1:29). In them, Jesus’s mission to restore human and Divine friendship continues. The Church is to become the sacrament of friendship with God.

b) Sent into the world (17:18)

This pericope indicates that the disciples are sent into the world: “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (17:18). In this prayer of the Son in John 17 the verb *send* (Greek: *apostellein*) occurs seven times. Legrand, therefore, is correct in calling the text “the great missionary prayer.”¹⁰¹ The disciples are *sent into* the world, but *they are not of* the world (cf. 17:16). The scope of the Divine mission which continues through the disciples is the whole created order. Mission has a cosmic horizon.

c) Reaping and harvesting (4:31–38)

The third passage, in which Jesus gives a direct commission to mission, is at the end of the story of his conversation with the Samaritan woman (4:31–38). Here the mission of the disciples is characterized as reaping and harvesting what has been sown by “others” (4:35–38). Who are these “others” in whose labors the disciples are going to enter (4:38)? It has been suggested that the “others” were the prophets in the Old Testament or John the Baptist and his disciples or Jesus associating the Father with Himself in the work (4:34). The last suggestion is the most attractive, since in the Johannine theological perspective, any mission is preceded by the missions of the Father, the Son, and the Paraclete. Therefore, according to Nissen, the disciples’ mission is none other than harvesting what has been Divinely sown.¹⁰² In 4:36 mission is presented as “receiving (wages)” and “gathering (fruit).” This concept of “gathering” plays a significant role in other Johannine passages. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus has to gather the “other sheep” into one “sheepfold” (10:16). He also has “to gather into one the dispersed children of God” (11:52). “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself” (12:32). Almost all these passages associate “gathering” with the death of Jesus. This is confirmed in 12:24: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies it produces

¹⁰¹ Lucien Legrand, *Mission in the Bible: Unity and Plurality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 140.

¹⁰² Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 78.

much fruit.” This implies that from Jesus’s death will come the new people of God, the union of God’s scattered children, the gathering of the flock (12:24; 12:32; 11:51; 10:16; 17:21). For John, Jesus’s bearing fruit is missional. Consider John 4:36 the reaper who gathers in fruit for eternal life receives wages (Jn 4:36).¹⁰³ These actions of sowing then reaping and harvesting are consistent with the notions of both the sending and gathering in mission, the centripetal and centrifugal movement in mission.

E. The Spirit Who Is Sent by the Father and the Son to the Disciples

In the Gospel of John, the Greek word *pneuma* can refer to wind (3:8); the animating force of human life (3:6); Jesus’s own life force (11:33; 13:21; 19:30); something Jesus gives the disciples (20:22); and/or something that comes from God (1:32–33; 3:5–8; 15:26). The phrase “Holy Spirit” is used in John only three times, in contrast to its frequent use in Luke and Acts. However, the phrase “Spirit of Truth” appears only in John (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). In the Fourth Gospel, the “Holy Spirit” is present near the beginning (Jesus’s baptism; 1:32–33)¹⁰⁴, the middle (the Last Supper discourse; 14:26), and the end (the first appearance of the resurrected Jesus (20:22)).¹⁰⁵

John gives the Holy Spirit an unusual but highly significant title, namely “Paraclete.” The Greek verb *παρακαλέω* (*parakaleo*—“to call to one’s side”) occurs often in the New Testament particularly in the Pauline corpus. But the noun *παράκλητος* (*parakletos*) occurs only in the Johannine literature. The Holy Spirit is “another Advocate” (14:16), implying that Jesus Himself was the first “Advocate” (cf. 1 Jn 2:1).

In John’s Gospel, the Holy Spirit who is sent by the Father and the Son to the disciples is of central importance for mission.¹⁰⁶ The Spirit is sent by the Father in John 14:16 and 14:26 and by the Son himself in John 15:26, 16:7, and 20:21.¹⁰⁷ The Son speaks tenderly of the sending of the Spirit in the Final Discourse. Fulfilling His promise, the risen Lord sends the disciples on

¹⁰³ Briger Olsson and Jean Gray, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text-Linguistic Analysis of John 2: 1-11 and 4: 1-42* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1974), 247.

¹⁰⁴ It might seem curious that the Spirit is not mentioned already in the Prologue; yet the “Logos” in John 1:1–5 has much the same role as the “Spirit” in the creation accounts of Gen 1–2.

¹⁰⁵ Texts referring to the Spirit in the Gospel of John 1:32-34; 3:5-8; 3:31-34; 4:21; 6:61-63; 7:37-39; 11:33; 13:21; 14:14-17; 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7; 16:12-15; 19:30; 20:21-23.

¹⁰⁶ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 79.

¹⁰⁷ Yet the relation of the Spirit/Paraclete to the Father and to the Son is a bit complicated in the text itself.: Is the Paraclete sent by the Father (14:16, 26) or by Jesus himself (15:26; 16:7)? Why can the world not “receive” the Spirit/Paraclete (14:17)?

mission with the Spirit. These passages demonstrate the pivotal role of the Spirit in Johannine missiology:

- And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you do know Him, for He abides with you and will be in you (Jn 14:16).
- But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you (Jn 14:26).
- When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me (Jn 15:26).
- But I tell you the truth; it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you (Jn 16:7).
- As the Father has sent me, so also I am sending you. When He had said this, He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (Jn 20:21–22).

In the farewell discourses, the Spirit is called the Paraclete, a term which has a range of meanings: helper, comforter, advocate, intercessor, or mediator.¹⁰⁸ According to Nissen, the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son continues to be with the disciples in a manner similar to how the Son was with them. Thus, the Paraclete is “with” the disciples (14:16), “teaches” and “guides” them (14:26; 16:13), reveals the Father’s message to them (16:13), and enters into a prophetic confrontation with the unbelieving world (16:8–11).¹⁰⁹

To be clear, the Paraclete does not replace the presence of the risen Christ in the community but intensifies it. Senior points out that this intensification is linked to the Church’s missionary experience. The Paraclete is sent from the Father by Jesus to “bear witness” to Jesus, just as the disciples, too, will “bear witness” (15:26–27). It confronts the power of evil in the world, just as Jesus had done and just as the community must do (16:8–11; 17:14–18). The “greater works” (14:12) done by the community and its more penetrating understanding of Jesus’s teaching are also tied to the community’s mission experience.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 79.

¹⁰⁹ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 79.

¹¹⁰ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 287.

In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Aquinas explains that in Chapter 15 Jesus indicates four things about the Spirit: the Spirit's freedom, tenderness, procession, and activity. All four shed light on the mission of the Spirit in John. The Son indicates the Spirit's freedom, or power when he says, "*But when the Paraclete comes*" (Jn 15:26).

Strictly speaking that person is said to come who comes willingly and on his own authority; and this is true of the Holy Spirit, because "the Spirit blows where it wills" (3:8); "I called upon God, and the Spirit of wisdom came to me" (Wis 7:7). Therefore, in saying, whom I shall send, he does not suggest force but origin.¹¹¹

Aquinas then describes how Jesus illuminates the Spirit's tenderness: "Since the Paraclete is the Love of God he makes us scorn earthly things and cling to God; and thus, takes away our pain and sadness and gives us joy in Divine things."¹¹² The explanation regarding the twofold procession of the Holy Spirit in Aquinas' *Commentary on the Gospel of John* is quite lengthy and contains several important clarifications. The first is that the Spirit is not a replacement for the Son:

Note that the Holy Spirit is said to be sent not because the Spirit is changing place, since the Spirit fills the entire universe, as we read in Wisdom (1:7), but because, by grace, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell in a new way in those he makes a temple of God: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16).¹¹³

The second point is that there is no discrepancy in saying that the Holy Spirit is sent *and* that He comes:

In saying that the Spirit comes the grandeur of his divinity is indicated: the "Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he will" (1 Cor 12:11). And he is said to be sent to indicate his procession from another, for the fact that he sanctifies the rational creature by indwelling he has from that other, from whom he has it that he is, just as it is from another that the Son has whatever he does.¹¹⁴

Third, Aquinas explains the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son together:

This is indicated in "He showed me the river of the water of life," that is, the Holy Spirit, "flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb," that is, of Christ (Rev 22:1). Therefore, when speaking of the sending of the Holy Spirit he mentions the Father and the Son, who send the Spirit by the same and equal power. Thus sometimes he mentions the Father as sending the Spirit, but not without the Son....[A]t other times he says that he himself sends the Holy Spirit but not without the Father, as here, whom I shall send you from the Father, because whatever the Son does he has from the Father: "The Son cannot do anything of himself" (5:19).¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 126: 2059.

¹¹² Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 126: 2060.

¹¹³ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol 3, sec. 126: 2061.

¹¹⁴ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol 3, sec. 126: 2061.

¹¹⁵ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol 3, sec. 126: 2061.

The Spirit continues the mission of the Father by continually making the Son present to his followers: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:22). The Church is at the center of the Holy Spirit’s activity in the world.¹¹⁶ The last narrative involving the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John indicates this close interconnection between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the witness of Jesus’s disciples to the world. The Son clearly indicated that the mission of the disciples would be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷ As the Spirit was present at creation, the Spirit is present in the creation of the new community of Christians tasked with renewing the world through the forgiveness of sin and restoring friendship with God and friendship with each other.

F. Conclusion: Mission in the Gospel of John

As we have seen, an inductive study of John’s Gospel suggests that mission is first of all Trinitarian: the Father sends, the Son is sent and sends, the Spirit is sent and animates the continuation of the mission in the disciples. Secondly, mission is relational: the cause of sending is love; it is necessary to abide, to be united with the sender. The mission of the Son is an expression of his filial relation to the Father as well as His relation to the world as Light, Way, Truth, Gate, Good Shepherd, Vine, Bread of Life, Resurrection, Messiah. Third, mission reveals the Sender. The sender’s love and glory are made known through the words, deeds, and total gift of self by the one sent. Fourth, mission is multidimensional. Mission in the Gospel of John may be understood as a specific task or work which a group or an individual carries out in union with the Sender and in love.¹¹⁸

For John, the mission of the Son, the Spirit, and the community are interwoven.¹¹⁹ The Son is sent by the Father to testify about the Father and to do his work. The Spirit is sent by both the Father and the Son to testify about the Son. Finally, the disciples are sent by Jesus with the Spirit to continue the Divine mission of testifying to the truth. In all of these instances, mission takes place in the world and has salvation as the goal.¹²⁰ In all of these instances, mission makes the Father known so as foster belief and grant the fullness of life. Similarly, the mission of the Son,

¹¹⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. For Foster (London, UK: Burns & Oats, 1969), 335.

¹¹⁷ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 261.

¹¹⁸ Andreas J. Köstenberger offers a similar definition of mission in the Gospel of John in his article “The Challenge of a Systematized Biblical Theology of Mission: Missiological Insights from the Gospel of John” Köstenberger offers: “Mission in John may be understood as the specific task which a person or group seeks to accomplish, involving various modes of movement.” 447.

¹¹⁹ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 292.

¹²⁰ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 292.

the Spirit, and the community all involve a deep interpersonal relationship between the sender and the sent, engendering unity and oneness¹²¹ evidenced by the authority given to the one sent by the sender and the response of loving, humble obedience in the one sent. In the mission of the Son, the Spirit, and the community, the gift of self—kenotic sacrifice—is required. The mission of the Son, the Spirit, and the community acknowledges that the promises of God are being fulfilled in the eternal now of “this hour.” It is the Divine mission that the followers of Jesus are invited to participate in and continue until the end of time. There is no question that the purpose of the Gospel of John is the mystical, missional union of the disciples with Jesus in God through the Spirit.¹²² The final paragraph of Jesus’s prayer in John 17 expresses this profoundly:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you Father are in me and I and in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me (Jn 17:20-23).

Jesus prays not only for the disciples with him but also for those who will be the fruit of the disciples’ missionary efforts (“those who will believe in me through their word”).¹²³ Brown helps us to understand the reference to “those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one” (17:20). The vital connection with future believers, the Church, will not be lost, for Jesus will dwell in them. “The indwelling of Jesus, the Christians’ earthly share in eternal life, provides the great bond of union connecting Christians of all time with the Father.”¹²⁴ Jesus loves them with the same love as he loves his first disciples, and this love is patterned on the eternal love of the Father for the Son.

This love of Father for the Son, now being extended not only to the disciples but to all who come to know the Father through their missionary efforts is a love that mutually glorifies. As the Son and Father mutually glorify one another through the complete self-gift of the Son on the Cross and the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son, the disciples too are to share in their eternal glory. One way to understand this glory is that the kenotic love of the disciples reveals the Son and the Father’s glory and so glorifies the disciples. Glory can be thought of as a reflection of the Divine Light and Love upon one who gives oneself to the Trinity in love so that others may come to know

¹²¹ Senior and StuhlmueLLer, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 292.

¹²² Sandra Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 2003), 15.

¹²³ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study*, 129.

¹²⁴ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*, 86.

and believe in God. As the moon reflects the light and glory of sun, so the disciples reflect the luminous glory of the love between the Father and the Son.

As with the unity between the Father and the Son, the unity among disciples is not an end unto itself. It is so that “the world may come to believe you have sent me” (17:21). Unity is not simply so that Christians get along with one another. It is to serve as a witness to the world. The oneness in love among the disciples which reflects the love of the Trinity is to be so good, true, and beautiful that it causes the world to believe.¹²⁵

The Gospel writer permits the disciples at the table of the Last Supper and us to “eavesdrop” on the Son’s request to the Father. With the disciples listening in, Jesus tells the Father “that the mutuality between himself and the Father that he passes on to believers is ‘glory.’”¹²⁶ The disciples receive *the same* glory the Son has received from the Father: *καὶ γὰρ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς* (Jn 17:22). Moloney offers this insight:

God was made known through the gift of the covenant at Sinai and has continually been made known throughout Israel’s history in the “glory of God” (*kabod* הַעֲרֹכָה YHWH), especially in and through the law. But the love and oneness existing between the Father and the Son from all time (Jn 1:1-2; 17:5) have been made visible in and through the gift of the Son (1:14; 2:11; 3:16–17; 5:44; 7:17; 8:50–54; 11:4; 11:40). This too is “glory”. The glory, the love bestowed upon the Son by the Father, is present in the human story in the glory that Jesus has given to believers. The love that the believers bear for one another reflects the love that exists between the Father and the Son. They too will reveal the glory of God.¹²⁷

This is a petition for the participation of the disciples in the love and the glory of the Father and Son with the Spirit. “I have made known to them your name and will make it known that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them” (17:26).

With this cry of triumph as a close to his prayer, Jesus draws all of us into his embrace. The world has refused to hear his Father; but we who believe have known the Father, and thus have a share in his love and in his Son. Jesus had made his Father known; now he proceeds to the ultimate revelation of the cross, the resurrection and the giving of the Spirit.¹²⁸

In inseparable union, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit engage in the loving act of redemption. In the fullness of time, they did so by executing the Divine missions toward creation. The Son and the Spirit are sent out into the world (*exitus*) that they may draw redeemed humankind

¹²⁵ “The Church does not engage in proselytism. Instead, she grows by attraction. Just as Christ draws all to himself by the power of his love, culminating in the sacrifice of the cross, so the Church fulfills her mission to the extent that in union with Christ, she accomplishes every one of her works in spiritual and practical imitation of the love of her Lord.” See Pope Benedict, Address the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, May 13, 2007.

¹²⁶ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study*, 130.

¹²⁷ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, 130.

¹²⁸ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, 130.

back into participation in the Divine life (*reditus*). Then, having been reconciled to the Father through the Son by the Spirit, believers are called to participate in God's mission in the world; as the Church, they are sent out (*exitus*) to preach the Gospel and, thus, beckon the lost world to return to God (*reditus*). In so doing, the mission of the Church continues the Divine mission by the *dynamis* of Love.

The Son, in his final discourse to his disciples says, "As [καθώς] the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, as [καθώς] I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love" (15:9–10). And so, in His loving obedience to the Father, unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8), the Son freely fulfills his atoning mission (Is 53:10) by embodying the fullest expression of love in laying His life down for friends (Jn 15:13) so that the world might be saved (Jn 3:17). One of the final commands of the Risen Lord to his followers is "as the Father has sent me, so I send you. ... Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:21–22). Those the Son sends are given the grace of the indwelling of the Spirit to help them to freely go where they are sent, which includes the places where they do not want to go (Jn 21:18).

CHAPTER VI: FRIENDSHIP IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

“Pure friendship is an image of the original and perfect friendship that belongs to the Trinity and is the very essence of God.”¹ – Simone Weil

The Gospel of John is an essential text for the discussion of friendship in the New Testament.² This is due to the fact that the vocabulary of friendship especially the noun φίλος and the related verb φιλέω are found in key moments of the narrative.³ This coupled with the occurrences of ἀγαπᾶ highlights the importance of concept of friendship in the Gospel of John. Friendship may seem like a relatively insignificant motif in the Gospel of John, as it is neither a philosophical discourse on the nature of friendship nor an explicit narrative on friendship per se. However, Martin M. Culy asserts in *Echoes of Friendship in the Gospel of John* that the classical notion of ideal friendship pervades the Fourth Gospel. Culy summarizes his research as follows:

[T]he array of friendship language that is used to describe not only the relationship between the Father and Jesus, but also the relationship between Jesus and his followers’ points to a conclusion that Jesus does become a genuine friend to his followers. In doing so, he invites and allows them to enter into the kind of intimate relationship that previously had been reserved for members of the Godhead alone. The Fourth Gospel’s use of the friendship motif is...theologically revolutionary in terms of its startling claim about human-Divine relations. The Word who was with God and is God invites his followers to be with God in the full measure of intimacy that only the language of ideal friendship can begin to describe.⁴

The Gospel writer is not hesitant to employ friendship language to describe the relation of the Father and the Son (Jn 5:20); the relation of Christ to the disciples (Jn 15:15); and the relationship of the disciples to one another.⁵ In the entire narrative, the verb φιλέω occurs 13 times.

¹ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1951), 208

² See book length studies on Friendship in John: Martin M. Culy, *Echoes of Friendship in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield, Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010); E. Puthenkandathil. *Philos: A Designation for the Jesus-Disciple Relationship. An Exegetico-Theological Investigation of the Term in the Fourth Gospel* (Frankfurt: Peter Land, 1993); J. M. Ford, *Redeemer-Friend and Mother: Salvation in Antiquity and in the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997); Sharon Ringe, *Wisdom’s Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999).

³ Gail R. O’Day, “Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John,” *Interpretation*, April 2004, 144-157; See also John Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” *Interpretation* (July 2007), 291.

⁴ Martin M. Culy, *Echoes of Friendship in the Gospel of John*, New Testament Monographs, 30, (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 2010), 187-188. See also Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*.

⁵ See John Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” *Interpretation* July 2007, 291.

The frequency of its use is notable among New Testament documents. The imagery of friendship is present in the first half of the narrative but comes into sharpest focus in the final discourse, namely chapters 14–17.

This chapter will first address the linguistic usage of φίλος and φιλέω. Second, a study of John 15:13–15 will serve as a key to understanding friendship in the Gospel of John. Third, Jesus as a friend will be discussed. Finally, the Johannine concept of friendship will be presented based upon the conceptual field of friendship in the text.

A. A Lexicographical Exploration of φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ

The concept of love in the Johannine literature is a significant topic for scholars of various theological disciplines, including biblical text criticism, Moral Theology, Pastoral Theology, and Dogmatic Theology. The concept of love in the Gospel of John and the Letters of John includes God as Love (1 Jn 4:7, 17); love among the Divine Persons (Jn 3:35; 5:20; 10:17); Divine love for humanity (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 3:16); human love for God (1 Jn 3:1; 4:11; 5:2–4), and love among human persons (1 Jn 2:10; 3:16; 3:23; 4:11–12;). Within this study of love in the Johannine writings, friendship emerges as a distinct aspect of love. The concepts of love and friendship in the Gospel of John are so intertwined it is difficult to unravel them.⁶

Numerous scholars including Franz Neiryneck,⁷ Gilbert van Belle,⁸ and Thomas Popp⁹ assert that the key to interpreting the Gospel of John is found by understanding the evangelist's

⁶ Scholars have long debated the significance of John's usage of the two verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ. Aside from Origen, who saw a distinction in the meaning of the two words, most of the Greek Fathers like Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, saw no real difference of meaning. Those who see a distinction in meaning are a number of British scholars of the nineteenth century, especially Trench, Westcott, and Plummer. Their thinking has been advanced by Spicq, Lenski, and Hendricksen. But a majority of modern scholars decline to see a real difference in the meaning of the two words in this context, among them Bernard, Moffatt, Bonsirven, Bultmann, Barrett, Brown, Beutler, Morris, Haenchen, Keener, and Beasley-Murray. For excellent sources on the verbs being synonymous see Francis, T. Gignac, "The Use of Verbal Variety in the Fourth Gospel," in *Transcending Boundaries: Contemporary Readings of the New Testament; Essays in Honor of Francis J. Moloney*, ed. Rekha M. Chennattu and Mary L Coloe, BibScRel 187 (Rome: LAS, 2005), 193–95. The common argument for the verbs being synonymous is that it was the literary style of the time not to repeat the same word but rather use synonyms. Yet I propose that in examining the text closely there are occasions in which the two verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ are employed not as synonyms, but distinctly. This distinct usage helps to convey the message of the author. The scholarship on variation, amplification, and repetition in the Gospel of John by Neiryneck, Labahn, Popp, and Frey influenced my thinking.

⁷ Frans Neiryneck, "Evangelica."

⁸ Belle, Labahn, and Maritz, *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel*.

⁹ Thomas Popp, *Grammatik Des Geistes: Literarische Kunst Und Theologische Konzeption in Johannes 3 Und 6*.

use of repetition, variation, and amplification, “whereby he endeavors to keep the attention of his readers time and again.”¹⁰ Jörg Frey also concludes that the Johannine

“theology of love is developed in a sequence of different love expressions which are embedded in a number of different scenes and contexts within the flow of the Gospel of John. By the repetition and variation of the love motif a semantic network of different love expressions and love relations is established, and every single relation or aspect has to be understood within the coherent network recognizable when the text is read in its narrative sequence.”¹¹

Frey explains that it is important to pay attention to the thematic repetitions, variations, and amplifications in the Gospel of John so as to appreciate the coherence of the text. He states that the “disregard of some of its elements, either as a mere tradition or as a secondary insertion (especially John 13,34f. and 15–17) leads to an incomplete and one-sided understanding of the Johannine concept of love.”¹²

The following paragraphs will explore how the verbs φιλέω (and the noun form φίλος) and ἀγαπῶ are employed both synonymously and distinctly in the Gospel of John. In the Gospel of John the verb ἀγαπῶ has come to mean the self-giving Christian love, while φιλέω maintains its classical meaning of friendship-love.¹³ This study of φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ will help to illuminate the Johannine concept of friendship. However, we need to look beyond these actual words and explore the concept of friendship within the text, which forms the theology of friendship in the Gospel of John. There is more to the theme of love and friendship in the Gospel of John than those places in the narrative where nouns and verbs for love and friendship are found.¹⁴ It is essential to observe what happens in the Gospel as well as what is said. John especially conveys God’s action of loving. The vocabulary of love is part of the description of these actions, but attention must also be paid to the actions in the narrative that depict love and friendship. It is thus insufficient to examine only those passages containing the vocabulary. We must rather engage in a semantic or conceptual field study, that is, to examine how love and friendship are portrayed and displayed in the Gospel of John. Nonetheless, let us start with the words themselves as a way to see the prominence of the topic of love and friendship in the Gospel of John. The vocabulary is a good place to begin to

¹⁰ Belle, Labahn, and Maritz, *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel*, 84.

¹¹ Jörg Frey, “Love-Relations in the Fourth Gospel: Establishing a Semantic Network,” in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 223 (Leuven; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2009), 174.

¹² Frey, “Love-Relations in the Fourth Gospel,” 194.

¹³ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study*, 2.

¹⁴ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, x-xi.

understand the significance of the mission of Divine love consummated on the Cross of Christ in the Gospel of John.

In the classical period, the noun φίλος is generally used to signify intimate associates who are not closely related by blood or marriage, in the sense of a “dear one.”¹⁵ Terms related to φίλος could refer to a wide range of affectionate bonds. The verb φιλέω (to love) as well as the abstract noun φιλία can include a variety of positive relationships between parents and children, comrades in arms, and other formal connections.¹⁶

Philía (φιλία) means friendship and dispassionate virtuous love. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity. In ancient texts, philía denotes a general type of love used for love between friends and family members, as well as between lovers. This, in its verb (phileo) or adjective (philos) form, is the only other word for love used in the New Testament besides agape (ἀγαπᾶ) but even then, it is used substantially less frequently.¹⁷

John uses the noun *friend* (*philos*, φίλος) six times:

- ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου (the friend of the Bridegroom, Jn 3:29)
- Λάζαρος ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν (our friend Lazarus, Jn 11:11)
- ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ (lay down his life for his friends, Jn 15:13)
- ὑμεῖς φίλοι μου ἐστε (You are My friends if you do what I command, Jn 15:14)
- δὲ εἶρηκα φίλους ὅτι πάντα (but I have called you friends, Jn 15:15)
- οὐκ εἶ φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος (you are no friend of Caesar, Jn 19:12)

It is the use of the verb φιλέω in the Gospel of John that perhaps is most interesting and worthy of our exploration in the following paragraphs. The verb φιλέω (to love as a friend) is more common in the Gospel of John than the noun φίλος (friend). The dynamic character of love in the Gospel of John is revealed in the grammar. Biblical scholar Ernest Lussier explains, “Johannine usage prefers the use of verbs for the concept of love, thus giving more stress to the active element in love.”¹⁸ This is seen in text: the Good Shepherd lays down his life, the friend lays down his life, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples and lays down His life. Friendship is not an ascribed relationship, but it needs to be demonstrated actively. Friendship is revealed and acknowledged through actions, particularly loving actions of self-gift that benefit the friend.

¹⁵ David Konstan, “Friendship, Frankness, and Flattery,” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (Leiden, Netherlands/Boston, MA: Brill, 1996), 8.

¹⁶ Konstan, “Friendship, Frankness, and Flattery,” 8.

¹⁷ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015).

¹⁸ Louis Bouyer, *The Fourth Gospel* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1964), 63.

Many scholars propose that the verbs φιλέω¹⁹ and ἀγαπῶ²⁰ are used as synonyms in the Gospel of John.²¹ The reason given is that using different words to express the same thought was a characteristic of ancient writing. Variation was not only common but was preferable to repetition of the same word.²² This argument is advanced by listing numerous passages in which the verbs function interchangeably for all practical purposes.²³

Both φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ are employed in the Gospel of John to name the Father’s love for the Son (ἀγαπῶ in 3:35; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23–24, 26; φιλέω in 5:20). Both are used to show Jesus’s love for the members of the family from Bethany (ἀγαπῶ in 11:5; φιλέω in 11:3, 36) and both are used for the Father’s love of the disciples (ἀγαπῶ in 17:23; φιλέω in 16:27). The two verbs for love are presented here to demonstrate how they are used to express similar ideas. Each sentence has the same subject and object.

- The Father ἀγαπᾷ the Son: 3:35; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23–24, 26
- The Father φιλεῖ the Son: 5:20
- The Son ἀγαπᾷ the Father: 14:31
- The Son φιλεῖ the Father: No examples
- The Father ἀγαπᾷ believers: 17:23; also 3:16
- The Father φιλεῖ believers: 16:27
- The Son ἀγαπᾷ believers: 11:5; 13:1, 23, 34; 15:9, 12; 19:26; 21:7, 20
- The Son φιλεῖ believers: 11:33, 36; 20:2

¹⁹ “*Philia* (φιλία *philia*) means friendship and dispassionate virtuous love. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity. In ancient texts, *philia* denotes a general type of love, used for love between friends, and family members, as well as between lovers. This, in its verb or adjective form (i.e., *phileo* or *philos*), is the only other word for love used in the New Testament besides *agape*, but even then, it is used substantially less frequently.” H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Benediction Classics, October 2010).

²⁰ “*Agape* (ἀγάπη *agápē*) refers to a general affection of “love” rather than the attraction suggested by *eros*; it is used in ancient texts to denote feelings for a good meal, one’s children, and one’s spouse. It can be described as the feeling of being content or holding one in high regard. This broad meaning of *agape* or its verb *agapao* can be seen extensively in the Septuagint as the Greek translation of the common Hebrew term for love (*ahaba*), which denotes not only God’s love for humanity but also one’s affection for one’s spouse and children, brotherly love, and even sexual desire. It is uncertain why *agape* was chosen, but the similarity of consonant sounds (*ahaba*) may have played a part. This usage provides the context for the choice of this otherwise still quite obscure word, in preference to other more common Greek words, as the most frequently used word for love in the New Testament. But, when it is used in the New Testament, its meaning becomes more focused, mainly referring to unconditional, self-sacrificing, giving love to all—both friend and enemy.” H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon*.

²¹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 1–2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 324–25.

²² See for example, Aulus Gellius 1.4; Anderson, *Glossary*, 53–54, 114, in LXX; Lee, “Translations of OT.”: 776–777.

²³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1–2:324.

Although the above is often used to demonstrate that the Gospel writer uses the verbs synonymously, it can also be true that there are distinctions between the verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ in the Gospel of John.²⁴ What is essential in determining the meaning of the verb is context.

There have been theologians from the patristic age to the present time who have argued that φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ in certain instances have distinct meanings in the Gospel of John. In the patristic period, Origen makes the case that in John 21:15–17, φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ are not synonyms and ἀγαπῶ is a superior form of love.²⁵ Ceslas Spicq,²⁶ a twentieth-century French Dominican biblical scholar and member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, in *Agape in the New Testament*, argues that the author of the Gospel of John makes a distinction between the theological “Christian love”—ἀγαπῶ—and “friendship-love”—φιλέω—in several instances. Spicq examines the context of the uses of φιλέω in the Gospel narrative to demonstrate that, at times, the evangelist employs the verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ distinctly so as to make a theological point.

Another noteworthy scholar also aware of the subtle distinctions in the Johannine usage of the verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ is Pavel Florensky, an Orthodox priest and martyr of the “Silver Age” of Russian religious thought.²⁷ For Florensky, friendship is *sacramentum caritatis*²⁸ a “communion of understanding essential for personal development.”²⁹ Florensky describes friendship as an ontological relationship, requiring fidelity and resulting in a consubstantiality that points to the mystery of the Trinity:³⁰

Friendship is not only psychological and ethical in nature but, first and foremost, ontological and mystical in nature. In all ages, all the profound contemplators of life viewed friendship in this way. What is friendship? Self-contemplation through a friend in God. Friendship is the seeing of oneself

²⁴ On the Johannine use of the words associated with φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ, see Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 86–102.

²⁵ Origen, in his commentary on Proverbs 8:17 *Exp. Prov.* (PG 17:184); See also Origen *Fr. Lam.* 11.2.

²⁶ Ceslas Spicq OP (1901-1992) is an internationally recognized biblical scholar who from 1953 until 1971 taught at the Swiss University of Fribourg. His works include *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, *The Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (3 vols.), *Trinity and our Moral Life According to Saint Paul*, *The Mystery of Godliness*, and *Agape in the New Testament* (3 vols.).

²⁷ Florensky's seminal work, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, is a series of twelve letters that focuses on the relationship between God and human beings, as well as relationships among human beings. The ultimate relationship described in these letters by Florensky is friendship. Quoting Gregory of Nazianzus, Florensky is convinced “there is no acquisition better than a friend.” Following Solovyov's analysis of Greek concepts of love; Florensky analyzes *eros* and *philia* as “personal” modes of love and *storge* and *agape* as “social modes.”

²⁸ Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 308.

²⁹ Meerson-Aksenov, Mikhail Georgievich, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology: The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Medieval Love Mysticism in Modern Russian Trinitarian Thought (from Solovyov to Bulgakov)* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Media, 1998), 132.

³⁰ Meerson-Aksenov, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology*, 132.

with the eyes of another but before a third, namely, The Third. The “I” of being reflected in a friend (Russ v druge), recognized in the friend’s “I” its own other (drugoe).³¹

In Florensky’s analysis of the Gospel of John, *agape* (the general love for all humanity) and *philia* (the specific love for a friend) are related, but *philia* is superior:

Friendship gives the loftiest joy but also demands the strictest asceticism. Every day, hour, and minute ruining my soul with sorrow for the sake of my Friend, it is in joy that I acquire this soul restored. Just as *agape* toward a person gives birth to *philia* toward him, so here too, in friendship sovereign *agape* is embodied in *philia* as a living medium. Divine *agapic* love transubstantiates *philic* love, and on this summit of human feelings like clouds brushing against the twin-peaked Ararat, the heavenly swirls above the earthly: Greater love (*agapen*) has not one than this, that someone lays down his love for his friends. (*hyper ton Philon autou*) (John 15:13) The greatest *agapic* love is realizable only in relation to friends, not in relation to all people not “in general.” The greatest *agapic* love consists in the laying down of one’s soul for one’s friend...Dying for friends is only the final step on the ladder of friendship. But before dying for one’s friend, one must be their friend, and this is achieved by long and difficult asceticism.³²

In addition to fervent fidelity, friendship requires the “bearing of one’s Friend’s cross.”³³ It necessitates suffering patiently with the friend, which, for Florensky, is the path of sanctification. Quoting a tale of Blessed John Moschus, Florensky makes a compelling case for bearing, suffering, and enduring everything for the salvation of a friend.³⁴ Florensky believes this radical fidelity in friendship is a mark of consubstantiality. Consubstantiality in friendship, according to Florensky, is expressed truly ontologically, that is to say, it impacts the substantive nature of the human being. For Florensky, human friendship sheds light in a mystical way on the very essence or nature of the human person. The human person is known in and through friendship. The nature of the human person is illuminated in the presence of a friend and the Divine, according to Florensky.

The following paragraphs explore a few instances in which the evangelist employs the verb φιλέω to convey specifically the love of friendship. We examine these texts in light of the insights of both Ceslas Spicq and Pavel Florensky.

1. *John 5:20 “For the Father loves the Son” (γὰρ πατὴρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν)*

“The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works” (Jn 14:10). In the Gospel of John, the Son speaks and does what He has received from the Father (5:19–24; 10:38; 12:49–50; 17:7–8). However, in John 5:19–20, the verb

³¹ Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, 314.

³² Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, 363.

³³ Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, 363.

³⁴ Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, 326. “Friendship gives the loftiest joy but also demands the strictest asceticism.”

φιλέω (friendship-love) is used. “Truly, truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does. The Father loves (φιλέω) the Son and shows Him all He does” (Jn 5:19–20). In this verse, the author of the Gospel of John describes the relationship between the Father and the Son as including friendship. The intimacy of the Father’s love for the Son is being stressed here. The Father discloses absolutely everything to His Son. According to Spicq, “The Father trusts his incarnate Son. He tells him all his secrets and everything he does. He treats him as a friend. in John 15:13–15: ‘I have called you friends because I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father.’”³⁵

Sharing secrets and one’s inner thoughts was a hallmark of friendship in the ancient world. In this one instance, the evangelist employs friendship-love to describe the love of the Father for the Son as it best conveys the love in “showing him everything”: “The Father loves the Son *and* shows him everything” (Jn 5:20).

2. *John 11:3 “[B]ehold, he whom you love is sick” (ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ)*

The text is not “your friend is sick,” but rather “he whom you love with friendship is sick.” The type of love Jesus has for Lazarus is friendship.³⁶ In the narrative, it is the disciples who identify the love Jesus has for Lazarus as friendship. It is the Friend Jesus who calls to Lazarus in the tomb, “Come out!” To say Martha and Mary would have been lost without their brother is an understatement. There is no mention of parents, nor of husbands of the sisters. Lazarus was their sole male family member, head of their household, and in first century Palestinian Jewish culture, would have been their only provider, protector, and advocate. Without a father, husband, or even a brother, a woman of that time would have been quite vulnerable. Spicq comments that here the evangelist is conveying the appeal from Martha and Mary to illicit a response from Jesus.³⁷ It is as if the sisters are pleading, aware of their plight, “Lord, your dear one is sick!”

Yet the evangelist could be making another point. In chapter 11, Jesus reveals intimate information about Himself to Martha. The exchange between Jesus and Martha is certainly a frank exchange, indicative of the idea of friendship. In John’s Gospel, it is only Lazarus whom Jesus raises from the dead. (In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus raises Jarius’ daughter, and in Luke’s Gospel, He raises the son of the widow from Nain.) Raising Lazarus is the last of the signs in the Gospel of

³⁵ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 87.

³⁶ Some scholars have proposed that Lazarus is the Beloved Disciple, based on 11:3; however, I do not adhere to that proposition.

³⁷ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 90.

John. Jesus shows the family in Bethany and those who mourn with them that the Father has given Him power over life and death. It is a revelatory act, as are all miracles in the Gospel of John.

In this story, the evangelist uses both verbs for love in this story. Jesus's affection for Lazarus, Martha, and Mary in 11:5 is *agape*: ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον (“Jesus *loved* Martha and her sister and Lazarus very much”). Ceslas Spicq notes that “to evaluate the alternating uses of *philien* and *agapen* in the story of Lazarus’ resurrection is a very delicate task.”³⁸ In John 11:36, the verb is *philia*: δε πῶς ἐφίλει αὐτόν (“See how *He loved* him”). One distinction in the narrative is that the Gospel writer is speaking in John 11:5, and the crowds are speaking in John 11:36.

3. John 16:27 “The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me” (ὁπατήρ φιλεῖ ὑμᾶς ὅτι ὑμεῖς ἐμὲ πεφιλήκατε)

The context of this pericope is the sending of the Paraclete in the final discourse. This pericope contains both our themes of mission and friendship-love. In this pericope, the Father has friendship-love for the disciples, because the disciples have shown friendship-love toward Jesus. In this section of the final discourse in which Jesus just mentioned the coming Advocate (Jn 16:13–15), Jesus now says,

16:25 “I have spoken these things to you in figures of speech. An hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you this way but will tell you *plainly* about the Father.”

16:26 “In that day you will ask in My name. I do not tell you that I will ask the Father on your behalf.”

16:27 “For the Father Himself loves (φιλεῖ) you, because you have loved (πεφιλήκατε) me and have believed that I came from God.”

16:28 “I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

16:29 His disciples said, “See, now You are speaking *plainly* and are not using any figure of speech.”

Looking at the chiasmic structure, it is possible to see verse 27 as the centerpiece of this pericope, which has speaking plainly as its topic. Now, as his “hour” is approaching, Jesus’s previous use of obscure speech (Jn 6:60) will give way to the open, frank speech that others had long wanted from him (Jn 10:24; 11:14).³⁹ Previously Jesus had revealed the Father to the disciples (Jn 14:7–9). But now, he speaks openly about the Father (Jn 16:25) because of the Spirit who will be sent (Jn 16:13–

³⁸ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 89.

³⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2:1047.

15). As we have seen in previous passages in the Gospel of John (5:20, 15:15ff), the Gospel writer seems to be making a connection between friendship and the act of revelation.

4. *John 20:2 “The one whom Jesus loved” (μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς)*

We read in John 20:1ff, “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So, she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved.” This is the only time in the Gospel of John that the verb for love used to name “the one whom Jesus loved” is ἐφίλει. Every other time, the evangelist uses ἀγαπῶ to name the Beloved Disciple, “the one whom Jesus loved.” This tells us two things. First, the love Jesus feels for the Beloved Disciple includes friendship. Second, the evangelist, in using ἐφίλει here, may be trying to emphasize the revelatory nature of John’s discovery at the tomb. The one whom Jesus loves (ἐφίλει), enters the tomb, sees the burial cloths and the cloth that covered Jesus’s head, and believes (Jn 20:6–8). It may be just a subtle nuance that underscores the ancient understanding of friendship as revealing oneself to another. The burial cloths reveal Jesus’s resurrection to the Beloved Disciple.

5. *Jn 21:15–17 “I love you as a friend”; “Do you love me as a friend?” (ὅτι φιλῶ σε; φιλεῖς με?)*

These verses of chapter 21 in the Gospel of John are often referred to as a jumble of synonyms.⁴⁰ In this dialogue between the Risen Lord and Peter, both verbs for love appear, as do two different verbs for feeding and tending, and two different nouns sheep and lambs. This pericope is of great significance to our study for, as Peter’s friendship with Jesus is restored, he is given his mission: to shepherd the Lord’s sheep. Peter’s mission is an expression of his relationship with Jesus. It is necessary to examine each line in Greek to extract the meaning.

21:15 λέγει τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρῳ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Σίμων Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τούτων; λέγει αὐτῷ, Ναί, κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ, Βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου.

Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me (ἀγαπᾷς με) more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you (ὅτι φιλῶ σε).” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

21:16 λέγει αὐτῷ πάλιν δεύτερον, Σίμων Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με; λέγει αὐτῷ, Ναί, κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ, Ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου.

⁴⁰ H.A.G Houghton, “A Flock of Synonyms? John 21:15–17 in Greek and Latin Tradition,” in *Texts and Traditions*, ed. Jeffrey Kloha and Peter Doble, vol. 47, New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents (Leiden, Netherlands/Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 220–38.

He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me (ἀγαπᾷς με)?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you (ὅτι φιλῶ σε).” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

21:17 “λέγει αὐτῷ τὸ τρίτον, Σίμων Ἰωάννου, φιλεῖς με; ἐλπήθη ὁ Πέτρος ὅτι εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ τρίτον, Φιλεῖς με; καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ [ὁ Ἰησοῦς], Βόσκει τὰ πρόβατά μου.”

He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me (φιλεῖς με)?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me (Φιλεῖς με)?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you (ὅτι φιλῶ σε).” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

This pericope is the climax of our study of the verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ. The section in John 21 begins, “After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way” (Jn 21:1). With this opening line, John returns to the theme of intimate revelation that is indicative of friendship. What is fascinating in John 21:15–17 is the alternation of two verbs for love in the dialogue between Jesus and Peter. The threefold affirmation of love, many commentators through the ages agree, is to overcome Peter’s threefold denial of Jesus in Jn 18:25–26.⁴¹

There are several interpretations of John’s interchanging usage of φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ in John 21:15–17. The first interpretation is that there is no distinction. The evangelist is simply avoiding using the same word over and over again in the dialogue between Jesus and Peter. Jesus asks, “Do you love me?” Twice the question is posed using ἀγαπῶ. The third time, simply for variation, φιλέω is used. This interpretation is bolstered by the alternating use of “sheep” and “lambs” in Jesus’s reply: “Feed my lambs” (Jn 21:15); “Tend my sheep” (Jn 21:16); “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17). The whole passage, some scholars assert is simply a flock of synonyms for love and sheep.⁴² This interpretation senses no real distinction in the meaning of the verb ἀγαπῶ in Jesus’s questions and φιλέω in Peter’s responses. Most recent interpreters note that John uses these verbs at other times interchangeably for stylistic variation in other passages.⁴³ Rudolf Schnackenburg

⁴¹ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 95; Minear, Hendricksen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 486; Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels*, 113; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1235; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 558.

⁴² See H. A. G. Houghton, “A Flock of Synonyms? John 21:15-17 in Greek and Latin Tradition,” *Koninklijke* (Brill, NV, Leinden, 2014), 220-238.

⁴³ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, (2 vols.: AB 29, 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 2:1102-3; C.K. Barrett *The Gospel According to Saint John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, (2nd ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1978), 584; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1991), 676-77; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco: World Books, 1987), 394; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint John* (ed. A. H. McNeile; 2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1928), 2:702-4; D. Moody Smith, *John* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 396; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 1235-36; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, (SP 4; Collegeville,

for example asserts, “[A]ll explanations which have as their starting point the different significance of ἀγαπῶ and φιλέω cannot convince.”⁴⁴

Another interpretation is that the distinct use of φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ does have theological significance. Origen, in his commentary on Proverbs 8:17, refers to John 21:15–17 and says regarding John’s use of the verbs for love, “[John] then considers *agape* as greater than *philia*, when he does not rank them as equal: For he is most concerned with the Savior saying to Peter do you *agape* me; knowing that he would return to him something less, he asked saying that *phileo* me.”⁴⁵ Origen and those who follow his line of interpretation consider ἀγαπῶ to be a superior, more Divine, more spiritual love than the love of φιλέω. This is due to the Septuagint’s broad use of the verb ἀγαπῶ, including for Divine love. These scholars believe that John’s alternating use of φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ is not merely one of style but of substance.⁴⁶ Ceslas Spicq notes,

Those commentators who make them synonymous either ignore the semantics of *agape* or minimize the importance of the scene. It was not a private conversation, or a moral lesson given to a disciple, but the institution of Peter as head of the Church and its primate. The Lord was not asking him for the affection of a friend, but for the religious love of *agape* which constitutes the very life of the Church (Jn 17:26).⁴⁷

Spicq’s interpretation is that Jesus wanted to test the depth of Peter’s affection, so he asked a second time, “Do you love me? (ἀγαπᾷς με?)” Peter repeated his response: “ὄτι φιλῶ σε.” Spicq explains,

Touched by Peter’s insistence, the Master repeated his expression, “Φιλεῖς με?” (21:17). Really? You still love me: Can I believe that you are a real friend? I can rely on your word and trust your heart? According to the Evangelist, this question filled Peter with sorrow. He was grieved to the heart that Jesus had changed the wording of this question when he asked it the third time and said, “Do you really love me?” He had been attached to the Lord from the very first day and could not bear the thought that Jesus doubted the fervor and depth of his human affection, which was the very thing that just a little while before had pushed him to promise to die for his friend....Peter must

MN: Liturgical Press, 1998) 559; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (Reading the New Testament; New York: Crossroads, 1994) 261; See William Hendricksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (2 vols. In 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1953, reprint 1970), 495, for a list of older commentators who see no significance in the alteration.

⁴⁴ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 362–63.

⁴⁵ *Exp. Prov.* (PG 17:184), usually abbreviated as *Pr. Cat.*; See also Origen *Fr. Lam.* 11.2.

⁴⁶ Although Brown (*Gospel According to John*, 2:1102–3) associates this position primarily with R. C. Trench, B. F. Wescott, and A. Plummer, he also acknowledges antecedents as ancient as Origen and Jerome. Modern scholars who defend the distinction of the verbs in John 21:15–17 include C. Bouma, C. R. Erdman, F. W. Grosheide, Hendricksen, R. C. W. Lenski, John Marsh, K. L. McKay, A. T. Roberts. See James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 1952); Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1889); B. B. Warfield, “The Terminology of Love in the New Testament” *Princeton Theological Review* 16 (1918): 153–203; and Ceslas Spicq, *OP, Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 90–96.

⁴⁷ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 95.

have had tears in his eyes as he answered acutely aware of his weakness and sorry for his faults, “Lord, you know it better than I do.” That Jesus accepted Peter’s friendship is proved by the charge he laid on him after each one of Peter’s answers: “Feed my sheep; be the shepherd of my flock.”⁴⁸

Peter, in following Jesus (cf. Jn 21:19), is to be a good shepherd (cf. Jn 10:11) who lays down his life for his flock (cf. Jn 21:18). There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for his friends (cf. Jn 15:13). Spicq notes a distinct use of the verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ in John 21 to restore Peter and Jesus in friendship.

Pavel Florensky provides even greater precision in interpreting the distinction between φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ in John 21:15–17. In his letter “On Friendship” in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, Florensky—after intense study of the ancient Greek vocabulary and concepts of love—offers explanations of their usage in the New Testament. Florensky says the following regarding φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ in John 21:15–17:

In order to understand anything of the Lord’s conversation with Peter in John 21:15–17... we must take into account the different meanings of the two verbs of love. But in his twice uttered question, the resurrected Christ indicates to Peter that he violated friendly love—*philia*—for the Lord and that henceforth one can demand of him only universal human love, only that love which every disciple of Christ necessarily offers to every person, even to his enemy. It is in this sense that the Lord asks: “agapais me?” The meaning of the question is clear. But in order to express it in our language, one would need to expand the text, perhaps in this way: “Once you were accounted My friend. But now after your renunciation of Me, it does not pay even to speak of friendly love. But there is another love which must be offered to all people. Do you have at least that love for me?” But Peter does not even want to hear such a question, and keeps speaking of the authenticity of his personal, friendly love: “Philo se—I am your friend.” That is why he was “grieved” when, despite his twice-uttered insistence of his *philia* for the Lord, the Lord agreed to speak of this kind of love only in the third question, which was probably posed in a tone of reproach or mistrust: “Are you, my friend?” ... The ear hears tears in his halting answer: “Lord! You know everything, You know that I am your friend.”⁴⁹

Although both Spicq and Florensky agree that the verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ are distinct in John 21, they come to very different conclusions about what the dialogue between Jesus and Peter implies. For Spicq, this dialogue and the commands by Jesus to Peter to care for His flock are the scriptural basis for the primacy of Peter.⁵⁰ For Florensky, the exchange does not grant Peter primacy over the other disciples but restores Peter’s friendship with Jesus.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, 97.

⁴⁹ Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, 291–92.

⁵⁰ Ceslas Spicq, OP, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, *Agape in the Gospel of John, Epistles and Apocalypse of St. John*, 97–99. It is important to note here that a primacy of the bishop of Rome is not derived from Mt 16 and Jn 21 before the end of the second century. The full teaching of the juridical primacy of the papacy over the whole church is not found before the time of Popes Innocent III (1199) and Boniface VII (1303).

⁵¹ Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, 292. “The passage analyzed here does not at all concern events of ecclesial economy... It exclusively concerns this Apostle’s personal fate and life. This passage is edifying but not

The connection in this pericope of friendship and mission is of particular interest. Friendship requires evidence. It is not enough merely to say that one is a friend. Friendship is something individuals need to create and maintain, requiring agency. It is not an ascribed relationship, such as sibling. One is a brother or sister by birth, not by an act of will. In this dialogue, Jesus connects being his friend with continuing his pastoral mission. Mission is an expression of a relationship. Peter's participation in the mission of Jesus to feed and tend the flock is an expression of his friendship with Jesus. As most Johannine scholars have noted, the Gospel was written after the martyrdom of Saint Peter, which is referred to in John 21. Peter does in fact demonstrate the greatest *agape* for Jesus by participating in his mission, including laying down his life for his friends.

Our thorough linguistic examination of the verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ reveals that the concepts of love and friendship in the Gospel of John are intertwined, and it is quite difficult to unravel them. These verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπῶ are most assuredly interconnected in the text and in their meanings. It is necessary, then, to explore the semantic field of love to understand what the Gospel of John is teaching about friendship. Let us now examine how love and friendship are portrayed and displayed in the Johannine narrative.

B. John 15:12–15 as a Key for Understanding Friendship in John

Perhaps no passage is more important to a mission theology of participation in friendship than John 15:12–15. Situated in the heart of his final discourse, Jesus proclaims his disciples are indeed his friends and he provides the grace to make them so.

15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἣ ἐμή, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς).

15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends (μείζονα ταύτης ἀγάπην οὐδεὶς ἔχει, ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῆ ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ).

15:14 You are My friends if you do what I command you (ὁμεῖς φίλοι μου ἐστε εἰὰν ποιῆτε ἃ ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν).

15:15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not understand what his master is doing.

15:15' But I have called you friends, because everything I have learned from My Father, I have made known to you.

dogmatic, and Roman Catholics therefore underscore it in vain." See *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, 292. We will address Peter's friendship with Jesus and his mission elsewhere.

Two dimensions of friendship in antiquity—the gift of one’s life for one’s friends and the use of frank and open speech—informed the way that the Gospel of John and its readers understood friendship. In John, Jesus gives the reason He calls the disciples “my friends.” It is because He made known to them what He heard from the Father. A common understanding of friendship in the Greco-Roman culture was that a friend was someone to whom you could disclose your most intimate secrets, thoughts, feelings, and ideas: a trusted confidant.⁵² John Fitzgerald notes in the Gospel of John that Jesus is doing something a bit unconventional, and even more loving.⁵³ He observes that in the usual “understanding of friendship, revelation presupposes friendship.”⁵⁴ This is true in contemporary society as well. One does not “disclose secrets or sensitive information to casual acquaintances.”⁵⁵ Such indiscretion is imprudent. “A confidant is by definition someone who over time has demonstrated they are trustworthy and has earned one’s confidence.”⁵⁶ It is only to such a trusted person that one discloses oneself. In the Gospel of John, the disciples demonstrate that they are quite untrustworthy, e.g., Peter denies Jesus (cf. 18:15–18, 26–27) and all but one of the others abandon him (cf. 16:32).

Fitzgerald proposes that Jesus reverses the standard logic by revealing so much of himself *before* the disciples proved they could be trusted:⁵⁷ “I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father” (15:15). In Fitzgerald’s words, “Revelation here creates friendship rather than presupposes it. Jesus discloses everything to the disciples in spite of the fact that they are unreliable.”⁵⁸ Fitzgerald explains that this is truly grace (1:17). “Rather than demonstrated merit and reliability on the disciples’ part that creates friendship between Jesus and his disciples. By treating his followers as friends, Jesus makes them precisely that.”⁵⁹ A hermeneutic of friendship interprets Jesus’s revealing everything that the Father has

⁵² Cicero *Amic. 22: Fin. 2.8*; Seneca, *Ep. 3.2-3*; Pliny the Younger, *Ep 5.1.12*.

⁵³ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 285.

⁵⁴ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 285.

⁵⁵ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 285.

⁵⁶ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 285.

⁵⁷ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 285.

⁵⁸ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 285.

⁵⁹ Fitzgerald, “Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians,” 285.

made known to him as directed toward human knowing and loving the Father. Revelation is oriented toward Divine-human friendship⁶⁰ and ultimately the deification⁶¹ of the human person.

Aquinas explores the disciples' friendship with Christ as the way Christ makes known his Father. The figure of the Beloved Disciple is paradigmatic for Aquinas because of his mystical closeness to Christ depicted at the table. Aquinas writes, "[W]e can see from this that the more a person wants to grasp the secrets of Divine wisdom, the more he should try to get closer to Christ, according to 'come to him and be enlightened (Ps 34:5).'"⁶² It is a sign of genuine friendship that friends reveal their secrets to each other. Christ reveals to His friends what belongs to His infinite wisdom. Levering states,

Christ's wisdom is nothing less than the Trinity: in speaking his Word (the Wisdom of God), the Father speaks the whole Trinity. Thus, Aquinas notes that if someone were to ask, "the Father will manifest himself, will he not?" the answer is "Yes, both the Father and the Son." For the Son manifests himself and the Father at the same time, because the Son is the Word of the Father: "No one knows the Father except the Son" (Mt 11:27) (Ioan. 14, lect. 5, n. 1937). Since Christ is the Wisdom of God, his wisdom is the Trinity, and learning his wisdom as his friend, means to share in his Trinitarian life (Ioan. 15, lect. 3, n. 2016). Christ then reveals the Trinity to his friends.⁶³

In his paschal mystery, Christ as our friend reveals not only the Trinity but also the way to His Father and our Father, to His God and to our God (cf. Jn 20:17). *Gaudium et Spes* refers to Christ's revelation: "Christ, the new Adam, in the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling."⁶⁴ While "brings to light" is the idiomatic translation of *pate-facit*, it literally means, "opens" or "lays open." From the cross, the Son lays open the deepest truths about God and the human person. Christ is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.⁶⁵

The disciples are called friends by the one who embodies God's own friendship among them and who revealed to them the way to friendship. In the words of Ambrose,

Let us reveal our bosom to [a friend] and let him reveal to us. Therefore, he said, I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. Therefore, a

⁶⁰ See *Dei Verbum*, §2, "Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself."

⁶¹ See *Dei Verbum* §2: "In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4)."

⁶² Aquinas, *John*. 13, lect. 4, n. 1807, quoted in Levering, "Does the Paschal Mystery Reveal the Trinity?", 88.

⁶³ Levering, "Does the Paschal Mystery Reveal the Trinity?," 88.

⁶⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, §22.

⁶⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, §2.

friend hides nothing, if he is true, he pours forth his mind, just as the Lord Jesus poured forth the mysteries of His Father.⁶⁶

This passage is reminiscent of Isaiah 49:6: “It is not enough for you to be my servant. I will make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.” This is the logic undergirding a theology of mission as participation in friendship. Neither is it enough for Israel or the disciples of Jesus to be called servants. No. They are friends because God has revealed Himself to them most intimately. They are to now reveal that Light to the ends of the earth for the purpose of salvation.

Perhaps in looking to the parallel of John 15:12 and John 15:15, we can say that the way the disciples are to love one another as Jesus has loved them is to reveal in word and in deed the love of God that has been revealed to them. This is the mission of Christian disciples: revealing in word and deed the love of God manifest to them in Christ Jesus through the Spirit.

C. Jesus as Friend “to the End” in the Gospel of John

In this section we will explore how, in the Gospel of John, Jesus is portrayed as a friend in the Last Supper and his Passion. The title “friend” is never used to describe Jesus in the Gospel of John; yet “throughout this Gospel, Jesus [is] the incarnation of friendship without the explicit appellation: He does not merely talk the language of friendship; he lives out His life and death as a most intimate and faithful friend.”⁶⁷

Jesus’s Last Supper with the disciples diverges from the Passover meal in that it is a gathering not of family but of friends. While traditionally the Passover meal is a family event, the gathering of an individual household (Ex 12:3), the Last Supper concerns a group of friends with Christ presiding. At the Last Supper, there is an intentional movement away from gathering as the traditional familial community to another type of community formed by a group of friends who love their master and love one another.⁶⁸ Zizioulas observes that this movement reflects the eschatological dimension of the Last Supper. While that is true, there is also a sense of a realized eschatology in the celebration of the Last Supper. At the Last Supper, Jesus establishes a new community founded not upon family or clan identity, but on common friendship with Him.

⁶⁶ Ambrose, *Ambrose in De Officiis Ministrorum* 3.33.135 St. John 3.110.

⁶⁷ Gail O’Day, “Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 58, no. 2 (2004): 152., *Interpretation*, April 2004, p. 152.

⁶⁸ John Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World* (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 3.

In the Gospel of John, redemption is itself the supreme act of friendship (Jn 15:13).⁶⁹ Jesus's entire life and death is an act of friendship. "In the life and death of Jesus, the friendship convention of loving another enough to give one's life moves from philosophical or moral possibility to incarnated actuality."⁷⁰ As the λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, "the enfleshing of the Word" of God, Jesus's speech and action are inextricably linked.⁷¹ Jesus both speaks frankly and acts courageously in friendship, becoming the embodiment of friendship. In John, Jesus is both the model and the source of friendship. As the model of friendship, He calls the disciples to love as He has loved. As the source of friendship, he makes possible their own friendship through what He has given them.⁷² "Friendship in John is the enactment of the love of God that is incarnate in Jesus and that Jesus boldly makes available to the world."⁷³ Let us examine how Jesus embodies friendship in both word and deed, as a prelude to the climax of Jesus's friendship-love expressed on the cross. First, we need to acknowledge the *inclusio* in this section of the Gospel of John, known as the Book of Glory.

13:1 "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour (ᾠρα) had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς).

19:30 "When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, "It is finished" (Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Τετέλεσται), and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Aquinas provides a four-point interpretation of the phrase "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (13:1). First, Aquinas cites 1 John 4:10 ("Not that we have loved God, but that he has first loved us") to call to mind that Christ loved us before He created us, called us, or redeemed us.⁷⁴ Second, Aquinas notes that Jesus's love "is commended as fitting because he loved his own."⁷⁵ God loves each individual as His own. Third, Christ's love is commended "because it was needed" by those who are in the

⁶⁹ See J. Massyngbaerde Ford, *Redeemer, Friend and Mother: Salvation in Antiquity and in the Gospel of John*, and Dörnemann, *Freundschaft Als Paradigma Der Erlösung*.

⁷⁰ O'Day, "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John," 151.

⁷¹ *Dei Verbum*, §2, "This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation."

⁷² O'Day, "I Have Called You Friends," 20.

⁷³ O'Day, "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John," 151.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 1735.

⁷⁵ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 1736.

world.⁷⁶ And fourth, His love is commended because “it was perfect, so he says he loved them to the end.”⁷⁷

Aquinas offers a lengthy explanation of the two kinds of “ends”: the end in the intention and the end in execution. He loved them to the ultimate end: eternal life. “He loved them to the end in order to lead them to himself, the end; or to lead them to eternal life, which is the same thing.”⁷⁸ We are reminded of the words from the Prophet Jeremiah: “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). He loved them to the end could also mean Jesus loved them until His death. “He loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). This phrase, according to Aquinas, could also be interpreted as “now that I am leaving it is necessary to show you how much I love you so that my love and the memory of me might be impressed more deeply into your hearts.”⁷⁹

Many saints and mystics down through the centuries have perceived the phrase εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς (“he loved them to the end”) as an act of consummation. More than inferring that the Son loves faithfully to the end of His temporal life, the gushing forth of water and blood from His side and His breathing of the Spirit connotes a love that is generative. The Son in εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς expresses the fullness and completeness of His love for both the Father and the world. The love of the Son from the Cross is unitive as it reconciles God and humanity (Jn 17:21). The love of the Son from the Cross brings forth eternal life (Jn 10:10). According to Moloney, “John systematically presents Jesus as a king, ‘lifted up’ on the throne of the Cross in a consummate revelation of love in self-gift, the perfection of all that he has been sent to achieve.”⁸⁰ This self-gift is not only a Christological event but also an ecclesiological event, as it is the foundational moment of the birth of a new family, upon which Jesus bestows the gifts of the Spirit (19:30) and Baptism and Eucharist, symbolized by the water and blood that flow forth from his side (19:31–37).⁸¹

The action of love of the Son on the Cross reveals the *telos* of love. In the Gospel of John, love as an abiding with Christ is both unitive and fruitful (Jn 15:4–6). One can only speculate how the Father eternally begets the Son, other than it is generative kenotic love without beginning or end. One can only wonder if perhaps we can interpret “as the Father has loved me, so I have loved

⁷⁶ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 1737.

⁷⁷ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 1738.

⁷⁸ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 1738.

⁷⁹ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 3, sec. 1738.

⁸⁰ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study*, 137.

⁸¹ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, 138.

you, remain in my love” (15:15) as the Son eternally begetting humanity, bringing forth humanity into life eternal (ζωὴν αἰώνιον) from the cross. “I came that they might have life (ζωὴν) and that they might have it abundantly (περισσὸν)” (Jn 10:10).

In verse 19:30, we have the realization of what was spoken of in 13:1. With Τετέλεσται (“It is finished”) Jesus bows his head and παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα. According to German scripture scholar Johannes Beutler, in recent years there has been significant scholarship on the phrase παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα (“He gave His Spirit”) (Jn 19:30). Beutler notes that this expression is often misunderstood as having the same meaning as “He gave up His spirit” in the Synoptics: ἐξέπνευσεν (Mk 15:37; Luke 23:46) or ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα (Mt 27:50).⁸² Beutler remarks, “However, the verb with which John describes Jesus’s final moment says something different: παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα. This verb means “gave over” or “gave away. ... Jesus does not ‘breathe out his spirit’ but ‘hands it over.’”⁸³ Beutler explains,

At the moment of his death, Jesus as come to his “hour.” He has been lifted up to the right hand of the Father and can bestow on his own the gift of the Spirit. This is how the evangelist had interpreted Jesus’s sayings about the streams of living water (Jn 7:38): “With this he meant the Spirit that all who believe in him were to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified” (Jn 7:39).⁸⁴

In this sense, Jesus actively gives the Spirit to those who believe in Him in a profound act of loving. In this act, Jesus realizes the “end” or fulfillment of His mission (Jn 3:16–18). He gives completely all that the Father has given Him. There is no earthquake, no splitting in two of the sanctuary veil, no dead rising from their grave at the death of Jesus in the Gospel of John.⁸⁵ There is no depiction of the Transfiguration in John. Instead, there is the still, small voice⁸⁶ of the Son to the Father (Τετέλεσται) and the simultaneous bestowal of the Spirit, who is the bond of love between the Father and the Son.

Τετέλεσται begs the question, what is finished? In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of the necessity of the future “lifting up/exaltation” of the Son of Mary (3:14; 8:28; 12:32–33); the coming of the “hour” (2:4; 7:6, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1); when everyone will be “gathered”

⁸² Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 490.

⁸³ Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 490.

⁸⁴ Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 490.

⁸⁵ Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 490.

⁸⁶ 1 Kings 19:12.

(10:16; 11:50–52; 12:32–33); when the glory of the God will become manifest and the Son of God will be glorified (11:4; 12:28; 13:31–32; 17:4). For Moloney,

“Framing” this steady presentation of the end of Jesus’s story is Jesus’s insistence at the beginning of the story that His mission is to bring to perfection the task given him by the Father (4:34)...All of these elements are also “framed” by Jesus’s claims that he was sent by the Father because God loved the world so much (3:16–17) and that he has made known God’s saving love and thus brought eternal life to all who believe in him (17:2–3). The Johannine story of Jesus’s death and resurrection tells of the accomplishment of all that he has promised...In the passion story, Jesus brings to a perfect end all that he was sent by his Father to do.⁸⁷

D. God Makes Friendship with Humanity Possible According to the Gospel of John

Thomas Aquinas describes friendship with God as the primary relationship from which all other relationships emerge. He basis this on his close study and commentary on the Gospel of John. Friendship with God is analogous to human friendship meaning that the elements and effects within human friendship should have analogues in friendship with God.⁸⁸ Aquinas seeks to show that friendship with God is an appropriate way of conceiving of love of God. He made friendship a central point in his theological works by defining charity as friendship with God: “Charity is a certain friendship (*amicitia*) of the human person toward God.”⁸⁹ Although Aquinas never wrote a work, or even a section of work, entitled “On Friendship,” insights into and discussions about friendship abound in his writings. “For Aquinas, friendship is the paradigm ideal for the relationships that rational beings should cultivate.”⁹⁰ “It is clear that a motivation for Aquinas’s broadening of friendship is the unsuitability of Aristotelian friendship to accommodate successfully the Christian ideal of friendship with God.”⁹¹ However, it is more than this: “Aquinas sees charity as a kind of friendship between God and man, not because he fancies the writings of the Philosopher, but because he takes seriously our Lord’s words in chapter 15, verse 15 in the Gospel of John.”⁹²

⁸⁷ Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study*, 136. See also Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 432, who says “For we are, of course, intended to understand the Passion-Narrative in John in the light of all that has been said in early parts of the Gospel, directly or indirectly, about the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection.”

⁸⁸ Matthew Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship: A Metaphysical and Scriptural Explanation According to the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Rome, Italy: Pontificia Università Santa Croce, 2012), 2.

⁸⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theological Complete in a Single Volume*, II-II, q. 23, art. 1.

⁹⁰ Daniel Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 1. publ. in paperback, Oxford Philosophical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), 161.

⁹¹ Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 162.

⁹² Matthew Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship: A Metaphysical and Scriptural Explanation According to the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Rome, Italy: Pontificia Università Santa Croce, 2012), 160. Also see Guy Mansini, “Charity and the Form of Friendship,” in *Ethics and Theological Disclosures*, ed. Guy Mansini and James

Friendship entails reciprocity—but the relation between God and creation can never be completely reciprocal, because the possibility of the created person’s friendship with God necessarily has its fundament in God’s creative act within the friend. God makes possible the reciprocity of friendship with humans through the incarnation and the Divine indwelling.

It is God who makes friendship with humans possible. Human friendship with God is both reciprocal and non-reciprocal. Human friendship with God is reciprocal in that humans love God and God loves humans even though human love cannot be equated with Divine love. It is God’s Divinity, God’s non-equality with humanity, which makes a friendship between God and human beings possible. The reciprocity in the friendship between God and humans does not rely upon the notion of each party loving, befriending equally. Humans cannot offer to God the same or equal love that He offers to us in friendship. However, precisely because God is not equal to humans, because of the expanse of His infinite Divine love, that friendship with God is possible for humans. In His graciousness, God shares His own life with us so that we can enter more fully into friendship with Him. It is the grace derived from friendship with God that gives humans the capacity for intimacy with God. God reveals to humanity, in creation, in the inner life of the person, more so in Sacred Scripture, and most fully in Christ, how to be a friend of God.

“[F]riendship provides, for Aquinas, the lens through which the theological virtue of charity can be best conceptualized....Aquinas is not the first theologian to treat charity as a form of friendship, yet it does seem that it is his original contribution to bring charity firmly into the Aristotelian understanding of friendship.”⁹³

G. Hart (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003); “When St. Thomas identified the charity poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5) with friendship, he pressed into theological service the philosophical appreciation of friendship found in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Mansini goes on to comment: “Nonetheless, if we have read thoughtfully, we will see by the end of Q. 23 that Aristotle has been interpreted as much as he has interpreted, that he has been framed and repositioned for all that he has helped us position St. Paul, and that the notion of friendship has been transformed in such a way that we realize its primary analogue is not the friendship between the virtuous Athenian gentlemen or even that between philosophers, but that between Christians and their God.” From footnote #104 in Matthew Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship: A Metaphysical and Scriptural Explanation According to the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Rome, Italy: Pontificia Università Santa Croce, 2012).

⁹³ Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 5. Charity was identified with *amicitia* at least as early as John Cassian (365?–433?), e.g. at Conferences, XVI. See Michael S Sherwin, Catholic University of America, and Catholic University of America Press, *By Knowledge & By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 147–48. Sherwin says, “Thomas’ definition of charity as *amicitia* marks the culmination of over a hundred years of scholastic reflection on the nature of charity.” See also, D. Konstan, ‘Problems in the History of Christian Friendship’, *Journal of Early Christianity*, 4 (1996), 106, and A. M. Fiske, ‘Cassian and Monastic Friendship’, *American Benedictine Review*, 12 (1961) on *caritas* and *amicitia*: 202–5. According to Fiske, Cassian’s views on charity are partially inspired by the ideas of Evagrius of Pontus, an Egyptian disciple of Macarius the Elder. Friendship was associated with *caritas*, before Cassian, by the Greek Fathers Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom. See L. Pizzolato, *L’idea di amicizia*

Aquinas believes that friendship with God is both possible and desirable despite the separateness that exists between Divine and human persons.⁹⁴ Christ enables human friendship with God by bridging the abyss between human beings and God, thus diminishing the vast inequality that prevents friendship. Thomas' certitude that we do in fact have friendship with God is grounded in the very words of our Lord in the Gospel of John 15:15. In this radical and wonderous exchange that God becomes human so that men and women might participate in Divine life and love. This admirable commercium makes it possible for men to know God and his love for all because God wished to draw near to us by taking our flesh. In Jesus, the Word made Flesh, (John 1), God the Father's will to be intimate friends with all persons becomes possible.

It is in the shared activity and in the exchange of love made possible in Christ that Aquinas finds the basis for a possible friendship with God. Aquinas states, "[T]here is a certain communication, communion of man with God, and when there is a communication with God, by sharing his happiness (beatitude) with us, on this basis is a friendship built."⁹⁵ This notion of Aquinas' was summarized in a talk given to Pope John Paul II and the papal household by Christof Cardinal Schönborn:

There is a *real* communication (communicatio) of God with man: a real participation in his life, his beatitude (*beatitudo*). God gives himself so that upon this gift a friendship might be built. *Fundari amicitiam*—is this not God's entire plan, from the beginning of creation to the hour when Jesus says to his disciples: "I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have *made known* to you" (Jn 15:15).⁹⁶

Jesus communicates, makes known to his disciples all that the He has heard from the Father. This is an intimate sharing signified by the word *all*. It is a profound act of friendship requiring authenticity, honesty, vulnerability, and trust. Jesus entrusts to the disciples that which is most precious to Him; His inner dialogue with the Father. Secrets of such magnitude are not spoken to strangers. Jesus shares wisdom with the disciples. Indeed, it is wisdom that makes us friends of God (Wis 7:27). Now being of one heart and one mind with Jesus, the disciples can no longer be called servants, but friends. In the Gospel of John, through His Incarnation, His Signs

nel mondo antico classico e cristiano (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), 375–93, 404, 411 (page references are to the 1996 Spanish translation published by Mario Muchnik in Barcelona in 1996). Cited as a footnote in Daniel Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, Oxford Philosophical Monographs, (Clarendon Press) 189.

⁹⁴ Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 125. Also, see Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship*, 142.

⁹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica Complete in a Single Volume*, II-II qu. 23, art. 1.

⁹⁶ Christoph Schönborn, *Loving the Church: Spiritual Exercises Preached in the Presence of Pope John Paul II*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 167, emphasis in the original.

and Wonders, to His Passion, Death, and Resurrection Christ renews humanities friendship with God.

E. Conclusion: Friendship in the Gospel of John is the Embodiment of Love

This chapter examined the instances of the Divine Persons expressing love in the Gospel of John. Friendship love is included in the presentation of God in the Gospel of John. Jesus as the Word of God enfleshes friendship with the Father and the world. “Friendship in John is the enactment of the love of God that is incarnate in Jesus and that Jesus boldly makes available to the world.”⁹⁷ In the Gospel of John, Jesus’s incarnation, words, deeds, passion, death, resurrection, giving of His Spirit, and missioning of His disciples are all acts of friendship. The Gospel of John enables us to see that friendship-love is an aspect of Divine love. The Father expresses friendship-love for the Son (5:20) and for the disciples (16:27) and the Son expresses friendship-love for his followers (11:33, 36; 15:15; 20:2). Therefore, the dichotomy between *agape* and *philia* in which *agape* is perceived to be a higher form of love or a spiritual love and *philia* a lower or earthly love may not be precise.

As the Son is the embodiment of Divine love, the disciples are sent forth to love in the same way. Based upon John 15:12 and John 15:15, we can say the way the disciples are to love one another as Jesus has loved them is to reveal in word and in deed the love of God that has been revealed to them. Frederick Bauerschmidt states it clearly, “[t]he unity in love of the community of disciples is an icon of the love shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁹⁸ This community of disciples, the Church “is ultimately that friendship between human beings made possible through friendship with God.”⁹⁹ This friendship with the disciples in God is demonstrated in word, deed, and most especially in the extension of this friendship to others in mission. This is the mission of Christian disciples: engaging others to participate in Divine friendship with them. The Son desires His friends to participate in the Divine mission. Let us now examine the concept of participation in the Gospel of John.

⁹⁷ O’Day, “Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John,” 151.

⁹⁸ Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, “That the Faithful Become the Temple of God,” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas*, edited by Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press) 2005, 301.

⁹⁹ Bauerschmidt, “That the Faithful Become the Temple of God,” 302.

CHAPTER VII: PARTICIPATION IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Gospel of John contains a rich language of participation. Father Bonino in an article on the role of the apostles in the communion of revelation according to Aquinas' commentary on the Gospel of John states, "The Gospel of John, especially in the discourse after the Last Supper, is filled with an elaborate theology of the apostolate as participation in the work of Christ."¹ Examples include "abide in me, as I abide in you" (15:4); "that they may be one as we are one" (17:11); "so that where I am you also may be" (14:3); and perhaps the most intimate, "I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in you" (14:19).

Various texts reflecting *participation* also include the concept of mission or *sending*: "I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (5:30); "I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me" (8:16); "The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone" (8:28–29); "I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (13:20); and perhaps the most important text for this project "As the Father sent me, so I send you" (20:21).

Also, several texts reflecting *participation* contain the concept of *love*, e.g., John 15:9 ("Just as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you; remain in my love") and John 17:26 ("I have made Your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love You have for me may be in them, and I in them"). These pericopes reveal that the love between the Father and the Son in the Gospel of John is a mutual indwelling that is eternal: "You loved me before the world was founded" (17:24).

Finally, the one passage from the Gospel of John that most fully reveals the mystery of love, mission, and participation is John 17:23: "I in them and You in me—that they may be perfectly united, so that the world may know that You sent me and have loved them just as You have loved Me." These texts require an exploration of the meaning of participation in the Gospel of John as it relates to mission and friendship, as they are of particular interest to the thesis of this project: God invites His friends to *participate* in and continue His mission.

¹ Bonino, Serge-Thomas, OP, "The Role of the Apostles in the Communication of Revelation according to the *Lectura super Ioannem* of Saint Thomas Aquinas," 323.

Waldstein expresses it this way:

The mission of the disciples is an essential feature of their life in the sphere of the Father's name. Mission is not an optional extra added to Christian existence; it is one of its constitutive elements. It would be a fundamental misunderstanding of the Johannine concept of mission to understand it as "foreign mission" carried out by specialized missionaries. According to John, Christian existence without mission into the world would be no Christian existence at all. It would be cut off from the dynamism of love that originates with the Father and is extended in the mission of the Son.²

Christian existence without participation in the Divine mission in the world would be no Christian existence at all because the movement of love, whether in contemplation (abiding) or in action (going forth), both essential to discipleship, would be lacking. In Waldstein's words nonparticipation in the Divine mission cuts Christians off from the dynamism of Trinitarian love.³ Waldstein takes to heart that the missionary nature of the Church and of her members has as their source the fountain-like love of the Triune God.⁴ Without tapping into the source of Divine love, which sends, is sent, and animates the sending, the life of the Christian withers. To follow Christ, whom John repeatedly names as the "sent one," is to participate in Christ's sending by the Father in the Spirit. This is the essence of Christian existence. Non-participation in the Divine mission alienates the Christian from the Triune God, from His creation, and His creatures. Ultimately non-participation alienates the Christian from him or herself as he or she has no outlet for Divine grace. This can be likened to the Dead Sea which, although possessing an inlet, has no outlet; water does not flow through it, so it becomes stagnate and eventually toxic. Participation in the Divine mission is the natural outflow of Divine love and grace which divinizes the Christian and blesses creation.

A. Pericopes of Participation as Analogy and the Experience of Divinization

In the Gospel of John, the concept of participation is expressed using analogy which implies the distance and distinctiveness between Divine and human persons. However, the notion of participation also conveys a closeness and sharing in the experience of divinization. In this section we will first examine the pericopes in the Gospel of John where Divine persons and human persons participate in the same activity or action analogously. Later in this section, we will explore how the Gospel of John contributes to the theology of divinization.

² Waldstein, *Mission of Jesus and Disciples in John*, 332.

³ Waldstein, *Mission of Jesus and Disciples in John*, 332.

⁴ See *Ad Gentes*, §2.

In John 20:21, the Risen Lord commissions the disciples for the continuation of the Divine mission. He declares, “As the Father has sent me, so I am also sending you (καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, κἀγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς).” The adverb καθὼς,⁵ which is the adverb of analogy, enables the reader to see that there is an analogy between the Father’s sending of the Son and the Son’s sending of the disciples, but the sendings are not the same. This is evidenced in the verbs employed by John for sending: The verb ἀπέσταλκέν is in the perfect indicative active tense referring to the action of the Father sending the Son. The verb πέμπω is in the present indicative active tense referring to action of the Son sending the disciples. It is important to note this distinction in the verbs.⁶ Another distinction, possibly the most important, is in John 20:22: “And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον).” The Risen Lord gives the Holy Spirit to the disciples when he sends them to continue the mission.

The chart below illustrates activities in the Gospel of John in which human persons analogously participate supernaturally, by grace in the Divine life. The first column is a list of twelve instances in the Gospel of John that depict something shared among the Divine Persons and analogously shared between the disciples and the Divine Persons. The second column lists pericopes which refer to the Divine Persons. The third column lists pericopes regarding the disciples and Divine Persons. The italicized text indicates the analogous concept.

Shared Activity	Divine Persons	Human Supernatural Participation
Oneness	1. “I and the Father are one.” (10:30) 2. “The Father is in me, and I am in the Father.” (10:38) 3. I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” (14:10)	1. That they may be one as we are one.” (17:11) 2. “Remain in me, as I remain in you.” (15:4) 3. “I am in my Father, and you are in me and I in you.” (14:19)

⁵ Roughly 17% of this adverb’s New Testament appearances are in John’s Gospel, whereas John constitutes on 11% of the NT tests, so John uses the adverb roughly 36.4% more than average. See Craig Keener “Sent Like Jesus: Johannine Missiology in John (20:21-22) *Asia Journal of Pentecostal Studies 12:1* (2009), 22.

⁶ As we have stated previously, John employs ἀπέσταλκέν and πέμπω at times distinctly. See Waldstein, “The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John,” 311. Recall that ἀπέστειλεν⁶ is the verb John uses in 3:16 regarding the Father’s sending of the Son.

Not Alone, With	1. "I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me." (8:16) 2. "The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone." (8:28–29)	1. "Where I am, there also will my servant be." (12:26) 2. "so that <i>where I am you also may be.</i> " (14:3)
Doing	"The Son <i>cannot do</i> anything of Himself." (5:19)	"Without me <i>you can do nothing.</i> " (15:5)
Has Life	"For just as the <i>Father has life in himself, so also he gave to his Son the possession of life in himself.</i> " (5:26)	"Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, <i>so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.</i> " (6:57)
Works	"The <i>works I do in my Father's name testify to me.</i> " (10:25)	"Whoever believes in me <i>will do the works that I do</i> , and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father." (14:12)
Loves and Does What Is Commanded	1. "I love the Father and I do just as the Father has commanded me." (14:31) 2. "If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love <i>as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.</i> " (15:10)	1. "Whoever does my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." (14:20–21) 2. " <i>If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.</i> " (15:10)
Receives the Sender via the Sent One	"I say to you, whoever <i>receives the one I send receives me</i> , and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." (13:20)	"I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and <i>whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.</i> " (13:20)
Mission	"As the <i>Father sent me</i> , so I send you." (20:21)	"As the Father sent me, <i>so I send you.</i> " (20:21)
Loved Agape	"As the <i>Father has loved me</i> , so have I loved you." (15:9) " <i>The Father loves the Son</i> " (3:35)	"As the Father has loved me, so have <i>I loved you.</i> " (15:9) " <i>The one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him.</i> " (14:22) " <i>The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me.</i> " (16:27)
Friendship Love	"For the Father <i>loves the Son.</i> " (5:19) NB: The verb <i>philia</i> (not <i>agape</i>) is used in Jn 5:19 to describe how the Father has friendship-love for the Son.	"I have called you friends." (15:1)

Know	“I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father.” (10:14–15)	“ <i>I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father.</i> ” (10:14–15)
Given Glory	“ <i>The glory that you have given me I have given to them.</i> ” (17:22)	“The glory that you have given me <i>I have given to them.</i> ” (17:22)

Figure 1 Analogous Participation by Helene Paharik

As the above chart indicates, in the Gospel of John, the disciples participate in activities with the Son in a way that is analogous to the Father and Son’s participation in Their shared activities. However, the Christian disciple’s *participation* cannot be equal to the life and sharing among the Divine Persons in all their perfections.⁷ It is a partial sharing. The Gospel of John is clear that supernatural participation is only possible through faith.⁸ “Then they inquired, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus replied, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent’” (Jn 6:28–29). Believing in the One God has sent is needed. Analogy recognizes the distance between God and humanity. Faith is the appropriate response to Divine analogy. However, we are invited to more than faith in the Gospel of John, we are invited to love. Divine and human love implies a closeness, a sharing and intimacy of communion. This intimacy is possible through the supernatural grace of Divine indwelling.

“The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the believer establish the faith and love that make human persons friends of God.”⁹ It is the Trinitarian missions that enable humans to become participants in the Trinitarian acts of life.¹⁰ “As a work of raising up believers to intimate communion with God, salvation and deification are nothing other than the extension to conscious

⁷ Najeeb Awad explores this topic in his article, “Thomas Aquinas’ Metaphysics of ‘Relation’ and ‘Participation’ and Contemporary Trinitarian Theology.” Awad summarizes, “Aquinas distinguishes between various forms of participation according to each one’s subjects. One of these forms of participation is that of the effect that participates in what is attributed of its cause. This form applies, for instance, to the human’s participation in God’s goodness, according to Aquinas. Here, ‘good’ is an additional predicate, in which the human participates by virtue of being caused by God as God’s creature. This form of participation is different, however, from the form of participation of the Son in the Father’s essence in the trinity. The Son’s divinity is not an additional predicate opposed to the Son’s substantiality. It is a substantial predicate of His nature, which lies in the Son’s and the Father’s equal constitution of one divine essence along with the Spirit. There is, then, an ontological distinction in the concept of ‘participation’ with regard to God-human relation and with regard to Father-Son-Spirit relations.”

⁸ We should note the distinction between natural participation and supernatural participation articulated by Aquinas. Saint Thomas uses “participation” to speak of creatures in relation to their Creator.” Najeeb Awad, “Thomas Aquinas’ Metaphysics of ‘Relation’ and ‘Participation’ and Contemporary Trinitarian Theology1.” *New Blackfriars* 93 (1048):2012, 664.

⁹ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,” 44.

¹⁰ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology, 49–51.

creatures of the relations that exist between the Divine persons.”¹¹ This is indeed the prayer of Jesus in His final discourse. As Archbishop Anastasios offers:

[M]ission cannot be limited to the offering of education, health care, and other means of external development. [The Church] is bound to offer to each person, particularly to the poor and oppressed, the faith that each person has a unique personal worth; that because each person is created in the “image and likeness of God”, he or she is destined for the highest possible achievement; to become “Christ-like,” to partake of the Divine glory, to attain by grace, deification.¹²

For this is the ultimate end or goal of mission: deification. The Christian mission is incorporated into and is a continuation of God’s mission, and its purpose, as Scripture proclaims, is the “[r]ecapitulation of all things’ (Eph 1:10) in Christ and our partaking of the Divine glory, the eternal, final glory of God.”¹³

Daniel Keating in his article in the *Oxford Handbook on the Trinity* entitled “Trinity and Salvation: Christian Life as an Existence in the Trinity” makes two important contributions to our understanding of the vine and branches imagery in John 15:4–5. First, he states,

Abiding (the branches in the vine) is intended for a fruitfulness pleasing to the Father (Jn 15:2–8). The image of Christ as the vine is rich with Old Testament echoes. In short, John is showing Jesus here to be the true vine, the true Israel, in whom all the promises to Abraham are fulfilled (See Isaiah 5). The abiding of the disciples in Jesus is not just for their personal delight alone—it is intended by the Father to yield a harvest for the kingdom of God manifest in the works of one.¹⁴

Keating’s second point synthesizes the primary thesis of this dissertation: Jesus invites His friends to participate in the Divine mission. Keating writes,

Jesus calls the disciples his “friends” for he now will include them in his counsels and work (Jn 15:15). Divine friendship marked by participation in the work and counsel of the Son himself is one important consequence of the “abiding” that John speaks of.¹⁵

Keating examines the entire final discourse in John in terms of divinization. He sees the prayer of Jesus in John 17 as a “crescendo,” noting that the specific qualities of unity and love are added to the motif of mutual indwelling in the vine and branches. Perhaps it is possible to say that Jesus’s prayer points to a *missional divinization*:

[T]hat they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me....I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them as you loved me....I

¹¹ Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 248.

¹² Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 232.

¹³ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 46.

¹⁴ Daniel A. Keating, “Trinity and Salvation: Christian Life as an Existence in the Trinity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Matthew Levering and Gilles Emery (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 449.

¹⁵ Keating, “Trinity and Salvation,” 449.

made known to them your name, and I continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them (Jn 17:21, 23, 26).

Keating explains, providing a concise definition of what could be understood as *missional divinization*: “The mutual indwelling and unity are ordered to witness ‘so that the world may believe’.”¹⁶ He states,

In the unity of the disciple with the Son and with each other, the love of the Father for the Son and the disciples is made manifest—and this love is the primary witness to those outside this fellowship of mutual love, inviting them to enter it and find life. Trinitarian love is the dynamis of the centripetal and centrifugal movement of the disciple, a love which both gathers or draws in and also sends forth.¹⁷

Keating continues,

It is not a life apart from our human existence or leading us to a plane of existence beyond that of our creaturely calling. It is precisely our human life, now redeemed in Christ, with all its created limitations that is to be infused with and “lived in” by the Father and the Son through the Spirit making their home in us.¹⁸

Keating concludes, “Human participation and deification through the effective indwelling of the Divine Persons is *a fruit of the love of God* who has fitted us (in creation and by means of redemption), not by nature, but by grace.¹⁹ It is the power of the Love of God which divinizes men and women.

B. Mission and Liturgy Are Two Modes of Participation in the Divine Life through the Paschal Mystery of Christ. They Are Distinguishable but Inseparable.

In the portrayal of the Last Supper in the Gospel of John, a theology of mission as participation in friendship is revealed. Recall that instead of the words of institution, John describes Jesus’s washing the disciples’ feet and His command that they are to go and do likewise. In the final discourse delivered during the Last Supper in the chapters 14-17 in the Gospel of John, all the themes we have discussed thus far are contained: abiding and going, friendship, and participation.

John Paul II said, “Participation in Trinitarian life takes place through the Liturgy and most especially through the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the glorified body of Christ.”²⁰

¹⁶ Keating, “Trinity and Salvation,” 450.

¹⁷ Keating, “Trinity and Salvation,” 451

¹⁸ Keating, “Trinity and Salvation,” 453.

¹⁹ Keating, “Trinity and Salvation” 452.

²⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen* (May 2, 1995), §6.

When the faithful go forth from the Mass they are dismissed to continue the mission of God in the world. The apostolic mission is in response to the action of the Trinity in the Eucharist. Both the Holy Mass and the Divine mission express and affect humanity's communion with the Trinity and with one another.

The first and fundamental mission that we receive from the sacred mysteries we celebrate is that of bearing witness by our lives. In the Eucharist, Christ gives Himself so that those who receive His body, blood, soul, and divinity may give what they have received. The wonder we experience at the gift Christ has given us in the Eucharist gives new impulse to our lives and commits us to becoming witnesses of His love. In the Catholic tradition, saints and mystics throughout the ages have understood that the faithful leave Christ at the altar to go to Christ whom we recognize in the poor and oppressed. Drawn into the very dynamic of Christ's self-giving, we are moved to self-giving action in apostolic prayer and action on behalf of those most in need.

The Eucharist and the apostolic mission are distinct yet inextricably linked; both invite our participation as expressions of love. The Eucharist and mission are interdependent aspects of participation in Divine life. The Eucharist provides the sacramental means of union with Christ, while mission represents the active response to this union, extending the transformative power of the Eucharist into the world. Benedict XVI reminds us in *Deus Caritas Est*: "A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented."²¹ John Paul II also comments frequently on participation in the Eucharist and in the Divine mission. In affirming the missionary nature of a Eucharistic community, he states, "A truly Eucharistic community cannot be closed in upon itself."²² This is because in the Eucharist, the boundlessness of the Father's love, "springs up within us a lively response" that causes us "to love."²³ Contemplating Christ's sacrifice for the world, the faithful are compelled to follow his example. John Paul II writes that our ability to go forth from the Mass in imitation of Jesus's washing of the disciples' feet is the "criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebration is judged."²⁴ "Eucharistic worship," he says, is the expression of "the love that springs up within us from the Eucharist"—that love which is the authentic and deepest characteristic of the Christian vocation.

²¹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, (December 25, 2005), §14.

²² John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, (April 17, 2003), §39.

²³ John Paul II, Letter *Dominicae cenae* (February 24, 1980), §5.

²⁴ John Paul II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*, (October 7, 2004), §28.

The Eucharist and the apostolic mission are both, in the life of the believer, a foretaste of the full participation in Divine life and love in eternal life. “After the course of our earthly life, participation in complete intimacy with the Father thus comes through our insertion into Christ’s paschal mystery.”²⁵ Participation is not simply in the Mass or in the mission, but rather in the transcendent, saving, love of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Church is then understood as the people that God has chosen not only to participate in the saving life of the Divine community, but also to be agent and cooperator in God’s outreach to the whole of creation.²⁶

The liturgy is not celebrated as a means to indoctrinate other people; it is not done for spectators but rather for God.²⁷ Joseph Ratzinger in a lecture in the Diocese of Como at a conference on “The Eucharist and Mission” offered a critical insight regarding the relationship between the two:

The Eucharist, as such is not directly oriented toward the awakening of people’s faith in a missionary sense. It stands rather at the heart of the faith and nourishes it; its gaze is primarily toward God, and it draws men into this point of view, draws them into the descent of God to us, which becomes their ascent to fellowship with God. It aims at being pleasing to God and at leading men to see this as being likewise the measure of their lives. And to that extent it is, of course, in a more profound sense, the origin of mission.²⁸

In conclusion, both the Eucharist and mission reflect the Church’s call to participate in the Divine life and love. The Eucharist is a sacrament of this participation, offering the faithful direct communion with God. Mission is a response to this communion, an expression of the Divine relationship lived out in the world. Eucharist and mission as two sides of the same coin. The Eucharist nourishes and sustains the Church for its mission, while mission expresses and actualizes the grace received in the Eucharist. Trinitarian love is the dynamis of both the Eucharist and mission. Gathering and being sent is the rhythm of the heart of both liturgy and mission.

²⁵ John Paul II, Wednesday General Audience (July 21, 1999).

²⁶ Stephan B. Bevans, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 386–87.

²⁷ Benedict XVI, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, ed. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnur, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 93.

²⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, ed. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnur, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco, Calif: Ignatius Press, 2005), 94.

CHAPTER VIII: JESUS'S FRIENDS PARTICIPATE IN THE DIVINE MISSION

A. Who Are Jesus's Friends?

In the paschal mystery, the Son accomplishes that for which He was sent while revealing and glorifying the Father as love. However, that is not the end of the Johannine development of themes of mission and friendship. In the Gospel narrative, Jesus instructs the disciples to love as He has loved (13:15, 13:34–25; 15:12–17; 17:20–26), and He sends the disciples as He himself has been sent (20:21). From the Johannine text, it is clear that the disciples are to participate in the Divine mission. Just as the Father loves and sends the Son, so the Son loves and sends forth the disciples.

The Johannine text is rich with analogies of participation, which we previously explored. In this chapter, we will examine several instances in the Gospel narrative of individuals participating in the Divine mission as a friend of Jesus. The three characteristics of Divine-human friendship will be explored: *intimacy*, *habit*, and *self-assertion*. Individuals and the disciples as a group in the Gospel of John narrative will be shown to display the characteristics of *intimacy*, *habit*, and *self-assertion*, indicative of friendship with Jesus.¹ We will demonstrate how participation in the Divine mission is an expression of friendship in the Gospel of John.

B. Women and Men

Both women and men participate in Jesus's mission as His friends in the Gospel of John. There are many similarities between the activities and experiences of the women and men portrayed in the narrative. Both women and men express their friendship-love with Jesus in a physical manner: Mary of Bethany (12:1) anoints Jesus's feet and dries them with her hair, and the Beloved Disciple rests his head on Jesus (13:23). Both women and men express an awareness of the identity of the Son of God: John the Baptist calls Him "the Lamb of God who takes away

¹ Biblical scholar Jacqueline Lapsley identified intimacy, habit, and self-assertion as characteristics of the friendship between God and Moses. In the chapter on the Old Testament, I will demonstrate how both Abraham Israel experienced intimacy, habit, and self-assertion and therefore, friendship with God. See Lapsley, "Friends with God? Moses and the Possibility of Covenantal Friendship," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, (April, 2004), 117–29.

the sins of the world” (1:29); Peter proclaims Jesus is “the holy One of God” (6:68–70); and Martha proclaims Jesus is the “Messiah, the Son of God” (11:27). Both women and men were at the foot of the Cross (19:25–28). Both women and men encounter the Risen Lord (20:11–10). Both women and men and are sent forth by the Risen Lord. Mary of Magdala is sent forth first in 20:17 and then the disciples in the Upper Room in 20:21. In the narrative of the Gospel of John, both women and men experience intimacy, habit (or multiple interactions), and self-assertion in their relationship with Jesus. This reflects a radical and stunning equality of men and women in the narrative. John is very clear that both women and men share intimate friendship with Jesus and have essential roles as participants in the Divine mission. In the following pages we will explore several instances of women and men participating in the Divine mission as friends of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

In recent years, there has been increasing scholarly interest in the female characters in the Gospel of John.² This may be due to the Johannine narrative’s inclusion of women as active agents in receiving, believing, and spreading the message of Jesus, given the patriarchal culture in which these stories arose.³ According to Sandra Schneiders, not a single woman in the Gospel of John is depicted as “resisting Jesus’s initiatives, failing to believe, deserting him, or betraying him.”⁴

Numerous women in John’s gospel are depicted as having a special relationship with Jesus.⁵ The Samaritan woman in John 4:1–42 comes to faith in Jesus and evangelizes her whole community. Martha makes the most complete profession of faith in the Gospel of John. Mary of Bethany is the only disciple who actually cares for Jesus’s physical body, lavishly performing the *mandatum*, even before the mandate is given, with perfumed oil (12:3–5). Mary of Magdala is the first witness to and proclaimer of Jesus’s resurrection (Jn 20:1–2; 11-18). The mother of Jesus stands with Jesus at the beginning and end of his public life and ministry (Jn 2:1–11; 19:25–27).

Additionally, John’s positive portrayal of women disciples does not in any way stereotype women. Martha and Mary of Bethany are very different personalities: Martha runs to meet Jesus

² Raymond E. Brown, “Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel,” *Theological Studies* 36, no. 4 (December 1975): 688–99. A recent very helpful article that carries forward some of Brown’s insights and supplies recent bibliography is Turid Karlsen Seim, “Roles of Women in the Gospel of John,” in *Aspects on the Johannine Literature: Papers Presented at a Conference of Scandinavian New Testament Exegetes at Uppsala, June 16-19, 1986*, ed. Lars Hartman and Briger Olsson, *Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series* 18 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1987), 56-73. For a feminist perspective on mission and friendship in the Gospel of John, see J. Massyngbaerde Ford, *Redeemer, Friend, and Mother: Salvation in Antiquity and in the Gospel of John*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1997).

³ Sandra Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 2003), 95.

⁴ Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 98.

⁵ Brown, “Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel,” 688–99.

while Mary stays behind (11:20). Martha prepares the meal (12:2), while Mary anoints Jesus's feet (12:3–5). The Samaritan woman is a known sinner. Mary, His mother, is assertive and direct (2:5). Women in the Gospel of John appear as strikingly unique and original characters.⁶ What is conclusive from the Johannine texts is that Jesus enjoyed friendship with women and engaged women to participate in the Divine mission as very diverse representatives of femininity.⁷ Female discipleship and leadership in John have many authentically varied faces, forms, experiences, and expressions. New Testament scholar Johannes Beutler is one among many who assert that “such female figures lead today to the question of the position and office of women in the church.”⁸

This question of the position and office of women in the Church historically has been related to the presentation of the twelve male disciples in the Gospels. Mark 3:16, Matthew 10:2, and Luke 6:13 present a list of twelve male disciples with their individual names. In John, a partial list of the twelve disciples comes at the end of the Gospel during the appearance of the Risen Lord on the Sea of Galilee in John 21:2. The disciples who were together in Galilee are specified: Peter, Thomas (whose mention forms a link with the climax of 20:8), Nathanael (who is said to be from Cana), the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two unnamed disciples. The two who are not named may be Andrew and Philip, who are mentioned together in 6:7–8 and 12:22. The unnamed also may be the Beloved Disciple, who appears in this scene. Just seven are listed and only five are named. However, John employs the term *the Twelve* three times:

- “Jesus said to *the Twelve*, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’” (εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῖς δώδεκα, Μὴ καὶ ὑμεῖς θέλετε ὑπάγειν) (6:67)
- “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I Myself not choose you, *the Twelve*? And yet one of you is a devil’” (ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Οὐκ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς τοὺς δώδεκα ἐξελεξάμην, καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν εἷς διάβολός ἐστιν) (6:70)
- “Now Thomas, one of *the Twelve*, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came” (Θωμᾶς δὲ εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος, οὐκ ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν ὅτε ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς) (20:24).

⁶ Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 99.

⁷ This is not to disregard the distinctions in the portrayal of men and women in the text. We acknowledged the similarity yet distinctions in the Johannine usage of the verbs *pempo* and *apostello* and the similarities yet distinction in the verbs *philia* and *agape* in the Gospel of John. It may be useful to employ a similar approach to the Johannine portrayal of men and women: There are profound similarities *and* there are also some distinctions between men and women in the Gospel of John. This is a comment on the Johannine text, not ecclesial discipline.

⁸ Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 2013, 322.

Regarding the Twelve in John 6:67–71, Johannes Beutler maintains that the Twelve may be considered closer or more intimate to Jesus than the other disciples. Beutler argues that the pericope has a concentric structure and claims that we should consider the Johannine term *the Twelve* in connection with the focalization in John 6:22–71: from the “crowd” to the “Jews,” from the “Jews” to the “disciples,” from the “disciples” to “the Twelve,” and from “the Twelve” to individually named apostles, Peter and Judas.⁹ Yet, despite this, John never provides a list of all the names of the Twelve or describes the call of the Twelve. However, in the Gospel of John, during the final discourse at the Last Supper and at the resurrection appearance in the room behind locked doors, John does not specify “the Twelve.” He uses the word “disciples.”

In the Gospel of John, both women and men are friends of Jesus and play an essential role in continuing the Divine mission.¹⁰ All who participate in the mission as friends both abide with Jesus and go forth. This perhaps is the main thrust of the final discourse. According to Raymond Brown, “the themes of Divine indwelling, asking in Jesus’s name, keeping the commandments, and abiding in love, are all touched upon in Jn 15:1–7.”¹¹ “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5); “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit” (Jn 15:8); “Remain in my love” (Jn 15:9). This is true for all disciples of every age, gender, culture, and time. Abide and bear fruit. Disciples of Jesus are to abide and go just as Jesus, who says of Himself, “I am with the Father who sent Me” (Jn 8:16). Abiding is a habit of being. Let us take a look at how Jesus invites both men and women to participate in the Divine mission as His friends.

1. *John the Baptist*

The first time φίλος appears in the Gospel of John, it is used in reference to John the Baptist, who is named “friend of the bridegroom.” In this pericope, John’s disciples report to him that Jesus is baptizing and “everyone is flocking to him” (Jn 3:26). John explains to his disciples that he is not the Messiah, but the one sent (*missio*) before the Messiah. In the Gospel’s first chapter, John the Baptist explains his relationship to the Messiah. In 1:20, he states clearly, “I am not the Messiah.” In 1:23, John quotes the Prophet Isaiah, saying he is “a voice crying out in the desert:

⁹ Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Michael Tait (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 194–95.

¹⁰ The position and office of women in the Church is not bound to the ordination of women. Women with requisite formation and experience can and should be engaged in leadership in the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church, regardless of whether they are ordained or not.

¹¹ Raymond Brown, *A Concise Commentary on the Gospel and Epistles of John*, 83.

Make straight the way of the Lord.” Then, in 1:29–30, John identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God and offers what could be interpreted as an affirmation of Jesus’s eternal existence with the Father: “After me is to come a man, who ranks ahead of me, because he was before me.” All this culminates with John’s testifying to seeing the Spirit descend and rest upon Jesus, which served to signify that Jesus is God’s chosen one (Jn 1:32–34).

John 3:28–36 may be interpreted as a recapitulation of all the previous comments about the identities of Jesus and John the Baptist and the relationship between the two. The identification of John the Baptist as the friend of the bridegroom serves as a parable, an explanation that accompanies previous discussions of their identities and relationship. The setting of this passage is Judea. Jesus is with His disciples, baptizing. John also is baptizing people nearby. John the Baptist’s disciples come to him to say that the one about whom John the Baptist was testifying is gaining a larger following. John the Baptist responds to them:

You yourselves are witnesses to the fact that I said: “I am not the Messiah; I am sent before him.” It is the groom who has the bride. But the friend of the bridegroom waits there listening for him and is overjoyed to hear his voice. That is my joy, and it is complete. He must increase while I must decrease (John 1:28–30).

In calling himself the “friend of the bridegroom,” John the Baptist draws upon both Scripture and the Jewish marriage customs of first-century Palestine. The Hebrew Scriptures frequently portray Israel as the bride of God (Is 62:4–5; Jer 2:2; Ez 16:8; and Hos 2:21). If John the Baptist is saying that he is the *friend* of the bridegroom, then Jesus is the bridegroom. The first hearers of this proclamation would have understood God as the bridegroom of Israel. John thus not only clarifies his role as subordinate to Jesus’s but also affirms Jesus’s divinity. The Baptist proclaims that it is “[n]ot he, but Christ is the head of the New Israel.”¹² It would be fair to characterize the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist as possessing a level of reciprocity, which is indicative of friendship.

An essential task of the friend of the bridegroom was that of presenting the bride to the bridegroom. In *Imaginative Love in John*, Sjeff van Tilborg suggests that, in a way, the reference to “the friend of the bridegroom” (παρὰνύμφιος) in John 3:29 is more akin to the Hellenistic and Roman understanding of the friendship between groom and groomsman. In the classical world, there was only one παρὰνύμφιος, while Jewish customs called for two best men: one for the bride

¹² C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: SPCK, 1978), 222–23.

and one for the groom.¹³ To be a *παρὰνύμφιος* was an honor which expressed the bond of friendship between the groom and his best friend, chosen as the “one and only” from among his friends.

The “friend of the bridegroom” (*παρὰνύμφιος*) is secondary to the bridegroom; yet there is an intimacy between the groom and his best man. John the Baptist—as the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him—“rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice” (3:29). This reflects a dimension of the friendship with John the Baptist, in that his joy or sorrow was in large part dependent on the joy or sorrow of his friend. This idea was typical in the pre-Christian world of classical Greece and Rome, where ideal friends shared in all of life’s experiences, whether good or bad. “In this way, John the Baptist can be understood as the precursor and bridge between pagan friendship, built on natural virtue and affinity, and the Christian understanding of friendship, built on grace.”¹⁴ As the friend of the Bridegroom, John the Baptist certainly experiences intimacy: he knows Jesus’s identity. John the Baptist knows this from the frequency of his encounters, or habit of connecting, with Jesus. A close reading of John the Baptist’s speech patterns in the narrative possess a striking similarity to the phraseology of Jesus. Compare the Baptist’s words to Jesus’:

- John the Baptist: “No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven” (Jn 3:27).
Jesus: “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (Jn 5:30).
“In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (Jn 16:23).
- John the Baptist: “So this joy of mine has been made complete” (Jn 5:29).
Jesus: “I have told you these things so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete” (Jn 15:11).
- John the Baptist: “He must increase. I must decrease” (Jn 3:30).
Jesus: “Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Jn 14:12–14).

¹³ Sief Van Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John* (Leiden, Netherlands/Boston, MA: Brill, 1993), 75–79.

¹⁴ Jonathan Sammut, “Friendship with God is the Basis for All Friendships,” *Church Life Journal* September 20, 2017.

It is evident that the Friend of the Bridegroom, John the Baptist, participates in the Divine mission. The last words of the Baptist are truly the refrain of a mission theology of friendship: “He must increase. I must decrease” (Jn 3:30).

2. *Mother of Jesus*

Some of the major themes of the Gospel such as sign, hour, and belief are introduced in the first Cana sign in which Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, has a significant role (Jn 2:1–12).

Although the Johannine texts regarding the mother of Jesus do not contain *philia* or *agape*, it is possible to make the case that the narrative reveals the motif of friendship between Jesus and His mother. The narrative contains dialogue of honest exchange, mutual care, and a genuine knowing of the other. Likewise, the characteristics of habit, intimacy, and self-assertation are evident in the Johannine portrayal of Jesus and His mother. Jesus’s relationship with Mary manifests a deep level of reciprocity like no other in the gospel. This can be seen in the interaction between Jesus and His mother at the wedding feast at Cana in John 2:1–12. Let us look at the text laid out to emphasize its chiasmic structure:

A On *the third day* there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding (Jn 2:1–2).

B When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” [And] Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? *My hour has not yet come* (οὔπω ἔκει ἡ ὥρα μου).” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:3–5).

C There were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water” (Jn 2:6–7).

D Then he told them, “Draw some out *now* (νῦν) and take it to the headwaiter” (Jn 2:8).

C’ So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now” (Jn 2:9–10.)

B’ Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his *glory* (δόξαν), and his disciples began to *believe* in him (Jn 2:11).

A’ After this, he and his mother, [his] brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days (Jn 2:12).

Perhaps “a preview of coming attractions” may be an appropriate title for the wedding feast narrative in the Gospel of John as the themes of hour, now, glory, water, wine, belief, as well as eschatological banquet, all appear. At the heart of this pericope of the first sign in the Gospel of John, we have the adverb *now*. The adverb *now* (νῦν) is employed very frequently by John as a means to indicate the realized eschatology. John employs νῦν 11 times in the Final Discourse alone, e.g., “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (17:5).¹⁵ This sense of time, in which the promises of the past are realized in the present moment, is the Johannine realized eschatology, the eternal now, the inbreaking of heaven. This “now” begins in Cana at a wedding where the Mother of God is an instigator.

In the only publicly spoken words during his first sign Jesus instructs, “Draw out the water *now* (νῦν).” *Now* has the water for purification been replaced with wine. *Now* has the Messianic reign begun. *Now* has the first sign (which, in fact, points to the final glory) been revealed. Throughout this gospel, water and wine are symbols of the Kingdom. This first sign points to the last sign, the ultimate glory of the cross, where blood and water flow from the Bridegroom’s side, the mystical marriage of Christ and His Bride, the Church.¹⁶ Mary is here now in Cana as she is present at the cross. Mary is present the first time Jesus’s blood flowed, at his circumcision at the Temple. She is present at the Son’s first sign, helping those present to listen to her Jesus, to cooperate with Him so that the Father is glorified and that the disciples might believe.

The hour of Jesus is a noticeably prominent theme in the Gospel according to John. The word *hour* (ώρα) sometimes refers simply and literally to a short period of chronological time (a 60-minute period during the day). More often and more importantly, however, Jesus’s hour refers more broadly and metaphorically to the climactic event of Jesus’s death and resurrection, which the Fourth Gospel also refers to as His “glorification” (12:23; 17:1). Early in the Gospel, the narrator and Jesus Himself emphasize several times that His hour has *not yet come* (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Twice, he similarly stresses, “My time has *not yet come*” (using the word *kairos* [καιρός]). But when does Jesus’s time or hour actually come? At the beginning of the Last Supper (13:1), the narrator says, “[H]is hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father” (13:1). Similarly, in the prayer Jesus addresses to the Father at the end of the Last Supper discourses, he

¹⁵ See also 4:18; 4:23; 5:25; 6:42; 8:11; 8:40; 8:52; 9:21; 9:41; 11:8; 11:22; 12:27; 12:31; 13:31; 13:36; 14:39; 15:22; 15:24; 16:5; 16:22; 16:29; 16:30; 17:7; 17:13; 18:38; 20:10.

¹⁶ See Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* §338, page 133.

begins, “*Father, the hour has come*; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you” (17:1). Curiously, however, Jesus had earlier already said, “*The hour has come* for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23). Moreover, in reference to certain other events related to His salvific mission, He had twice already said, “[T]he hour is coming and is now here” (4:23; 5:25).

What is significant is Jesus’s mother’s participation from the first hour to the last, as the model disciple. She knows what time it is in a mystical sense. She opens the stage curtain for the Son of Man to act and gives Him the cue to begin. She directs our attention to Him, to listen and do what He says (2:5). All is ordered to foster belief in God.

In the narrative of John 2:2–13, the dialogue between Jesus and His mother includes the honest repartee and self-assertion indicative of friendship. The only words spoken by Mary in the entire narrative are instructive to missionary disciples: “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5). The presence of Jesus’s mother from the first hour to the last indicates their *habitual* and continued interaction. Jesus extends His care for His mother even beyond His death by entrusting her to the disciple whom He loved. Standing at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25), His mother exhibits the intimacy of genuine solidarity. Even as she remains Jesus’s mother, the relationship between the two, as we have demonstrated, reveals a friendship as well. This should not surprise the watchful reader of John, for, in John 5:20, the Evangelist includes the love of friendship in the relationship between the Father and the Son.

3. *The Samaritan Woman*

We meet the Samaritan woman in John 4:4–26.¹⁷ Some could argue that the relationship between Jesus and the Samaritan woman does not rise to the level of friendship as it was a one-time incident and not habitual. The Gospel of John provides no other interaction between them except this dialogue at Jacob’s well. Yet, the Samaritan woman is familiar with the idea of the Messiah. She says, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; and when he comes, he will tell us everything” (Jn 4:25). This proclamation of faith reveals that, although the Samaritan woman did not up to this point have an encounter with Christ, she was longing for the

¹⁷ For additional interpretations of the Samaritan woman pericope, see Sandra Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1999) 101-105; Johannes Beutler, SJ, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Michael Tait, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmann’s 2017)112-124.

day. However, her marital situation does not seem to reflect that of one who was preparing for the imminent coming of the Messiah.¹⁸

In the dialogue, the Samaritan woman is self-assertive several times. First, when she says, “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” (Jn 4:9) Then, she is incredulous at Jesus’s claim that He has living water: “Sir, you don’t even have a bucket. ... Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this cistern?” (Jn 4:11–12) This is followed by her demand that Jesus give her the living water: “Sir, give me this water” (Jn 4:15). The climax of her self-assertion occurs in John 4:19–20 when the Samaritan woman, like the Jewish Pharisee Nicodemus in John 3, engages in a theological debate with Jesus. “Sir, I can see you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is Jerusalem.”¹⁹ And like the exchange with Nicodemus, Jesus reveals something critically important about the Father to His interlocutor. Jesus reveals to the Samaritan woman in the course of their theological debate that “the hour is coming and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed, the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23–24). Toward the end of their dialogue, and for the very first time in the Gospel of John, Jesus proclaims, “I am he” (Jn 4:26), in reference to the Messiah. Her self-assertion is rewarded with a self-disclosure by Jesus.

Jesus’s self-disclosure to the Samaritan woman in John 4:26, as we have discussed previously, is indicative of the intimacy of friendship. Jesus reveals he is the Messiah for the first time in the Gospel of John to the Samaritan woman. Up to this point in the narrative, others name Jesus as Messiah, specifically Andrew in John 1:41 and John the Baptist in 3:28, and Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man and the Son of God, as well as “the one whom God sent” but this is the first time He states He is the Messiah. This disclosure is a clear sign of the intimacy Jesus has with the Samaritan woman. It is not lost on exegetes that the place of this intimate self-disclosure is at Jacob’s well.

¹⁸ Jean-Louis Ska, “Jesus et La Samaritaine (Jn 4) Utilite de l’Ancien Testament,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 118, no. 5 (1996): 641–52. Ska explains in a thoughtful manner how the Samaritan woman could be a symbol of the Samaritan people who have not been faithful.

¹⁹ One of the flashpoints of the Jewish-Samaritan conflict in the first century centered upon the place of true worship. In the fourth century on Mount Gerzim in Samaria the Samaritans erected a temple to rival the temple in Jerusalem. See Dt 27:4. The temple was built by their occupier and the Roman client king Herod and temple practices were riddled with the corruption of this alliance.

Unlike Nicodemus, who keeps his relationship to Jesus a secret, the Samaritan woman runs from the well to tell the whole village she has seen the Messiah (Jn 4:39). She participates in the Divine mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God has come, the Messiah has arrived.²⁰ In superb missionary form, the Samaritan woman's testimony leads people to believe not only on her account but on their own experience of Jesus. The Samaritan woman leads people to Jesus. She enacts both coming to Jesus and going forth from Him to share His message. As one who goes forth, a missionary refers to the one who sent them, revealing the sender's message not their own. Thus, the Samaritan woman becomes a model missionary.

4. *Martha of Bethany*

Several chapters after the prominent role of the Samaritan woman, another strong female appears in the narrative, Martha of Bethany, in 11:1–44 and 12:1–2. The final miracle of Jesus in the Gospel, the raising of Lazarus, includes Martha as an indispensable character. This miracle pertains to one of the main themes of the Gospel, namely, life.

The role of Martha is unique in comparison to the other characters in the Gospel of John. This is because in the Gospel it is to her that the foundation of Christian faith is revealed: Jesus is the resurrection and the life (11:25–26). She is presented by the evangelist not only as the recipient of the revelation; it is through her that the famous Christological confession of faith is communicated (11:27). Since the last miracle is of such importance in the Gospel, the role of Martha, a leading protagonist of the scene, is highly important. The evangelist depicts her taking the initiative to send a message to Jesus about the illness of Lazarus (11:3). When Jesus comes to Bethany, she goes out of her house (11:20) to meet Jesus. Contrary to the character of her sister Mary, Martha engages Jesus in a theological dialogue about resurrection and eternal life (11:21–

²⁰ Schneiders comments, "The episode about the Samaritan woman shows us a woman apostle, presented as such within the lifetime of the historical Jesus but surely reflecting also the life of the Johannine community, in whom is fully realized the typically Johannine revelation process: Jesus self-revelation to her as Messiah (or Christ) and "I am" (God), which is the content of Christian faith according to the Fourth Gospel (see 20:31); her believing in him and leaving all things to bear effective apostolic witness to him among the Samaritans; and the acceptance of her work by Jesus, who claims as his own those who come to believe in him through her word.", 102. Buetler does not refer to the woman as an "apostle", yet remarks, "The woman leaves her jar behind and returns to her city to report on whom she has met. In this feature, exegetes mostly see an expression of the haste with which the woman goes on her way. One can however, read it as an expression of the learning process through which the woman has passed since the beginning of her conversation with Jesus. At least for the readers, the woman no longer needs the physical water that she had come to seek after she has met Jesus, who is the source and bestower of living water that quenches man's thirst in a deeper sense." Buetler states the woman's belief Jesus is the Messiah, is "precisely the reason that the inhabitants of Sychar come out to Jesus in John 4:30." Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 124.

27). The evangelist affirms Martha's role as the recipient of this revelation, which is special to his Gospel. Finally, she makes her Christological confession (11:27).

After setting the scene, the evangelist presents the revelation through the mouth of Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (11:25–26). In the revelation to Martha, Jesus affirms that he is "the resurrection and the life" (11:25). He offers the same "life" to all believers. It is stated in two forms: first, "Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live" (11:25); second, "[E]veryone who lives and believes in me will never die" (11:26). The former indicates faith in Christ as the guarantee that believers will rise again after death. Brown explains the latter: "Whoever receives the gift of life through belief in Jesus will never die a spiritual death, for this life is eternal life."²¹

The Johannine Jesus reveals to Martha His universal role as the giver of life. This confirms Jesus's authority to give life (5:21) and to raise the dead. He reveals His identity to her, and she reveals her belief in His identity in response. The narrative tells us that Jesus loves Martha as well as her sister and Lazarus (11:5) and that Martha is not timid in making her request known to Jesus by sending word to Him in a manner to compel Him to act (11:3). When Jesus does not do what she wanted how and when she wanted it, she tells Him about it, exhibiting the frank speech characteristic of friendship: "Lord, if you had been here ..." (11:20–21). She leaves her grieving sister and family members to have this frank discussion with her friend Jesus out on the road, before He gets to the house.

Martha addresses Jesus with the title *Kyrie*, an acknowledgement of His identity and her devotion to Him. Martha's profession of faith is remarkable, even in a Gospel that consistently depicts women favorably. The narrative unfolds the stages of her progression in faith through her dialogue with Jesus. First, she calls him *Kyrie* and complains that if he had arrived sooner, her brother would still be alive. Next, she says that she *knows* (οἶδα) (11:22) that even now whatever Jesus asks of God could be accomplished. She knows it. She says, "whatever you ask of God (ὅσα ἂν αἰτήσῃ τὸν θεόν)" (11:22), which anticipates what Jesus tells His disciples to "ask the Father"²² (14:13, 16; 16:23). This is reminiscent of the Mother of God's prodding her Son at the wedding in

²¹ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, The Anchor Bible 29, (New York: Doubleday), 434.

²² "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" 14:13; "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever," 14:16; "I tell you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you" 16:23.

Cana. Jesus's saying that He is the resurrection and the life prompts an expression of partial faith from Martha: She *knows* her brother will rise on the last day (11:24). Jesus lifts the veil and tells her plainly: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die" (11:25–26). But Jesus does not leave it there. He does not simply make the proclamation but invites her participation into it. He asks her personally, "Do you believe this?" (11:26). She responds with an extraordinarily mature Christological profession of faith saying plainly, "Yes, Lord, I have *come to believe* (λέγει αὐτῷ, Ναί, κύριε: ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα [past perfect tense]), that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (11:27).

In her statement of faith, Martha speaks truths straight out of John's prologue, which contains the highest Christology of the New Testament.²³ Peter had his own profession of faith: "We have come to believe and are convinced you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:69). Placed side by side, Martha's profession of faith is much fuller, weaving Johannine Christology from the prologue into one sentence. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who comes into the world from God (cf. Jn 1:3, 10–11; 17–18). "When Martha had thus made clear her unshakeable faith, but before she saw any sign of Lazarus' life restored, she ran to tell her sister that Jesus was with them. Such witness is the stuff of resurrection."²⁴ Martha proclaims her faith and then moves in anticipation of its fulfillment.

In John 11:5, we read of Jesus's affection for Martha: "ἡγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον (Jesus loved [*agape*] Martha and her sister and Lazarus)." Even those scholars who are most attentive to the nuances and distinctions of the Johannine usage of the verbs for love *agape* and *philia* conclude that in chapter 11 it is difficult to perceive the difference between the two. Spicq notes, "It is legitimate to conclude that in Jn 11 *agapan* and *philien* are almost synonymous."²⁵

We can employ the conceptual field study to see that friendship is being portrayed between Jesus and Martha. The characteristics of friendship—habit, intimacy, and self-assertation—are very evident in the dialogue between Martha and Jesus in chapter 11. The text itself reveals the habitual interaction between Jesus and the family of Bethany in verses 11:1–3. Martha runs to

²³ Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *Women of the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 203.

²⁴ Sullivan, *Women of the New Testament*, 203.

²⁵ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, *Agape in the Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalypse of John*, trans. Sr. Marie Aquinas McNamara, OP and Sr. Honoria Richter, OP (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1966), 91.

Jesus while He is still out on road, in a gesture of familiarity and intimacy. She dispenses with the formalities of receiving someone in her home and runs off to meet Him. (Jn 11:20) In an intimate exchange, Martha reveals to Jesus the feelings in her heart of grief and disappointment in Him: “Lord, if you would have been here” (Jn 11:21). And her belief that even now Jesus can intercede with the Father (Jn 11:21). Jesus reciprocates Martha’s unveiling of her heart by revealing His identity: “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25). There are several instances of Martha’s self-assertion in this pericope as we can see. Perhaps an additional one worth noting is when Jesus tells them to roll away the stone (11:38) and Martha tells Him there will be a stench (11:39). Jesus is very direct with her and says, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” (Jn 11:41). Martha is a friend of Jesus whose proclamation of faith sums up the entire Christology of John. She plays a key role in His mission of revelation. In the Gospel of John, Jesus’s miracles point to His identity as the Son of God. They are true signs, and Martha is a witness to the greatest of these signs: Jesus’s bringing to life her brother Lazarus.

5. *Mary of Bethany*

Not to be outdone by her sister, Mary of Bethany is also a friend of Jesus who participates in the Divine mission. In introducing Mary of Bethany in John 11:2, the evangelist mentions her anointing of Jesus, which only will come in the next chapter. John presumes his readers have already heard the story of Mary anointing Jesus’s feet with costly perfumed oil. Indeed, the reader should be familiar with Mary of Bethany’s anointing of Jesus, for in the Gospel of Mark, the story of the anointing woman concludes with Jesus saying, “Amen, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed to the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her” (Mk 14:9).

Like her sister Martha, Mary of Bethany is loved by Jesus (Jn 11:5). In this pericope, it is clear that Mary of Bethany experiences the hallmarks of friendship (intimacy, habit, and self-assertion) in her relationship with Jesus. The Johannine depiction of the two sisters presents no tension or conflict as in the Gospel of Luke. Although the sisters still depict two different forms of discipleship, the active and contemplative, they do so in a complementary fashion.

As amazing as Martha’s words are in proclaiming Jesus’s identity, equally mind-blowing are Mary of Bethany’s gestures. Kenneth Bailey, New Testament scholar and missionary of the twentieth century, coined a phrase to describe the actions of Jesus intended to be imitated by his followers: Bailey describes actions of kenotic love in the gospels as “costly demonstrations of

unexpected love.”²⁶ Certainly Jesus’s crucifixion is the supreme example of a costly demonstration of unexpected love. The anointing of His feet by Mary of Bethany is a rare example in the gospels where a disciple performs a costly demonstration of unexpected love.

Mary of Bethany’s gesture is costly in three ways. First, in the literal sense, “she took a liter of costly perfumed oil” (Jn 12:3). Second, it was costly in a social sense. For a woman to publicly demonstrate such lavish affection for a man outside of her family (“[She] anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair” [12:3]) was far outside of the boundaries of social norms of first-century Judaism. Third, it was costly in a religious sense. The Messiah is quite literally the anointed one. Mary’s anointing is an enactment of Martha’s proclamation that Jesus is the Christ. It is not merely an anticipation of the anointing of his body for burial but a bold, unambiguous sign that He is the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world. “The house was filled with the fragrance of the oil (Jn 12:3)” is both a nuptial motif and an image of heaven.²⁷

The manner of Mary of Bethany’s devotion is what Jesus commands of the other disciples in the next chapter in John: “If, I therefore, the master and teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (Jn 13:14–15). Mary of Bethany is, according to John 13:14–15, a model disciple. Judas objected to Mary of Bethany’s demonstration of costly love, and Jesus rebukes him: “Let her alone” (Jn 13:7). Unlike Judas, Mary of Bethany participates in Jesus’s mission as an exemplar of loving service. Their friendship has a level of reciprocity that is unmatched, except for perhaps Jesus’s relationship with his mother Mary. Thus, we can see that in the pericope of washing Jesus’s feet with perfumed oil and drying them with her hair, Mary of Bethany experiences intimacy, habit, and self-assertation in relating to Jesus. She is indeed a friend of Jesus who participates in the Divine mission through her costly demonstration of unexpected love.

²⁶ Kenneth E. Bailey, *The Cross & the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 88.

²⁷ Ps 45:7-8 “You are passionate for righteousness, and you hate lawlessness. This is why God, your God, crowns you with bliss above your fellow kings. He has anointed you, more than any other, with his oil of fervent joy, the very fragrance of heaven’s gladness. Your royal robes release the scent of suffering love for your bride; the odor of aromatic incense is upon you.”

6. *Mary of Magdala*

Magdala was a small Jewish enclave on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, south of Capernaum.²⁸ Its name in Aramaic literally means “tower of fish” because it was the place where the fish caught in the waters near Bethsaida and Capernaum were salted, preserved, and prepared to be transported on the *Via Maris* to cities across the Roman-occupied regions. When Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount in chapter five of the Gospel of Matthew, tells the people assembled on the hillside two miles from Magdala, “You are the salt of the earth,” it was a metaphor that hit close to home: you are a preservative of the human race and the earth by slowing down the moral and spiritual decay of the world around you. That Mary of Magdala is known by her hometown may indicate that she was an unmarried woman or a widow. That her hometown is used to modify her name is a reminder that she preserved the good news of the resurrection in her heart as she ran from the tomb to the Upper Room. She is a significant figure in the Christian story as she is the only person mentioned in all four gospels as a witness of the crucifixion and empty tomb. As we shall demonstrate in the following paragraphs, Mary of Magdala’s relationship with Jesus reflects a genuine sense of intimacy, habit, and self-assertion, indicative of friendship both at the Cross and at the tomb.

In her search for Jesus in the early morning on the first day of the week soon after the crucifixion, Mary of Magdala combines the actions of the Beloved Disciple, who stoops down (20:5), and Peter, who peers into the tomb (20:6). Two angels take the positions of the cherubim who occupy the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (Ex 37:7–8). The angels inquire, “Woman, why are you weeping?” (Jn 20:13), a question Jesus will repeat in 20:15. We are reminded that Jesus addresses his mother as “Woman” at Cana (Jn 2:4) and at the Cross (19:2–27). Mary of Magdala’s own presence at the Cross and this address as “Woman” links her to His mother, as both are exemplary disciples. Mary of Magdala’s response repeats her words to the Beloved Disciple and to Peter, but in more intimate terms this time: “They have taken *my* Lord, and *I* do not know where they laid him” (20:13).

²⁸ I have been to Magdala numerous times and saw the excavations in 2009–2013 which resulted in perhaps the most important recent archeological discovery in the Galilee region: an ancient synagogue from the second temple period. Archeologists also found a *bima* which has been dubbed “the Magdala stone” that has a seven-branched menorah symbol carved on it. It is the earliest menorah of that period to be discovered outside of Jerusalem. This synagogue dates to the time of Christ and may have been one of the synagogues in which in he preached. “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people” (Mt 4:23).

Jesus's instruction to Mary of Magdala, "Don't cling to me," is an invitation not to hold on to the past, but instead to be open to experiencing the realization of the past in the present moment, revealing a glimpse of the future. Missionaries are to be forward facing. In a gesture of intimacy in the garden, outside the tomb, the Risen Lord reveals himself to Mary of Magdala before he appears to the disciples. Jesus calls Mary of Magdala by name and invites her to be the first proclaimer of his resurrection. She is sent by the Risen Lord to bear the good news to the other disciples. She is indeed "the apostle to the Apostles."

7. *Peter*

In the Gospel of John, Peter appears with Jesus in the very first chapter, in the middle of the gospel several times, and in the very last chapter, which is evidence of his importance in the narrative. Peter and Jesus experience the indicators of friendship—intimacy, habit, and self-assertion—in their relationship depicted in the Johannine Gospel narrative. The first sub-section will demonstrate how Jesus and Peter's friendship develops in the Gospel of John; the second will address Peter's relationship with the Beloved Disciple with regard to their common friend Jesus Christ. Peter will be shown to be invited by the Johannine Jesus to participate in the Divine mission as a friend.

a) *Peter and Jesus*

Peter first encounters Jesus in John 1:40–45. Andrew, who is named as the brother of Simon Peter (1:40), after spending time with Jesus, first goes to his "own brother" (1:41). Before he tells anyone else, Andrew tells Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (1:41). Andrew himself then brings Peter to Jesus. At this point, Peter does not say anything to Jesus in the narrative. His proclamation of faith occurs later. However, in their first encounter, the narrative depicts Jesus's intimacy with Peter: "Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas' which is translated Peter" (1:42). It is the only occurrence of Jesus naming someone in the Gospel of John. Yet it can be closely compared to John 19:26–27: "[H]e said to his mother, 'Woman behold your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.'" It also is evocative of the epithet "Beloved Disciple," which, although this title is not bestowed by Jesus, it comes to be identified with a central figure in the narrative.

The disciples accompany Jesus to Cana (2:2), then to Capernaum (2:12), then to Jerusalem (2:13ff), then to the region of Judea (3:22), and then return to Galilee (4:1–2) by way of Samaria

(4:4), where they stayed for two days (4:43). Next, the narrative has Jesus and the disciples arriving in the Galilee region (4:45) and stopping again in Cana (4:46). Following this time in Galilee, they return again to Jerusalem (5:1ff). John 6:1 situates Jesus and the disciples back in Galilee. The journey from Jerusalem was a three- to four-day walk and would have typically included sharing meals and sleeping in tents. Although he is not named, it is presumed Peter is among them. This, for Peter and for all the disciples, indicates both a habitual and intimate relationship with Jesus.

Peter speaks for the first time in the Johannine narrative in chapter six when he makes a profound profession of faith. Peter's confession here is equivalent to his confession at Caesarea Philippi, recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. His confession takes place at the end of the Bread of Life discourse. Both the content and context of Peter's profession in the Gospel of John are significant.

Although Jesus asks his question of the entire Twelve, it is Peter who speaks. According to many scholars, in saying "we" Peter is speaking not just for himself but as a spokesman for the Twelve.²⁹ As to why Peter is speaking on behalf of the Twelve, Benedikt Swank posits similarities between this pericope, John 6:67–71, and John 21:14–19 as a reason.³⁰ Peter, in speaking for the Twelve proclaims that they and he have *believed* and have come to *know*. They have arrived at belief in Jesus and are living already from that faith and knowledge.³¹ In the name of the Twelve, Peter confesses, "You are the Holy One of God" (6:69).

With Peter's confession, for the first time in the Gospel of John, a character expresses faith in Jesus based upon *his origins*.³² Peter recognizes the holiness of Jesus comes from the fact that he is *of God*. This indicates several things. First, Peter has been paying attention when Jesus, numerous times throughout the narrative, refers to Himself in relation to the Father. Second, it shows Peter knows Jesus intimately. Peter knows who Jesus is and that Jesus is of God. This would indicate that Peter understands the Son's closeness to the Father, which is the seed of Trinitarian faith. In both instances, the dialogue between Peter and Jesus occurs on the shores of the Sea of Galilee after Jesus feeds them a miraculous meal. An important role falls to Peter in both instances: a confession of his faith as spokesman for the community in chapter six and as shepherd of the

²⁹ Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 2017, 195. See also Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John Sacra Pagina*, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 229.

³⁰ Schwank, 2:37 cited in Beutler, 195. Beutler notes that Schwank and others perceive parallels in John 6:67-71 and John 21:14-19.

³¹ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 229.

³² Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 229.

flock in chapter twenty-one. In the first instance, he declares his knowledge of and belief in Jesus; in the second instance, he professes his friendship for Jesus. Peter's confession of faith on behalf of the community is excellent in its content.

It also is supremely sensitive in its context. His declaration of fidelity ("Lord, to whom shall we go?") and proclamation of faith ("You are the Holy One of God") come at a time in the narrative when Jesus experiences harsh criticism from "the Jews," following the Bread of Life discourse. As a good friend to Jesus, Peter asserts both his loyalty to Jesus and his belief in Him and His mission. The timing of Peter's words must have been a consolation to Jesus, who, experiencing the rejection and murmuring of the larger group of disciples (6:60–61), begins this dialogue with the question to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

The biblical highpoint of the missiology of friendship-love occurs in chapter twenty-one of John's Gospel, verses 14–19.³³ The connection between friendship with Jesus and participation in the Divine mission is very clear from the text. In this pericope, the Risen Lord asks Peter if he loves Him, and after Peter responds, the Lord tells Peter to care for His flock. This exchange was explored in the linguist study on *agape* and *philia* in the previous chapter. In verses 14–18, Jesus asks Peter if he has *agape* for Him. Peter responds, "I *philos* you," which means I have *friendship-love* for you. To which Jesus replies, "Feed my sheep." In other words, if you are my friend, then participate in my mission. Again, Jesus asks Peter, "Do you *agape* me?" Peter a second time replies, "I *philos* you." In response to Peter's second declaration of friendship, Jesus says: "Shepherd my sheep." Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd, tells Peter to shepherd His flock, to continue His mission. In the third interrogation, Jesus does not use the verb *agape*. He asks Peter, Φιλεῖς με, "Do you friendship-love me [Jn 21:17]?" Peter replies in what can be perceived as an emphatic tone: "Lord, you know everything, you know that I have friendship-love for you" (21:17).³⁴ It is as if Peter is pleading with Jesus, reminding Jesus that He knows Peter is His friend. Jesus responds to Peter's affirmation of their friendship by telling him, "Feed my sheep." Peter's apostolic mission is founded upon his friendship with Jesus.

Friendship must be re-established between Jesus and Peter for Peter to participate in the mission of Jesus. Only then can Jesus appoint Peter as the one who shepherds His sheep. Rekha

³³ Scholars debate whether Chapter 21 is an appendix written by a redactor or is an integral part of the Gospel composed by author of The Gospel of John.

³⁴ John 21:17 in the Greek: καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε.

Chennattu rightly remarks, “The threefold profession of love and commitment on the part of Peter therefore reinforces the idea that Peter’s unconditional love for Jesus is the foundation and source of his mission as the shepherd of the new covenant community.”³⁵

Peter is charged with shepherding and feeding the lambs and sheep of Jesus. For many scholars, discussions of the Petrine office in the Roman tradition of Christianity are out of place in reading this passage.³⁶ Peter must show his love for Jesus (in 21:15, 16, 17) in his preparedness to make the words of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, his own (vv. 15d, 16c, 17c): “I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly” (10:10); “I know my own and my own know me” (10:14); “I lay down my life for my sheep” (10:15; cf. vv. 11, 17, 18); “I have other sheep, that are not of this fold....[T]here shall be one flock, one shepherd” (10:16).

Yet, as Francis Moloney explains, Peter’s participation in Jesus’s mission extends beyond the pasturing tasks of the Good Shepherd:

Simon Peter’s commitment to the way of the Good Shepherd associates him with the death of Jesus. Death did not fall upon Jesus as a terrible end to a self-sacrificed life. His unconditional acceptance of the will of the Father (4:34; 5:36; 17:4) revealed the love of God for the whole world (3:16). Through this Jesus was glorified (11:4; 12:23; 13:31–21; 17:1–5) and Jesus gave glory to the Father (11:4; 11:40; 12:28; 13:32; 17:1–5). Peter’s unconditional acceptance of the role of shepherd...will also lead to the glorification of God in his self-gift in love unto death (21:19). In this way Peter truly “follows” (21:20) Jesus by revealing the love of the One who loves him.³⁷

b) Peter and John as friends rather than rivals

We do not perceive in this pericope (Jn 21) an intense rivalry between Peter and the Beloved Disciple as some have postulated,³⁸ but rather a clarification of their roles and

³⁵ Rekha M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 178. Augustine’s splendidly concise exegesis (only five Latin words) of Jesus’s insistence upon Peter’s threefold commitment to love supports this interpretation: “He makes sure of love so as firmly to establish unity” (*Sermo* 46.30: “Confirmat caritatem ut consolidet unitatem” [CCSL 41:556]). Bradford B. Blaine, in book *Peter in the Gospel of John*, 169–70, disagrees. He suggests that the threefold confession leads to Peter’s threefold appointment as “feeding lambs, tending sheep, and feeding sheep.” Martin Hasitscha, in her chapter “The Significance of the Resurrection Appearance in John 21,” in the book *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer, WUNT 222 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 323–24, argues strongly for a reminiscence of the denials. Hasitscha’s study provides a number of links between John 1–20 and John 21 in defense of the unity of John 1–21.

³⁶ See the wise, detailed discussion in Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1112–17. See also Moloney *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2013), 182 and previously mentioned Florensky *Pillar and Ground of Truth*.

³⁷ Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 28.

³⁸ See especially Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

responsibilities.³⁹ Both Peter and the Beloved Disciple are foundational leaders in the early Christian community. Each exercises a distinct function given to them by Jesus in the narrative.⁴⁰ The narrative reveals both can be considered friends of Jesus, even though there is undeniably a special relationship between Jesus and the Beloved Disciple. Similar to our interpretation of the Johannine treatment of men and women, who have equally important roles as participants in the Divine mission and experience all the characteristics of genuine friendship, both Peter and the Beloved Disciple are friends of Jesus who have equally important yet distinct roles. Peter is entrusted with the care of Jesus's flock, and John is entrusted with the care of Jesus's mother.

Rather than competitors, we perceive the possibility that Peter and John could share friendship. Three times in the Gospel of John, Jesus directs His disciples to love one another: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (Jn 13:34); "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12); and "This is My command to you: Love one another" (Jn 15:17). Peter and John each have a particular friendship with Jesus, yet that does not preclude them from being friends with each other. Rather, Christ's strong injunction that they love one another as He has loved them—and his love for them included friendship— would lead us to believe that they were indeed friends.

Although the juridical function of the Petrine primacy is beyond the scope of this work, it is worth noting here that Christ is the foundation of all primacy in the Church. Orthodox scholar Olivier Clement, one of the most highly regarded Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century, additionally posits a trinitarian basis for it: "Primacy has another foundation: namely Christ's teaching in John's Gospel on the unity of the disciples as based on the love of the Father and the Son, in other words, Trinitarian love."⁴¹

³⁹ The question of the distinct roles of Peter and John is answered well by Bradford B. Blaine in his work, "Peter in the Gospel of John: The Making of an Authentic Disciple," *Academia Biblica* 27 (Atlanta: SBL, 2007). Blaine argues that John's Gospel presents Peter and the Beloved Disciple not as competitors but as colleagues who together serve as composite halves of the ideal Johannine Christian.

⁴⁰ Historically, Catholics have interpreted this passage along with Mt 16:18 as Jesus installing Peter as Primate, however full teaching of the juridical primacy of the papacy over the whole Church is not found before the time of Popes Innocent III (1199) and Boniface VII (1303).

⁴¹ Olivier Clement, *You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy*, trans. M. S. Laird (New York, NY: New City Press, 2003) 91. Clement cites Apostolic Canon 34 which is worth recalling here for the purposes of advancing the position that Peter and John share friendship. "Apostolic Canon 34, 'The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head and do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do those things only which concern his own parish, and the country places which belong to it. But neither let him (who is the first) do anything without the consent of all; for so there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit.'"

If Peter and John are friends and their friendship is founded upon Trinitarian love, then they are not rivals. The implication is that the relations of their successors should be marked not by estrangement, antipathy, or competition but rather by the intimacy, habit, and self-assertation of friendship.

8. *The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved*

The disciple *whom Jesus loved* (ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς) is shown in a distinctive and primary role in the Gospel of John. There are several initial points to consider. First, his identity seems to be anonymous.⁴² He is known only as ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς. While theories⁴³ abound as to who this person is, he is not known by a name, as Peter is, or where he is from, as Mary of Magdala is. He is known in terms of his relationship with Jesus. Second, in John 21:24, a dramatic shift in the narrative occurs when the narrator points to himself: “It is this disciple who testifies to these things and has written them down, and we know that his testimony is true.” Irenaeus attributed the Gospel of John to the Beloved Disciple, whom he identified as John the Son of Zebedee.⁴⁴ Despite this early testimony of Irenaeus, many scholars today presume there is inadequate evidence to substantiate Irenaeus’ claim that the Beloved Disciple, the author of the Gospel of John, and John the Son of Zebedee are one and the same individual.

So, while the narrative does not provide a name for the Beloved Disciple, it does present essential facts. According to the text, the ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς is an eyewitness to the events of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection; the ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς is the author of the Gospel of John; and he is a credible witness. Perhaps the most important detail is what the title ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς reveals about Jesus: This is the disciple whom Jesus loves. According to Schnackenburg, the title “Beloved Disciple” should be replaced with “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”⁴⁵ This interpretation

⁴² The Beloved Disciple’s anonymity in the second half of the Gospel was already preceded by other significant anonymous characters: Jesus’s Mother (Jn 2); the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4); the Royal Official (Jn 4); the lame man (Jn 5); the blind man (Jn 9). The anonymity of the Beloved Disciple who is presented as the ideal disciple and friend may serve to enable the reader to identify with the Beloved Disciple. Anonymity of charity seems to serve to facilitate the reader’s identification with a character. See D. R. Beck. “The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization,” *Semeia* 63 (1993) 143-155.

⁴³ James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995) 197-213, gives a succinct history of the theory and its status as present.

⁴⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1 Irenaeus says John wrote his Gospel while at Ephesus (A.H. 3.1.1) and remained there until the time of emperor Trajan (r. 98-117) (A.H. 3.3.4).

⁴⁵ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 97.

understands the verbal aspect⁴⁶ inherent in the clause ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς rather than the substantival one in the English usage “Beloved Disciple.” The phrase “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is more precise in that it names Jesus as the one who loves this disciple. This title is always used by the narrator and never by any of the characters in the Gospel. The disciple whom Jesus loved and the intimate friendship he shares with Jesus has fascinated and inspired Christians for two millennia.

The disciple whom Jesus loved appears explicitly⁴⁷ in key places in the second half of the Gospel of John. First, during the Last Supper (Jn 13:23–25). Second, under the cross (Jn 19:25–27). Third, at the empty tomb (Jn 20:2). Fourth, at the lakeside appearance of the risen Jesus in Galilee (Jn 21:1–23). Fifth, at the conclusion of the Gospel (Jn 21:24–25). Each pericope will be examined in connection with the elements of friendship and participation in the mission of Jesus.

a) *John 13:23–25 Intimacy and abiding with Jesus.*

ἦν ἀνακείμενος εἰς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς
“One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table on Jesus’s bosom” (Jn 13:23).

This is the first time the disciple whom Jesus loved (ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς) appears in the text. This pericope is between the washing of the feet (13:1–20) and the beginning of the farewell discourse (13:31) in the context of the Last Supper, the Passover meal. The custom at Passover in first-century Jerusalem was to eat in a triclinium, in the reclining position. Lindars suggests that this setting was marked by “great solidarity and intimacy.”⁴⁸ The present participle ἀνακείμενος with the imperfect ἦν implies an imperfect tense.⁴⁹ This would mean that this was the position usually occupied by the disciple whom Jesus loved. The position of the disciple whom Jesus loved is ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ (at the bosom of Jesus), which indicates more than close physical proximity. It denotes being in someone’s heart in a spiritual sense as well. In John 1:18, the relation of Jesus to his Father is described as being “in the bosom of the Father (εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς).” To be in the bosom of the Father implies that Jesus had access to the innermost being of God and enjoys

⁴⁶ The pronoun ὃν is in the accusative case in as much as it receives the action of the verb ἠγάπα. The force of the accusative is determined by this lexeme and that of the verb. The primary function of the accusative is to limit the action of the verb. See D.B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 178.

⁴⁷ There are other passages which mention *an anonymous disciple* who may or may not be identified with the Beloved Disciple in Jn 1:35–42; 18:5; 19:35.

⁴⁸ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 458.

⁴⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academics, 2001), 648.

deep intimacy with the Father.⁵⁰ “No one has ever yet seen God. The only begotten God, the One being in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known” (Jn 1:18). The evangelist in depicting the disciple whom Jesus loved in the bosom of Jesus may be drawing a parallel between this disciple’s relationship with Jesus and Jesus’s relationship with the Father. Recall that in 17:21, Jesus prays, “Father, just as you 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.”

In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Thomas Aquinas notes three things the author, believed to be the disciple whom Jesus loved, says about himself. He says these three things in the third person, so as not to boast, according to Aquinas.

First, the love he had for Christ as he rested upon him. ... Secondly, he intimates his knowledge of mysteries, which were made known to him by Christ, and especially for the writing of this Gospel, for the [bosom] signifies things that are hidden: “The only begotten God, the One being in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known” (Jn 1:18). Thirdly, he mentions the special love Christ had for him, saying “whom Jesus loved”, not exclusively, but in a way above others.⁵¹

Aquinas also provides three reasons why Christ loves John more: first, because of his purity; second, because of his depth of wisdom; third, because of the great intensity of his love for Christ.⁵² As it says in Proverbs 8:17, “I love those who love me.”

The closeness of the Beloved Disciple to Jesus was known by the other disciples. In 13:22, the disciples were at a loss as to whom Jesus meant when he solemnly announced one of them would betray him. In 13:24, Peter gestures to the one resting on Jesus’s bosom to find out whom Jesus meant. In 13:35, the Beloved Disciple “leaned back against Jesus’s chest and said to him, ‘Master, who is it?’” The narrator in repeating the position of the Beloved Disciple was re-emphasizing his intimacy with Jesus. Sharing knowledge is characteristic of friendship in John.⁵³ Jesus’s answer reveals his betrayer and, at the same time, his trust of the Beloved Disciple. “The Beloved Disciple’s location, designation, and asking a private question indicate he was on particularly close terms with Jesus.”⁵⁴ By his close proximity to the heart of Jesus, resting in his

⁵⁰ See Lindars, *The Gospel of John: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, 99. The idea of the bosom companion which is seen in both Jewish and classical sources come from the nursing of a child (Ruth 4:16; 2 Sam 12:3), from the embrace of husband and wife (Deut 13:6), and from the position of a privileged guest when reclining at dinner. Also, Isaiah speaks of the Shepherd gathering the lambs and carrying them in his bosom (40:11) and in Luke one in heaven is depicted resting on the bosom of Abraham.

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13:21*, trans. Fabian Larcher OP and James Weisheipl, (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2010), §1804.

⁵² Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13:21*, §1804.

⁵³ See John 15:15.

⁵⁴ J.J. Gunther, “The Relation of the Beloved Disciple to the Twelve,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 37 (1981): 129–48.

bosom, he is able to access knowledge to help him understand Jesus. He models for all disciples the necessity to abide in Jesus so as to bear fruit. The Beloved Disciple participates in Jesus's mission of revelation *as his friend* par excellence.

b) John 19:25–27 The disciple Jesus loves beneath the Cross.

John 19:25–27 depicts the Beloved Disciple as the only faithful male friend of Jesus. He alone stands with Jesus's mother and the other women (Jn 19:25). This scene, referred to as the "legacy of Jesus," stands in the center of the Johannine account of the passion, death, and burial of Jesus (Jn 19:16c–42), as can be seen here:

19:16c–18: the crucifixion of Jesus

19:19–22: the inscription "the king of the Jews"

19:23–24: the seamless garment

19:25–27: Jesus's mother and the Beloved Disciple

19:28–30: the handing over of the Spirit

19:31–37: the piercing of Jesus's side

19:38–42: the burial of Jesus

According to Johannes Beutler, few sections in the New Testament in general and in John's Gospel in particular have met with so many different interpretations as this one.⁵⁵ Beutler offers an explanation that is worth citing as it helps to express how the Beloved Disciple, as a friend of Jesus, participates in the Jesus's mission after the crucifixion:

In the history of exegesis, a Marian interpretation has been dominant since the time of the fathers. This view is found to the present day especially in Catholic exegesis, not least in francophone research. Here the emphasis lies either in the fact that Jesus entrusts the beloved disciple as representative of the future community to his mother,⁵⁶ or else that he entrusts the mother to the disciple who takes her into his own home, literally, to his own.⁵⁷

Beutler offers "that in exegesis outside the Catholic sphere, but also among Catholics in Louvain or Germany, we find a model which prefers to see the Beloved Disciple at the center of the scene."⁵⁸ The trust of Jesus in the Beloved Disciple is profound, and such a deep trust is the mark of a genuine friendship.

⁵⁵ Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Michael Tait (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 485.

⁵⁶ de la Potterie, *La parole*. Cited in Johannes Beutler, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 485.

⁵⁷ Johannes Beutler, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 485

⁵⁸ Johannes Beutler, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 485

Jesus's proclamation "Behold your son" and "Behold your mother" (Jn 19:26–27) connotes a revelation.⁵⁹ To His mother, He reveals her continuing to be a mother after His death. To the Beloved Disciple, He reveals a new sonship, one that connects the Beloved Disciple to Jesus as a close brother, perhaps even as an alter ego.⁶⁰ To His followers who would read about His entrustment of His mother and the Beloved Disciple to one another, Jesus reveals two things. First, new intimate bonds of family are formed in the Church. Second, the Beloved Disciple is so close to Him, it is to him that Jesus entrusts His mother. It is significant that in the very hour of Jesus's return to the Father, the Beloved Disciple receives Jesus's mother. This could be another indication of the Beloved Disciple's identification with Jesus.

The highpoint of Jesus's friendship with the Beloved Disciple in the Johannine narrative is this moment under the Cross at which the Beloved Disciple receives into *his own* (Jn 19:27) both materially and spiritually the very mother of Jesus, the woman whose own flesh enfolded the incarnate Son of God. This profound act displays the reciprocal dimension of friendship between Jesus and the Beloved Disciple. Jesus totally entrusts His mother, whom He can entrust to no other⁶¹ but the Beloved Disciple, and the Beloved Disciple receives her completely. In a way, the Beloved Disciple lays down his own life, and takes up responsibility for the care of Jesus's mother. No further evidence is needed to demonstrate the intimacy, habit, and self-assertion of the loving friendship between Jesus and the disciple whom He loved. And yet there is a *coda* in John 21:20–15, which is the final revelation of the intimacy, habit, and self-assertion in the friendship of the disciple whom Jesus loved.

c) *John 20:2 The disciple Jesus loved at the empty tomb.*

In this passage, we read that Jesus loved this disciple not only with *agape* but also with the love of friendship. Upon seeing that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb entrance, Mary Magdalene runs to Simon Peter and the one whom Jesus loved (μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς). This is the only time in the Gospel of John that the verb for friendship-love, ἐφίλει, is used to name the

⁵⁹ M. de Goedt's frequently cited article notes the 'scheme of revelation' in the expression "behold." See M. de Goedt, "Un Schème de Révélation Dans Le Quatrième Evangile," *NTS* 8 (1962): 142–50..

⁶⁰ For those who assert the Beloved Disciple becomes Jesus alter ego in the entrustment, see E.L. Titus, *The Message of the Fourth Gospel* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1957), 230. See also Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, 552.

⁶¹ If Jesus had other brothers, this gesture would not have been necessary. A widowed mother who loses her only son no longer has a social network, she is completely alone and vulnerable. By entrusting his mother to his Beloved Disciple, Jesus gives his mother a new life, a new family, which quite literally saves her from destitution.

one whom Jesus loved. In the other instances the verb *agape* is used to name the one whom Jesus loved. In John 20:8, the gospel writer notes that although both Peter and the one whom Jesus loved went into the tomb, it is the one whom Jesus loved who “saw and believed.” The disciple whom Jesus loved is present both at the Cross and at the empty tomb, making him among the Twelve as *the* credible witness. As a witness, he is able to participate in the Divine mission of giving testimony. The disciple whom Jesus loved participates in Jesus’s mission of testifying, as Jesus was sent to testify about the Father and do His work (4:34; 17:4). The intimacy with Jesus the Beloved Disciple experienced at the Cross is extended to tomb. His habit of closeness with Jesus, resting at His breast and standing beneath His cross, included entering the *Anastasis* on Easter morning. Because the disciple whom Jesus loved sees these things, he testifies. His testimony is described in John 21:24 as the basis for the Gospel and is said to be true.

d) John 21 The disciple whom Jesus loved with Him at the Sea of Galilee and at the conclusion of the Gospel.

Chapter twenty-one of John’s Gospel begins by telling the reader that Jesus “revealed himself” again to the disciples. Revelation of oneself is indicative of friendship, as is the recognition of a friend. As the disciples unsuccessfully are fishing on the Sea of Galilee, the risen Lord appears on the shore, but it seems the disciples do not recognize him, which is a common occurrence in encounters with the risen Lord in the Gospel of John. After a successful catch of fish, as a result of following the risen Lord’s instruction, the disciple whom Jesus loved recognizes him and says to Peter, “It is the Lord” (21:7). Recall that, early in the Gospel, John the Baptist also sees Jesus in the distance and recognizes him. He calls out, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn 1:29).

It is possible to make several parallels between the disciple whom Jesus loved in chapter 21 and John the Baptist in chapter one. These two friends of Jesus both not only recognize who Jesus is from afar but point out His identity to others. Both John the Baptist and the disciple whom Jesus loved give testimony. Referring to John the Baptist, John 1:7 states, “He came as a witness to testify.” Referring to the disciple whom Jesus loved John 21:24 states, “This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.” The disciple whom Jesus loved not only testifies, but he also writes down what he has seen and heard. John the Baptist is to be believed because he was sent by God to testify. The disciple whom Jesus loved is known to offer a true testimony: “[W]e know that his testimony is true” (Jn 21:24). He is

to be believed because of his intimacy, habit, and self-assertion with Jesus. The reason his testimony is known to be true is because he is a friend to Jesus. True friends of Jesus are thus for us a source of revelation, allowing us to know the secrets they shared with the Divine friend.⁶²

C. Friendship and Foot Washing

Intimacy, habit, and self-assertion: All these characteristics of friendship in John are displayed in the foot washing in Jn 13:4–12. The *mandatum* reveals the pattern of descent and ascent that was taken up in John 1 and 3. As a revelatory sign, and like the other signs in the Gospel of John, the foot washing manifests the Father’s glory (2:11) in Christ, who is the resplendence of Divine love. Symbolic actions speak for themselves. “Jesus’s gesture on behalf of His disciples immediately before His passion is a vivid expression of the disposition with which He enters His passion. Words fall short of the image.”⁶³ This image reveals Jesus as friend who embodies a declared love; a love of respect; a delicate, extremely solicitous love; a love of predilection; an intimate love; a merciful, generous love; a love that desires participation.⁶⁴ The foot washing serves as both a window and a mirror: a window to the Son’s whole mission to make known the Father’s love and a mirror reflecting back to the disciples what they are now to do.

The pericope closes with the first use of the double amen in John: “Amen, amen, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (13:16). Jesus tells his disciples that the foot washing is not an end in itself, but an instruction given to servants by the master, to the sent ones by the one who sends them. Jesus associates these servants/sent ones with His own knowing and doing (13:1–5).⁶⁵ He tells them, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” Using chiasmic structure, we can see that blessing is the emphasis (Jn 13:17):

εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε (if you know these things)
μακάριοί ἐστε (blessed are you)
ἐὰν ποιῆτε αὐτά (if you do them)

⁶² Matthew Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship: A Metaphysical and Scriptural Explanation According to the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Rome, Italy: Pontificia Università Santa Croce, 2012), 343.

⁶³ Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 357.

⁶⁴ Ceslas Spicq, OP, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, *Agape in the Gospel of John, Epistles and Apocalypse of St. John*, 61.

⁶⁵ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 4, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005) 376.

“As the knowledge and love of Jesus (13:1–3) flowed into action (13:4–11) so must the love and knowledge of the disciple flow into action. Therein lies the blessedness (13:12–17).”⁶⁶ Pavel Florensky defines friendship as “self-contemplation through a friend in God.”⁶⁷ He states: “Friendship is the seeing of oneself with the eyes of another, but before a third, namely the Third.”⁶⁸ What Florensky is proposing is that one is able to truly “see” oneself as his friend sees him, but before God. This tri-unity in friendship—the self and the friend in front of God—enlightens the mind to perceive the clearest sense of self. My being is known through the eyes of my friend before or in front of the Divine gaze. For Florensky, friendship-love is how the truth is known; the truest nature of oneself and God.

In this notion, we hear resonance with the modern Russian religious thinker’s understanding of the symbiosis between love and knowledge: the more we love the Other (God, or in this case, the friend), the more we know the Other, *and* the more we know the Other, the more we love the Other. Love is the characteristic sign by which a disciple of Christ is known: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). Knowledge is not an end to itself. Gregory of Nyssa, succinctly states, “knowledge becomes love.”⁶⁹

These reciprocal actions are the manifestations of the love that binds the disciples to Jesus and are the means by which the disciples are brought into relationship with God. Benedict XVI proposes that “[t]he Lord himself throughout his whole life is the act of washing our feet. His essence is bending down to us; his being is humility.”⁷⁰ His being brings disciples the knowledge of the Father. His Spirit animates the disciples to do what they do. In this way, like Him, the disciples are blessed by the Father. Peter objected to Jesus’s washing their feet, so Jesus had to explain that this act includes them in His fellowship. Jesus indicated that the believing community is constituted through participation in Him. He invites them to acknowledge that humility and servanthood are essential characteristics of Divine love of which they are to become the ambassadors. Indeed, the knowledge of God and the doing of His mission are the source of blessing

⁶⁶ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 376.

⁶⁷ Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, trans. Boris Jakim, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 322.

⁶⁸ Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, 314.

⁶⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 96C:

⁷⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, “When God Kneels Down Before Us,” Homily for Holy Saturday, given in the Cathedral in Munich on April 3, 1980. Accessed in *Joseph Ratzinger Benedict XVI Selected Writings on Love*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2019), 65.

for all disciples. The life of love in the community of disciples becomes the trademark and the credential of the missionary community: “If *you* have love for one another, then *everyone* will *know* that you are my disciples” (Jn 13:25). Their love for one another is how everyone will know who they are, as those sent by Jesus. C.H. Dodd observes,

John makes use of the strongest expressions for union with God that contemporary religious language provided, in order to assure his readers that he does seriously mean what he says: that through faith in Christ we may enter into a personal community of life with the eternal God, which has the character of ἀγάπη [agapē], which is essentially supernatural and not of this world, and yet plants its feet firmly in this world, not only because real ἀγάπη cannot but express itself in practical conduct, but also because the crucial act of ἀγάπη was actually performed in history, on an April day about A.D. 30, at a supper-table in Jerusalem, in a garden across the Kidron valley, in the headquarters of Pontius Pilate, and on a Roman cross at Golgotha. So concrete, so actual, is the nature of the Divine ἀγάπη; yet none the less for that, by entering into the relation of ἀγάπη thus opened up for [humanity], we may dwell in God and He in us.⁷¹

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Aquinas indicates that the washing of the disciples’ feet by Jesus reflects back to his incarnation and forward to his passion.⁷² Aquinas offers three ways the foot washing episode brings the past and future together in the present moment. The foot washing is an anamnesis. First, in *rising from the table* (cf. Jn 13:4), Jesus is willing to help the human race as depicted in Psalm 43:26: “rise up, come to our help.” Aquinas likes viewing the incarnation as God’s “getting up” to rescue us.⁷³ God comes to our assistance and makes haste to help us (Ps 70:1) through the incarnation and passion. Is this not what a friend does? Second, in *laying aside His garment*, Christ in the incarnation did “not abandon his great dignity, but he hid it taking on our smallness: ‘Truly you are a God who hides yourself’ (Is 45:15).”⁷⁴ In the passion, He is stripped of his garment and in so doing treads underfoot the universal tendency to pride.⁷⁵ He became completely vulnerable, revealing Himself to us, removing the veil that separates us. He completely discloses Himself and His love. Is this not what a friend does? Third, “the fact that he *girded himself with a towel* indicates that in the Incarnation, he took on our mortality.”⁷⁶ In His resurrection, He is clothed in the splendor of immortality, revealing our future glory. He reveals to us not only His resurrection but our potential, our future glory. Is that not what a friend does?

⁷¹ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953,) 199-200.

⁷² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13:21*, trans. Fabian Larcher OP and James Weisheipl, (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2010), §1746.

⁷³ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13:21*, §1746.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13:21*, §1746.

⁷⁵ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13:21*, §1746.

⁷⁶ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 13:21*, §1746.

Jesus does not simply wash the feet of the disciples, exemplifying the virtues of friendship, but instructs them to do as He has done. The foot washing is an anamnesis of the friendship-love of God into which we are invited to participate. We are to become examples of the attentive, humble, self-emptying, revelatory friendship-love of the Jesus revealed in the washing of the feet and, ultimately, on the cross.

D. Conclusion: Participating in the Divine Mission as Friends

As Jesus was sent by the Father not simply as a messenger or servant, but as the beloved Son, close to His heart, so the disciples, who are no longer called servants but friends, are sent as the friends of Jesus, whom He loved to the end. As Jesus was sent from the Father and He was never out of the Father's presence, communion, or love, so the disciples are sent out with the indwelling Christ, as well as with another Comforter. As Jesus's communion with the Father never ceased during his mission, so the disciples' communion with Jesus is vital to their fruitful mission. As Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (15:5). Communion, intimacy, habit, and, we would say, friendship sustain mission. As Jesus was sent as a vulnerable servant to lay down His life for His friends, so His disciples are to love one another as He loved them—sacrificially, humbly, and with the heart of a servant. As Jesus did what He heard and saw from the Father because His will was completely yet freely docile to His sender, so His disciples do what they see and hear their master doing.

Finally, the resurrected Jesus, in a powerful visual of His "way," stands before His disciples, shows them His nail-scarred hands and His pierced side, breathes on them, bestows the Spirit, and says, "Just as the Father has sent me, so I send you" (20:20–21). The extension of Jesus's agency to His disciples parallels His agency with the Father in the Spirit. Just as Jesus acknowledged His communion with the Father through the Spirit as the source of His life and mission, so the disciples' mission is exclusively dependent on their communion with the Trinity through the Divine indwelling. Love is the dynamism of mission.

With the appointment of the disciples as His agents, the pattern of relationship between Jesus and the Father has been transferred to the relationship between Jesus and His disciples through the indwelling of the Spirit. The metaphor of mission is always simultaneously also a metaphor of relationship. The Gospel of John provides a theology of mission as participation in friendship.

For the past two thousand years, friends of Jesus have participated in the Divine mission. German Theologian Holger Dörnemann proposes that the way to read salvation history is to see how God continually seeks to befriend humanity. For Dörnemann, friendship is paradigmatic of salvation and the humanity of Christ is the instrument of friendship and salvation. The Divine missions make friendship with God and neighbor possible, and for each Christian, friendship with God shapes his or her identity and mission. As friends of God, Christians extend a hand of friendship to humanity, gently leading them to participation in eternal friendship with God.

PART THREE: DISCERNING A THEOLOGY OF MISSION AS PARTICIPATION IN FRIENDSHIP IN SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER IX: A THEOLOGY OF MISSION AS PARTICIPATION IN FRIENDSHIP IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS, ACTS, AND THE EPISTLES

A. Introduction to the Chapter

Chapters four through eight presented a theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Gospel of John. This chapter will demonstrate that a mission theology of participation as friendship can be perceived in the other books of the New Testament. It will begin with the oldest texts in the New Testament, the Pauline epistles, and will include the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, as well as Luke-Acts. The exegetical method combines literary, historical theologies and magisterial exegesis from a variety of sources.

The communities from which and for which the books of the New Testament originated were newly formed by the missionary efforts of the early Church. Although the New Testament is composed of a variety of literary genres, but all are considered missionary literature. “They are mission documents for the Church itself, meant to justify, renew, and motivate the church’s claim on the heritage of Jesus’s own boundary-breaking ministry.”¹

The New Testament is a missionary book in its form, purpose, and content as it proclaims and evokes participation in the mission of the Trinity revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Donald Senior’s words, “The catalyst that triggered the missionary consciousness of the early Church and shaped its basic message was the person and ministry of Jesus.”² Senior explains, “The Synoptic Gospels use a narrative of the person and life of Jesus to give direction to the Church’s mission.”³ For example, the Gospel of Mark describes the Galilean ministry of Jesus as including both sides of the lake—Jewish and Gentile. The disciples in the Gospel of Mark are able to understand the scope of their mission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations (13:10) only in light of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In the Gospel of

¹ Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 211.

² Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 151.

³ Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 319.

Matthew, “the boundary breaking potential of Jesus’s own kingdom mission is recalled providing authority for the disciples’ mission to the Gentiles.”⁴ In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’s parables of mercy, His prophetic ministry, and sacrificial love are the models for mission. For Paul, mission has its source in the love and the person of Christ (1 Cor 9:16; 2 Cor 5:14). From even this very brief overview, one can see that the New Testament reveals that the Spirit-led mission of the early Church was the continuation of the mission of the Son, sent by the Father.

In the Synoptic Gospels, as in the Gospel of John, Jesus has a profound sense of being sent. Jesus proclaims in all three Synoptics, “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me” (Mt 10:40; Mk 9:37; Lk 9:48). He identifies Himself as being the one sent and connects those who receive Him to the one who sent Him. This is strikingly similar to the sending language examined in the Gospel of John in chapter five.

The Acts of the Apostles contain expressions of participation in the Divine mission. For example, Peter’s speech in Acts 10:38–42 affirms that Jesus “commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God.” Paul, like the other apostles, sees himself as a friend and missionary of Christ, participating in the Divine mission for the salvation of the world (Gal 1:11–17; 1 Cor 9:1–2; 15:8–11). The following sections illustrate that while a theology of mission as participation in friendship is most evident in the Gospel of John, it can be perceived in other books of the New Testament. The study begins with the earliest writings, those missional letters attributed to Paul.

B. The Pauline Epistles

1. Mission in Pauline Epistles

Many scholars agree the significance of Paul for the biblical foundation of mission cannot be overstated.⁵ “Paul was the first Christian theologian precisely because he was the first Christian missionary.”⁶ New Testament Missiologist Johann Nissen asserts that Paul’s theology and mission do not merely relate to each other as theory and practice, but rather Paul’s theology is a missionary theology.⁷ “All the elements of Paul’s theology fused together to produce the explosive energy of

⁴ Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 151.

⁵ Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 161; also, Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 99.

⁶ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 99.

⁷ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 99.

his missionary apostolate.”⁸ Paul felt a driving compulsion to mission because he believed God was offering salvation to all people through the passion of Christ and that this mystery was his to proclaim and participate in through the Spirit.⁹ It was love for God in Christ and love for humanity which urged him on (2 Cor 5:14). Paul’s theology and missionary practice were intertwined and formed his response to Christ’s invitation to friendship. Paul embodied and communicated a mission theology as participation in friendship.

Paul not only is sent as an apostle but also participates in the act of sending others on the Christian mission. In Philippians 2:19–30, he speaks of two emissaries he is sending, Timothy and Epaphroditus. In 2 Corinthians 8:16–19, he writes of sending Titus and another Christian missionary to Corinth. Additionally, others, including Tychicus, Epaphroditus, and Epaphras, were emissaries of Christ through Paul. He emphasized their importance to his apostolic mission and conveyed his affection for them by employing terms such as *coworker*, *brother*, *sister*, *beloved friend*, *partner*, *fellow prisoner*, and *fellow soldier*. The Acts of the Apostles mentions Paul “and his companions” (Acts 17:1) spreading the gospel. These are people who Paul said labored with him in the cause of the Gospel, who struggled with him to advance the kingdom of God. These men and women participated in the Divine mission as Paul’s friends, friends of Christ, and friends to the Church. This practice of forming disciples to become missionaries continues in the Church today.

2. *Friendship in Pauline Epistles*

In the writings of Paul, “God’s friendship with human beings is not merely an idea; it is a love of benevolence realized through history by Jesus Christ, who is the true sacrament of God’s friendship to the world.”¹⁰ He writes in the Letter to Titus,

For at one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, led astray, and enslaved to all sorts of desires and pleasures—living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not by the righteous deeds we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Ti 3:3–5).

⁸ Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 181.

⁹ Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 181.

¹⁰ Benedict Ssettuuma, “Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission,” *African Ecclesial Review*, vol. 52, Nos. 2 & 3, (2010), 65.

The phrase “His love for mankind appeared” could be properly understood as “His *friendship for humanity* appeared.” Paul uses the word *φιλανθρωπία* to describe the love God has for humanity. Christ, then, could be understood as the friendship of God for humanity. Christ’s disciples come to understand that Jesus is among them as even more than a sign and symbol of God’s friendship, but the realization of it. Indeed, His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection are acts of God’s deepest friendship with human beings. There is nothing that “could satisfy God the Word’s longing to be near us, nothing except becoming flesh of our own flesh.”¹¹

In the letter to the Philippians, Paul employs language evocative of the classical understanding of friendship. Ben Witherington provides an insightful explanation regarding not only the friendship between Paul and Timothy, but Timothy’s friendship with the community of believers at Philippi. In commenting on Philippians 2:20 which reads, “For I have no one else who is alike in the depths of his being, such as genuinely cares about the things concerning you,” Witherington writes,

Paul says there is no one else as like in “soul” as Timothy is with Paul, and no one else who cares so much for the Philippians. The word *isopsuchos* is a rare one in Greek and not found elsewhere in the New Testament. One of the keys to understanding its meaning here is to bear in mind what Paul already said about the relationship between Christ and God the Father in 2:6: it describes a relationship of equality and similarity in character. In one respect this can also be said about the relationship of Paul and Timothy, namely that they share the same deep-seated love, concern, and ‘mind’ for the Philippians. Perhaps an even more important parallel is found in Philippians 2:2, where the Philippians are urged to be one in common life (*sumpsuchoi*).¹²

Paul in sending Timothy to Philippi, is sending a friend of both himself and of the community. Timothy is sent as a friend to participate in the apostolic mission.

The verb *φιλέω* and the noun *φίλος* are not employed by Paul. However, by engaging in a semantic field study, it is apparent that the concept of friendship permeates his letters. Paul’s vision of Christian fellowship—love one another as brothers and sisters—transformed the notion of friendship in antiquity. Michael Bird observes,

These radical ideas of sincere love and the adoption of each other as family—what scholars call “fictive kinship”—were shared with others irrespective of sex, ethnicity, class, and status. They surface in several places in Paul’s letters, particularly in his transformation of the word *philadelphia* from its ancient meaning of love of one’s blood-relatives or tribe to love of anyone who professes faith in Jesus as Lord. Paul wrote to a potentially fractious cluster of house churches in Rome: “In brotherly and sisterly love, let your devoted and deep affection for one

¹¹ Mary Ann Fatula, *Thomas Aquinas, Preacher and Friend*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press), 1993), 61.

¹² Ben Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians*, *The New Testament in Context*, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 77.

another be known and pursue the honor of others over yourself” (Rom 12:10, author’s translation). Paul was telling Christians to have a family level of love for people who were not part of their biological family and to seek the honor of others in a social context characterized by fierce rivalry and competition for one’s own honor. This was a completely countercultural view of friendship. Paul also commended the Thessalonians for their exercise of *philadelphia*. He wrote: “As for brotherly and sisterly love, there is no need to write to you about that topic, since you have yourselves learned from God how to love one another, and in fact this is how you treat all the brothers and sisters spread throughout the whole of region of Macedonia” (1 Thess 4:9–10, author’s translation).¹³

According to Bird, Paul’s reinterpretation of the virtue of *philadelphia* provided the burgeoning Christian movement with an affirmation of the importance of friendship among them. *Philadelphia* becomes an intimate bond of friendship-love in the Christian community. This bond of love is the fundamental necessity of the Christian vocation.¹⁴ Ceslas Spicq explains the absolute necessity of the Christian practice of fraternal love:

Once he has been sanctified and consecrated to God by baptism, the disciple of Jesus is, as it were, vowed to the practice of fraternal love...Brotherly love is a constitutive element of the Christian’s being. The Divine calling which separates the neophyte from the world and purifies him from sin also makes him belong exclusively to God so that he becomes holy...Romans 12:10 explains that fraternal love unites a kind of innate tenderness with a most respectful attention...The newly baptized were always instructed about this fundamental requirement of the Christian life. Brotherly love and agape were the two essential articles of early catechesis and in his letters, Paul is merely reminding his readers of them.¹⁵

Scholars have noted the similarity of Paul’s letter to the Philippians with the popular genre of friendship letters in antiquity. Witherington identifies these similarities to include, “repeated expressions of affection; the language of being of one mind and one soul; mutual giving and receiving; common joys and struggles; and the sharing of a moral framework.”¹⁶ The letter reveals that Paul addressed the Philippians with sincere affection (Phil 1:12; 2:12; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 8). He thanked them for their support, which he saw as evidence of their sincere concern for him (Phil 4:10–20).¹⁷

Paul desires the communities to whom he is writing to be, in a world darkened by sin, shining examples of Jesus’s command to love. This is evident in his frequent use of the phrase “to love one another” and similar directives. Below is a sampling:

¹³ Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi*, 77.

¹⁴ Ceslas Spicq, OP, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 2, *Agape in the Epistles of St. Paul, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. James, St. Peter, and St. Jude* (Eugene, OR: Wipf Stock Publishers, 2006), 17.

¹⁵ Spicq, OP, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 2, 17-18.

¹⁶ Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi*, 77.

¹⁷ Michael Bird, “Paul Among Friends,” *Christian History*, no. 132 (2019).

- “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law” (Rom 13:8).
- “If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Rom 13:9).
- “For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14).
- “Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph 5:2).
- “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col 3:12).
- “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess 4:9).

For Paul, love is the highest of virtues. In his letters, Paul considers the faithful, sacrificial, affectionate devotion among Christians as “the greatest of all the gifts of grace; it is the one surpassing all others; it is God’s direct teaching to his children.”¹⁸ Human effort alone cannot produce this type of fraternal charity among Christians. Love is the fruit of the Spirit. “It is the Holy Spirit who inspires and guides the Christian to bind himself spontaneously to the service of his brothers.”¹⁹ It is being a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit that enables the baptized to practice and perfect fraternal charity. Participation in the Divine life and love is requisite for participation in the authentic friendship of the Christian community which extends to the world. All of life becomes graced by our friendship with the Trinity. “Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift” (2 Cor 9:15).

3. *Participation in Pauline Epistles*

The Pauline epistles are laden with imagery of participation in the Divine live through Christ and His Spirit, to the glory of the Father. The letters of Saint Paul In recent years, Pauline scholars have become increasingly aware of the significance of participation in Paul’s letters.²⁰

¹⁸ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 2, 38.

¹⁹ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 2, 48.

²⁰ See for example, E. P Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress Press, 1989); N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 4, Christian Origins and *The Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013); N.T. Wright, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God,” *Pauline Theology* 2, no. 1 (1993); Stephen Finlan, “Can We Speak of Theosis in Paul?,” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christians Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 325; Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2015).

Paul employs a diversity of participatory expressions, for example, speaking of believers being “in Christ,” baptized “into Christ,” being crucified “with” Christ, etc. Below are just a few instances:

- “This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph 3:6).
- “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).
- “For we are members of his body” (Eph 5:30).
- “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27).
- “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).
- “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim that anything comes from us, but our competence comes from God. He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant” (2 Cor 3:5–6).
- “As God’s fellow workers, then, we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain” (2 Cor 6:1).

Perhaps the most unambiguous declaration of Christian participation in the Trinitarian mission occurs in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, which simply states, “So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:20). Paul uses the Greek word *πρεσβεύομεν*, which is translated as ambassadors. It is a verb derived from *presbys*, “an older, venerated person.”²¹ It is worth noting here that this is the root of the word *presbyterate*, the body of priests. This noun occurs only one other time in the New Testament, when Paul refers to himself in his letter to the Ephesians: “I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it fearlessly, as I should” (Eph 6:20). In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul refers to all Christians as ambassadors. All Christians are to “re-present” Trinitarian love in the world, for “Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18). Paul is not only speaking of himself or of his companions here, for he has already stated, “[I]f anyone is

²¹ *Strong’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “*Presbeúō*”: *presbeúō* (a verb derived from *presbys*, “an older, venerated person”) properly, to be elderly or mature, “to be the elder, to take precedence and hence act as an ambassador.” *Presbeúō* (“act as an ambassador”) means to act as an established statesman (diplomat) – a trusted, respected ambassador who is authorized to speak as God’s emissary (represent His kingdom). This term is used in the ancient phrase, “I am on embassy to the Emperor, I am an ambassador” (Souter)—i.e., as someone respected as trustworthy (loyal, knowledgeable), especially in the opinion of those they know (belong to).

in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). This text undergirds the teaching that all the baptized participate in the priesthood of Christ.²² In these lines of his second letter to the church at Corinth, Paul declares that all Christians are ministers and ambassadors of Christ, participants in His mission of reconciliation. This ministry of reconciliation can be understood as restoring the friendship between the Creator and creation, between the Trinity and humanity as well as restoring friendship among human persons.

Paul’s theology of participation focuses on the baptized person’s union with Christ through their faith and the Spirit, their participation in the life and mission of the Church, and their hope of communion with God eternally. This participation is manifested in suffering, community, and most especially in the Eucharist. Paul explains that Christians participate in Christ’s redemptive suffering for the salvation of the world in Colossians 1:24. In Philippians 1:5, Paul describes the shared life of the Christian community as a participation in the Gospel which involves sharing in the spiritual and material aspects of the faith. The fullest participation in the life of the community and in the life of Christ is the reception of the Eucharist. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, that the Eucharist is a participation in the blood and the body of Christ, creating our communion with Christ and one another.

A full exploration of the theology of participation in the Pauline corpus is beyond the scope of this project. However, in this brief presentation, it is evident that the letters of Paul proclaim Christian participation in the Trinitarian mission as members of Christ’s body, animated by the Spirit, to the glory of the Father.

4. *A Theology of Mission as Participation in Friendship in Pauline Epistles*

In his article “Reading the Bible Missionally,” N.T. Wright describes the missionary theology in Paul in terms consistent with a mission theology as participation in friendship. First, in commenting on Ephesians 1:10, Wright notes, “[W]e find in this summary statement, that God’s purpose is to unite all things in heaven and on earth.”²³ God’s purpose is humanity’s participation

²² See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1547, “The common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace --a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit--, the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians.” These two priesthoods are not competitive, nor contradictory, rather they are complimentary! Each priesthood distinctly participating in the priesthood of Christ in mutuality, lovingly sustaining and bringing life one to the other. There is no ministerial priesthood without the priesthood of the laity. There is no common priesthood of the laity without the ministerial priesthood.

²³ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 189.

in the transcendent through the imminent. It is not to rescue some from the earth, but to restore the created order in Trinitarian love and through Trinitarian love.

Second, he comments on Ephesians 2:10, which reads, “For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.” In this text, Paul is proclaiming that the Church has been constituted as God’s work of art, His *ποίημα* (*poiēma*). According to Wright, “We are God’s *poem*, made so that the world can sing, see and sense the rhythms of God’s love and power.”²⁴ The Church, as God’s handiwork, not only participates in Divine life and love, but is the means for the world to perceive and participate in Divine life and love.

The Church is the sacrament of mission and friendship, the sign and instrument of God’s saving love. Wright explains,

Here in Ephesians 2, the good works are the whole mission of the church, to things that the Church must do that show the world a different way to be human. This understanding of good works was central to the spread of the church during the first two or three centuries, despite opposition from the Roman Empire. People came across these strange little communities and were surprised to find new ways of living together. The early church demonstrated an extraordinary love that flowed outward and become obvious in their concern for the poor, their healing of the sick, and their welcoming of the outcast. We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.²⁵

It is not only that the Church is God’s workmanship, but she is filled with His Spirit so as to continue God’s work on earth. Paul tells the Church in Corinth, “Do you not know that you yourselves are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16).

Wright explains,

The second half of Ephesians 2 envisions the unity of the church as the model for the unity that God intends for heaven and earth at the end of time. Following that grand vision, we receive the missionary mandate in Ephesians 3:10. Simply put, it says that through the church the manifold, multicolored wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. That is missional scripture right there, giving purpose to the very existence of this community, which is made up of Jews, Gentiles, men, women, slaves, free, rich, poor, young, old and on and on.²⁶

According to Wright, Paul’s whole missionary work is to bring about and sustain a new *polis*, a new social reality, a new way for people to worship and live fellowship together for the sake of the salvation of the world:

²⁴ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 189.

²⁵ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 189.

²⁶ Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” 189.

God's new creation is happening, and we are called to be not only its beneficiaries but also its agents. As we become agents of this new creation, we provide the social, cultural, religious, ethical, and political reality toward which the different societies and cultures of our day aspire. And we do this not by retreating into a private huddle, but by living out this new creation right there in the middle of the old one.²⁷

For Paul, the Christian community does not solely benefit from the salvific love of God manifest in Christ Jesus. Christians are God's agents, his missionaries. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20).

C. The Letter of James

A study of a mission theology as participation in friendship in the New Testament cannot ignore the Letter of James. Many scholars believe the Letter of James was composed before the Council of Jerusalem in 50 A.D. Donald Senior summarizes this pastoral epistle in this way: "James urges the Christians to lead lives of integrity, translating their faith into active good deeds of justice and mutual respect."²⁸ It is in through both their words and deeds that the communities to whom James is writing come to identify with and participate in God's mission.²⁹ In his epistle, James addresses his readers three times (Jas 1:16, 19; 2:5) with the expression ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί, translated "my beloved brothers." Ceslas Spicq notes that this phrase has no parallel in Jewish literature and is perhaps original to the author of the Letter of James.³⁰

There are two pericopes in particular in the Letter of James that need to be addressed regarding friendship. These pericopes do relate to one another and must be interpreted in the context of the whole letter. The first pericope is James 4:4–6:

Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world renders himself an enemy of God. Or do you think the Scripture says without reason that the Spirit He caused to dwell in us yearns with envy? But He gives us more grace. This is why it says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

This pericope is often misinterpreted as creating a chasm between the friendship of God and friendship with humanity, but it must be read in the context of the whole letter. Let us consider a second pericope, James 2:14–15:

²⁷ Wright, "Reading the New Testament Missionally," 192.

²⁸ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 309.

²⁹ Joel B. Green, "Reading James Missionally," in *Reading the Bible Missionally* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 212.

³⁰ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol 2., 1.

What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have deeds? Is the faith able to save him? If a brother or sister is going naked and lacking daily food, and if one of you should say to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” but does not give to them what is necessary for the body, what is the use?

Luke Timothy Johnson provides an excellent exegesis of the Letter of James.³¹ He affirms that, according to the Letter of James, “the lives of those who call themselves friends of God must be characterized by economic sharing, for the view of reality that God gives all to all does not exist apart from embodied actions that make the claim true.”³² In the community that styles itself as a friend of God, radical socioeconomic inequities are no more. The lowly are “raised up,” the rich are “humbled.” “To say that one believes in God and does not materially care for the needs of one’s brothers and sisters is to prove the claim of faith to be empty.”³³

The author of the Letter of James is very much concerned with community solidarity, mutual care, and support. Luke Timothy Johnson points out that starting from verse 1:1, “James uses plural pronouns and addresses his audience as an *ekklesia*.”³⁴ The author contrasts his vision of Christian charity with “friendship with the world.” In an article discussing friendship with God in the Letter of James, M. Therese Lysaught “proposes that the logic of the world, the logic of competition, presumes two diametrically opposed players, locked in a zero-sum game of win-lose.”³⁵ In this view, the “other” is perceived as “a threat, a threat of loss, a threat of subjection and oppression, a threat to one’s very life.”³⁶ But a reality imbued with the transcendent and grounded in the truth of a generous, kind, and merciful God who gives all to all requires a different anthropology. If we are all brothers and sisters of a supremely and perfectly loving God, there is no need for men and women to compete for God’s grace and providence. “James calls his hearers to see themselves not as individuals in competition, but as brothers and sisters in Christ, members of a community of solidarity created and sustained by God’s grace.”³⁷

³¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 37A (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2008).

³² Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 80.

³³ Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 80.

³⁴ Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 81.

³⁵ Lysaught, “Medicine as Friendship with God: Anointing the Sick as a Theological Hermeneutic,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 171–192.

³⁶ Lysaught, “Medicine as Friendship with God,” 190.

³⁷ Lysaught, “Medicine as Friendship with God,” 190.

Action consistent with faith in God who is rich in mercy and full of compassion is what the author of James requires of his community. It is not enough to merely listen to the Word of God, one must act upon it, participating in the saving work of God. Consider James 1:22–27:

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

The author of the Letter of James is interested in creating a community of solidarity, one that makes “the choice between a life of envy that logically tends toward the elimination of the other and a life based on gift and mercy expressed in service of the other.”³⁸ Friendship with God in the Letter of James is realized through a community of solidarity shaped by radical socioeconomic egalitarianism, compassion for the sick, the poor, the widow, and the orphan that is expressed in effective action. Love of God is expressed through love of neighbor, particularly those most vulnerable. The Letter of James reveals that friendship with God is lived by humble, faithful, sacrificial care of others, especially those who are in need. The practice of Christianity in the Letter of James reveals a mission theology of participation in the mercy of God as a friend to God, in solidarity with fellow Christians and befriending those who are suffering.

D. Mark

1. *Mission in Mark*

As the first *euangellion*, Mark creates a new literary genre with the purpose of announcing the good news of Jesus Christ in narrative form. The term *euangellion* in the ancient Roman lexicon was the type of announcement of victory in battle. Most scholars concede that the gospel genre is in large part a literary creation of early Christianity. Mark's labeling his story an *euangellion* indicates his intention to connect the Church's missional proclamation with Jesus's victory over sin and death.

³⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 37A (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2008), 82.

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15) is a mission command given not only by Jesus to the disciples but also by Mark to his community of nascent Christians. This is one example of how Mark’s Gospel gives missionary instruction to the early followers of Christ, whom Mark is addressing perhaps in Rome shortly after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.³⁹

Rudolf Pesch’s monumental commentary, *Das Markusevangelium*,⁴⁰ points to three major examples of the focus on mission in Mark’s *euangellion*. First is the theme of the “way,” which carries Jesus’s work from Galilee to Jerusalem and ultimately into the worldwide scope of the community’s preaching. Second is the concentration on the powerful deeds of Jesus which not only affect salvation but provoke a response from witnesses. Third, is the revelation of Jesus’s true identity as Son of God at His baptism (1:11), His transfiguration (9:7), and in the circumstances surrounding His death (15:33, 38, 39), which demonstrate that the Church’s proclamation of Jesus is of Divine origin.⁴¹

Pesch asserts that the Gospel of Mark is best described as a *Missionsbuch*,⁴² a mission text. Senior offers the insight that as a mission text Mark’s Gospel “is a document for the Church itself, meant to justify, renew, and motivate the Church’s claim on the heritage of Jesus’s own boundary-breaking ministry.”⁴³ This theme of Jesus’s breaking boundaries will be explored in the section on friendship in the Gospel of Mark.

Reading this, the shortest of all the Gospels, one comes away with a sense of the urgency of the mission of Jesus. The Markan narrative describes Jesus and the disciples’ activities in such rapid succession, the audience becomes almost breathless. The dynamic force of the Gospel of Mark is the mission of Jesus and of his disciples. The movement from place to place, event to event, and particularly the movement toward the Cross signals the importance of mission in the Gospel of Mark.⁴⁴

³⁹ The location of the Markan community is debated by scholars. The statement of Papias associates Mark with Peter in Rome. There is some scholarly discussion of Mark as a scribe of Peter. One theory is that the negative portrayal of Peter in the Gospel was to give courage to the struggles of early Christians to comprehend and be faithful to the message of Christ. I tend to agree with those who see Mark as written from Rome during the beginnings of the Jewish revolt around 66–70 AD or shortly after the destruction of the Temple in 72 AD.

⁴⁰ Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, (Germany: Herder, 1984).

⁴¹ Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 59–63.

⁴² Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 59.

⁴³ Senior, Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 211.

⁴⁴ R. Geoffrey Harris, *Mission in the Gospels* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2014), 75.

Geography plays a role in the missiology of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus takes several boat trips across the Sea of Galilee, shuttling between the Hellenized Jews on the Capernaum side to the non-Jewish communities on “the other side.” Jesus crosses the lake to do the same ministry of healing, exorcisms, and feedings done in the Jewish territory (7:24–8:10) in pagan territory. The gospel narrates Jesus’s movements from Galilee to His ultimate destiny in Jerusalem. Mark focuses his account on Jesus’s ministry in Galilee (1:2–8:21); uses a central section to indicate the transition to a new phase (8:22–10:52); and completes Jesus’s mission in Jerusalem (11:1–16:8). It is a progression of rejection, persecution, and ultimately crucifixion. Mark takes care to note the responses to Jesus of individuals and groups along the way: most are hostile, very few are friendly. The disciples are to expect the same as they are sent forth on mission. The movement of the Divine mission in the lives and martyrdoms of the disciples knows no boundaries as they are sent into the whole cosmos to proclaim the good news of salvation to every creature (16:15).

2. *Theme of Friendship in Mark*

The author of the Gospel of Mark is clear: friendship with Jesus is costly. In Mark 8:34 we read, “Then said Jesus to his disciples, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” The vocabulary of love is scarce in the Gospel of Mark. There is one instance that deserves our investigation. In Mark 10:21, Jesus looks at a man, loves him, and explains the cost of discipleship. It is necessary when interpreting this passage of Mark to follow the story line through to the end.

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, (Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ **ἠγάπησεν** αὐτὸν) and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

Jesus loves this rich, young man who approaches Him seeking to know what is required for eternal life. It is the single instance in the Gospel of Mark where the subject is Jesus and the verb is “love.” In Mark 10:17–18, this inquiring man identifies Jesus as “Good Teacher,” to which Jesus replies, “No one is good but God.” Although some interpreters suppose Jesus is rebuking the man for flattery, perhaps there is more to this story which might demonstrate Jesus’s friendship with this interlocuter, who identifies Jesus as good.

Perhaps the rich young man is not engaged in flattery. Perhaps he is revealing he knows Jesus’s identity. When the man calls Jesus good teacher, Jesus replies that God alone is good. The reply, “God alone is good” does not imply Jesus is not good himself. Jesus does not deny He is

good, rather he affirms that God alone is good. It is possible that Jesus inviting the man to deduce: Jesus is good. God alone is good. Therefore, Jesus is (the Son of) God. This makes sense because in the following line, Jesus looks at him and loves him. As was mentioned this is the only time the Gospel of Mark where Jesus is said to love someone. It is Jesus's look of love which provides our interpretive lens.

Jesus looks with love and speaks with the frankness of friendship to the man, telling him what he must do to inherit eternal life, sharing with him what is necessary for him to be "good." Mark reports the man went away sad because he had much wealth. Mark follows this with a teaching and parable by Jesus on the difficulty for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mk 10:23). However, the story does not end there. While comparing the challenge of discipleship with the parable of the camel going through the eye of needle, Jesus gives reason to hope. Mark 10:27 reads, "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.'" (Note the parallel of Jesus looking at the rich man and looking at the disciples. Yet, it the rich man to whom Jesus looks with love.) God Himself makes discipleship possible. At this point in the narrative, Peter representing the Twelve, speaks up and asserts that they have left everything to follow Jesus. Again, Jesus offers reassurance,

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for My sake and for the gospel will fail to receive a hundredfold in the present age—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, along with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first (Mk 10:29–31).

Is it possible that the rich, young man went away sad, but also gave away all his possessions and then came to follow Jesus? Could the rich man have chosen to become poor, least, and last? One can be sad at the sacrifices required by discipleship, yet still carry out the sacrifice. Jesus mentions that God's grace is sufficient to make one forsake the material and emotional comforts of this world. Perhaps it is by the grace of God that the rich young man strips himself of wealth and follows Jesus. Ceslas Spicq offers, "The man who becomes voluntarily poor for God's love enters a closer relationship with Christ."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Ceslas Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 1, *Agape in the Synoptic Gospels*, trans. Marie Aquinas McNamara and Mary Honoria Richter (Eugene, OR: Wipf Stock Publishers, 2006), 54.

There is a clue at the very end of the Gospel of Mark that gives credence to this unconventional interpretation.⁴⁶ At Jesus's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, a mysterious young man, a follower of Jesus, makes an appearance just after all the other disciples have fled. "Now a young man followed him wearing nothing but a linen cloth about his body. They seized him, but he left the cloth behind and ran off naked." (Mk 14:51–52). This young man has clearly taken to heart Jesus's directive to leave material possessions behind, as he is clothed only in a linen cloth, which he leaves behind and runs away naked (14:51). This man is seen to be with the other disciples and like the other disciples in Mark's Gospel, he flees at Jesus's arrest (14:50).

Some interpreters propose that the naked young man in chapter fourteen is the author of the Gospel, John Mark. However, could John Mark be the rich man from chapter ten, who by Divine grace has been converted and is now naked poor? The rich young man in chapter ten is the only person in the Gospel of Mark whom Jesus is said to love. Not even in the call of the first apostles does Mark describe Jesus looking at them with love. In the call to discipleship of the rich man in chapter ten, Jesus looks, and He loves. It would seem that if Jesus looked upon a man and loved him, He might thus move a man to follow Him, regardless of the cost. The identity of the naked man fleeing from Gethsemane may still be a mystery. One thing though is certain and that is in the Gospel of Mark: friendship with Christ is costly.

3. *Participation in Mark*

An indicator of the significance of participation in mission for the Gospel of Mark is the commissioning of the disciples in the first chapter of the narrative. Early on, Jesus recruits the disciples who are commissioned to participate in His mission.

During His lifetime, the disciples are empowered with the Spirit (3:5; 6:52; 8:17). They will participate in Jesus's ministry of confronting evil and proclaiming the good news (13:10). They will also experience a death like His, marked by suffering and kenotic love (13:11–13), but Senior explains,

To share in his power is not to possess power of prestige and playing lord over others, but it is to practice the self-emptying service which becomes the source of liberation to the many (10:41–45).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Amy-Jill Levine makes this case in her book *The Difficult Words of Jesus*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2021), 1-30.

⁴⁷ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 229.

Participation in the Divine mission in the Gospel of Mark includes going out to the whole world to proclaim the good news, confronting evil, healing the sick, and most especially entering into the paschal mystery.

In the shorter ending of the Gospel of Mark, there are no accounts of the resurrected Jesus interacting with the disciples, only an angel at the tomb proclaiming to the women that Jesus has been raised from the dead (16:1–8). In the longer ending of Mark, Jesus first appears to Mary Magdalene (16:9–12); He next appears to two unnamed disciples (16:12–13); and then rather quickly Jesus commissions the disciples (16:14–18). This longer ending concludes with the ascension of Jesus (16:19–20). All of this action occurs in a mere ten lines of text. In the Markan narrative, the resurrected Lord departs quickly, precisely so that the disciples can participate in His mission. The ascension of Jesus cues the apostles to take up their part, to participate in the drama of salvation. As Jesus departs the scene, He opens the stage for His followers to continue the Divine mission. He directs them and us to “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). There is no time to waste.

4. *A Theology of Mission as Participation in Friendship in Mark*

Donald Senior provides a description of the Gospel of Mark that reflects a mission theology as participation in friendship:

Mark invites the Church to take up the powerful redemptive mission of Jesus, a mission that embraced Jew and Gentile. But this mission will be only genuine when the community has been transformed by a servant Jesus and his cross.⁴⁸

A mission theology as participation in friendship in the Gospel of Mark requires going to the margins, to the ends of the cosmos to proclaim the saving power of the Son of God, who has won the victory of sin and death. Mark’s journey motif reminds Christians that missionary activity is not static but possesses an urgency. This urgency forces continual outward movement to reach others while simultaneously drawing nearer to Christ crucified. In the Gospel of Mark, we can see the nascent Church as she begins to understand herself as the sacrament of the Divine mission and friendship realized through her cruciform vocation.

⁴⁸ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 229.

E. Matthew

1. Mission in Matthew

The theme of universal mission is central to Matthew's Gospel.⁴⁹ It is present at the call of the first disciples: "I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:14). There is a long missionary discourse in chapter ten. The final encounter of the risen Lord with the disciples, deemed the "Great Commission," occurs in the very last lines of Gospel of Matthew (Mt 28:16–20). Much could be said on the concept of mission in Matthew; however, this discussion will be limited to the culminating missioning of the disciples in chapter twenty-eight.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:19–20).

There are seven points to consider in this pericope. First, an assertion of Jesus's Divine authority frames the great commission as Divinely authorized and realized. Second, is the command to "Go." The Church is not static; it traverses the whole world by Divine command and thus is a pilgrim Church. Often disciples of Christ are eager to follow His invitation to "come and see" (Jn 1:39) but are less inclined to follow the command here in Matthew to "Go and make." Both sets of verbs are required: "coming and seeing" as well as "going and making." The "coming and seeing" or "abiding" in Christ enables one to be sent forth on mission. One must be first *with* Christ in order to be sent *from* Christ. Consider the human cardiovascular system in analogy to the process of missionary discipleship. The heart pumps blood to the lungs to get oxygen. It "then sends oxygenated blood through arteries to the rest of the body. The veins carry oxygen-depleted blood back to the heart to start the circulation process over."⁵⁰ In like manner, missionary disciples are "oxygenated" by sacramental grace and are sent forth to share Divine grace with the whole body of humanity and then return to the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, to be "re-oxygenated," and the process continues.

The third and crucial point is that the Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who are themselves sent forth to go and make disciples. Recall early in the Gospel of Matthew, in calling the disciples Jesus says, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men" (Mt

⁴⁹ Senior and Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 233.

⁵⁰ Cleveland Clinic, "Circulatory System," <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/body/21775-circulatory-system>, accessed June 21, 2022.

4:19; Mk 1:17). To be a disciple is to be a missionary disciple. In *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis writes,

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries," but rather that we are always "missionary disciples".⁵¹

Fourth, the disciples are sent to all humanity. Unlike in chapter ten, where the twelve apostles are sent only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:5–6), at the conclusion of the Gospel, Jesus instructs them to make disciples of all nations. The mission of the Church is universal. Fifth, the Trinitarian formula is at the heart of their commissioning. The disciples baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, immersing the new disciples into Trinitarian life and love. Sixth, catechesis is essential to mission. Teaching the kerygma is to accompany baptism. The seventh and final point tells how this is all possible. Jesus, who is the Divine Son of God is with them always. Similar to John's usage of the tetragrammaton, Matthew has Jesus say, "I am with you always." The enduring, faithful presence of Christ enables the Divine mission to continue in the Church.

2. *Friendship in Matthew*

The verb *to love* (*agapan*) appears eight times in Matthew's Gospel. It appears five times in the Sermon on the Mount, demonstrating that love is at the very heart of the kingdom of God.⁵² The Sermon on the Mount presents serious challenges with regard to love. How is it possible to love one's enemies, to befriend those who betray you, to show kindness to those who persecute you? Jesus simply says, "to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:28). In other words, to love as your heavenly Father loves. This brief discussion of friendship-love in Matthew's Gospel will focus on the Father's love for the Son, as well as how people are to love God and one another according to the text.

⁵¹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, §120.

⁵² Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 1, 5.

Ceslas Spicq offers commentary on two declarations of the Father's love for the Son. The first declaration is at the baptism of Jesus by John. In chapter three of Matthew's gospel, Christ's divinity and Trinitarian love are proclaimed as Jesus rises out of the river Jordan. All four gospels record this event. In his remarks on Matthew 3:16–17, Spicq states,

God made the most important of all revelations to the world. On the banks of the Jordan he named Jesus his son and his *agapetos*, his beloved. Clearly *agape* exists in God; it is the force uniting the two Divine Persons unchangeably, from all eternity. ... Jesus is "loveable" in himself. God's "delight" necessarily reaches out to him, and the word "delight" (*eudokia*) expresses the communion between the Father and the Son. The heavens opened, the Divine voice spoke, the Holy Spirit descended—all to let men know the essential mystery of the life of the Trinity.⁵³

The Father loves the Son with delight! His love for the Son revealed by the Holy Spirit is a joyful love. It is a love made known to humanity through the Spirit, expressed as the Son is about to formally commence in his public ministry making known the mission of God to the world.

The second proclamation of Divine love occurs on Mount Tabor in Matthew 17:5. This pronouncement of love is connected to Jesus's passion. According to Spicq,

Jesus was ordained to suffer, but he received then and forever the reassurance of his Father's infinite love. God would not abandon him during his ordeal. Divine love revealed itself as always attentive and unchangeable; *agapan* expresses a love that never waivers. Moreover, God chose to reveal his love for his son as Jesus was about to consummate the work of man's salvation. ... In presenting Jesus as "the beloved," St. Matthew demonstrates the authenticity of his mission.⁵⁴

The Son's mission is an expression of Divine love. Mission is not a function of a person. It is not a task to be performed. The mission of the Son and Spirit is the outward movement of Trinitarian love. Mission is an expression of a relationship of love which forms one's identity. Matthew expresses the profound, overflowing, joyful intimacy between the persons of the Trinity and relates it to the mission of the Son, the salvation of the world.

Finally, God's love for humanity is revealed in the Gospel of Matthew as analogous to the love that the Father has for the Son. Since Christians are to reproduce the breadth and depth of God's love, they try to know this love by the example Christ gave in order to live as Christ taught. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, as if to provide the answer as to how in the world one can live the teaching of Jesus, He instructs His followers to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). The Father's perfection is His love. Spicq remarks,

⁵³ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 1, 49–50.

⁵⁴ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 1, 50.

The Father's love is universal, individual, and generous. God knows each of his children (Mt 6:4–6; 10:29–31); he does not forget a single one of them (Mt 18:10). He knows in advance what they need (Mt 6:8, 32) and wants their true happiness (Mt 5:3–10). Since “the Father in heaven” is all-powerful, the best thing the charity of Christians can do is to speak to him on behalf of other men, even of the persecutors. Their love of their neighbor will immerse itself in the Divine love and become one with it. They will come to understand how they can and ought to love men as God loves them.⁵⁵

Christians strive for perfection in their love for one another because God loves them and all of humanity perfectly. For Matthew, loving one's neighbor is not simply an ideal. It is a commandment whose observance is required for eternal life (Mt 19:16–21). Matthew, in chapter 25 in the parable of the sheep and goats, leaves no ambiguity concerning the Christian duty to love. “Just as you did it to the one of the least of these, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). In this parable of the last judgement (Mt 25:31–46), Christ identifies Himself with those who are most in need. The poor and suffering are seen as bearers of Christ's presence. At the heart of Matthew's Christology is the identification of “God with us” with the powerless and weak rather than the strong.⁵⁶ If followers of Christ befriend the least and last, they befriend Christ.

3. *Participation in Matthew*

Participation in Matthew may be summarized as “going forth to love and to serve.” Spicq reflects on the connection between “to love” and “to serve”:

The life of the members of the new kingdom is conceived as an appropriation to a Person, a belonging to God, and hence a service; to love is to serve (agapan-douleuein 6:24). “To love,” understood as “to adhere willingly” to God, keeps the meaning it had in the Septuagint: “to love religiously, and to adore.” “To serve” specifies this consecration as exclusive and definitive. Taken as a whole, the logion demands attachment to God in expressed, exclusive fidelity as well as in faith and love. From the moment a Christian acknowledges and adheres to the true God, he becomes his liege man, bound to serve him with all his being. This idea contains the essence of New Testament charity. It is much more than a consecration of activities; it so seizes the very heart of man that it permeates all his thoughts and affections.⁵⁷

For Matthew, Christians are to participate in Divine love, partaking of God's love and sharing God's love with all humanity. This is done through works of genuine charity; proclaiming the kingdom of God; teaching of the Law, the Prophets, and the kingdom of God; forgiving sins; healing the sick; casting out demons; living the beatitudes; and by continually sacrificing oneself

⁵⁵ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 1, 52-53.

⁵⁶ Johannes Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt am Main ; New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 33.

⁵⁷ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission*, 51.

to the good of the other. The highest and most perfect love one can have for one's fellow human being, to truly be a friend, is to participate in the mission of Christ for the sake of their salvation.

4. A Theology of Mission as Participation in Friendship in Matthew

Matthew 10:40 has parallels in the Synoptic Gospels⁵⁸ and is similar to the mission theology of participation in friendship presented in the chapter on John. Chapter 10 of Matthew's Gospel identifies the twelve apostles (10:1–4); describes their commissioning (10:5–16); warns of coming persecutions (10:16–28); and connects the apostles' mission with the Divine mission (10:32–34, 40). Toward the end of chapter ten, Jesus declares to the apostles as he sends them forth, "He who receives you, receives me and he who receives you receives the one who sent me" (Mt 10:40). This statement links the mission of Jesus's disciples to the Father who sent him. This concept is also found in John's Gospel, "I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (Jn 13:20).

The Gospel of Matthew is framed by dual affirmations of God's closeness to humanity. The title given to Jesus in chapter one, Emmanuel, means "God is with us" (Mt 1:22). The concluding words of Jesus's departing address to his disciples at the close of the Gospel are "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). This final promise of *being with* the disciples occurs within their commissioning to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). Here, as in the Gospel of John, going forth on mission and remaining with Christ are linked in the Gospel of Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew concludes with a mission theology of friendship as participation. Jesus is faithfully present always with his disciples as they go forth to participate in and continue the saving mission of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Similar to the Gospel of John, there is a sense of both abiding in Christ and going forth on mission. Jesus's loving abiding presence, indicative of friendship, is the source and sustenance of the missionary activities of his followers.

Participation in friendship is facilitated in, with, and through the Church. The Church has a central role in Matthew's ecclesiology as he is the only evangelist to use the word *ekklesia* (Mt 16:18; 18:17).⁵⁹ Missiologist Johannes Nissen explains,

⁵⁸ "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not only Me, but the One who sent Me" (Mk 9:37); "And He said to them, "Whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For whoever is the least among all of you, he is the greatest"(Lk 9:48); "Whoever rejects you rejects Me; and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me" (Lk 10:16).

⁵⁹ Johannes Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 27.

The church is the subject of mission—not only in the sense that it proclaims the gospel, but also in the sense that it lives it. This does not mean that Matthew conceives of the church as an ideal community. It is a church where the “weeds” are together with the “wheat” (Mt 13:24–30), a church where there are hypocrites, false prophets (Mt 7:15; 24:11) and false messiahs (24:24). It seems as if the church which was called for mission had many internal problems. That God can use a fragile fellowship in his mission is something of a miracle. This miracle has to do with the promise which concludes the last commission: “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”⁶⁰

In the Gospel of Matthew, (as in the Gospel of John) it is clear that Divine indwelling makes participation in the Divine mission fruitful.

F. Luke-Acts

1. Mission in Luke-Acts

Perhaps the best presentation of the Church’s universal mission in the New Testament can be found in Luke’s two-volume work comprised of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.⁶¹ This claim is based upon the fact that Luke binds the story of Jesus with the story of His followers sharing Jesus’s story in word, deed, worship, and fellowship. In the Acts of the Apostles, the followers of Christ enact and embody Jesus’s teaching and witness in the Gospel of Luke, by their lives and through their deaths. Thus, it can be said that one of Luke’s intentions was to demonstrate the continuity between the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church.⁶² The Gospel of Luke tells the story of the mission of the Trinity revealed in Jesus; the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the mission of the Trinity continuing in the Church.

Thus, the very structure of the two-volume work reveals the connection between Jesus’s mission and the mission of the Church. Luke and Acts are to be read together. The text itself tells us, “In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about *all that Jesus did and taught* from the beginning *until he was taken up to heaven* (Acts 1:1–2), and “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you (which, is the same verb as for the annunciation to Mary by the archangel Gabriel,): and *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* (Acts 1:8).

⁶⁰ Nissen, *New Testament and Mission*. 29.

⁶¹ See Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, editors, *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 2-17; Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 255; F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, (Naperville: Allenson, 1965), 128; F. Danker, *Luke*, Proclamation Commentaries series, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 89-90; and R. Karris, “Missionary Communities: A New Paradigm for the Study of Luke Acts” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41, (1979), 80–97.

⁶² Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 255

Using this passage from the first lines in the Book of Acts, which describe the author's intent in the two-volume work, Paul Hertig and Robert Gallagher divide Luke-Acts into six parts. These six divisions are derived from "Luke's use of summary statements throughout the two volumes to indicate the narrative boundaries" and to demonstrate that the saving mission of God manifested in the deeds and teaching, the life and death of Jesus described in Luke continues as the mission of God in the deeds and teaching, the life and death of the first Christians in the Acts of the Apostles.⁶³

Part 1: "All that Jesus did" (Lk 1:1–9:50)

Part 2: "And taught" (Lk 9:51–19:44)

Part 3: "Until he was taken up" (Lk 19:45–24:53)

Part 4: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem" (Acts 1:1–6:7)

Part 5: "In all of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 6:8–9:31)

Part 6: "And to the ends of the earth" (Acts 9:32–28:31)

In part 1, Luke describes the Galilean ministry of Jesus. In part 2, the journey to Jerusalem contains many of the teachings of Jesus, including parables unique to Luke. Part 3 describes the suffering and death of Jesus as His exaltation as Lord and Messiah,⁶⁴ through the consummate expression of love through the cross. The love of Jesus for His disciples continues in Acts in His sending of His Spirit. The story of the disciples waiting in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit is repeated in the end of part 3 and the beginning of part 4. The last words of Jesus not only conclude the Gospel but serve as the introduction to the Acts of the Apostles. Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8 are indicators of God's missionary purposes, which are revealed in the narrative. The mission of God depicted in the narrative is both centripetal and centrifugal and the dynamism of the Divine mission is love. The disciples are gathered (centripetal) in love and sent (centrifugal) forth in love to the ends of the earth.

In the Gospel of Luke, the first sending passage occurs in 4:16–30. Jesus returns to the synagogue in Nazareth and proclaims His inaugural address. Jesus identifies Himself with the passage read from Isaiah 61:1–2. "Of all the Old Testament passages he could have chosen, he

⁶³ Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, editors, *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 11.

⁶⁴ Luke speaks explicitly of a suffering Messiah (Lk 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:3; 26:23). The idea of a suffering Messiah is not found in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature prior to the New Testament period, although the idea of the suffering Son of Man is found in Mk 8:31–33.

selected this one as the platform for his life and work. It became the manifesto of his ministry.”⁶⁵ In Isaiah 61:1–3, there are no less than six redemptive deeds that proceed from or are dependent on the verb *shalack* (“He has sent me”).⁶⁶ By identifying Himself and His mission with this particular Old Testament passage, Jesus reveals Himself as being sent by God on the messianic mission.

The Acts of the Apostles continues Luke’s presentation of biblical history. The promise of salvation is now extended to the whole world and will be carried out by the Apostles. Jesus prepared the apostles during His earthly ministry (Acts 1:21–22) and commissioned them after His resurrection to be witnesses to all that He taught (Acts 1:8; 10:37–43; Lk 24:48). The saving mission of God continues in the Church.

2. *Friendship in Luke-Acts*

In reading the Acts of the Apostles it is apparent that the first Christian community of Jerusalem took to heart Jesus’s precepts recorded in the Gospel of Luke regarding affectionate, effective fraternal love (Acts 2:24–47; 4:32–37).⁶⁷ Luke’s gospel contains some of Jesus’s most profound teaching on Christian charity. Consider the parables of the Good Samaritan (10:29–37) and the Prodigal Son (15:11–32), both unique to Luke’s Gospel. In the parables illustrating the kingdom of God, Luke provides examples of the charity, generosity, fidelity, and forgiveness that are to be practiced by Christians. In the Gospel of Luke, it is apparent that the vocation of friendship requires humility to set aside one’s own interests so as to lovingly attend to the needs of others, whether it is convenient or inconvenient.

Luke includes in his presentation on Christian love a parable on friendship. The parables in Luke are often preceded by a related aspect of Jesus’s ministry, especially a teaching on the kingdom of God. In chapter 11 of Luke’s Gospel, immediately following Jesus’s teaching on how to pray, Luke includes a parable on friendship to illustrate how the Father in heaven answers our petitions. While the purpose of the Friends at Night parable is to demonstrate the need for persistence in prayer, it also reveals insights into the Lukan Jesus’s expectations of friendship.

⁶⁵ Francis M. DuBose, *God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983), 50.

⁶⁶ Koole, Jan L. *Isaiah III*, vol. 3, *Historical Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. Cornelis Houtman, Gert T.M. Prinsloo, Wilfred G.E. Watson, and Al Wolters (Belgium: Peeters, 2001), 270. See also John N. Oswalt. *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 565

⁶⁷ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 1, 381.

The parable begins, “Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight, and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey, and I have nothing to offer him’” (Luke 11:5–6). The first line reveals several behaviors friends may expect from one another. First, the friend who is travelling can expect hospitality and nourishment upon arriving at his friend’s house. The host’s need to ask another friend for bread implies that the travelling friend did not “call ahead” to see if it was a convenient time for him to visit. Nor did the travelling friend inquire if there was a place for him to sleep or provisions for his stay. It seems based on the parable that a travelling friend can expect to have his bodily needs met by a friend. Secondly, the friend who is suddenly, and unexpectedly, hosting the travelling friend has expectations of his neighbor friend. There is an expectation of availability, compassion, and generosity. He arrives at midnight and makes his request, a detail indicating the significant inconvenience of the appeal. The parable continues,

And he says to him in reply from within, “Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.” I tell you, if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up and give to him whatever he needs because of his persistence (Luke 11:7–9).

The line in the parable, “If he does not get up and give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship,” demonstrates that this unreasonable, middle-of-the-night request for bread might be honored because of friendship. Friends can be expected to satisfy even the inconvenient petitions of a friend as depicted in the faithful friend in Sirach 6:7–17.

The parable of the Friend at Night points to the reliability of God. Following Jesus’s instruction on the Lord’s Prayer, this parable teaches that one can make requests of God which are unreasonable, inconvenient, and costly. Jesus is instructing His followers that they should not hesitate to pester God. They can become a nuisance in making their needs known to Him. If a friend can respond to an unreasonable, inconvenient, costly request, how much more so can our Heavenly Father? In this parable, Luke is comparing the generous, reliable support from our Heavenly Father with a faithful friend and a good father who knows how to give good gifts to his children.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we gain a glimpse of the application of this parable, not only in terms of making petitions to the Father but also in responding to the petitions of others. In Acts 4:34–35 Luke writes, “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of

lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need."

The generous, reliable, supportive love Christians are to expect from God they are to offer to those most in need. As they trust in God to provide for their needs, Christians should be relied upon to meet the needs of others. The theme of friendship in Luke-Acts is a realized fraternal and sororal charity. Even those who are hostile are shown patience and kindness. Ceslas Spicq is emphatic that the Lukan directives of turning one's cheek and giving one's tunic in addition to one's coat are not hyperbole. He states that "each Christian must be ready, whenever there is a need, to give up his most basic rights and necessary possessions. ... Charity, as desire for another's good, requires the sacrifice of one's own good."⁶⁸ According to Luke-Acts, Christians are to be faithful friends, sturdy shelters to anyone in need.

3. *Participation in Luke-Acts*

In Luke, Jesus is not only the sent one, but He is also one who sends. The sending of the apostles is a participation in and continuation of Jesus's own mission. Jesus sends the Twelve in Luke 9:1–6:

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." So, they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

Jesus sends the apostles during his earthly ministry. They participate in Jesus' teaching and healing ministry in Galilee. Andreas J. Kostenberger remarks,

If the foundational mission, according to Luke, is Jesus being sent by God, then the sending of the twelve is an integral part of Jesus's own mission. From a larger group of disciples Jesus chose and commissioned twelve 'apostles' (apostoloi, Luke 6:12–15). He now shares his power and authority with them and sends (apostello) them on their mission (9:1–2).⁶⁹

In the Gospel of Luke, the twelve are sent to participate and continue Jesus's mission in which the love and mercy of God are both proclaimed and experienced. In Acts, both individuals and groups of believers are sent to participate in the mission of Christ through the Spirit. As

⁶⁸ Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 1, 82.

⁶⁹ Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 120.

depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, the early Jerusalem community of Christians saw themselves as continuing God's saving work, as participants in the salvific mission of the Son in the power of the Spirit, sent forth to proclaim and embody Trinitarian love to the whole world.

4. *A Theology of Mission as Participation in Friendship in Luke-Acts*

In Luke-Acts, the mission theology as participation in friendship indicates the necessity for missionaries of Jesus to share in His humility. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said to the disciples, "Whoever welcomes this little child in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For whoever is the least among all of you, he is the greatest" (Lk 9:48).

Pride engenders a false sense of self-sufficiency which has no need for others. Humility is required for genuine friendship with God and others. Egoism drives one to carry out one's own will, seeking to do what is desirable to oneself. Egoism is opposed to doing the will of the sender; of representing not oneself, but another; of speaking not one's own message, but that of the sender. Pride and egoism are obstacles to participation in the Divine mission as a friend of God and of humanity.

In the Gospel of Luke, Mary's Magnificat proclaims the Lord raises up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty (1:52-54). In Jesus's Sermon on the Plain, the poor and the hungry are called blessed (Lk 6:20-21), and the rich are told they have already received their consolation (Lk 6:24). In the Gospel of Luke, exemplars of faith are often those thought to be outcasts and undeserving: a poor widow, a Samaritan, a thief being crucified, a centurion. In the Acts of the Apostles, the followers of Christ are to place their resources at the service of those most in need.

The Acts of the Apostles describes how the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost enables the Church to participate in the Divine mission (Acts 2:4). The Holy Spirit sent by the Father through the Son empowered and continues to empower the Church's participation in Trinitarian love and work. Peter and the other apostles energized by the Holy Spirit were able to preach, convert and work miracles (Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16). The Holy Spirit equipped Paul to share the Gospel with the Gentiles (Act 9:1-19). It guided the first Christians in their witness, their communal life, their prayer, and in the breaking of the bread. (Acts 2:42-44). And it enabled the early Church to transform their experience of persecution into the embodiment of the kerygma (Acts 8:1-3; 12:1-9,24). The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles is the bond of love among the

first Christians, both drawing them closer (centripetal) to one another and propelling them outward (centrifugal) to share the love of Christ with the world. For the Church then and now, the Holy Spirit makes possible participation in the Divine mission as friends of God and friends to all humanity.

G. Conclusion: A Mission Theology as Participation in Friendship in the New Testament

This study of the epistles of Paul, the Letter of James, the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles helps to demonstrate that a mission theology as participation in friendship can be gleaned in the vast majority of the New Testament books. N.T. Wright offers that “the New Testament was written to sustain and direct the missional life of the early church.”⁷⁰ The New Testament was written to be believed, celebrated *and lived*. It was written not merely to tell the story of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, but to enable early Christians to live this mystery, to participate in this mystery.

Participation in this mystery—which is to say, participation in Christ’s own mission—involves embracing the poverty, humility, obedience, and charity of Christ. It necessitates being vulnerable, wounded, rejected, and persecuted. The Synoptic Gospels make clear that, just as Jesus relied on the Father who sent Him, the same is prescribed for His disciples:

- “And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ‘Take nothing for the journey,’ He told them, ‘No staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no second tunic’” (Lk 9:3).
- “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions, ‘Take no gold or silver or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff’” (Mt 10:9–10).
- “He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two. . . . He ordered them to take nothing but a staff for the journey—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts” (Mk 6:8).

⁷⁰ N.T. Wright, “Reading the New Testament Missionally,” in *Reading the Bible Missionally*, ed. Michael W. Goheen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 175.

Christ sent His disciples as He was sent, materially poor and physically vulnerable, yet full of the Spirit of God. The disciples are sent without material resources, increasing their reliance not on themselves but rather on Divine Providence. Christ was sent in the humblest way possible.

“He does not come with power and outward splendor. He comes as a child—defenseless and in need of our help. He does not want to overwhelm us with his strength... . God made himself small so that we could understand him, welcome him, and love him.”⁷¹

Christ’s vulnerability, poverty, and humility were evident from the moment of his conception and were fully manifested in his passion and death.⁷² Ratzinger reflects,

When the shepherd of all humanity, the living God, himself became a lamb, he stood on the side of the lambs, with those who are downtrodden and killed. This is how he reveals himself to be the true shepherd: “I am the Good Shepherd. . . . I lay down my life for the sheep,” Jesus says of himself (Jn 10:14). It is not power but love that redeems us! This is God’s sign: he himself is love. How often we wish that God would show himself stronger, that he would strike decisively, defeating evil and creating a better world. All ideologies of power justify themselves in exactly this way, they justify the destruction of whatever would stand in the way of progress and the liberation of humanity. We suffer on account of God’s patience. And yet, we need his patience. God, who became a lamb, tells us that the world is saved by the Crucified One, not by those who crucified him. The world is redeemed by the patience of God. It is destroyed by the impatience of man.⁷³

The more the Church progresses through history, the poorer and humbler she is to become so as to be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit and respond to it.⁷⁴ Embracing material poverty voluntarily also fosters solidarity with many of the world who lack basic necessities. “The person who puts himself in God’s hands does not distance himself from others, withdrawing into his private salvation; on the contrary, it is only then that his heart truly awakens, and he becomes a sensitive, hence, benevolent, and open person.”⁷⁵

The voluntary poverty of Christians may serve to facilitate more intimate friendship with God and with men and women, especially those most in need. Christian voluntary poverty is a reflection of and participation in the kenotic love of the persons of the Trinity. Christian voluntary poverty is a participation in the incarnation, Christ taking on human flesh.

The New Testament authors linked the mission of the disciples and the early Church with the Trinitarian mission. To give a few examples:

⁷¹ Benedict XVI, Midnight Mass Homily (December 25, 2006), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20061224_christmas.html.

⁷² This idea of poverty and friendship was developed by Brother Gilbert Heater, OSB in a draft paper I read. I am indebted to him for his insights on the necessity of poverty for friendship with God and humanity.

⁷³ Benedict XVI, Inaugural Homily (April 25, 2005).

⁷⁴ Jacques Philippe, *Fire & Light: Eucharistic Love and the Search for Peace* (New York, NY: Scepter, 2016), 38.

⁷⁵ Benedict XVI, Homily for the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 2005).

- “He who receives you, receives me and he who receives you receives the one who sent me” (Mt 10:40).
- “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not only Me, but the One who sent Me” (Mk 9:37).
- “Whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For whoever is the least among all of you, he is the greatest” (Lk 9:48).
- “Whoever rejects you rejects Me; and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me” (Lk 10:16).
- “Then Jesus cried out, ‘Whoever believes in Me does not believe in Me alone, but in the One who sent Me’” (Jn 12:44).
- “Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever receives the one I send receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives the One who sent Me” (Jn 13:20).

The New Testament authors were themselves participating in the Divine mission as friends of God and friends to the Christian communities they were addressing. They participated in Christ’s life-giving sacrifice as an expression of their love for God and for humanity. They invited their audiences to participate in the Divine mission as friends of God, friends of one another, and friends to the world proclaiming and embodying the Trinitarian love revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER X: DISCERNING A THEOLOGY OF MISSION AS PARTICIPATION IN FRIENDSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. Introduction

By reading Sacred Scripture, it is possible to perceive that God establishes friendship with humanity and gradually invites humanity to participate in His plan of salvation.¹ The first explicit reference is found in Isaiah 41:8, “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend.”² It is God who identifies Abraham as His “friend.” As friend, Abraham participates in God’s mission by leading his progeny into a loving bond with God. The story of Abraham serves as the *locus classicus* for human participation in the Divine mission as an expression friendship. Likewise, in Exodus 33:11, Moses “speaks to God face to face as one does with a friend.” Moses, in a manner similar to Abraham, participates in God’s saving mission as a friend of God, leading Israel from bondage in Egypt to freedom in God’s law and promise. Not only do individuals participate in the Divine mission, but so do the chosen people Israel through her covenant with YHWH and through her vocation to be a “light to the nations” (Is 42:6; 49:6).

This chapter will discuss a theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Old Testament. However, there are several preliminary questions that need to be addressed, such as: Does mission exist in the Old Testament? If so, how is mission understood? How is God perceived as missionary? Who are the individual agents of God’s mission in the Old Testament? How is the community Israel, God’s chosen people, missionary? These are critical questions arousing significant scholarly debate.³ First, the opinion that mission is absent from the Old Testament will

¹ “The first man was not only created good but was also established in friendship with his Creator.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §374.

² All English-language biblical quotes are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2011.

³ For mission theology based on biblical material, consult Daniel I. Block, *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology*, foreword by Alan R. Millard, ed. David W. Baker, 2nd ed., Evangelical Theological Society Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000); Michael W. Goheen’s *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*; Rodger E Hedlund’s *The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology*; Lucien Legrand’s *Mission in the Bible: Unity and Plurality*; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Kostenberger A.J. and O’Brien, P.T., *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*; also by A. J. Kosetenberger, *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*; Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission: The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003); Gerald Anderson, *Theology of the Christian Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961); David Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles Too: The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College,

be presented. Second, the diverse opinions regarding the nature of mission and the agents of mission in the Old Testament will be presented. Then by acknowledging God as the main agent of mission in the Old Testament, we can demonstrate how God invites His friends, Abraham, Moses, and the community of Israel to participate in His mission as friends.

1. *The Opinion Mission Is Absent from the Old Testament*

Some scholars profess that in the Old Testament mission is not present. In his magnum opus, *Early Christian Mission*, Edward Schnabel asserted that in the Old Testament, “There is an absence of a Divine commission for the purpose and of any conscious outgoing to the Gentiles to win them for belief in Yahweh.”⁴ Schnabel argues that there was nothing like an active programmatic plan to proclaim God’s message to the whole world during the times of Israel’s monarchy or intertestamental Judaism; thus, they did not engage in mission. Ferdinand Hahn concurs, “There is an absence of a Divine commission for the purpose and of any conscious outgoing to the Gentiles to win them for belief in Yahweh.”⁵ David Bosch, whose writing has become standard reading for English speaking students of missiology and who is consistently cited by scholars, concurs: “There is, in the Old Testament, no indication of the believers of the old covenant being sent by God to cross geographical, religious, and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh.”⁶ Therefore, we have several renowned scholars indicating mission does not exist in the Old Testament.

2. *Diverse Opinions regarding How Mission Is Expressed in the Old Testament*

Other scholars affirm mission is present in the Old Testament, but they hold widely different views on where and how the theme of mission occurs in the narrative. The opinion of Stuhlmüller and Gensichen is that although the Old Testament does not contain a missionary commission of the people of God to “go out” to others, the Old Testament is part of the narration of salvation history, in which mission will become possible. What Israel experiences with God in

1994); James C. Okoye, *Israel A Light to the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006) 153. Richard D. Ridder, *Disciplining the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975); Charles R. Taber, “Missiology and the Bible,” *Missiology* 11 (1983); Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 2006); and Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmüller *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*.

⁴ Eckhard J Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, Ill.; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press Apollos, 2004). See also Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, (Naperville: Allenson, 1965), 20.

⁵ Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1965), 20.

⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology and Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 17.

its history is open to the final fulfillment which is realized in Christ.⁷ Here we have the opinion that mission does exist in the Old Testament as a preview to the mission of Christ. Several scholars, including Schnabel and Hahn, similarly assert that if mission is present in the Old Testament, it is passive and preparatory to the mission of Christ.⁸

For Andreas Kostenberger and Peter O'Brien, both from the Evangelical tradition, God's mission in the Old Testament is linked to the fallen nature of man. "There was no 'mission' in the Garden of Eden and there will be no 'mission' in the new heavens and the new earth....Mission is necessitated by humanity's fall into sin and need for a Savior."⁹ For Kostenberger and O'Brien, mission does exist in the Old Testament, but only after the fall of man.¹⁰ Their writing indicates that mission is necessary when the Divine-human friendship falters.

Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser,¹¹ also of the Evangelical tradition, identifies the beginning of mission in the Old Testament not after the fall, nor after the flood, but after the failure of the Tower of Babel.¹² Kaiser proposes Genesis 12:3 as the beginning of mission in the Old Testament with Abraham, who was the first to be sent on behalf of YHWH for the benefit of the world. "It is my hope that the formative theology of Genesis 12:3 may once again be seen for what it is and has always been in the discussion of mission: a Divine program to glorify the Lord by bringing salvation to all the earth. Indeed, here is where mission really begins in a formal way."¹³ For Kaiser, the promise of YHWH in Gen 12:3 to make Abram into a great nation, to make Abram's name great in order that he may be a blessing is the commencing of mission in the Old Testament. To bless those who bless him, and curse those who curse him, so that all the peoples on earth may be blessed through him—this is the first Great Commission of the Bible for Kaiser.

⁷ H.-W. Gensichen, *Glaube für die Welt; Theologische Aspekte der Mission* (Gütersloh, 1971) 62.

⁸ Refer to Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). See also Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1965), 20.

⁹ Kostenberger, Andreas J., and Peter T. O'Brien. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*. (Lisle, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2001), 251.

¹⁰ Although Kostenberger and O'Brien mention on page 25 "Any comprehensive treatment of mission in the Old Testament must begin with God's creation and purpose for humanity", they do not explore this topic, but rather completely focus on God's mission *as a response* to the Fall. This implies that the Divine mission is contingent upon humanity. (*If* humanity is sinful, *then* God will go forth to save.) I find this quite problematic from a Trinitarian ontological perspective. Is not Divine love *ex-sistentia*? Would Trinitarian love stay within the Trinity if not for the fall?

¹¹ Walter Kaiser Jr. is the president emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where he served as Distinguished Professor of Old Testament. He has authored over forty scholarly books including *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, *A History of Israel*, and *An Introduction to Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*.

¹² Walter Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 2.

¹³ Walter Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament*, xix.

This pericope, according to Kaiser, frames the entirety of the theology of mission in the Old Testament. He is not alone. Numerous leading scholars of missional hermeneutics place the beginning of mission with the call of Abraham.¹⁴

With a contrary opinion, H. H. Rowley,¹⁵ R. Martin-Achard, P. Volz,¹⁶ and E. Sellin,¹⁷ who all wrote in the early and mid-twentieth century, assert that the beginning of an authentic mission in the Old Testament does not occur until the later prophet book of Deutero-Isaiah. The text “a light to the nations” makes the author of Deutero-Isaiah the missionary of the Old Testament, according to Rowley. Robert Martin-Achard, whose writing reveals some influence by Rowley, remarks: “For most scholars who write on this subject, Deutero-Isaiah is not only a universalist prophet, he also is a missionary one. He it was who, more than anyone else, revealed its true calling to Israel: I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth (Is. 49:6).”¹⁸

It would seem that these scholars were influenced by the work of M. Lohr who published *Der Missionsgedanke im Alten Testament* in 1896. Lohr asserts that the idea of mission could not have emerged in Israel before the time of the prophets, but only after the exile.¹⁹ Lohr makes a compelling case in three points. First, the concept of mission is peripheral in the Old Testament. Second, the idea of mission involves the ministry and message of the prophets. Third, mission achieved no tangible results since it collided with the particularism of the law and nationalism for the Jewish community.²⁰ Reading Lohr, one could conclude, as does Martin-Achard, that “on the

¹⁴ Approaches that begin with Abraham are: Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, 28; Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 56; Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 26; Vicedom, *The Mission of God* 47-48; Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission*, 106, 130-157; Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments*, 7. It seems to me that these scholars are all from the Reformed or Evangelical traditions.

¹⁵ H. H. Rowley authored several early works on mission and the Old Testament including *Israel's Message to the World*, London: 1939; *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, London: 1950; *The Faith of Israel*, London: 1956; *The Missionary Message=The Missionary Message of the Old Testament*, London: 1944; *The Servant of the Lord, and other Essays on the Old Testament* London: 1952. He also edited *The Old Testament and Modern Studies* published by Oxford in 1951

¹⁶ P. Volz, *Jesaja II*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament, vol. IX (Leipzig: 1932), 169, calls the writer of the Servant Song in Isaiah the founder of mission.

¹⁷ E. Sellin, “*Der Missionsgedanke*,” in *New Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* (1925), considers Deutero-Isaiah to be the father of Jewish missionary activity.

¹⁸ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations*, Trans. John Penny Smith, (Oliver and Boyd: London, 1962) p. 7.

¹⁹ See footnote on page 5 in Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations*.

²⁰ M. Lohr, *Der Missionsgedanke im Alten Testament*, Freiburg & Leipzig 1896 as quoted by ²⁰ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations*, on page 5.

levels of thought and action alike, the role of mission within the framework of the Old Testament is extremely limited.”²¹

However, it is important to recall that some texts of the Old Testament are directed to the involvement of other nations in the plan of God for worldwide redemption. Consider the story of Jonah the prophet sent to the land of Nineveh. Likewise, the Book of Ruth, the Moabite woman who plays a key role in God’s plan of salvation. And the prophecy of Obadiah was, after all, addressed to the nation of Edom. Therefore, it would be incorrect to conclude that the notion of universal mission is non-existent for Israel in the Old Testament. We need only to look in the first chapters of Genesis to understand how God invites a unique relationship with Israel for the sake of the world, as a sign, a witness, and instrument of His hared: “I will make of you a great nation...so that you will be a blessing ... to all the families of the earth” (Gn 12:2–3). The reason for the special relationship between God and Israel was for the sake of the whole world.²²

In the above paragraphs, several divergent opinions of mission in the Old Testament are identified. The first opinion presented was that there is no mission in the Old Testament. The next opinion was that mission does exist in the Old Testament, but it is passive. Finally, there is the view that, yes, mission does exist in the Old Testament. These opinions vary from mission beginning in Genesis to mission beginning in Deutero-Isaiah. The starting point that is attributed to mission in the Old Testament depends upon who is identified as the agent of mission: God, Abraham, the Prophets, or Israel. A second reason for assigning different starting points of mission is the understanding of the nature of mission, and whether it is defined as: presence; blessing; conversion of others; witness; centripetal; or centrifugal.²³

3. *God is the Main Agent of Mission in the Old Testament*

These differences can be reconciled in this project of developing a theology of mission as participation in friendship in the Old Testament. God is understood as the main agent of mission

²¹ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations*, Trans. John Penny Smith, (Oliver and Boyd: London, 1962) 5.

²² God’s promise that He would through Abraham bless “all the families of the earth” (kol mishpechot ha}aretz) is repeated in various forms in Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4 and 28:14. The Hebrew phrase *kol mishpechot* is rendered in the Septuagint as *passai hai phulai* “all the tribes” (12:3; 28:14), but the Hebrew expression *kol goyeh* is used in Gen 18:18; 22:18; and 26:4 and is translated in the LXX as *panta ta ethne* (“all the nations”). The intention of the text envisioned the whole world with all families or clans as this word is used in the case of Achan’s tribe/family, see Josh 7:14.” Refer to Jiri Moskala’s book *The Mission of God’s People in the Old Testament*, 48

²³ This is my own deduction. I have not found this explanation of the reasons for the divergent opinions regarding mission in the Old Testament in the texts that I have read. However, it may be possible that indeed other scholars have arrived at this same conclusion. If so, I would be delighted to acknowledge their insights.

who invites his friends, particularly Abraham, Moses, and Israel, to participation in His salvific mission, which is multivalent. The Hebrew verb *salah* means “to send” and is used frequently in the Old Testament. God is the subject of this verb over 200 times in the Old Testament. It is clear in the dogmatic teaching of mission at the Second Vatican Council that mission originates in God. “Missionary activity is nothing else and nothing less than an epiphany, or a manifesting of God’s decree, and its fulfillment in the world and in world history.”²⁴ Mission flows from the “fountain of love” within God the Father. If mission originates in God and flows from the very heart of God, it is not an after-thought. Mission does not begin after some action of humanity, such as the fall of humanity. In Roger E. Hedlund’s words, “the Divine mission begins with Genesis 1–11 because the Bible begins here.”²⁵

An excellent examination of a theology of mission in the Old Testament from a Catholic perspective is *Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* by James Chukwuma Okoye. Okoye perceived God as the main missionary in the Old Testament. God Himself called Abram to be the instrument of His blessing in the world. God brought Israel out of Egypt to be His people. “God chose Israel to be the vehicle by which salvation would be made available to the rest of the world.”²⁶ According to Okoye, it is only later in the Old Testament where we see the people of God being formally sent to engage in missional activities.²⁷

God is an agent of mission in the Old Testament. According to Johannes Blauw, “It is not the human activity that stands in the foreground of the Old Testament, but the Divine acts for the redemption of Israel.”²⁸ Martin-Achard beautifully articulates a theology of mission in which God is the main actor, and invites Israel (his chosen people, his friend) to participate:

The Church cannot deny that God converts the nations, acting in the midst of His people. His intervening, and this alone, makes Israel the light of the world. The Church evangelizes to the extent that her Lord inspires her. Mission has nothing to do with this or that political or commercial undertaking, as people have sometimes thought; it is completely dependent on the secret activity of God in the Church. It is the fruit of a life that is truly founded in God. First and foremost, the evangelization of the world is not a matter of words or of activity, but of presence, *the presence of*

²⁴ *Ad Gentes*, §9.

²⁵ Roger E. Hedlund, *The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 27.

²⁶ James C. Okoye, *Israel A Light to the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), xvii.

²⁷ Isaiah 49, the book of Jonah, the book of Amos, Nehemiah, Esther, etc.

²⁸ Johannes Blauw, *Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (London, UK: McGraw Hill, 1962), 42.

God among His people. It is not without purpose that the Old Testament brings this to the recollection of the Church.²⁹

The next chapter explores in greater detail how God, in a gesture of friendship, invites human participation in His mission.

B. Three Examples of Mission as Participation in Friendship in the Old Testament

What is most significant in a Divine sending of anyone on a mission is the will of the One who sends the envoy. God sends a variety of agents to accomplish His purpose. The most frequent association with God's sending is the office of prophet. "Just as God sends his word (Isa. 55:11), and it accomplishes that for which it was sent, so God sent a whole line of prophets who would accomplish what God had intended (Isa. 6:89; Jer. 1:7; Ezek. 3:5–6)."³⁰ The singular distinction between a false and a true prophet is that a true prophet is an emissary of God, has been sent by God (Jer 14:14–15; 23:21; 28:15; Ez 13:6). It is the relationship with YHWH that distinguishes a false from a true prophet. To be an effective emissary, it is necessary to know who is sending you and why. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a correlation between being an agent of the Divine mission and being friends with the Divine. The following paragraphs will illustrate how Abraham, Moses, and Israel participate in the Divine mission as friends of YHWH.

1. Abraham as a Friend of God Participates in the Divine Mission

As Christopher Wright puts it, God "sees an elderly, childless couple in the land of Babel and decides to make them the fountainhead, the launch pad of his whole mission of cosmic redemption."³¹ Some scholars interpret the call of Abraham to assert that "he was a missionary, because he leaves and goes out to receive some promise that is not defined, but which has to do with being a blessing to the world."³² Thus, the meaning of election—being selected out—does not mean a selfish privilege, but an assignment to be a mediator between the electing God and the nations. This aligns with the notion of the particular serving the universal—the particular call of Abraham serves the universal salvation of all humanity. In Genesis 12 we read:

And YHWH said to Abram,

²⁹ Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*, 75.

³⁰ Walter Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012) p. xviii.

³¹ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP Academic, 2006), 123.

³² *Ibid.*

‘Go from your land, your kindred, and from your father’s house
to the land that I will show you
and I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you
and I will make your name great
and you will become a blessing!
And I shall bless those who bless you and curse those who take you lightly
And all the families of the earth will be blessed in you.
And Abram went as YHWH had told him.

The passage contains the implication: If you obey me and go and become a blessing for the people around you, I will bless you. Seven promises are made to Abram by God that precede the covenant (Gn 15:9–21; 17) and are the following: 1) “I will make you into a great nation”; 2) “I will bless you”; 3) “I will make your name great”; 4) “you will be a blessing”; 5) “I will bless those who bless you”; 6) “whoever curses you I will curse”; 7) “all peoples (clans) on earth will be blessed through you.”

Abraham participated in God’s saving mission as a friend of God. His participation in the Divine mission was an expression of his relationship that formed his identity. A servant is not privileged to have the same rights, powers, and authority as the master. A servant does not have the ear and attention of the master; however, an intimate friend does. A servant serves out of duty, but a friend serves out of devotion. The tradition of Abraham as God’s friend was so strong that it was perpetuated by the early Christian community. In the Letter of James, we read, “And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called a friend of God.”³³ Abraham’s relationship with God is the *locus classicus* of human participation in the economy of salvation as a friend of God. May Abraham as God’s own friend be a model for all who seek to participate in the Divine mission.

2. *Moses as a Friend of God Participates in the Divine Mission*

Moses, more than any other character in the Old Testament, participated in God’s saving mission through his leadership of Israel out of bondage in Egypt.³⁴ Moses is sent by God to free God’s people from Pharaoh with the promise that God would be with him in Exodus 3:10ff:

³³ James 2:23.

³⁴ Donald Senior notes, “Biblical scholars contend that the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt seems to have consisted of a series of many escapes over a century or more. The biblical text combines at least two of these departures under the name of Moses. “In one series of passages, the people flee from Egypt against the pharaoh’s wish (Exodus 10:27–29; 14:5). In another series they are deliberately expelled by pharaoh (Exodus 6:1; 11:1; 12:39) ... Yet one of these departures was destined to impress its name upon world religions and international policies. It

“Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”

Moses is sent not only as a prophet but as a liberator, a savior. Roland de Vaux, in his final work, *The Early History of Israel*, expresses the role of Moses:

The whole person of Moses exceeds the rather narrow categories within which authors, past and present, have tried to enclose him. He was not a thaumaturge, nor was he a judge, a priest, or a prophet. He was all these and he was more than all these. He was the man who received YHWH’s revelation of Himself and who communicated that revelation to the people. He was the mediator of the covenant between YHWH and his people and the leading charismatic figure of the people of YHWH. He did not, in other words “found” a religion in the sense of establishing its institution and its teaching. What he did is nothing compared with what God did. He was no more than the instrument used by God, and what is more, he was the instrument used by God only in the first stages of the history of Israel’s salvation...He was a servant of YHWH. (Exodus 14:31).³⁵

Yet in his role as an agent of the Divine mission, Moses was more than a servant of YHWH. He was a friend. Exodus 33 reads, “Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.” YHWH is the subject in this sentence. It is YHWH who speaks, and the passage is describing how YHWH would speak to Moses. The translation “and the LORD would speak with Moses” could be interpreted as speaking more than once, perhaps many conversations over time, or a pattern of communication. The communication is not by an angel, but by God Himself in person; not by a dream or vision, but in real visible appearance; not in veiled speech, but in words easily understood; and not by a voice from heaven at a distance, but face to face, heart to heart, mouth to mouth. This is an intimate, personal encounter between God and His friend and missionary Moses.

3. Israel as a Friend of God Participates in the Divine Mission

Let us now turn to how God’s People, Israel, participate in the Divine mission. Okoye sketches four primary models of Israel’s mission in the Old Testament. The first model is

was undertaken by a leader of overwhelming faith in God and of irresistible courage in the face of opposition. His name was Moses, his achievement, the exodus. This secular event of liberation from slavery is to be attributed to a non-secular, thoroughly faith-dominated person, Moses.” Senior, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission*, 14.

³⁵ Roland de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), 453–455.

universality: the universality of salvation and the universality of righteousness before Yahweh. The second is the “community-in-mission” model, wherein Israel’s experience of election is understood as a pattern for all of humanity to follow. The third is the centripetal mission model, in which the nations are drawn toward Israel’s moral monotheism. The fourth and final model of mission is the centrifugal mission that comes with the expectation of the covenant.³⁶

It is necessary to discuss God’s particular, intimate friendship with Israel, and God’s desire for the salvation of all humanity. The textual evidence of Israel as God’s particular chosen people is overwhelming.³⁷ Yet, it cannot be denied that Genesis chapters 1–11 are decidedly universal in scope and orientation, for they are addressed to all peoples, all cultures, and all languages. The Old Testament clearly begins with the universal story of the origin of all of creation and all of humanity. Numerous scholars have attempted to explain the tension between the universal and the particular as they are manifested throughout the Old Testament narrative. Richard Bauckham, in his *Bible and Mission*, asserts that the biblical narrative moves from the particular to the universal in three dimensions. First, “temporal—from creation to the eschatological future, therefore mission is a movement to a new future.”³⁸ Second, “spatial—from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, therefore mission is a movement toward ever new horizon; and”³⁹ Third, Social—from person to person, from people to people, therefore mission is a movement that is always being joined by others, the movement toward an ever-new people.”⁴⁰

Bauckham, among several theologians, including Johannes Blauw and H. H. Rowley,⁴¹ makes a strong case that mission is the mediation between the universal and the particular. This is

³⁶ James C. Okoye, *Israel A Light to the Nations*, xvii.

³⁷ See Deuteronomy 7:6–8 “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His prized possession, above all peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than the other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the LORD loved you”; Deuteronomy 14:2 “For you are a holy people belonging to the LORD your God. The LORD has chosen you to be His prized possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth; 1 Kings 3:8 “And here I am in the midst of your own chosen people, a nation so great and numerous they cannot be counted.”; Isaiah 65:9 “My chosen people will inherit them”; Isaiah 43:20 “Yes, I will make rivers in the dry wasteland so my chosen people can be refreshed; Psalm 105:43 “He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy”; Psalm 33:12 “Blessed are the people he has chosen as his own.”

³⁸ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 25.

³⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 25.

⁴⁰ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 25.

⁴¹ See Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission*, (London: McGraw Hill edition, 1962) chapters 1-3, where he discusses the Old Testament message of universalism as a messianic and missionary message. H.H. Rowley maintains in *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* that election is “election for service.” He states on page 39: “The purpose of the election (of Israel) is service, and when the service is withheld the election loses its meaning, and therefore fails.”

illustrated by the example of YHWH's particular relationship with the particular person Abraham and YHWH's relationship with the particular people of Israel. Abraham is singled out by God in Genesis 12. He is particularly chosen. This, according to Bauckham, is perhaps the most remarkable of all the instances of Divinely chosen singularity in the Bible, because it immediately follows the thoroughly universal narrative of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. It precedes the great catalogue of the seventy nations descended from Noah's sons in chapter 10, and then, in chapter 11, the story of Babel which concludes with humanity being scattered over the earth, divided by land and language.⁴² It is from the emphatically universal scope that the Genesis narrative suddenly narrows to focus on a particular person, Abraham. Bauckham goes on to say that Abraham is singled out precisely so that YHWH's blessings may come to all the nations.⁴³

In this way, the particular serves the universal. The particularity or singularity of the call of the individual Abraham is not interpreted as simply as exclusionary, but as a means to inclusivity. "God's purpose never ends with the particular but moves on from particular to particular in the direction of the universal."⁴⁴ Abraham's particular friendship with God has a universal perspective and a universal blessing. Blessing is the principal word in YHWH's promises to Abraham. Abraham himself will be blessed, in that his descendants will be a great nation, and Abraham will be a blessing, in that all the families of the earth will be blessed, as is recounted in Genesis 12:2-3: "And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing." "From one man Abraham and the one new nation that descends from him, God's blessing will overflow to all other nations."⁴⁵ The promise that all the nations will be blessed is repeated four times in Genesis 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, and 28:14.⁴⁶ The blessing of YHWH's particular friendship with Abraham facilitates the blessing of YHWH's universal friendship with all humanity.

⁴² Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 28.

⁴³ For the blessing of the nations as the ultimate purpose of God's call of Abraham, according to Genesis 12:2-3, see P.D. Miller, "Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a", *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984), 472-5. For a more recent study of the promise in Genesis 12:2-3, see J. Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (JSOT 305; Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 185-207 and Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, 28-30.

⁴⁴ Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, 84.

⁴⁵ Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, 29.

⁴⁶ "For Abraham is indeed to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will find blessing in him" is a slightly modified version of 12:2-3. The addition of the adjective "powerful" (cf. Num 14:12; Deut 9:14; 26:5) and the substitution of "nations" for "families" and "clans" seem to enhance the original promise. See Wenham, Gordon John. *Genesis 16-50*, vol. 2, *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Zondervan Academic, Kindle Edition), 50.

Lesslie Newbigin offers a useful interpretation of the action of God to single out particular individuals and groups to be bearers of His blessings for all. Newbigin makes the case that God's purpose never ends with the particular but moves from the particular to the universal. In his work *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*, Newbigin connects this pattern of the Divine purpose to a fundamental aspect of human nature revealed in Sacred Scripture:

If each human being is ultimately understood as an independent spiritual monad, the salvation could only be through an action directed impartially to each and to all. But if the truly human is the shared reality of mutual and collective responsibility which the Bible envisages, then salvation must be an action which binds us together and restores for us the true mutual relations to each other and the true shared relation to the world of nature. This would mean that the gift of salvation would be bound up with our openness to one another. It would have to pass from one to the other... There would have to be one called and chosen to be the bearer of the blessing. The blessing is intended for all. But the blessing itself would be negated if it were not given and received in a way that binds each to other. God's way of universal salvation, if it is to be addressed to man [*sic*] as he really is and not to the abstraction of a detached 'soul,' must be accomplished by the way of election—of choosing, calling, and sending one to be the bearer of blessing for all.⁴⁷

In his overview of the biblical foundations for mission, Carroll Stuhlmueller acknowledges that,

[a] scan of Jewish history in the Old Testament reveals a dialectic between centripetal and centrifugal forces, between flight from the secular and absorption of the secular, between a concern for self-identity and responsible interaction with one's environment, between elect status as God's chosen people and humble awareness of one's solidarity with the entire human family.⁴⁸

Verkuyl notes that the election of Israel was never to become a privilege but rather a service that was extended to all (Is 49:6). Israel had a duty to live as a symbol of God's grace, mercy, and justice, becoming a bridge to Yahweh among all the nations. Verkuyl does not share other theologians' views that "the Old Testament shows a passive neutral God that seems uninterested in the salvation of all nations, but rather affirms that God seems to be keenly interested as well as busy working out the salvation of those who want to believe."⁴⁹ The relational aspect of mission is revealed in the biblical narrative of "from one to many," beginning with the call of one, Abraham, who will be father of many, to Israel, one nation, to all of the nations.

⁴⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Mission Theology*, (London/Grand Rapids: SPCK/Eerdmans, 1978), 78-79.

⁴⁸ Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 316.

⁴⁹ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 94.

In building his case for Israel's mission, Kaiser points to various Old Testament passages, peoples, and periods. Three biblical passages form the Old Testament's core teaching regarding evangelistic outreach to the Gentiles: Deuteronomy 28, Genesis 12:1–3, and Exodus 19:5–6. According to Kaiser, the Great Commission (Mt 28:18–20; Mk 16:15) finds its Old Testament counterpart in Genesis 12:3. Missionary accounts come from Melchizedek, Jethro, Balaam, Rahab, Ruth, the captured Israeli girl and Naaman, Jonah and the Ninevites, select Major and Minor Prophets, select psalms: 67, 96, 117, and 50

The mission of Israel is to be God's Chosen People, to live in the knowledge of the love and law of YHWH. Quite simply the mission of Israel is to offer a faithful witness to the SHEMA. Martin-Achard explains,

It is in so far *as it is* the Holy Nation, consecrated to its God, that it will reflect His glory and testify to His holiness, and in this way, by its very existence in the world, will assume its mediatorial function; it is through Israel that YHWH will manifest his sovereign power and utter His Word. The duty devolving upon the Chosen People assumes three complimentary aspects: its task is to communicate the Divine oracle, to speak in the name of YHWH, and to testify to His kingship over the whole of creation. In short: *the eschatological mission of Israel to the world consists in it taking upon itself the offices of priest, prophet, and king.*⁵¹

C. Conclusion: A Theology of Mission as Participation in Friendship in the Old Testament.

Though scholars disagree whether mission is present in the Old Testament, what is clear is that there is a pattern of God inviting humanity to participate in the Divine mission as His friends. Abraham, Moses, and Israel serve as prime examples. God's revelation draws humanity into a particular relationship with Him (centripetal mission) for a universal purpose (centrifugal mission). The blessing of friendship with God for Abraham, Moses, and Israel becomes a blessing for others as they participate in His mission. The same could be said of all who share friendship with God and participate in His mission.

⁵⁰ William C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*. 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), xi.

⁵¹ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*, trans. John Penny Smith (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011), 75.

CHAPTER XI: CONCLUSION

“[God] is, as it were, beguiled by goodness, by love and by yearning, and is enticed away from his transcendent dwelling place and comes to abide within all things, and he does so by virtue of his supernatural and ecstatic capacity to remain, nevertheless, within himself.”

– Dionysius the Areopagite, *Divine Name*

“So, it is not just a generous and paternal love, a unilateral gift, but a craving for ecstatic relation that after all produces the world.”

– Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 76 (commenting on Dionysius above, 76)

A. The Divine Missions Enable Participation in Friendship with God

Aristotle contends that friendship is the sweetness of life, and to be a friend is to cultivate virtue in yourself to encourage your friend in the pursuit of all that is good, true, and beautiful. Aquinas explains that it is possible to be friends with God through the Divine missions and indwelling. This is quite significant for our study, given that the means to friendship with God is His mission.

As we reflect upon the mission of the individual baptized person as well as the Church’s mission, the thought that one endures the Cross for the salvation of a friend is most inspiring. Individual persons and the Church are to be friends to others in this suffering world for the sake of others’ salvation. There is no sacrifice too great to make for the salvation of the other. “There is no greater love says the Lord, than to lay down one’s life for a friend” (Jn 15:13). For this reason, the Son of God is sent (*missio*).

Friendship can be a special place, indeed a sacred place, in which the image of God can become incarnate and in which one can learn to go out of oneself to open oneself to another.¹ “The practice of the ascent of the soul to friendship with the Divine Trinity occurs through friendship in and with Jesus Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit.”² Because the purpose of the mission of the

¹ See Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM, Cap., *Contemplating the Trinity*, (Frederick, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2007), 101.

² Matthew Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby”, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol. 9, no. 1, January 2007, 49.

Son and the Spirit is “to draw us into contemplative friendship with the Trinity.”³ Creation is being recreated and our finite beings are infused with sanctifying grace through the missions of the Son and Spirit, who make us friends with God able to participate in the Divine life and mission. “The missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the believer establish the faith and love that make humans friends with God.”⁴

“The Trinitarian gift of Divine life is accomplished by the missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—that is to say, by their salvific sending.”⁵ The very possibility of knowing and loving the Divine Persons is the result of the undeserved gift of grace (both created and uncreated grace) to us. Certainly, all of creation exists through the gracious love of the Triune God. Yet what we have received in the incarnation of the Word and the descent of the Holy Spirit far exceeds the gift even of our created existence. The Divine missions of the Son and Spirit enable our return to God as well as gracing us with the capacity to participate in the Divine life of love with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Our returning will go beyond being endowed with a distant resemblance of God; it will mean being gathered into God himself.”⁶

B. Participation in Friendship as the Origin of Mission

In the sending of the Son and the Spirit, God the Father demonstrates that the Love between Father, Son, and Spirit is so effusive that every human being is invited to participate in their Divine friendship eternally. This sending and going forth demonstrates God as “missionary.”⁷ Lesslie Newbigin stresses that as the ultimate sender, God the Father is the source of mission, which is an expression of His relational, holy love.⁸ “God the Son is the embodiment of mission in His

³ See Matthew Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby”, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol. 9, no. 1, January 2007, 49.

⁴ Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology,” 44.

⁵ Emery, Gilles, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, (Catholic University of America Press, Kindle Edition), 178.

⁶ Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 360.

⁷ See Stephen Holmes, “Trinitarian Missiology: Toward A Theology of God as Missionary”, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol. 8, no. 1, (January 2008); Seng-Kong Tan, “A Trinitarian Ontology of Mission”, *International Review of Missions*, vol. 93 no. 369, (April 2004), 279-296; Scott Horrell, “The Self-Giving Triune God, The Imago Dei and the Nature of the Local Church: An Ontology of Mission”, *Global Mission*, 2008. 2-15; Adam Dodds, “The Mission of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church: Toward a Trinitarian Missiology”, *Evangelical Review of Theology*, (2011) 35:2, 209-226; Peter Bellini, “The Processio-Missio Connection: A Starting Point in *Missio Trinitatis* or Overcoming the Immanent-Economic Divide in *Missio Trinitatis*”, *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 49, no. 2, (2014), 7-23.

⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995). See also Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), chapters two and three.

incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, and God the Spirit is the empowering presence of mission.”⁹ Missiologist Christopher Wright is attributed with saying, “All of Scripture witnesses to the self-giving movement of God toward humanity.”¹⁰

Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania Anastasios proclaims, “Mission is the extension of the love of the Trinitarian God, for the transformation in love of the whole world.”¹¹ The foundation for mission is the very heart of the Trinity.¹² Trinitarian love is the very essence of the apostolic mission. The apostolic mission goes out as Trinitarian love to the whole world with the purpose of returning the whole world to this origin of love. As a friend is compelled to run out toward a friend, clasping his hand, leading the friend to the joy of home, the apostolic mission goes into the whole world seeking the hand of humanity to unite it with the Father’s hand.

Archbishop Anastasios explains that it is not simply obedience, duty, or altruism that motivates us for mission. It is an inner necessity.¹³ As an “inner necessity,”¹⁴ it is not external to the person, but rather wells up from their inner being. It is perhaps the very essence of the person, *imago Dei*. I propose it is Divine love as friendship.

Pope Francis speaks of a Trinitarian missiology of friendship-love in terms of accompaniment. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, he writes:

Thanks solely to this encounter—or renewed encounter—with God’s love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?¹⁵

Thus, Trinitarian love, particularly the love of God that desires human friendship, is the origin of mission. The sending of the Son and the sending of the Spirit is the movement of Divine

⁹ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 35.

¹⁰ See Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God—Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

¹¹ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 221.

¹² *Ad Gentes*, §2: “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father. This decree, however, flows from the “fount - like love” or charity of God the Father who, being the “principle without principle” from whom the Son is begotten and Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son, freely creating us on account of His surpassing and merciful kindness and graciously calling us moreover to share with Him His life and His cry, has generously poured out, and does not cease to pour out still, His divine goodness.”

¹³ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, 58.

¹⁴ Compare with John Paul II: “The Church’s mission does not derive only from the Lord’s mandate, but also from the demands of God’s life within us.” *Redemptoris missio*, §11.

¹⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium*, §8.

love seeking communion with the created world. Similarly, the human person animated by Divine love goes forth to evangelize, goes forth to foster the communion of persons to God and persons with one another.

C. Participation in Friendship Is the Way of Mission

In *Mission in Christ's Way*, Archbishop Anastasios reminds us that the community which Jesus had gathered around Himself had mission as its inner dynamic. He states, "Their work had a *centrifugal* energy moving outward from the Lord, the Teacher, to others; and at the same time, a *centripetal* attraction back to the one person, the Person of Christ."¹⁶ I suggest this force of missionary dynamism has its source in friendship since it is founded upon an interpersonal relationship. The apostles were drawn into a relationship with Christ who called them friends. Christ then sent them out on mission as the Father had sent Him in the Spirit.

The sending by the Father is always oriented to the cross. The Church must constantly call herself back into a cruciform way because it is always Jesus's way; it is always Love's way. And there is "no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend" (Jn 15:13). "The Lord had come to die even for his enemies, and yet he said he would lay down his life for his friends to show us that when we are able to win over our enemies by loving them, even our persecutors are our friends."¹⁷

The way of mission is a radical sharing of self and a reception of the other. Mission as friendship desires what is best for the other, seeks the highest good of the other, which is sanctification. In this, sanctification equals love. Mission as friendship realizes the self with, in, and through the other. Russian Orthodox priest and martyr Pavel Florensky illuminates this notion in his classic text *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*.

Friendship was the way of mission in the ancient Church. We read in the Acts of the Apostles 2:4 how the first Christians cared for one another in mutual affection and generosity. Friendship in the early Christian community was an effective means of growing the Church. So much so that historian Rodney Stark explains, "Christianity did not grow because of miracle workings in the marketplaces, or because Constantine said it should, or even because martyrs gave

¹⁶ Anastasios, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 261.

¹⁷ Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies 27*, quoted in Elowsky, Joel C., ed. *John 11-21*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 4b (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014),173-174.

it such credibility. It grew because Christians constituted an intense community.”¹⁸ The early Church practice of a missiology of friendship-love provides not only historical precedent but also inspiration for the future missiology of the Church. Christian saints for two millennia have astounded the world with their way of life. From the Maximus the Confessor to Maximilian Kolbe, authentic Christian witness attracts people to Jesus. John Chrysostom urges, “Let us win them therefore by our life!”¹⁹

According to renowned missiologist Dana Robert of Boston University, friendship is also necessary in modern missionary practice. “Christian community depends upon personal relationships, and missionary failures can be traced to their lack.”²⁰ Her insight can be linked to a speech given by C. Y. Cheng, honorary secretary of the National Christian Council of China to an international gathering of student missionaries in 1923 in Indianapolis. Cheng stated,

Friend is a big word, especially as it appears in the eyes of the Oriental people. He who comes to us with the spirit of a friend through and through will ultimately win our hearts. It is this friendship, which is another word for Christian love, which will solve many of our mission problems, and will lead the work to a more successful issue.²¹

Cheng is clear that it is friendship that leads to the success or failure of Christian missionary activities in China. The sacrificial practices of friendship that are rooted in and reflective of Trinitarian kenotic love are the way of mission. Friendship is the way of Christ and must be the way His followers participate in His mission.

In commenting on Luke 10:1–12, Pope Francis said, “Perfect pastoral plans can be drawn up and well-designed projects implemented, organized down to the last detail. We can summon crowds and have many means, but if there is no desire for fraternity, the mission cannot advance.”²² Participation in the Divine mission is facilitated by full and active participation in the Church. The mission of God continues in the Church first and foremost in her *liturgia*, but also in her *koinonia*, her *catechesis*, her *diakonia*, and *martyria*. Participation in all these facets of mission is the response of the baptized to the love of God. Participation in *liturgia*, *catechesis*, *diakonia*,

¹⁸ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Early Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 210.

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on First Corinthians.

²⁰ Dana L. Robert, “Cross-Cultural Friendship in the Creation of Twentieth-Century World Christianity,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 35, No. 2, 101.

²¹ C. Y. Cheng, quoted in Milton T. Stauffer, ed., “Christian Students and World Problems: Report of the Ninth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions” (New York, NY: Student Volunteer Movement, 1924), 187.

²² Francis, Angelus (July 3, 2022).

koinonia, and *martyria* is not perfunctory. Participation in the Church as the sacrament of the Divine mission is done as a friend: a friend to the Divine Persons and to human persons. The entirety of the Church's ministry should be characterized by the qualities of genuine friendship.

D. Participation in Friendship as the Fulfillment of Mission

“This is our highest vocation: to enter into communion with God
and with our brothers and sisters.”²³

The human person participates in mission here and now, growing in friendship-love with God and neighbor. Theologian Holger Dörnemann proposes that the way to read salvation history is to see how God continually seeks to befriend humanity. For Dörnemann, friendship is paradigmatic of salvation, and the humanity of Christ is the instrument of friendship and salvation. This notion resonates with a homily on chapter 15 of the Gospel of John by John Chrysostom, in which Chrysostom places these words on the lips of Christ: “That is, it is not to upbraid, that I tell you that I lay down My life for you, but I ran to meet you in order to lead you into friendship.”²⁴ Christ runs to humanity to lead us into friendship. This is the goal of His mission: “that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (Jn 17:21).

Fiona Lynch points out that particular friendships are not ends in and of themselves but seem to have a value during our lives that points to a greater eschatological reality: “No Christian defender of such friendships has, so far as I am aware, argued for their persistence in their present form beyond the boundaries of this present, pilgrim's state of our life. Their primary justification is that they are an indispensable training for that eschatological charity that we should like to extend to all men and women.”²⁵ Lynch asserts that particular friendships are necessary because “without particular friendships we are in danger of attaining only a bland, unchallenging, and undifferentiated goodwill toward other people.”²⁶ This is why, according to Lynch, particular friendships “tutor us in the kind of love God has for us, and which we hope to eventually have for all men and women.”²⁷

²³ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor* (February 2, 1994).

²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homily on John 15:17.

²⁵ Fiona Lynch, “Morality, Metaphysics, and the Romance of Friendship,” *Communio* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 259.

²⁶ Lynch, “Morality, Metaphysics,” 261.

²⁷ Lynch, “Morality, Metaphysics,” 261.

For every believer, friendship with God shapes our identity and mission. As friends of God, we extend a hand of friendship to humanity, gently leading them to eternal friendship with God. Cardinal Christof Schönborn in a retreat to the papal household of John Paul II said, “The whole way of human Christian life has its deepest sense in the building of friendship with God.”²⁸

Margaret Turek observes,

For the mission to be effective, as a sign and instrument of God’s saving love, it is not enough to attempt to imitate the God of Jesus Christ by standing in solidarity with the poor, the stranger, and the oppressed. Neither the life of the Trinity nor the life of Christ is to be regarded as a mere paradigm to guide programs of social and political involvement. The crucial factor is that Christian action participates in God’s interpersonal love. Christ through his incarnation and the bestowal of this Spirit, imparts to us a participation in his Divine Sonship, by virtue of which we are made capable of taking part in his Trinitarian mission.²⁹

The ultimate expression and culmination of friendship in the Christian context is Christ crucified. In all four Gospels the passion narrative depicts the death of Christ as a complete and total sacrifice of love. “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” (John 13:1) The end of friendship, the fulfillment of friendship is to offer all of oneself for the salvation of the other. This cruciform friendship does not anticipate or expect mutuality, equality, and reciprocity. Cruciform friendship continues to love through rejection, denial, betrayal, abandonment, and scorn. “Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn 15:13) “The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (Jn 10:11) It is on the Cross where Jesus fully reveals God’s glory and is himself glorified (Jn 11; 4; 12:28; 13:31–32). In his last breath, Jesus claims to have finished the task for which he was sent (Jn 19:13). He pours down his Spirit on the newly formed community (Jn 19:28-30) with water and blood that flows from His side (Jn 19:31-37). The love of the Triune God is to be revealed in the life of those who call themselves friends of Christ, Christian.³⁰ In reflecting on fellowship and the mission of the church, Joseph Ratzinger wrote, “The Church constantly achieves her highest victory when she stands nearest to Christ. It is when she is called to suffer for others that she achieves her highest mission.”³¹

²⁸ Christoph Schönborn, *Loving the Church: Retreat to John Paul II and the Papal Household* (Kindle Edition, 1998), Locations 1843–1846.

²⁹ Margaret Turek in the Forward of Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Engagement with God: The Drama of Christian Discipleship* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2008).

³⁰ See Francis Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2013), 30.

³¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, Second English edition (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1993), 84. This publication is of an address to the Theological Congress of the Austrian Institute for Pastoral Work in Vienna at Easter in 1958.

In his encyclical on mission, *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II presents the spirituality of a missionary in terms of cruciform friendship-love:

The missionary is a person of charity. In order to proclaim to all his brothers and sisters that they are loved by God and are capable of loving, he must show love toward all, giving his life for his neighbor. The missionary is the “universal brother,” bearing in himself the Church’s spirit, her openness to and interest in all peoples and individuals, especially the least and poorest of his brethren. As such, he overcomes barriers and divisions of race, caste or ideology. He is a sign of God’s love in the world—a love without exclusion or partiality. Finally, like Christ he must love the church: “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”(Eph 5:25). This love, even to the point of giving one’s life, is a focal point for him.³²

Friendship love, to the point of giving one’s life for the sake of another is the focal point for the missionary. The missionary is to be a sign and instrument of the cruciform friendship-love of God for humanity. This is so because it is true for Christ. Friendship between God and humanity is restored through the cross.

Today, many in Europe and North America are adrift in a culture which lacks meaning, purpose, identity, community, and unity. Some are convinced these are not only elusive but impossible. In the midst of the present divisions, uncertainty, and distrust, the existential desire to be loved, listened to, cared for, to be part of something bigger than ourselves, part of a community, to be known and accepted by others, persists. Therefore, the Church has an opportunity. Now is the moment for the Catholic Church to rise up into a new movement of purpose which reaches out to the world with the truth, goodness, and beauty of authentic friendship. No great movement of spiritual renewal has ever occurred without a group of saints who supported one another, had deep intimacy in prayer with God, who preached the Gospel of Jesus boldly, and lived the bond of Trinitarian love. Our age requires the same. May the Church today answer the century-old petition, “Give us friends!”³³

³² Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 88–89

³³ Pastor Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah at the 1910 World Missionary Conference. Quoted in Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 25.

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